

THE MEN OF THE HOME RULE MOVEMENT.

A LECTURE on "The Men of the Irish Party," was given by the Rev. William Burke on Tuesday night, November 6, in the Choral Hall. The appearance of the Hall on entering was very pleasing. All about the platform was tastefully festooned with evergreens and flowers and hanging on the walls were pictures, maps, and banners, conspicuous amongst which was the green flag of Erin with harp in gold. Beneath this hung a large picture of Ireland's Apostle. But by far the most brilliant effect of all was produced by the appearance of sixty or eighty of the school children seated on a platform, dressed in holiday attire and wearing on the left breast a bright green rosette. These lads form the school choir and are known as "The Young Ceciliaans." Under the leadership of one of the Brothers, and with Herr Schwuers, presiding at the piano, they very appropriately opened the proceedings by singing with much taste and spirit that fine old song "The Wearing of the Green." In the absence of the Most Rev. Dr. Moran, Mr. J. B. Callan presided. The Ven. Archdeacon Coleman and many leading citizens of all denominations were present.

The rev. lecturer commenced with a vivid description of Ireland during the famine period of 1848 to 1850; of the people dying in thousands and of the despair which filled the breasts of the people during the dark and dismal times which followed the famine, and of the betrayal of their trusts by Keogh and the Sadliers. He gave a loving and fine outline of the life of the "noble and self-sacrificing A. M. Sullivan"; his connection with the Nation, which was viewed by the Whigs and Fenians alike with distrust; how Sullivan, when he left for his office in the morning, was not certain that he would get home alive. He briefly described the formation of the Home Rule movement, its chief aim being the restoration of the old Irish Parliament, and the difficult task which the Home Rulers had set themselves. Before them was the British Assembly, strong in majorities; behind them was the Irish nation, the people hoping with their strong faith that something good would result from the movement; and behind this great body of the Irish people was that small minority of Irishmen who stood by the sword alone for obtaining their rights. The latter derided the Home Rulers, and prophesied that they would be voted down by the British House of Commons, and that the party would consequently fall to pieces without doing any good. That they were outwoted was a fact, and that even for their most simple demands. For Isaac Butt's bills there generally voted 40 Irish ayes and 400 British noes, and thus was the prophecy fulfilled. But throughout these defeats of Butt's bills there was sitting on the benches during 1875 and 1876 a pale-faced, quiet-looking man, noting the mockeries of the English members, and reading their insolent attacks on the Irish party. His name was then little known—he was even received with hesitation as a member of the Home Rule party; and after his first address it was predicted that he would be one of the many silent members. When elected for Meath in 1875 the people shook their heads, and contrasted him unfavourably with his predecessor, honest John Martin. But this man raised the most potent party of modern Ireland. It was now that this quiet, silent man, Charles Stewart Parnell (great applause) took his place, seized the cudgels, and the Commons were made to give way. Next to Gladstone he was the best Parliamentarian of his day. During the session of 1877 Messrs. Parnell and Biggar proposed a new plan of action—the difficult task of subduing the entire British Parliament. These two men, in order to carry out their aim, had to overcome storms of hate and hurricanes of abuse. They felt that their first duty was to their own country, and they determined that the opening address of the Queen to Parliament should not be an address devoted only to the Ashantees, Zulus, and such like, and they succeeded. They turned, as John Bright says, "that House of free speech into a gagging assembly," and they turned out Governments. Obstruction had been known in the House before, but obstruction like theirs never. The pale-faced man and the ugly-looking man from Belfast had a Herculean task; they had to understand all the by-laws of the House, and all its modes of procedure. They discussed clause by clause every bill that was brought forward, whether it was English, Scotch, or Irish. Irishmen in the House had never done this before. They talked and gave trouble, as they intended to do. Such audacity was before unheard of. Division after division went on fast and furious for hours during the sessions of '77 and '78. But the obstruction of '77 and '78 was as nothing compared to that of '80 and '81. A person entering the House of Commons at 9 in the morning of February 3, 1881, beheld a curious sight—the Speaker holding a paper in his hand vainly trying to read it, and before him some 300 or 400 English members with their mouths formed into concave circles hooting and yelling at some 25 Irish members, and these 25 Irishmen standing erect bold and defiant facing with clenched fists their bitter opponents vociferating with fury, aye, and even swearing as only angry Irishmen could swear in the face of their foe (tremendous applause). The new Parnell party was then understood in Ireland, and the cry went up that now they had the men who would carry out their policy. It was impossible, he said, to crowd into one evening's lecture even a hasty outline of the history of the Parnell party and of the stormy scenes which followed their struggles. The events of these past 10 years had had a revolutionary tendency. They had stirred the English people as they had never been stirred before, and away over the bonny hills and dales of Scotland the spirit of the movement had gone and had taken deep root amongst the poor crofters of the Hebrides. Then what an effect had it on the land question! Ten years ago the Irish peasantry were trodden down; they were mere serfs, worse off than the slaves of the American planters. The latter had an interest in the health of their slaves, but Irish landlords did not trouble themselves whether their tenants lived or died. Better that their lands were occupied as sheep-walks or by cattle. But when Gladstone delivered in 1881 his Irish Land Bill, it was felt that a glimpse of better days was looming. It had many defects, but many of these defects had since been remedied. The cry of the people now was "The land for the people."

"We want the land that bore us,
We'll make that want our chorus,
We'll have it yet—though hard to get—
By the heavens bending o'er us."

(Enthusiastic applause.) In June, 1876, little more than 10 years ago, Mr. Butt introduced one of his Home Rule Bills; the ayes were 43, the noes 291. In June, 1886, 10 years after, Mr. Gladstone introduced what was practically the same bill in a full House of some 600 members, and the majority against him was only 30 (great applause). And what had led to this? Mr. Parnell had ousted the strongest Liberal Ministry of the century. He saw his end was gained; he saw he could turn out Ministries as he wished. They saw that Home Rule must come. Mr. Gladstone saw this, and saw that the Irish party could stop the Government of the country. The alternatives were: Either Home Rule must be granted, or the Irish people must be disenfranchised. The latter could not be done, and so Home Rule must be given (hear, hear). It was not yet granted, but it must come—if not during this septennial period of Parliament, very shortly afterwards. Looking back to '48, and '52, and '68, and '78—dark and gloomy periods, and then at '88 they must conclude that Parnell had been the saviour of his country. He had done wonders, but he had to go through fire and water to do it. He had suffered terribly in the cause of his country. His reward would be great. Even now when his character was assailed, his loving countrymen cluster around him, and not only they, but Englishmen and Scotchmen of all shades of opinion, are subscribing liberally to the defence of his good name. A man, for the defence of whose character even his political enemies subscribe, need not fear to have his fair name tarnished by the Times. But Parnell has not done all the work. He has been aided by others. Ireland in all ages has had its poets, and the poet of the Parnell party was T. D. Sullivan, and its orator Sexton. The poet was a copy of his brother, A. M. Sullivan. His poems were on the lips of thousands of Irish people, and they were like a beautiful ribbon drawing together Irishmen all over the world. The rev. lecturer here gave a masterly description of the poems of T. D. Sullivan.

Father Burke now sat down for a few moments, when Mr. John Deaker advanced to the front of the platform and recited with much spirit, and with admirable effect, T. D. Sullivan's latest magnificent poem, "The Vision of Balfour's Ghost as Gaoler of Tullamore." The weird effect produced on the immense audience by the burden-line of the poem, "His reply was—Tullamore," delivered slowly, in sepulchral tones, was something remarkable. Mr. Deaker was heartily applauded on resuming his seat. The Young Ceciliaans then stood up and sang with great taste, and evidently with great heart, a new version, suited to New Zealand, of "The Song from the Canadian Backwoods," by T. D. Sullivan. The singing was highly appreciated.

The rev. lecturer, continuing, said Thomas Sexton, the present Lord Mayor of Dublin, was a pupil of the Christian Brothers' school, Mount Sion, Waterford. When about twelve and a half years of age, young Sexton and another boy from Mount Sion school were successful in a competitive examination for two vacant clerkships in the Waterford and Limerick railway. This examination was conducted by a Government Model School master, and it is worthy of note that the first ten places were taken by the Christian Brothers' pupils (applause). At the age of twenty-one, he went to Dublin, and became a leading writer on the Nation. In 1881 he was returned as member for Mayo, and members of the House soon recognised that a great orator had come into the House. He could do what he pleased with words, and next to Gladstone he was considered the greatest orator in the British Isles. Parnell, the Sullivans, Sexton, Healy, O'Connor, M'Carthy, and Davitt were instances of bands of men with great ability, who had from time to time sprung up in Ireland to serve their country. It is extraordinary that no matter how battered or how scattered Ireland was, she revived in these bands all the good qualities of the bands of men who had lived long ages ago. No historian need deplore that at any period of Ireland's history her spirit was dead. From New York to San Francisco they found her sons ruling the great cities and possessed of great power. Their eloquence of to-day was worthy of O'Connell, of Grattan, and of Sheridan. They possessed a courage which nothing could overcome, and theirs was a brilliancy which no obstacle could obscure; and for them there was a glorious future (immense applause).

Mr. J. B. Callan, in proposing a vote of thanks, said:—Ladies and gentlemen, I beg to move a hearty vote of thanks to the rev. lecturer. Apart from the object of the lecture, I think Father Burke is deserving of our thanks for bringing under our notice the subject upon which he has spoken to-night. As he says, the Home Rule movement is the foremost one of the time, and it is only natural that the men who are the leaders of this movement should be objects of interest to us. If we were to be guided in our opinions concerning these gentlemen by the general tone of the cablegrams transmitted from Home, we should come to the conclusion that they were rather a "bad lot." But most of us who have the opportunity of reading the TABLET, and other sources of correct information, know better than that. We know that the cablegrams do not represent the true state of the case. Still we have not the time or opportunity of going into detail in these matters; Father Burke has done this for us to-night, and I think we owe him a debt of gratitude for the very full, able, and dramatic narrative which he has given us. I may say there is one thing which has always struck me in connection with the Home Rule movement as unique in the history of any legislative assembly, and that is the wonderful unanimity and discipline displayed by the Parnellite Members of Parliament. You know it is often cast as a reproach upon Irishmen that they are easily divided, that they allow their feelings to gain the mastery and sway them instead of reason and judgment and the interest of the subject matter under discussion. If this be true, and there may be some truth in it, for Irishmen are more excitable than Englishmen or Scotchmen—but if it be true, then how marvellous must be the leadership of Mr. Parnell, and how splendid the discipline of his followers when we see what an unbroken front this large body of men (as large as some of our