

of a warder. The *Dublin Freeman* says:—Sentence was passed upon the Rev Samuel G. Cotton at the Belfast Assizes on Saturday. The sentence, although pronounced by Mr Justice Holmer, was that of the Lord Chief Baron, who tried the prisoner in April last. Judgment was deferred owing to one or two points of law having been reserved on behalf of the prisoner for argument before the Court of Crown Cases Reserved. The extreme leniency of the punishment is its most noticeable feature. Six months' imprisonment without hard labour and a fine of £400 is the entire penalty which the Rev Mr Cotton has to pay for the atrocious barbarities of which he was found guilty by a Belfast jury.

The Rev J. H. Wright of Portlaoine, Ireland, is a Protestant minister who lately had the temerity to write to the Press saying he had no fear of persecution in the event of Home Rule becoming law. Lately Mr Wright and his invalid wife were set upon by a pair of ruffians, waylaid, and beaten, Mrs Wright being knocked down and kicked. No arrests have been made—a fact full of significance. Of course, the garrison in Ireland disavow all responsibility and even attempt to find a motive in some mysterious "old standing feud" which culminated in the outrage. The culmination, it has to be observed, came rather at a peculiar time, and it is also worth remarking that, if a feud existed, the parties to it would be known, whereas no arrest has been made till now. There is an "old standing feud," the feud between Orange bullying and anyone—unprotected—who dares oppose it.

MR MICHAEL DAVITT.

(From the *Daily News*)

MR MICHAEL DAVITT is, with the possible exception of Mr Edward Blake, the most interesting and remarkable of the new members in this Parliament. His entrance into the House of Commons adds little or nothing to his own influence or fame. But, on the other hand, he will be one of the most notable figures in that assembly. It is curious that an Irish patriot of such eminence and ability should have been defeated in his first candidature, and should have had a hard fight in his second. The reason, of course, is that he preferred to contest Parnellite strongholds rather than places where his return would have been a foregone conclusion. For Mr Davitt is an ardent Nationalist, and a loyal member of the Irish parliamentary party. No more striking tribute has been paid to the strength of the Nationalist cause, and the prudence of its leaders, than the adhesion of Mr Davitt. Mr Davitt, as everybody knows, was in youth an active Fenian, and spent some of the best years of his life in penal servitude for treason-felony. His political opinions are much more socialistic than those of his parliamentary colleagues, and during the reign of Mr Parnell he was not on the best of terms with Mr Parnell's principal lieutenants. For Mr Parnell himself he had a profound admiration, and never lifted a finger to dispute the authority of the chief. But when Ireland had to choose between a constitutional alliance with British Liberalism and the desperate struggle of a disappointed man for the recovery of his personal ascendancy, Mr Davitt joined the Constitutionalists without a moment's hesitation. If Mr Gladstone's Irish policy had achieved nothing else than the conversion of Mr Davitt it would not have been fruitless. Before 1886 Mr Davitt, though he trusted Mr Parnell, gravely doubted the efficacy of political agitation as a weapon for obtaining Home Rule. It was in frank acknowledgment of Mr Gladstone's wisdom and sincerity that he fell into line with the general body of Nationalist politicians. Nothing could be more creditable to Mr Davitt. It was Mr Gladstone's Government that prosecuted him in 1870. It was Mr Gladstone's Government that revoked his ticket-of-leave and sent him back to Portland in 1881. When the interests of his country are concerned Mr Davitt is incapable of personal feeling. He may not be always judicious; he may not sufficiently realise the truth of the maxim that if speech is silver, silence is golden, but his keenest and bitterest opponents admit his transparent sincerity, his chivalrous sense of honour, and his absolute devotion to the cause of Ireland. In Ireland the name of Michael Davitt is something more than a household word. Even at the height of the lamentable quarrel to which the deposition of Mr Parnell gave rise the cowardly assault upon Mr Davitt, for which, like Mr O'Brien, he refused to prosecute, excited universal indignation.

The characteristic qualities of the intellectual and gentlemanlike party have been well illustrated in their references to Mr Davitt. Some of their lower organs in the Press think it dignified and becoming to call him "Davitt." The fact that when he was twenty-four he engaged in a criminal conspiracy to procure the restoration of his country's freedom by force has been made the excuse for denouncing him as unfit for the society of honest men. Chief Justice Cockburn's suggestion, founded on an ambiguous letter, that that he had been engaged in a plot to murder somebody is still repeated without the full explanation given by Mr Davitt himself to the Special Commissioners. Because in 1882, being in gaol for felony, he was ineligible for Parliament, the jurists and pundits who follow the Duke of Devonshire and Mr Chamberlain

gravely argue that, although his sentence expired in 1885, he must be ineligible now. Their way of putting the argument is even more edifying than the argument itself. They describe Mr Davitt as "disqualified by a vote of the House of Commons." They might as well say that he was disqualified by a vote of the Ulster Convention, for the House of Commons has no more power to disqualify anybody than, as Sir Fletcher Norton elegantly put it, "so many drunken porters." Mr Davitt used himself, it is believed, to feel scruples about taking the oath of allegiance to the British Sovereign. But that was before Mr Gladstone had recognised the rights of the Irish people.

Mr Davitt's abilities as a speaker are of a very high order indeed. He is fluent, if anything too fluent. He is in deadly earnest. He is capable, when deeply moved, of genuine eloquence. In describing before the Special Commission the scenes of hardship and suffering which he had witnessed as a boy, he drew signs of rare emotion from the impassive countenance of Mr Parnell. Lord Hannon and his colleagues were delighted with Mr Davitt. No doubt, being a hostile tribunal, they relished his candid admissions—admissions so candid as to raise the question whether he would not have done better to retire from the case with Sir Charles Russell and the other counsel retained. But there was something about Mr Davitt's manly, straightforward appearance in the witness box which favourably impressed even the most bigoted Coercionist. It would probably not be denied by Mr Davitt's warmest admirers that he was anxious to vindicate his position as the real founder and originator of the Land League. A man who has been three times imprisoned for his political faith can afford to be self-assertive without dreading the charge of egotism; and certainly it would be the height of absurdity, and the depth of imbecility, to accuse Mr Davitt of undue personal ambition. More than almost any other Irishman, he has toiled for the advancement and regeneration of the working classes. In pleading for the farmers he did not forget the artisans, and his relations with the Labour party in England are very close. The doctrines of Mr Henry George which he professes, or at least professed, have not been made popular in Ireland, even by him. The Irish peasant is an individualist to the backbone. But as editor of *The Labour World* he has acquired a good deal of power among the class which lives by weekly wages on this side St George's Channel, and his most recent speeches have urged his countrymen to co-operate in obtaining social reforms for Great Britain. Two of Mr Davitt's phrases have become commonplaces of the Irish controversy. One contains the famous image of the "wolf-dog of Irish vengeance bounding across the Atlantic," which was at the time he used it as accurate as it was vivid. The other introduced the familiar simile of breakfast, dinner, and supper, which gave the Tories an occasion for saying that Mr Davitt at all events did not regard Home Rule as final. But when the context came to be examined, the disestablishment of the Irish Church appeared to be Mr Davitt's idea of breakfast, and the Land Acts had supplied his dinner, leaving the programme to be completed by a supper of Home Rule.

Mr Davitt's recollection goes back almost to the great famine and probably covers the cruel evictions which followed it. He exemplifies the truth of John Bright's familiar saying that the people of Ireland were anxious to cross the 3000 miles of ocean and join hands with the great Republic of the West. His parents emigrated to the United States in his early youth, and his own ways of thought are in many respects more American than Irish. As a thorough Radical, however, he is quite at home among the British Democracy, and a very popular speaker on English platforms. It would be important that Mr Davitt should be in Parliament even if he did not succeed there. For he is a thoroughly representative man, and no body else could exactly fill his place. It is quite true, as Mr Lecky says, that in the time of O'Connell and ever since Irish Members have given valuable assistance to the cause of progress and reform. It is also true that closer intercourse with America has made Ireland more Democratic than she used to be. But still Mr Davitt does not belong to any ordinary type of Irish Nationalist. He is more of a philosopher and a theorist, less conventional and provincial, than most of his colleagues. It is a wonderful thing, which may well make the comfortable classes ashamed of themselves, that a man kept for years in what the Lord Chief Justice of England has called a state of slavery, should have employed the years of his punishment and seclusion, not in indulging bitterness and planning vengeance, but in thinking out schemes for the use and benefit of his fellow countrymen. Mr Davitt's published account of his life and experience in prison is full of strange and painful interest. The jury who found him guilty were probably right on the evidence, and Sir Alexander Cockburn, who sentenced him, was by no means a vindictive judge. When Sir William Harcourt, as Home Secretary, revoked Mr Davitt's licence in 1881, he very sensibly and humanely directed that Mr Davitt should be treated as a first-class misdemeanant. It would have been a thousand times better, though quite without precedent, if either the Judge himself or Lord Aberdare, who was then at the Home Office, had given such a direction in 1870. Countries far behind Great Britain in many of the things which make up civilization