

MR. BRIGHT'S RECANTATION.

WE, *Nation*, take the following excellent article from the *Newcastle Daily Chronicle*. It is one of the most conclusive replies we have met with to the recent speech of Mr. Bright, and one of the most effective exposures of the sophisms with which that so-called statesman has attempted to reconcile his support of Liberal despotism in Ireland with Liberal principles of Government:—

"One word describes Mr. Bright's speech—recantation. His deliverance being throughout an apology for political conduct which his long, energetic, and distinguished public life has been mainly occupied in denouncing, it could not well be otherwise than that he should be driven to recant. True, the denunciations of the past misgovernment were in strict harmony with his former utterances; his casting of the whole blame of bygone misrule upon political opponents was also characteristic of him; and his expression of repentance for British injustice towards Ireland in other days was a kindly piece of commonplace long familiar, not only to Mr. Bright's audiences, but to the public platforms of both parties in the State. In these respects, then, the Chancellor of the Duchy appeared as he has always done. Nor in declaring that he is no Democrat did he make any recantation. That he never has been is perfectly true. Among other measures of a popular character, his opposition to the extension of suffrage proved this; which was also testified to by the hostility he encountered from the rank file, and leadership of Chartism—the only genuinely democratic movement that this country has ever seen. Mr. Bright has done much valuable service to the cause of freedom amongst us; since his first appearance among the public men of our country, he has been one of the purest, most single-eyed, and best among them. But he has never pretended to be a Democrat. While determinedly opposed to those political notions which, when unrestrained, led up to the "gagging Acts" of Sidmouth and Castlereagh, to "blanket meetings" in England, to secret societies in Ireland, and to the arrogant exercise of force all round—while thus opposed, Mr. Bright has never realised the ideal of Democracy seeking to assert itself as a dominant institution, rather than as a simple political element under one or other form of Government. As such, it aims at that system of rule—the highest conception of Liberalism—"according to which every member of society is considered as a man, and nothing more." Mr. Bright has been all along a politician of the Manchester school, whose prime characteristic is to supplant feudalism by capital, transferring the gilt of the former's sword to the yard-stick of the latter. It hates the titled aristocracy; but it by no means regards the labouring class as on a footing of equality with itself. Politically it is a school not without charity, and is willing to make concessions and grant political favours to the wages-winning multitude—not, it is true, according to the Democratic formula of "Liberty, equality, and fraternity," but according as its own sense of superiority suggests whether or not the multitude is fitted to receive them, or according as its sense of safety is shaken into yielding them. But in all these things the ell is its measure, alike of politics and of morality, whether it is gathering money in its churches to convert the heathen Hindu, or making wheels in its workshops for the car of Juggernaut. English middle-class Liberalism is something very different from Democracy; and no man knows this better than Mr. Bright.

The Chancellor of the Duchy was no less unhappy in his references to the action of the American Irish—to the money they send over and the sympathy which is maintained between them and their brethren in the old country. To say nothing of his taking up the tale of the partizan and hackneyed argument which wilfully ignores the vast sums of money now being collected in Ireland itself, and which denies all constitutional aims and honest intentions to the Land League organisers in England, Mr. Bright forgot at this point his own recent summing up of the moneys sent home by the American Irish, the plaudits he poured out about it, and the arguments he drew from it as to political and social virtues of the highest order. He who now reviles the action of the Irish beyond the Atlantic and the home-sympathy with that region thus spoke in 1866, in the Rotundo, Dublin:—"A few days ago a most esteemed citizen of Dublin told me that he believed that a very large portion of what he called the poor, amongst Irishmen, sympathised with any scheme or any proposition that was adverse to the Imperial Government. He said, further, that the people here are rather in the country than of it, and that they are looking to England. I think there is a good deal in that. When we consider how many Irishmen have found a refuge in America, I do not know now we can wonder at that statement. You will recollect that when the ancient Hebrew prophet prayed in his captivity he prayed with his window opened towards Jerusalem. You know that the followers of Mahomed, when they pray, turn their faces towards Mecca. When the Irish peasant asks for food, and freedom, and blessing, his eye follows the setting sun; the aspiration of his heart reach beyond the wide Atlantic, and in spirit he grasps hands with the great Republic of the West." Mr. Bright's talk about armed resistance would have been in place had any but fools contemplated it in a country totally disarmed, and swarming with troops three times more numerous than the English army at Waterloo. But by far the cruellest allusion he did make was regarding the representation of Ireland as compared with that of England. Ireland, it is true, has more than her due proportion of members; but it is her governing classes that have them, while the great bulk of the population is entirely deprived of the franchise. Mr. Bright maintains that the grievances of Ireland have been practically all redressed and that she has more than her share of political advantages. One would think he should know the contrary to be true. He must know that the Reform Bill of 1868 did not refer to Ireland, and that there the household suffrage for Parliamentary purposes does not exist. He must know about the £4 rating, the absence of compulsory rating, and the fact that, in the large towns, where tenants pay by the quarter, they are not put upon the rate book. Leeds, which is a smaller town than Dublin, has nearly four times the number of Parliamentary

electors, and ten times that of municipal voters. And the case of the suffrage is only one out of a great number of inequalities between the two countries that could be mentioned, and that are continually being exposed. Mr. Bright asserts, in common with all part legislators for Ireland, that the present Government has given the finishing stroke to her wants; but at no distant date he may be shown that this is his greatest mistake of all. His speech sadly belies his career; and out of respect for the man, and in full recollection of the good he has done, we acknowledge it with sorrow.

In the matters above mentioned Mr. Bright did not recede from any position he has hitherto occupied; but, otherwise, his speech was a recantation throughout. All he said was a resolute attempt to refute what he had so often mentioned before, and particularly what he said, only twelve months ago, in declaring that "Force is no remedy." To begin with, his opinion as to the source of Irish disorder has become thoroughly revolutionised; and what he formerly so stoutly maintained as the effect he now regards as the cause. He contends that disorder is the main spring of Irish want and the secret of its having little or no trade. He thought differently, however, when he maintained the very opposite in the Rotundo of Dublin and when, speaking in the House of Commons on the misery and disorder in Ireland, he made the memorable statement that no man could travel the country "without feeling that some enormous crime had been committed by the Government under which the people live." Government misrule and not popular misbehaviour was his fervid contention for the root of the whole evil, when a Conservative Government was advocating coercion. Now he believes that the suspension of *habeas corpus* is justifiable; then he denounced it in burning terms as an act of barbarity; and the world has not been allowed to forget his burning words in St. James's Hall against the act of despotism by which "individual liberty, except by consent of the executive," was abolished in Ireland, or his accusation that "Lord Derby, as the representative of his party in Parliament, is himself the fomenter of the discord" to allay which was called up "that ancient and rude and savage remedy—the remedy of military force." It is lamentable to think, for the sake of political consistency, that he who has given the key-note to ten thousand denunciations against suspending the constitution over the heads of a whole people should be now posing as the advocate of that course, and that he who rebuked political opponents for being unable to govern Ireland with less than 26,000 troops should be active in a Government which miserably fails to do the same thing with three times that number, supplemented with every requisite of arbitrariness. The wretched simile of a captain and his crew might tell beyond the vista, where the millions are at the bidding of despot's nod. But it is obnoxious in a free country professing to hold the doctrine that the popular will is alone supreme—the true captain of the national ship. In such a country the majority of the people never become unruly without sufficient cause; and no one has maintained more energetically than Mr. Bright that in such a case the responsibility rests with the Government. But he has changed in this as he has changed in all his ideas about coercion and the propriety of confining respectable citizens in prison without trial. The only well defined argument advanced in the speech to justify repressive measures is that of Mr. Healy's having said something in Parliament about knocking "Government into a cocked hat." Apart from any misapprehension of the member for Wexford's reference, which we are inclined to think there is, if that gentlemen said anything worthy of imprisonment, let him be imprisoned forthwith, and if he has done anything worthy of being hanged, let him be hanged by all means. But surely what he said or did is a childish reason for depriving a whole nation of its birthright of freedom.

THE DUKE OF NORFOLK.

The spirit moved me this afternoon—All Saints day—to attend vespers at the Chapel of the Nunnery of the Assumption, Kensington square. The light streams through stained glass windows of exquisite beauty upon an altar rich with tracery and many coloured marbles and decked with lovely flowers and countless lights. One by one file in the nuns in long court trains of deep violet cloth. The Prioress leads the choir and the singing is perfectly divine—as beautiful as that of the Sisters of the Sacred Heart at Rome. In the place reserved for ladies of rank, I saw a tall rather stout lady, praying with great devotion. I found out afterwards that it was the Duchess of Norfolk, who is now on a religious retreat in this holy house, whilst her husband is away at Lourdes on a pilgrimage with his sick son, the infant Earl of Arundel and Surrey, the hope of the great house of Howard. The child is not deaf and dumb as represented, but nearly blind—a light passed before his eyes makes very little impression. The pious father hopes "the Lady of Sorrow and pity" will intercede for him, and in this faithless age, his faith, I think, is most touching, when we remember what a man he is—the father of the poor, the very comforter of the sorrowing. All England bears witness of the holiness of life, the untiring charity, the nobility and liberality of this most modest and retiring, but also princely man. The Duchess, after the Queen and Princess of Wales the greatest lady in England, is the most timid of living women, and the equal in all that is good with her husband. Some time ago a poor little street sweeper was run over. The Duchess was passing in her carriage and saw what happened. In an instant she jumped out, and lifting the wounded wail, all muddied and dirty as he was, had him brought to her carriage, and carried him on her knees to the Children's Hospital, where you may be sure every attention was paid to him.—An English correspondent.

The Pope has received from Mgr. Veriti, on the part of the Catholics of France, a magnificent reliquary, decorated with precious stones, and containing portions of the bones of the newly canonised Saint Benoit Labre.