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BLAKE'S SPEECH

AT THE GLADSTONE PRESENTATION

A Magnificent Oration and a Glowing
Tribute to the G. O. M.

The following is the speech of Hon. Edward Blake, at the occasion of the presentation of the portrait of Right Hon. W. E. Gladstone to the National Liberal Club. After expressing his regret at the absence of Mr. Wilfred Laurier, M.P., the popular leader of the Canadian Liberal party, he said that he remembered some years ago that Lord Roseberry enriched the English literature with a new word borrowed from the American—namely, that of "mugwump." He confessed that he was a bit of a "mugwump" himself with regard to Canadian Liberal politics. He rejoiced, however, that his dissent in judgment had not prevented his old friends from intrusting him the duty of making this presentation. It was his duty in the first instance to ask that club, which was the social home and one of the principal embodiments of National Liberalism in the metropolis, to accept at the hands of their Canadian brethren the portrait of that great leader of Liberal thought and action, whom it was their proud privilege to call their own leader, but whose name and fame extended far beyond these isles, far beyond the great English-speaking Republic, even to the ends of the earth. His name was known and revered wherever there had been an oppressed people to be freed, an ancient wrong to be redressed, a political evil to be remedied, or a public good to be accomplished. At no time in the history of the world had it been possible for so many of the nations of the world to know the aims and objects, the ideas and aspirations, the plans and methods of a living statesman, as it was at present. (Here the curtain in front of Mr. Gladstone's portrait was withdrawn amid loud cheers.) Mr. Blake resuming his speech said that at no time had it been possible for so many men amongst the nations of the world to form upon data, more or less precise, a judgment upon the career of a living statesman as was the case at the present moment. In no former instance had the length of the career, the vastness of the staging, the multiplicity of the interests, the variety, the brilliancy and the splendour of the gifts, the many-sidedness of the character of a statesman been present to give materials for the formation of a judgment as to that career, as was the case with regard to Mr. Gladstone. No man had so triumphantly stood the test and had been received and marked by such general acclaim amongst the Liberal leaders as Mr. Gladstone, the foremost of the English race and the first of men. Canadian Liberals were bound to the English and to this kingdom by many ties, in the case of most of them by blood and of all by allegiance, and they were bound by the still stronger ties of affection and gratitude for just consideration of their interests and for liberal concession of their rights. Canadian Liberals on the other side of the Atlantic were free from the difficulty of trying to reconcile the principles of Democracy with Monarchy, and therefore they were free to exercise the maximum of liberty with the minimum of restraint. As a democratic portion of a very democratic community they naturally sympathized with the British Liberal party, and those sympathies had increased in these latter days, during which they had seen that party freed

from some elements which, however much they might have added to its weight and stability, certainly did impede its onward march. Most of all had Canadians sympathized with the attitude and movement of Mr. Gladstone from the time he undertook the solution of the Irish problem. They sympathized with its glorious aim of redressing wrong, of restoring peace, and of substituting for shame, weakness and discord, honor, strength and unity. They sympathized also with the principle of Home Rule as conducive to contentment, prosperity, and good government amongst the people to which it had been applied, and as a promotive not merely of local good fortune, but also of national patriotism and unity. The Canadians for whom he spoke felt the greatest admiration of the powers of the aged statesman who at a time of life far beyond that allotted to the great majority of the human race had undertaken a task from which the boldest of them in the fullest vigor of their lives might well have shrunk dismayed. Undaunted by the magnitude of the labor, regardless of the schism in the ranks of the Liberal party, undismayed by the timidity of some, and undeterred by the not unnatural desire of many to place domestic reforms in the forefront of legislation, the right honorable gentleman had, with firm and unwavering hand, pressed forward the Home Rule Bill, which he had introduced in 1886. Having received once more his great commission he had entered upon his fourth campaign with every prospect of success. The broad principles which the honorable gentleman had laid down in the earliest days of his first Home Rule Bill had stood the test of time and argument, and had been accepted by the great majority of the Irish people as the foundation of a great measure of reconciliation on which the unity of the Empire might well be based. Of course, the rights of the minority should be fully safeguarded. But the main principle of the new Bill undoubtedly would be that, while common and Imperial interests should be controlled by a common and an Imperial Parliament, Irish local affairs should be managed by an Irish local Parliament. He hoped that in the new measure the old Home Rule Bill would be amended in many important respects. If the democracy of Great Britain held their faith and pledge to the Irish people the Irish democracy in turn would support the democracy of Great Britain in enforcing their legitimate demands. (Hear, hear.) In conclusion he asked the National Liberal Club to accept the very admirable and striking picture which he was deputed to present to them in the name of the Liberals of Canada.

It isn't the flighty poet who is responsible for all the fugitive verses.

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