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Current Topics

AT HOME AND ABROAD.

JOCK
MCKENZIE'S
SPEECH.

THE very plain speech of a very plain man. Such was the address delivered in Dunedin, on Wednesday, the 20th inst, by the Hon John McKenzie. There was certainly no attempt made by the speaker at a display of eloquence—and we should say that neither was he attempting to pass off for truth statements that he did not himself believe. We would fain hope, nevertheless, that he took an exaggerated, even though a sincere, view of the dealing with him of the Conservative Press in general, and the *Otago Daily Times* in particular. Otherwise there must be a degree of baseness among journalists that no honest man would care to contemplate. For our own part, although we have occasionally to complain of prejudice and unfairness among our contemporaries, we rarely find their conduct impossible in a gentleman, and, without very strong evidence, we should hardly be prepared to accept such an accusation as just. Mr McKenzie, no doubt, has now and then been roughly treated in the heat of political feeling—but it must be admitted that he himself can be pretty rough in returning the compliment. But Mr McKenzie does not seem at all heated in the combat. Surely the wild Highland blood that courses in his veins must be tempered by some pawky Lowland strain. In days gone by some ancestor of his had wooed and won some fair Lowland lass, and "Jock" has inherited the self-restraint of his great-grandmother. Or perhaps it was the colder tongue, that of the Sacsanach, that subdued his utterance to the more proper tone. There was not a note to remind us of the spirit in which the Celt rebukes his foe. The ring of the "*salacharan an domars*" was absent throughout from Mr McKenzie's sentences. To bring it out the presence of Mr Earnshaw was possibly necessary—and Mr Earnshaw was not there. At least we heard a member of the audience explain to another that he was not—and that if he was he would certainly not be on the platform. For our personal information, we may add, an opera glass would have been needful—and indeed, judging by the favour in which he stands such as it is, the naked eye of many people can hardly see Mr Earnshaw as he really exists. Mr McKenzie, as we have said, was a plain man making a plain speech. No word spoken by him disturbed the calmness of his hearers, or prevented them from reflecting on its meaning. Mr McKenzie, however, told a tale in which it would be very hard to detect a flaw. His figures, we admit, seemed perfect. It will at least be quite impossible for any one to contradict them until some prominent member of the Opposition comes forward with a list drawn from official documents, and shows errors in the subtraction and division, if not in the addition and multiplication, that in times gone by, when the dominie was still a dominie, would have brought down the tawse heavily on the urchin guilty of them. A great part of the speech, moreover, was taken up with figures, and it should give that member of the Opposition some trouble to cook his list in reply. But Conservative politicians are skilful and well exercised cooks. With the settlement of the land, the most important of all Colonial questions, Mr McKenzie dealt in a manner that was at once interesting and satisfactory. Here he was able to cite facts as well as figures and what kind of "chiefs" facts are is known to all of us. The account given of the "white elephants"—that is to say, the lands purchased by the Government—was particularly cheering and seemed to promise great things for the future. The *bona fide* effort of the Government to place a population on the lands, which is their chief merit—and in itself sufficient to cover a multitude of sins, is certainly that which subjects them to the keenest and most determined opposition. Some attempt, we see meantime, has been made to discredit the character of the meeting addressed by the Minister. The meeting was a very large one, and eminently respectable both in appearance and conduct. It was more reflective than enthusiastic, as the manner of the address induced it to be—but there can be no doubt that it was fully representative, and that the vote of confidence in the speaker, and the Ministry generally—propelled by Mr J. P. Armstrong, and seconded by Mr John Carroll—was an important

expression of the feeling of the citizens of Dunedin. Mr McKenzie, we repeat, spoke as a plain man, but he spoke as a man honestly expressing his convictions—and the policy stated by him as that of his Government was a policy promising good things for the Colony in general.

MR TIMOTHY HEALY, speaking recently at Cross-MR HEALY ON maglen, gave a very decided expression of his EDUCATION. views on education. Mr Healy had been defending himself against a charge of dissension which was brought against him. "There are," he said, "in England large questions affecting the rights of our fellow-countrymen and our fellow-Catholics. Scandal was given on a recent occasion by the action of some gentlemen in reference to this question of religious education. Now, let me say as a layman that I take a view with regard to the question of religious education and its effect on the government of men somewhat, it may be, of a civil character, as distinct from the views which you, very rev and rev friends, may hold. It is this: If the State sets the seal of secularism upon public education, paid for by the taxpayer, it cannot complain afterwards of the Anarchist and the Dynamitard. Let the people of any country be brought up in a negation of God and of the teachings of conscience and the State can have nothing to rely upon afterwards but the policeman and the convict cell and the penal hulks for the enforcement of its laws. We saw through a century of strife and bloodshed the attempt to found a Republic in France. We saw the thousands of men who were sent to the scaffold, the millions of men who fell in battle to sustain the Republican idea. And then when after a century of strife, and after all the sacrifices that the French Republicans made to attain their ideal of government, what was the result? The godless system of education which they established nursed as its product men to fling bombs in the faces of their Republican Chamber of Deputies; and we saw another of the products of their godless code stab to the heart the President of the French Republic. Therefore I say that those politicians who strive for the attainment of secular liberty are laying a very poor foundation for the government of men by divorcing from the minds of youth the sanctions of faith, which, in my judgment, are a necessary cement to good citizenship in building up a State." "Hence," he continued, "I viewed with anxiety the action of those who, when authority, acting within its jurisdiction—as I conceive Cardinal Vaughan strictly acted on this question of education—puts forward his views not as a politician, not seeking, as I believe, to effect any political design, but simply carrying out the Gospel and the mandate of his Master with a view to provide that the children of four millions of people—a population nearly as large as that of Ireland—should not be deprived of knowledge of the tenets of Christianity common to both Protestant and Catholic—the ordinary simple formulas of our common creed—that he should without provocation be assailed by Irish politicians on the ground that his action was inconvenient to a political party. After having thought over the matter in the months that have gone by since this scandal arose, and after I had ample time to form my conclusions, and having remained hitherto silent, I now declare that I condemn such procedure, and I will have neither part nor lot in such policies (applause)." "Perhaps," added the speaker, "this expression of opinion will be called 'dissension.' If so, I would ask is there no dissension on the part of those who cast an outrage upon Cardinal Vaughan? (hear, hear.) Is there no dissension in creating scandal in the minds of millions of their fellow-countrymen by violently assailing the educational position of a Prince of our Faith, and is there only dissension and disunion when, not upon an eternal issue but on a matter of ephemeral politics, we venture to disagree either with the procedure of the chairman of the Irish Party or any one of his colleagues of the Parliamentary Committee? (Cheers.)" Mr Healy went on to refer to the case of the Irish Christian Brothers, and to point out how the recommendation made even by a Board composed of Conservative Protestants that their claim to State aid should be admitted was refused by the Home Rule Government. "There are," he concluded, "many who think that the lapse of years brings about possibilities of appeasement, and therefore that no time may after all be lost by what has occurred. I trust it will be so, and that if in the

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