

a certain ecstatic sacramental union between him and them. He had become known and strangely beloved by the young men; and the greatest marvel of all to him was to discover that the electricity which supplied his verses seemed to have flowed into the veins and muscles of his hand, so that he shook hands with a strange trembling sense of giving and receiving joy. One wrapt in such a Mahomet-vision, and with the patient face of Noble Nolan plantively awaiting at his elbow the leaves of his Koran as they were struck off, had not much attention to spare for the packing of chairs and bedsteads at the Mill—especially within a few days of the Revolution which was to right all by upsetting all—though once captured by his mother and chained to the work, nobody was so expert as Ken in picking wooden bedsteads to pieces, and whisking the old mahogany legs with the brass castors from under Katie's coffin-like pianoforte, and coaxing the unwieldy musical coffin itself past sharp edges of the stairs and through impossible doors.

(To be continued.)

The Story of Ireland

(By A. M. SULLIVAN.)

LXXXVII.—How Some Irishmen Took to "The Politics of Despair." How England's Revolutionary Teachings "Came Home to Roost." How General John O'Neill Gave Colonel Booker a Touch of Fontenoy at Ridge-way.

All may deplore, but none can wonder, that under circumstances such as those, a considerable section of the Irish people should have lent a ready ear to "the politics of despair."

In vain the hero's heart had bled,
The sage's voice had warned in vain.

In the face of all the lessons of history they would conspire anew, and dream once more of grappling England on the battlefield!

They were in the mood to hearken to any proposal, no matter how wild; to dare any risk, no matter how great; to follow any man, no matter whom he might be, promising to lead them to vengeance. Such a proposal presented itself in the shape of a conspiracy, an oath-bound secret society, designated the "Fenian Brotherhood," which made its appearance about this time. The project was strenuously reprehended by every one of the "Forty-eight" leaders with scarcely an exception, and by the Catholic clergy universally; in other words, by every patriotic influence in Ireland not reft of reason by despair. The first leaders of the conspiracy were not men well recommended to Irish confidence, and in the venomous manner in which they assailed all who endeavored to dissuade the people from their plot, they showed that they had not only copied the forms, but imbibed the spirit of the continental secret societies. But the maddened people were ready to follow and worship any leader whose project gave a voice to the terrible passions surging in their breasts. They were ready to believe in him in the face of all warning, and at his bidding to distrust and denounce friends and guides whom, ordinarily, they would have followed to the death.

In simple truth the fatuous conduct of England had so prepared the soil and sown the seed, that the conspirator had but to step in and reap the crop. In 1843 she had answered to the people that their case would not be listened to. To the peaceful and amicable desire of Ireland to reason the questions at issue, England answered in the well-remembered words of the *Times*: "Repeal must not be argued with"—"If the Union were gall it must be maintained." In other words, England, unable to rely on the weight of any other argument, flung the sword into the scale, and cried out: "Vae Victis!"

In the same year she showed the Irish people that loyalty to the throne, respect for the laws, and reliance exclusively on moral force, did not avail to save them from violence. When O'Connell was dragged to gaol as a conspirator—a man notoriously the most loyal, peaceable, and law-respecting in the land—the people unhappily seemed to conclude that they might as well be real conspirators, for any distinction England would draw between Irishmen pleading the just cause of their country.

But there was yet a further reach of infatuation, and apparently England was resolved to leave no incitement unused in driving the Irish upon the policy of violence—

At the very time when the agents of the secret society of hate and hostility implacable.

were preaching to the Irish people the doctrines of revolution, the English press resounded with like teachings. The sovereign and her Ministers proclaimed them; parliament re-echoed them; England with unanimous voice shouted them aloud. The right, nay, the duty of a people considering themselves, or fancying themselves, oppressed, to conspire and revolt against their rulers—even native and legitimate rulers—was day by day thundered forth by the English journals. Yet more than this. The most blistering taunts were flung against peoples who, fancying themselves oppressed, hoped to be righted by any means save by conspiracy, revolt, war, bloodshed, eternal resistance and hostility. "Let all such peoples know," wrote the *Times*, "that liberty is a thing to be fought out with knives and swords and hatchets."

To be sure these general propositions were formulated for the express use of the Italians at the time. So utterly had England's anxiety to overthrow the Papacy blinded her, that she never once recollected that those incitements were being hearkened to by a hot-blooded and passionate people like the Irish. At the worst, however, she judged the Irish to be too completely cowed to dream of applying them to their own case. At the very moment when William Smith O'Brien was freely sacrificing or perilling his popularity in the endeavor to keep his countrymen from the revolutionary secret society, the *Times*—blind, stone-blind, to the state of the facts—blinded by intense national prejudice—assailed him truculently, as an antiquated traitor who could not get one man—not even one man—in all Ireland to share his "crazy dream" of national autonomy.

Alas! So much for England's ability to understand the Irish people! So much for her ignorance of a country which she insists on ruling!

Up to 1864 the Fenian enterprise—the absurd idea of challenging England (or rather accepting her challenge) to a war-duel—strenuously resisted by the Catholic clergy and other patriotic influences, made comparatively little headway in Ireland. In America, almost from the outset it secured large support. For England had filled the western continent with an Irish population burning for vengeance upon the power that had hunted them from their own land. On the termination of the great civil war of 1861-1864, a vast army of Irish soldiers, trained, disciplined, an d experienced—of valor proven on many a well-fought field, and each man willing to cross the globe a hundred times for "a blow at England"—were disengaged from service.

Suddenly the Irish revolutionary enterprise assumed in America a magnitude that startled and overwhelmed its originators. It was no longer the desperate following of an autocratic chief-conspirator, blindly bowing to his nod. It grew into the dimensions of a great national confederation with an army and a treasury at its disposal. The expansion in America was not without a corresponding effect in Ireland; but it was after all nothing proportionate. There was up to the last a fatuous amount of delusion maintained by the "Head Centre" on this side of the Atlantic, James Stephens, a man of marvellous subtlety and wondrous powers of plausible imposition; crafty, cunning, and quite unscrupulous as to the employment of means to an end. However, the army ready to hand in America, if not utilised at once, would soon be melted away and gone, like the snows of past winters. So in the middle of 1865 it was resolved to take the field in the approaching autumn.

It is hard to contemplate this decision or declaration, without deeming it either insincere or wicked on the part of the leader or leaders, who at the moment knew the real condition of affairs in Ireland. That the enrolled members, howsoever few, would respond when called upon, was certain at any time; for the Irish are not cowards; the men who joined this desperate enterprise were sure to prove themselves courageous, if not either prudent or wise. But the pretence of the revolutionary chief, that there was a force able to afford the merest chance of success, was too utterly false not to be plainly criminal.

(To be continued.)

E. S. Robson

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