

THE CANADIAN BAR REVIEW

VOL. II.

TORONTO, APRIL, 1924.

No. 4

WILLIAM HUME BLAKE, K.C.

A lawyer, a golfer, a fisherman and woodsman, a man of letters, deeply interested in the affairs of the country and particularly in our French-Canadian compatriots, but above all a genial and loyal friend—such was “Billy Blake,” otherwise William Hume Blake, K.C., son of the Honourable S. H. Blake, as I knew him.

Born in November, 1861, after attending Upper Canada College and Dr. Tassie's school at Galt he graduated from University College in 1882, was called to the Bar in 1885 and was made a K.C. in 1902. After his retirement from the Bar he devoted himself to literary work, and his “Brown Waters” and admirable translation of Louis Hémon's “Maria Chapdelaine” have achieved for him great literary distinction abroad as well as at home. He died suddenly on the golf links at Victoria, B.C., on the 5th February last, and rests in the little churchyard at his beloved Murray Bay, Quebec.

From 1887 until his death it was my good fortune to know him in all his various spheres of activity and to enjoy his friendship. I cannot say whether I admired most his ability as an advocate, his charm as a writer, his skill as a fisherman or the dogged “will to win” that made him a formidable opponent at golf and a staunch partner in a foursome. To him perhaps more than to any other one person was due that spirit of camaraderie which characterized the membership of the old Toronto Golf Club, of which he was one of the charter members.

The period of Blake's career at law extended from his call in 1883 till about 1909, when he retired from active practice. During that time he was largely though not exclusively engaged in agency and counsel work at Osgoode Hall. His confreres in that branch were Mr. Justice Middleton, Douglas Armour, K.C. (now of Vancouver, B.C.), the late Wm. Douglas, K.C., the late John H. Moss, K.C., and myself. It is no exaggeration to say that each member of that group entertained for the legal ability and fairness of the others the most absolute respect, and for the individuals personally a sin-

cere regard. No better training school for young lawyers will ever exist at Osgoode Hall than the Chambers of the late Master R. G. Dalton, K.C., whom we all revered and loved, and in whose Chambers much of our work was done. In the battles of those days Blake was especially distinguished, not merely by his accurate knowledge of the rules of practice and cases, but also by the precision of his language, the lucidity of his arguments and the clearness of enunciation that always characterized his spoken word. It would be impossible to recall Blake as ever mumbling his argument. Would that more of his successors would imitate his example.

From an early age his summers were spent in Murray Bay, in the Province of Quebec, and his regard for our French-Canadian compatriots might be said to have been literally in-born. Intimately familiar as he was with their language, character and habits, that regard seemed steadily to increase as the years went by, and if the French-Canadian has any weaknesses Blake was blind to them. It naturally followed that he was equally appreciated by them, as was testified during his life and by the great sorrowing procession of French-Canadian friends who assembled to pay their last respects at his burial. Though a Canadian Irishman, whose home was Ontario, his heart was always among the woods and rivers of Quebec and with the unspoiled natives of that Province. To me at least he seemed the most complete embodiment of the *Bonne Entente*, though with a slight leaning to the French side.

He never mentioned the matter to me, but I have been told that it was a disappointment in his life that circumstances never fell out so as to permit his representing a French constituency in the House of Commons.

Like a true Irishman he was usually by preference "agin the government" and the majority; his sympathies going naturally with the weaker side.

Until he was gone few of us I fancy realized how large a place he filled in the lives of his friends. To some of the members of the narrowing circle to which he belonged in the eighties his passing will bring to mind the lines of Moore—

When I remember all
The friends so linked together
I've seen around me fall
Like leaves in wintry weather,
I feel like one
Who treads alone
Some banquet hall deserted.

I cannot better conclude this brief sketch than by quoting and applying to himself Blake's own words in the appreciation he wrote some two or three years ago of our mutual friend Jack Moss.

"Some faint memory have I of an old writer who pictures the children of men as little images hanging some high, some low, above a sullen pool. A thread is cut, an image falls, the ripple spreads; or high or low it soon dies upon the face of the unrecording water. Ay, but here it has touched many lives—touched and brought them that with which they will not readily part."

Surely the memory of "Billy Blake" and all he was shall long endure.

C. A. MASTEN.

Toronto.

DIPLOMACY AND INTERNATIONAL STATUS.

No man can spend even a few years in the law school of any Canadian university without becoming painfully conscious of the difficulty of interesting more than a small handful of students in such subjects as constitutional law and public international law. Their down-town advisers warn them solemnly against spending too much time upon subjects which are "not practical," by which is meant that they are not a direct source of income in the office. Even using the word in this narrow sense it may well be doubted whether these old-fashioned practitioners are right, since the experience of countries other than Canada has by now proved fairly clearly that the most successful practitioners are usually also the best educated men. If we give to the word "practical" a broader and a truer meaning, it is manifest that the intelligent study of these subjects has a most direct practical bearing upon the "peace, order, and good government of Canada." Furthermore, the rapid international development of this country has now disclosed to us another practical result of our long continued neglect of cultural legal study. We are venturing into the difficult field of diplomacy, and we find that we are almost wholly lacking in that class of specially qualified lawyers who in all older countries are deemed indispensable to the intelligent handling of international business.

The public discussion of the treaty-making power in the popular press has become involved in such confusion, and has been clouded with so much political and sentimental irrelevance, that it seems permissible to use the pages of a learned review for an effort to set