

and consequently they provoked irrepressible laughter. Of course they were little calculated to elicit truth, or promote order, or attract respect to the speakers. Indeed men who were inclined to despondency affected little reserve in saying that Parliamentary government was in their opinion a failure. During his early career, Mr. McGee appeared chiefly to occupy himself in saying unpleasant and severe things. This occupation was apt to include the habit of making personal allusions the reverse of agreeable, and, as a matter of course, creating personal enmities the reverse of desirable. In truth, Mr. McGee's speeches at that time were garnished with so many merry jests, and sometimes overlaid with so much rancorous levity, that their more valuable parts were hidden from ordinary eyes, and inappreciable to ordinary minds. The cookery was too generous, the condiments were too spicy. The sauce bore to the substance about the same proportional inequality which Falstaff's "sack" did to his bread; and this deficiency of solidity was attributed by many people to an absence of intellectual property, rather than to an error of conventional taste. Hence arose a disposition on the part of some to underrate Mr. McGee's mental strength, and hence, too, the observation, which, however, was more remarkable for glibness than accuracy, that "Mr. McGee speaks better than he reasons." Certainly the Parliamentary skirmishes of that period, though difficult to defend, were delightful to witness. Human drollery made up in some sort for human naughtiness. There were, for example, two members of that house of great ability, but very dissimilar habits of thought. They sat not far from one another, for if at that day they were not exactly "friends in council," they usually voted together. One was the present Attorney General West, the unrivalled chief of Parliamentary debate; and the other, the present learned member for Brome, the intellectual detective of suspected fallacies. Breadth and subtlety, reason and casuistry, extensive observation and minute knowledge, marked then as now the peculiar characters of their modes of thought. No matter, however; whether the range of their reasoning was broad or deep, horizontal or vertical, circular or lateral, profound or peculiar, it was commonly acknowledged by the subject of our sketch in a cheerful Irish way, amusing enough to the spectator, but probably not as agreeable to those who looked