

and the tone of the two reviews differed greatly.

One more reminiscence out of that now somewhat distant time and I have done. One of my articles for the *Nation* dealt with a translation of one of the airiest of Greek authors, admirably done with a feminine deftness few men can equal. The translation bore a woman's name, but I protested against the uncertainty in which the reviewer was left because of the failure to indicate whether the translatrix was maid or wife. Certain risky passages of the original were rendered with an uncanny dexterity that left a Grecian in doubt whether the happy result was due to intimate knowledge or rare good luck; and in the absence of personal information I could only guess at the solution of the perilous egg-dance. Some years afterwards I met the translatrix, who at once taxed me with the authorship of the review. Finally she said: "I am grateful to you for attacking my morals, of which I am positively certain, and sparing my Greek, of which I am not so confident." This is one of the many by-products of my work for the *Nation*. I only wish that these reminiscences were worthier of the honor the editor has done me in associating my name with the earlier stages of the high career of the *Nation* as an organ of independent criticism—literary as well as political.

## An English Scholar's Appreciation of Godkin

By A. V. DICEY.

Forty-five years have passed since I wrote my first article for the *Nation*. One of the happiest results to myself of my connection with that paper was the creation of a friendship with E. L. Godkin which remained undisturbed to the day of his death. I will not, however, write of my personal reminiscences. My wish is to dwell wholly on my estimate of Godkin's work and on the causes which made him one of the most successful and influential of newspaper editors. Such an appreciation of the career of a very remarkable man may have some interest for the readers of the *Nation*, just because it proceeds from an Englishman, who must from the very nature of things have stood outside American politics. My deep respect and affection for Godkin provides some security that I shall speak of the first editor of the *Nation* in that spirit of perfect sincerity which was one of Godkin's many high qualities and was a virtue which he expected to find in every contributor to the pages of his newspaper.

No critic of Godkin's work can fail to be struck with its extraordinary success and with the many circumstances which, in 1865, seemed to make it all but certain that his attempt to create at New York a newspaper which should be perfectly independent of any political party, and which should within the course of a few years make its

editor a leader of public opinion throughout the United States, would end in complete and rapid failure. Yet the undeniable results of his effort may be thus summed up: Godkin, aided, as he would have been the first to tell you, by allies of high intellectual power and of great energy, created a weekly newspaper which certainly stood on a level with and, as some Englishmen would say, rose above the best weekly journal to be found, during the Victorian era, in London, or indeed in any part of the British Empire. Year by year, the influence of the *Nation* extended far and wide. One has often heard it said that, wherever throughout the United States there existed a college, however small, there you were certain to find at least one copy of the *Nation*, and wherever the *Nation* was read, there Godkin was sure to exert influence. He aroused either firm faith or strenuous opposition. He never failed to arouse discussion. His words were certain to tell upon opinion. The editor of the *Nation* had, before sixteen years had passed, become a power in the land.

The obstacles which seemed to make the attainment by Godkin of moral authority among the men who were fifty years ago the youth of America an impossibility were many and formidable. He had indeed lived and worked for some years in the United States. He had obtained the warm friendship of some among the wisest of American citizens. He was in 1865 already known to a limited circle of acquaintance as an effective writer in English newspapers. But to ordinary American citizens he was a stranger. He had but recently been an alien. He was not the representative of any one American party. The *Nation* itself could not from the nature of things possess any of that prestige which in England at any rate has, at different periods, belonged to an established newspaper, and notably to the London *Times*, between, say, 1853 and 1865. Then, again, Godkin pretty rapidly acquired a sort of personal authority differing in kind from the influence which has occasionally been gained by a powerful English newspaper. The impressive "we" of the English periodical press has a real meaning. It is the outward and visible sign of a mystery almost as curious as some of the important fictions, or semi-fictions, of the British Constitution. It signifies that the power of a successful English newspaper belongs to the paper, and one supposes ultimately to its owners, rather than to its editor. As time passes and memoirs or letters reveal the secrets of the past, we come gradually to know that the editors of the *Times* have at certain crises influenced to no small degree the course of English politics. But this fact has been combined and even connected with the ignorance of the readers of newspapers of the name and the character of the man by whom a paper is edited. Any one who carries his memory back to 1865 will recollect that not one in a thousand of its readers at that date knew or cared to know

who was the editor of the renowned periodical. Editors came and went, but these changes were not known to the public. The public were guided, or thought they were guided, by the impressive "we" who uttered to the public the current public thought of the day.

The editor of the New York *Nation* at the same date was known and felt to be Godkin. His followers knew who was their leader; his opponents had not the least doubt who was the foe by whom their follies, errors, or crimes were denounced. Then, again, Godkin was by nature a fighter. He thoroughly liked a fight. He fought for good causes, but when he fought he struck hard and gave very telling blows. It is impossible that such a man should not arouse vigorous opposition, but the difficulties of the contests in which Godkin was engaged were increased by the fact that he was often opposed to popular sentiment, which he was apt, often quite rightly, to identify with popular folly; and then, too, the wholeheartedness with which he fought in favor of any principle which commanded his intellectual and moral assent occasionally led him to confound adherents who, either from wrongheadedness or under the unconscious bias of self-interest, failed in strict adherence to a true principle, with fools or knaves who opposed a cause which they knew in their hearts to be good. It is in reality the plain truth, though it is a truth which Godkin's success itself conceals from critics who have never studied with care the conditions under which Godkin in 1865 founded the *Nation*, that his success as an editor appeared to his friends and to himself to be doubtful, and was achieved in the face of great and, it seemed, all but insuperable obstacles.

What, then, were the causes of his success? One cause was the possession by Godkin of certain definite talents. He was endowed by nature with all the gifts of a pamphleteer, and these he had improved by the whole course of his education and life. He possessed a clear and vigorous style, and his power of expression was the natural result of his mode of thought. He reasoned logically and delighted in coming to sound and practical conclusions. Vague ideas and vague ideals were intellectually and morally repulsive to him. He had early perceived that vagueness of thought led to unwise conduct, and vagueness of expression might often cover courses of action which were morally ambiguous. He used fair and vigorous argument for the confutation of fallacies relied upon by political adventurers, and for the exposure of the follies into which selfish leaders may conduct an ignorant or an enthusiastic people. And he constantly attained his end. His power, further, of reasoning was set off by great command of language. He had, indeed, made himself a true man of letters, who, by the way, ought never to be confounded with that very inferior person, a literary man. He was no ardent admirer of journalism. He has warned the Ameri-

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can public that newspaper reading is apt to be the death of the taste for reading books.

A little study of Godkin's writings is quite enough to prove that his knowledge of the matters on which he wrote, in so far as it did not arise from his observation of life, was due to the careful perusal of books, and of good books. Then he had a talent absolutely essential to the success of a pamphleteer. It is the gift of "appositeness," or, in other words, a writer's habit of interesting himself in the matters which are passing before every one's eyes, and which at a given moment occupy the thoughts of his neighbors. It will be found that men of considerable intellectual power are sometimes disqualified from gaining influence as pamphleteers or journalists, because such men have a tendency to turn their minds at a given moment towards subjects which, whether important or not, have no interest for the ordinary public or the so-called general reader. An illustration best shows the nature of this error. Vain, indeed, would be the labors of a man who in this year 1915 addressed the English public about woman suffrage or proportional representation. Englishmen who care about the conduct of public affairs are thinking about the war, and nothing but the war, and probably they are right in turning away their minds from every subject not connected with the conduct of the war. But whether they are wrong or right, no born journalist will ever waste his skill in trying to force upon the English world topics to which that world will pay no attention. It was one proof of Godkin's genial nature and common-sense that he always brought his powers of thought and his capacity for lucid exposition to the examination of questions which at a given moment both concerned and interested the citizens of the United States.

But let no one suppose that the gifts of a pamphleteer are enough to insure his success as a leader of opinion. Cobbett was at one moment the leading journalist or pamphleteer of his day. He possessed shrewd sense, homespun eloquence, and independence of judgment. He is still credited by admirers with a genuine interest in the welfare of the poor. But as a leader of public opinion his career was a failure. He lacked the virtues which in England, as in America, transformed an active agitator into a trusted leader of men.

The second cause of Godkin's success was of a quality which, where it exists, every man perceives, but very few of us can define. It is best described by the term "character." Instead of attempting definition, I propose to enumerate some few of the traits by which Godkin convinced all men of sound judgment that the editor of the *Nation* was a man of character. From the very opening of his career as a journalist, and years before the *Nation* was founded, he had shown the capacity for acquiring the trust of every man who really knew him. Very soon after his arrival in the

United States he gained the esteem of a body of friends mostly connected with the University of Harvard, who formed the glory of Boston. It is hardly an exaggeration to say that the *Nation* was originally created in order that the men who trusted Godkin might find for him a field in which his genius could be best employed for the advantage of the whole American commonwealth. It soon then became apparent that Godkin, besides his trustworthiness, was endowed with a gift which does not necessarily fall even to an able and a perfectly honest pamphleteer. Though he gained his influence by his pen, he was by nature a man of action as much as a man of letters. It may well be that an eminent writer and a man inspired with high public spirit is by nature nothing but a critic. Such a man may well play an important part in the formation of public opinion. He may warn the country against the acceptance of popular fallacies. He may denounce politicians who are undeserving of trust, but he will hardly be numbered among the leaders of a people or a party. Criticism, after all, for the most part, deals with negations. It warns men against errors; it does not tell them how to act on some critical occasion. Now, Godkin was no mere critic. His thought lay very near to action. He was a good adviser; he had the capacity for pointing out in a time of difficulty the right course of action. If he was once convinced, say, that a judge of New York was guilty of judicial misconduct, Godkin could never stop at exposing the offender's errors. Godkin was not satisfied till he had driven the corrupt judge from the office he disgraced. If a statesman was accused of conduct which morally unfitted him for high office, Godkin was certain to press the accusation home, and, until it was disposed of, was ready to move heaven and earth in order to prevent a political leader of fame and of influence from obtaining a position of which Godkin deemed him unworthy.

This capacity of making action the immediate result of thought is so closely connected with the highest statesmanship that admirers of Godkin may occasionally regret that he had not the opportunity of playing a direct part in the public life of the country whereof he ultimately became a citizen. It also suggests a last feature in Godkin's character and in his views of public life on which it is worth while to dwell with emphasis, just because it will hardly be noted, except by the body of men, now rapidly dying off, who have been, speaking broadly, Godkin's contemporaries. When he came to the United States, Godkin was a mid-Victorian who thoroughly shared and sympathized with the liberalism or radicalism which from, say, 1845 to 1880 colored the whole public life of the United Kingdom. And Godkin, be it remarked, accepted the political creed of the mid-Victorian era in its wisest and in its noblest form. He accepted the maxim then adopted by almost every Liberal that the object of rational

government should be the attainment of "peace, retrenchment, and reform." He was no pacifist. He sympathized, like most Liberals of the day, with the Crimean War, which was popularly held to be an attack on European despotism and certainly did facilitate the liberation and the unification of Italy. But he maintained throughout life that, though war might be sometimes a necessity, peace was the necessary condition of progressive improvement, and he has been heard to argue, not without force, that Roman success in war was at bottom grounded on the discipline imposed by severe training in the virtues of civil life.

Retrenchment, or the cutting down of unnecessary expenditure by the state, was to the best of my belief always with Godkin desirable, because the lightening of taxes both relieved the pressure of taxation upon the poorer classes and in effect increased the area of individual freedom. Reform, lastly, was with mid-Victorian Liberals, and certainly with Godkin, a matter of wider significance than any mere improvement in the constitution of Parliament. It meant the gradual, the considered, and therefore the effective, removal of every demonstrated evil which could be curable either by legislation or by the improvement of social habits or sentiments. It also was the rejection no less of the dull conservatism which aimed merely at keeping all things, or at any rate all things not absolutely evil, exactly as they were, than of the revolutionary schemes which, even if unconnected with lawless violence, assumed that even the best institutions existing in the civilized world ought to undergo a fundamental change. No one can doubt that Godkin, whose knowledge of life was wider and far more varied than that of many statesmen, and whose Irish birth and education had in many directions extended his sympathies, gave a very wide sense to reform. Still it is perfectly plain that, like a true mid-Victorian Liberal, he was neither an obstructive Conservative nor in any sense a revolutionist. He was in short a mid-Victorian reformer.

I shall be told, as all surviving mid-Victorians daily are told, that our political creed was a narrow one. Personally I am not prepared to plead guilty to this charge. I venture absolutely to deny its truth as regards Godkin. In him at least were strongly developed two virtues which will ultimately be admitted to be characteristics of the Victorian age. The one was the stern belief that reform, and constant reform, was the law of progress, and that reform must be based upon the dictates of enlightened common-sense. The other was an intense hatred of injustice, and especially of injustice which, being committed by mobs, is the odious parody of judicial punishment. Godkin at any rate might at all times use the words to be found somewhere in the works of the wittiest as well as the most sensible of English pamphleteers: "I am an enthusiast for common-sense; I am a fanatic for common justice."

## The "Nation" and Its Ownership

By OSWALD GARRISON VILLARD.

At the outset let it be said that into no journalistic enterprise did ever commercial considerations enter less than into the launching of the *Nation*. It was not, and never has been, in the *Nation's* half-century of existence, a question of profits, but of presenting certain definite literary, political, and social ideals and of urging them with all the power of righteous, patriotic purpose as expressed by such able pens as Mr. Godkin's and those of a long list of brilliant contributors, on both sides of the Atlantic. It is true that when J. Miller McKim, the Philadelphia Abolitionist, father of a son, Charles F. McKim, whose genius will never be forgotten in the history of art and architecture in America, gave the final impetus which made it possible for the new venture to take its initial plunge into the literary ocean, his prospective son-in-law, Wendell Phillips Garrison, was ready for a position as executive officer of the new craft. But what Mr. McKim and his associates wanted was primarily an organ to fight on for the principles which underlay the long and successful struggle for freedom in America.

The *Liberator*, a militant organ for a specific purpose, had ceased publication on December 29, 1865; the *Nation*, with a younger Garrison, fresh from Harvard and his service on the *Observer* and *Independent*, was to busy itself, second only to "the maintenance and diffusion of true democratic principles in society and government," with the "earnest and persistent consideration of the condition of the laboring class at the South . . . with a view to the removal of all artificial distinction between them and the rest of the population, and the securing to them, as far as education and justice can do it, of an equal chance in the race for life." The Federal Government was content to free and enfranchise the blacks, to scratch the surface of their material and educational needs by the Freedmen's Aid Bureau and schools—and then to turn them adrift and let them sink or swim, survive or perish, as best they might. Whatever else may be said of the *Nation*, no one can deny that it has never lost its interest in this still vital problem, or failed to devote much space to the championship of the least understood and the worst treated of our fellow-citizens.

As Mr. Rollo Ogden has pointed out in his life of Mr. Godkin, it was not an easy task to carry on the *Nation* under the ownership of the group of forty men who supplied the first \$100,000 of capital. With the chief stockholder, Major George L. Stearns, Mr. Godkin soon had serious but needless trouble, involving groundless charges of bad faith or worse. At the end of the first year the bulk of the capital had disappeared, despite a considerable revenue from advertising and subscriptions, and a reorganization followed, with "virtual liquidation." To the

original Nation Association there succeeded E. L. Godkin & Co., which comprised some of the original stockholders, others being bought out. Thereafter the new craft remained afloat, but always in rough waters from the business point of view. While it started off with 5,000 readers and grew with considerable rapidity thereafter, it made a fortune for no one, at best assuring a comfortable living to its small staff of editors and employees.

This was partly due to the difficulties inherent in the problem of maintaining a weekly entirely without popular appeal and conducted upon the very highest standards of literary taste and sound scholarship, and partly to the fact that neither Mr. Godkin nor Mr. Garrison was deeply interested in the business side. Indeed, when the *Nation* was amalgamated with the New York *Evening Post*, Mr. Godkin's interest in the financial success of the enterprise faded away almost entirely. His like as a brilliant and sound and farseeing leader writer we are not likely to behold again; but his very qualities and the bent of his mind precluded his being both a great editor and a great publisher. The combination, if not an impossible one, is of the rarest. The same was also true of Mr. Garrison, whose absorption in the weekly grind of editing left no room for concern as to the business management of the *Nation*, which never attracted to itself a business manager commensurate with the ability of its original editors. When E. L. Godkin & Co. sold out in 1881, the *Nation* had receded from the high-water mark of its chief success—a subscription list and weekly sales aggregating 12,000—and was again in difficulties. Since then, under the shelter of the *Evening Post*, it has gone its way calmly and equably, attracting of late years a steadily widening readership, until it is in most respects stronger to-day than ever before.

To both Mr. Godkin and Mr. Garrison financial profits could naturally make no appeal. Their lives were devoted to things spiritual and intellectual; their rich rewards came in the appreciation and gratitude of men of light and leading, which was theirs in the beginning and in the end, and in the consciousness that they had profoundly influenced the thought and conscience of their time. That was the success they aimed at—to make the *Nation* the monitor and the mouthpiece of intellectual America, and in this they succeeded. The high praise early won by them from such men as Charles Eliot Norton, James Russell Lowell, Whittier, and Longfellow, George P. Marsh, Charles W. Eliot, and a host of others in America and England, particularly in the academic world, compensated them richly for much abuse and misunderstanding, of which perhaps the most trying was the oft-repeated charge that because they criticised America in order to help her, they were thereby disloyal Americans. Never were there more single-minded and devoted patriots than these, nor men who more ardently clung to and cherished and upheld every fundamental democratic doctrine which underlies our institutions and our organic law.

With the *Nation* again nearing a lee shore, there came to its rescue in 1881 Henry Villard, another loyal American. A native of Germany, the fervor for republican institutions which animated him was partly inborn and partly due to the German idealism of 1848—so different from that controlling the Germany of to-day. Himself a reporter and war correspondent of twenty years' experience, he had long cherished the idea of establishing a great daily which should be perfectly free to speak the truth and be independent politically, as were then but one or two journals of the day—so slavishly worn were the bonds of party. An extraordinarily rapid success in the business world made possible the carrying out of this plan by the purchase of the *Evening Post* and of the *Nation*, and the combining of both, with the *Nation* somewhat in the position of the weekly edition of the *Evening Post*—a condition not now obtaining, since the *Nation* is again developing along its own lines. This afforded Mr. Villard the additional satisfaction of providing editorial positions for Mr. Godkin and for his warm personal friends, Carl Schurz and Horace White, as well as assuring to his brother-in-law, Mr. Garrison, the control of the *Nation*. With Mr. Godkin's advancement within a year to the position of editor-in-chief of the *Evening Post*, Mr. Schurz retiring, Mr. Garrison became the editor and the soul of the *Nation*. From 1881 until his retirement the *Nation* was precisely what Mr. Garrison thought it should be, both on the editorial and the business side, and no man ever gave his life more happily, more earnestly, or more completely, to the object of his daily labors.

It is true that both newspapers suffered on the business side from the self-abnegation of Mr. Villard, who placed the control of both publications entirely in the hands of the editors. When his advice was sought he gave it freely, but had the properties had the benefit of his close personal supervision and of that unusual news instinct which made him so distinguished a war correspondent, and also the aid of his sagacious business judgment, both must have profited greatly. Mr. Garrison, it goes without saying, was as free in his editorial chair as if he owned every dollar of stock of the *Nation*. His was an enviable position in that he had all the privileges of ownership and none of the responsibility. Few editors have been as completely free from the harassments of the business office or as able to speak their minds about anything and anybody, precisely as they saw fit without the slightest regard for any consequences. If this was a rare privilege it is on record in the words of the many friends and contributors who gave him so handsome a testimonial on his retirement in July, 1906, that he knew how to live up to it, to preserve it from abuse, and to honor it.

As to the future, it can only be said that as long as the present ownership continues, the *Nation* on its business side will be conducted in strictest conformity to the standards and ideals of Wendell Phillips Garrison and Henry Villard.