

no Catholic might be enrolled among its directors'. It was a whiff from the spirit of the penal days—a spirit that, despite the growing tolerance of the time, still survived in many parts of Ireland. In the course of time this intolerant proviso was abolished.

In 1802—after the Act of Union had been passed by bribery, force, and fraud—the Bank of Ireland purchased the beautiful building in which the sessions of the old Parliament had been held. The Government made a curious secret stipulation in consenting to this sale. It is thus set forth in a letter to Lord Hardwicke, approving the purchase: 'It should, however, be again privately stipulated that the two chambers of Parliament shall be effectually converted to such uses as shall preclude their being again used upon any contingency as public debating rooms.' 'It was feared,' says Lecky, 'that disquieting ghosts might still haunt the scenes that were consecrated by so many memories.' Recent rumors declare that the Old House in College Green is again to be restored to the uses for which it was originally intended. Negotiations are said to have been recently afoot for its repurchase and restoration to the nation. This may possibly mean more to the Bank of Ireland than the loss of the beautiful offices which, to the chagrin of the vast body of the people, it has so long occupied in the heart of Dublin city. The Bank has had, since the Union, a vast monopoly of Government business. And the fear that a Home Rule Government might distribute a portion of its business among other and more popular banking institutions is, no doubt, amply sufficient to account for the fall in Bank of Ireland shares that was recorded by the cableman in the daily papers of last Saturday. There will, of course, be the customary clamor of martyrdom—that arises when monopolies are hit or threatened. Sydney Smith, in his day, deplored the fact that Catholic emancipation was for a long time blocked 'because one politician will lose two thousand a year by it, and another three thousand, a third a place in reversion, and a fourth a pension for his aunt'. 'The great soul of this world is just,' says Carlyle. And justice to Ireland, so long delayed, is not, we hope, to be now balked by the fear that the titled and untitled stockholders in the Bank of Ireland are to draw dividends of fourteen per cent. instead of fifteen per cent. upon their shares. People do a good deal of dancing and singing nowadays around the golden calf. But justice is more than moneybags, and a nation's liberties more than shent per shent.

Home Rule

The leaf of the aspen is so neatly balanced upon its stalk that the gentlest breeze of heaven will set it trembling. It is even so with financial institutions. They are agitated by the smallest breath of fact or rumor that comes their way. What is more gentle than a message of hope to suffering man or hard-trying nation? Yet it was 'a message of hope' to Green Éire of the Tears that set the aspen shareholder of the Bank of Ireland trembling so wildly during the past few weeks. It was a double message. The first was spoken by Sir Antony MacDonnell, Under-Secretary to the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, at a banquet in Dublin. He said:—

'He came before them that night after three years of work, some of which had brought great satisfaction, and some of which had brought regret, and he came before them, as he came before them three years ago, with a message of hope. He was no more entitled to tell them that night the grounds on which the hope was based than he was able to tell them three years ago the grounds upon which his hope was then based; but his firm belief was that the coming year 1907 would see the fruition of many of those hopes which the best Irishmen had for many years entertained. It might not be the fruition of everything which Irishmen had hoped for, but it would

be, he believed, the fruition of so much that Irishmen, if they were true to themselves, would make the fountain and the source from which the whole of their hopes might be fulfilled.'

The other part of the 'message of hope' was delivered in the House of Commons by Mr. Bryce, Chief Secretary for Ireland. 'It was,' he said, 'the wish of the Government to secure equal justice for all classes in Ireland, to render Ireland peaceful and prosperous, and to see that respect for the law went hand in hand with that large measure of self-government which they all thought Ireland ought to enjoy.'

Time is the corrector of many a wrong. It is (as Rosalind said in the play) the Justice of the Peace that tries and sentences old offenders. Slow-paced but sure, this great avenger has been on the side of the Irish people in their legitimate demand for the right to manage their own internal affairs. For over a hundred years they have been 'pining for the dawning of the day'. It has been 'lang a-comin'. But the sun seems to be peeping over the edge of the horizon at last. Twenty years ago (says the Dundee 'Evening Star' in the course of an eminently fair and well-informed article) even a scheme of devolution or co-ordination 'would have been damned with bell, book, and candle as vigorously as were the Gladstonian proposals for a separate and distinct Legislative Assembly on College Green. "The rising tide is with us", said the Grand Old Man on one memorable occasion; and the boast, interpreted in terms of time, has been marvellously justified. . . The social and moral forces at work throughout the civilised world are on the side of those communities which demand freedom to govern and develop themselves, subject, of course, to the paramountcy of the Sovereign Power by virtue of which the nation in its integrity is held together. All parties, as far as Ireland is concerned, are agreed that the past is a black record that has to be wiped out; the difference is merely one of how far and how soon shall the forward move be taken.' There will, of course, be the customary vilification, threats of rebellion, etc., 'from the little knot of representatives from one small and 'yellow' corner of Ireland who are traditionally known in the House of Commons as 'the deadheads of Ulster'. Our local evening contemporary displays an intimate acquaintance with the methods of political propaganda usually adopted by the ascendancy party in Ireland:—

'We may safely anticipate exciting scenes, angry recriminations, and sensational language. The colonies particularly, if the history of the past may be taken as a precedent, will be supplied with concise details of outrages that never happened, and of disloyal sentiments which, shorn of their context, will look very black. In this connection, however, it is well to remember that the ebullitions of religious rancor, the creation of irrelevant issues, and the assumptions as to what will or will not follow ought not so affect our judgment on the justice of the fundamental principle to which the Imperial Government propose to give effect. Much of our cable news, experience has shown, should be accepted with caution: The Campbell-Bannerman Ministry during the recent session complained strongly of the nature of the news received from and sent to South Africa, and felt constrained to take steps to counteract its unfortunate tone; whilst Sir William Butler, an able and proved public servant, a few weeks since gave publicity to the statement that the telegrams published in the London press prior to the outbreak of the Boer War, which were instrumental in rousing popular sentiment, were written out after dinner in a certain well-known house near Cape Town every Sunday, and then flashed across the wires in time for the Monday morning papers. We mention these items as we believe it to be imperative, now that the Empire is on the eve, not perhaps of a Home Rule Bill in the Gladstonian sense, but of a larger measure of representative local self-government, that colonists generally should preserve a dispassionate and judicial standpoint, and not permit themselves to be swayed by what may be termed ex parte snapshots.'

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