

## THE REDMONDS.

THE following letter was written by the Rev. Father Ahern in reply to an article in the *Waipapa Mail*. We supply in parenthesis a passage or two left out by the paper alluded to.

Sir,—Seeing that, in last Friday's issue of the *Mail*, you have poured out the vials of your wrath upon Mr. Redmond and upon the Irish generally, I trust you will have the courtesy to accept a few words which I offer in reply. Finding the editorial to which I allude exceptionally bitter (even for a paper sorely afflicted with the malignant disease of Hibernophobia), I resolved to analyse it with a view to find out whether or not it contained any trace of benevolence. And happy I am, sir, to be able to state that my trouble is not wholly unrewarded; for I have found two or three items of goodwill which appear amongst the profusion of bitterness like a trace of honey in a pool of gall. And although the value of these items does not amount to any percentage worth the trouble of calculation, yet as I am disposed to look first at the pleasant aspect of things and leave the worst for last, I will commence with your benevolence.

The first item of goodwill for which I deem it my duty to thank you is a lesson in geography, which, I must acknowledge, it was very charitable of you to give, because we Irishmen, being a poor benighted lot of people, must be ignorant of geography as well as of everything else. When Mr. Bromby was going about here, we all knew from advertisements extensively circulated at the time, that he was lecturing for the benefit of a cathedral situated at a place called Hobart, and which must be a town, or perhaps a city now, for they say it was formerly called Hobart Town. But I suppose we might go down to our graves in dense ignorance of the fact that this Hobart cathedral is located in Queensland if you had not informed us that such is really the case. Many, many thanks! Your next favour is a lesson in genealogy, in which you inform us that Mr. Bromby is "of the same nationality" as Mr. Redmond, that is to say, an Irishman. Well now, sir, this is really a conclusion to which our very limited knowledge of dialectics would never have brought us, because we are well aware that Mr. Bromby was not born in Ireland, and furthermore, that his genealogy as far as we can trace it, does not claim an Irish ancestry for him. But from these trifling premises I do not presume to hint that you are wrong, because, from the cleverness you display in the two foregoing lessons, you are evidently able to prove that black is white, or that two and two make five, or any other one of these strange propositions which we unsophisticated Irish people have always regarded as absurdities.

Next, you bear willing (or unwilling) testimony to many of Mr. Redmond's good qualities, which, however, Mr. Redmond ought not to possess, because they evidently displease you. Let me say a passing word on these good qualities. First of all you say "Mr. Redmond does not trade upon half-slumbering race antipathies and prejudices." Ah! sir, there is the mischievous f of him. Would it not be more to the purpose if he used his fiery eloquence in drawing graphic and glowing pictures of wholesale slaughters of helpless innocent Irish women and children by British soldiers, such for instance as were committed by them at Drogheda or Wexford. Oh! how our Colonial Press could hound Mr. Redmond out of the Southern Hemisphere if he would only oblige us by doing something of this kind. Secondly, you tell us "He does not attempt to stir up the passions of his audience by highly-coloured or altogether apocryphal narratives of wrongs and tyrannies of bygone ages with about as much bearing on present day interests as the atrocities of the siege of Jerusalem." There is the perversity of Redmond again. What right has he to possess the common sense of combating existing evils instead of brooding over the sufferings of by-gone generations, as he ought to do, so as to make a fool of himself and give us a good laugh at his blunders? Would it not be more edifying on his part to give us a lecture on the cruelty of Titus and his army, and the dreadful famine which they caused in Jerusalem—a famine which has no parallel amongst famines created by the wickedness of men, except the famines which English armies have created in Ireland, often reducing wretched mothers to the unnatural and inhuman extremity of eating the flesh of the emaciated bodies of their own children who had died before their eyes in the prolonged agony of starvation. This sort of horror is quoted in history as the climax of the misery brought upon Jerusalem, and thus it happens that your allusion to that unfortunate city, though far-fetched, is not so inapt an illustration of Ireland's woes as you may have supposed. It would indeed be less embarrassing to the "prejudices and race antipathies" of our British colonials who wish to pose before the world as champions of constitutional freedom—much less embarrassing and awkward, if Mr. Redmond would talk of some siege which took place about 1800 years ago rather than the present siege to which his race and kinsmen are now subjected in Ireland. This is no figure of speech. Disguise it as you may, Ireland is at present groaning under a tyranny more galling and oppressive than the despotism of the Russian Czar. Constitutional liberty is known there only by the existence of its contrary. Arbitrary imprisonment without accusation or trial has become the order of the day, and all the more sacred rights of the people which were (theoretically) secured by the Great Charter, and are supposed to be, inviolable are constantly and shamelessly trampled upon by the Government. What a delightful thing it is for Britons to sing "Britons never, never shall be slaves" while they are carrying on this sort of thing.

But the present misgovernment of Ireland is a matter which ought to be left entirely in the dark, and no light should be shed upon it at all. We ought to keep the skeleton well hidden in the closet, so that we may be able to give all our attention to the Careys, the dynamiters, and all the other unsavory but natural fruits of misgovernment which are cropping up abundantly in Ireland, and which must always flourish in every country where despotic injustice is supported by the brute force of the bayonet. To hide all the iniquities of misgovernment which produce these results, and to attribute the undesirable results to some other than the true cause is the aim of many editors whose mental vision is distorted by "race antipathies and prejudices." Let me say a few words more about Redmond. Is it not a most wicked machination on his part to make

a speech which, according to your own account, is "singularly unobjectionable," and thus leave our loyal colonial Press no way of attacking him except by calling nicknames, such as "sturdy beggar" or "circus man"? And hereupon I say, all honor to Mr. Redmond if he has taken upon himself the opprobrium of beggary for his country's sake. All honor to him if he tread unflinchingly and successfully in the footsteps of his great prototype Daniel O'Connell, whom the enemies of Ireland nicknamed and reviled as "the big beggar-man." I think I cannot wish Mr. Redmond any higher or more noble measure of fame than by desiring that he may become another "big-beggar man" equal to Daniel O'Connell. The humane and patriotic portion of mankind will for ever honor the men who take upon their own persons the misery and suffering of their country, in order that they may thus lighten her burden and give her whatever relief they are able to afford. In doing this, as far as human weakness can copy a divine model, they imitate the Saviour of mankind who took upon himself the weakness and sufferings of our poor human nature in order to save us from eternal misery.

You say you cannot believe in the sincerity of the moderation and reasonableness of Mr. Redmond's expressed sentiments; and you give as the reason of your distrust that, as far as you know, he has not challenged the correctness of the report of a speech of his at home in which he advocated the absolute independence of Ireland, etc.

Well, sir, in making so grave a charge as that of insincerity against an honorable and distinguished gentleman like Mr. Redmond, you ought in all fairness to give some definite grounds for the charge. But to make such a charge upon the strength (or rather the weakness) of mere vague hazy hearsay is, I submit, scarcely consistent with honorable journalism. You say virtually that some newspaper, published somewhere, stated sometime, on the authority of somebody (perhaps a nobody), that Mr. Redmond on some occasion, at a place unknown, advocated the absolute independence of Ireland; and therefore we are not to believe Mr. Redmond when he speaks for himself and when we find his expressed sentiments are "moderate and reasonable"—in fact, "singularly unobjectionable." I don't know any standard criterion of truth by which this erratic process of reasoning can be justified. I believe it is wholly inexplicable unless we venture on the hypothesis that editors are sometimes capable of being guided more by "race antipathies and prejudices" than by common sense.

You assert broadly and unjustifiably that "the exact destination and application of the funds thus collected" (i.e. by Bromby and Redmond) "is unknown." Sir, this assertion is another "leap in the dark." The destination and application of the money is well and satisfactorily known to those who contributed it, and as long as these are satisfied, your kind solicitude, lest it may be misapplied, is a great waste of your good nature. But how comes it, sir, that, while you exhibit so much concern for the money freely given to Bromby and Redmond in accordance with the most noble promptings of religion and patriotism, and while you deplore it as a "dead loss to the Colony," you have not a syllable of regret to offer over the many thousands of pounds which the Irish people of these colonies are forced to send home every year to protect their parents and other relations from being thrown out on the roads by the myrmidons of so-called British law, there to perish as many have perished, from cold, hunger, and famine fever. Nor are we at a loss to know what becomes of our hard-earned money after it has purchased for our friends another half-year's respite from the cruel fate with which the merciless agent of your British absentee landlord constantly and remorselessly threatens them. After the red-handed agent has taken his percentage (veritable blood-money) out of it, it then goes to support in a style of royal magnificence a horde of vampire sybarites, a large proportion of whom dwell in the gilded palaces of questionable repute which are numerous in London and Paris.

It is a very great mistake to suppose that the oppression of the Irish land system is confined to Ireland. The five millions of Irish people who live in the United States, as well as the many thousands who live in these southern colonies are heavily mulcted every year for the support of Irish landlords, and they suffer from the oppression of these gourmands in a degree second only to that suffered by the Irish at home. The bankers of America and Australasia can tell of the vast sums of money which the hard-working Irish send home every year to save their poor friends from the ruin which is always threatening them, and often callously executed. Thus the landlord extorts not only the last shilling he can wranch from the unfortunates who are completely at his mercy, but also the last dime or cent which his exactions can compel his victims to beg from their friends in America and Australasia. Now, sir, we want to get rid of this horrid incubus which tortures our race at home and abroad, and feeds on our blood and sweat as a devil-fish strangles and feeds upon its victim. If you seek the true explanation of our reason for contributing freely of our hard-earned money for the purpose of wiping out this paragon of iniquities, you have it here, and you need no longer torture your brain in vain endeavours to solve the problem with your morbid dreams about bonanza sweeps and circus-riders.

Finally, since Mr. Redmond with all his "eloquence," "moderation," "reasonableness" and "singular unobjectionableness," has not satisfied you, let us hope that the Irish at Home may be more accommodating the next time they send a representative to these shores, and that they will select a stammering idiot who will possess the faculty of spluttering out fiery absurdities by the thousand, and who will meantime, brandish a Phoenix Park knife with one hand while he swings a lump of dynamite with the other. This is the sort of an Irish representative that will suit your journalistic requirements to perfection.—I am etc.,

J. L. AHERN  
St. Patrick's Presbytery, October 30, 1883.

[We do not care to provoke Rev. Mr. Ahern into writing another long letter, and will therefore let his statements pass without editorial comment. We will at all times allow correspondents the use of our open columns to ventilate any public question, but their remarks must be confined within reasonable space.—ED. W. M.]

[How considerate of Rev. Mr. Ahern's time and temper is our editor.—Has he by chance heard the saying "let sleeping dogs lie"?—ED. N. Z. TABLET.]