

## STEPHEN JOSEPH MEANY.

Birth—Early Writings for the Press—Publishes a Volume of Poems at Sixteen—O'Connell's Reporter—Establishes the *Irish National Magazine*—In the Clubs—On the *Irish Tribune*—Brenan and Meany Test the Right of the Police to Sell the National Journals—Arrested under the Suspension of *Habeas Corpus*, 1848—Released—Journalism—Emigrates to the United States—Editor of the *Toledo Commercial*, Ohio—Centre—At the Third Congress—A Senator—Address to the Parent Trunk of Fenianism—Resolutions at Jones' Wood—Goes to England—Arrested—Tried for Treason—Felony—Fine Speech in the Dock—Exposes Overtures made to him to Betray the Fenians—Sentenced.

The case of Stephen Joseph Meany has attracted peculiar attention, and thrown light upon a public career of devotion to Ireland, which it is gratifying to record. On the National side of Irish politics from boyhood, Meany was up to every progressive movement which, in our day, lifted politics into the domain of patriotism. He does not now suffer for the first time for entering wisely and well into the agitations exposing the misgovernment of his country, or advocating measures to achieve her independence. In 1848, he shared the hopes and penalties of that brilliant band of poets, authors and journalists, whose writings, not less than their aspirations, chivalry and sufferings, were sufficient to make that year an ever-memorable epoch in the annals of Irish intellect and progress.

Stephen Joseph Meany was born at New Hall, near Ennis, County Clare, Ireland, in December, 1825. After preparatory studies, he adopted the profession of reporter and journalist, and became distinguished as a most capable short-hand writer when little more than fifteen years old. A vivacious and romantic intellect naturally found expression in poetry; and the kind reception given to some contributions to the *Clare Journal* and a Dublin weekly, bearing the signatures of "Abelard," "Werner," &c., induced the author to print a volume, which he did in 1842, with the title "Shreds of Fancy." This book, which was dedicated to Sir Michael O'Loughlin, Bart., Master of the Rolls, is in some respects remarkable, as evincing, not only a facility, but a felicity, in diction and versification, of more than usual maturity in one so young. The tender affections, of course, were the main inspiration of the youthful bard; but love of country found expression happily prophetic of the author's patriotic future. About the same time, young Meany published "The Terry Alt; a Tale of 1831," in three volumes, which necessarily

embraced illustrations of the state of the country.

During 1843-4, the era of the monster meetings, when O'Connell convened the people on Tara Hill, at Mullaghmast and Clontarf—bencos and battle-grounds of Irish glory and retribution—and inspired them with feelings never to be gratified by him, Meany was entrusted with the position of chief of the *Freeman's Journal* staff. His tact and facility in reproducing the "Liberator," caused him to be distinguished as "O'Connell's Reporter." The enthusiasm of his nature, not less than his literary leanings, as a matter of course, led the active journalist into the progressive ranks of the Young Ireland party. In 1847 he made a most laudable attempt to establish a first class weekly periodical, in Dublin, of the same character as *Chambers' Edinburgh Journal*. This publication, *The Irish National Magazine*, was in every way most creditable, but did not continue probably more than six months.

In 1848, Mr. Meany became an active propagandist in the Confederate Clubs, and soon entered still more prominently on the path of danger.

He became connected with the *Irish Tribune*\* as associate-editor and contributor, and at once attracted the watchful attention of the authorities. His writings at this crisis were peculiarly forcible in style, and more than usually pointed in suggestiveness. Take the following passage for instance, which is as suitable to-day as in July, '48:

"Free thoughts—free men—free soil for Ireland! These are the sacred rights of Nature. We ask not freedom because we were once free; we trust not to such frail and frivolous auxiliaries. We ask freedom because we have a right to be free. Usages, precedents, authorities and statutes sink into insignificance before this right. We seek our remedies in nature, and throw our parchment chains in the teeth of our oppressors. We ground our claims upon justice, and will not disgrace freedom by investing it with the fantastic honor of a pedigree. So little is plain sense heard in the mysterious nonsense which is the cloak of political fraud, that the Cokes, and Blackstones, and other jurists, speak as if our right to freedom depended on its possession by our ancestors. In the common cases of morality we would blush at such an absurdity. No man would justify murder for its antiquity or stigmatize benevolence for being novel. The genealogist who would emblazon the one as coeval with Cain, or denounce the other as upstart with Howard, would be disclaimed even by the most frantic partisan of aristocracy."

\*"The stock was issued in shares, and was owned by Kevin O'Doherty, R. D'Hilton Williams, Dr. Britsell, J. de Courcy Young, Walter T. Moyley, myself and two others. Michael Doherty and Stephen J. Meany, with the proprietors, wrote the paper. \* \* \* J. De C. Young and myself had issued the "Patriot" in April, which the police discontinued, by removing the placards and confiscating the stock in the hands of the vendors. We then projected the "Tribune," and were joined by the parties above named. \* \* \* 1848 and '49. *The Modern Revolutionary History of Ireland*, pp. 321-41."