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PRINCIPLES AND POLICY OF THE IRISH RACE.

TO THOMAS FRANCIS MEAGHER.

For six months, my dear Meagher, I have meditated addressing you in a public letter. I have meditated saying plainly what it has become imperative on some of your old associates to say—and perhaps on none more than me, who have maintained an unbroken friendship with you for so many years. O! saying plainly and peremptorily, that you are wrecking in the most palpable shallows and quicksands, a life meant to be a credit to your country; and flinging down in the dust the cause for which you risked so much. It is not a welcome task; but it would ill become us, who resisted O'Connell when he endangered the Irish cause, to be punctilious with one another.

You are, perhaps, dreaming at this hour of a universal people, who would hail your return with triumph—who believe in motives above suspicion, and fidelity tried even to the scaffold—and who long for your coming as that of a Deliverer.

Let me awaken you, my friend. Your relation to Ireland has fatally altered. There are multitudes of Irish Catholics to whom your name has become odious—there are many Priests who would head their people to resist you as an enemy, if to-morrow you were landing on our shores; there are not a few of those who shared our councils and hopes in '48, who have abandoned both, on the specific ground that you have compromised them with the Church, and joined the cause which united us. The men most aggrieved were slowest to complain; but the perverse me of your speeches by the Government press left them in the end no choice. For six months scarcely a week has passed in which some friend has not remonstrated: on his own behalf, or on behalf of the cause.

I can well believe you have been scandalously misrepresented—it is the way with these Swiss of the Castle. I am confident your heart or purpose has not materially altered since I saw you last; and that both are still intrinsically right. But, after this admission, enough remains to convince me you have embraced opinions which cannot be justified, and permitted them to be habitually exaggerated and misunderstood, to an extent incredible in one who has been among the spokesmen of a party. It seems to me one of the plainest duties of a public man to take care his associates shall not be compromised—a plain and higher duty is to take that precaution for his cause. Thomas Meagher, private gentleman, may submit, from pride, or *insouciance*, to any imputation he thinks fit—no one is concerned but himself. But Thomas Meagher, public man, long placed in the front rank of an organisation, habitually speaking on behalf others, bound to the past and future by ties which he can never wholly break—how can he permit himself to forget that many men share the responsibility of his acts and opinions? Fancy (and it is no suppositious case) young priests, our friends from '46 to '48, called on to answer for your present theories as the fundamental principles of their party—principles to which (it is said) others may have proved traitors but you are still loyal. Can anything be more cruel or embarrassing? They must renounce their dearest convictions or renounce you.

It is to recal you, my dear Meagher, to this duty—which you would be the last man to deny—that I address you at present. Your opinions are fatally misunderstood, or you have lost the ancient landmarks of the Irish cause; and they are no longer those which we held in common. The first alternative I believe to be substantially the true one. I believe you are made answerable for designs the farthest from your heart. The Thomas Meagher who was my friend and ally would have shared the plots of a detective, as soon as some of the unholy schemes with which your name is associated. But your language has given rise to suspicions which daily grow stronger and more general; and it is my firm conviction that if you do not take prompt measures to remove them, they will settle down into a rooted aversion more formidable to your hopes than the steel and fire of England.

At this distance of time and place, I am not in a position to sift your actual opinions from the mass of contradictory imputations levelled at you. That is your task. I can only report the charges which pass from mouth to mouth, and which have thinned your friends and quadrupled your enemies.

I. You are said to preach the exclusion of Priests from Irish politics.

II. You are said to embrace the opinions and cultivate the sympathies of Mazzini and his associates.

If either of these charges be true, you are on a path which will lead to disappointment and discomfiture; you are on a path which cannot, and ought not, to end in the deliverance of Ireland.

Exclude Priests from Irish politics! To what end

have you read our history? It is not enough to say that wanting Priests, it would want all you are proudest to recal in it; it is not enough to say that, in that epic resistance to foreign dominion which alone saves it from contempt, cassocks still throng the front rank of combatants, or martyrs; it is barely enough to say that since the extirpation of the hereditary chiefs, the Church has furnished an inexhaustible succession of new leaders spread as widely and trusted as fondly as the first—who have inspired every battle fought for the Celtic race, without or within the lines of the English Constitution. And at this day, if Priests were excluded, you and I might consider our life's task over—a *Te Deum* might be sung in Westminster Abbey—for all substantial or formidable resistance would be at an end.

Exclude Priests from Irish politics! Why, for what object has English intrigue labored for the last half century? Read Castlereagh's private correspondence with the Catholic bishops in '98 and '99; read the Quarranotti controversy in 1814; read the Repeal debates in '45; read Clarendon's letter to the Archbishop of Corfu in '48. What brought Minto to Rome? What brought Bulwer? What is Petre doing there at this hour? Whispering, lying, intriguing with sleepless activity for one end—to exclude Irish Priests from Irish politics! If this be your desire, you will have for allies and sympathisers every statesman in Downing street, every "Shave-beggar" in Dublin Castle, every exterminating landlord, every Whig slunkie in the island.

In practicability and public beneficence the scheme seems to me on a par with an insurrection against the Solar System. It is about as likely to succeed, and would be about as useful if it had succeeded. The peril to clerical influence need give no one uneasiness; but the fatal waste of your own life in barren and impracticable adventures, the misdirection given to the ideas of our young men, and the prejudices arrayed against the cause with which your name is associated—these are not considerations which I can disregard.

But you will tell me you meant something far short of "exclusion." Be it so; but what? Where, short of it, can you draw a straight and intelligible line?

The exact sentiment quoted from your speeches is this: that the minister of religion, while he is guaranteed all the rights of a citizen, must not be permitted to exercise in secular affairs the influence his office confers. What does this mean? How is it to be applied in the transaction of public business?—I search in vain for any positive principle or any practical rule of action in it. Does it mean that he shall be at liberty to vote, but not at liberty, like you and me, to counsel, stimulate, and guide the votes of others? In this sense it is naked despotism. If a Priest must not exercise the influence which his services create, why must he not, as well as the Orator or the Journalist? Is he less likely to make a disinterested use of it? Is he more likely to be swayed by personal ambition or individual interest? Are his ties to the people less close and permanent? Scarcely! I have known a good deal of public men in Ireland for the last dozen years, and I cannot admit that it would be a change for the better to banish the Priest and set up the Demagogue in his vacant place. If one or other must go, for my part I will not hesitate to blacken Messrs. John Reynolds & Co., Messrs. John O'Connell & Co., or Messrs. John Mitchell & Co., rather than the men who have stood between the peasant and his tyrant—who have shared their last crust with the pauper, and brought sunshine to the poor man's hearth, generation after generation. There are partizan Priests, and place-begging Priests, who are not pleasant to remember; but I believe in my soul and conscience partizans and place-beggars are rarer in the ranks of the Priesthood than in any other ranks. Trust me, my friend, your theory has not a grain of common sense, and nothing could be more fatal to its long life than such a want.

It is just as naked of principle as of practical sagacity. Do you call it Republicanism to refuse men their ordinary privileges, because some of them hold opinions hostile to yours? This is not the liberty Jefferson taught, or Washington practised. They built on the sure basis of common right. You will find precedents for it, indeed, in the turbulent and ruthless cabals of the Jacobins, who found some lofty pretence for excluding from power all whom they feared or hated; but in America none. It leads straight to the excesses which were once abominable to you as the deadly cancer of liberty. Say the Priest is excluded for his opinions; you begin with him, by-and-by follows the gentleman; a little later all the "eulotic classes," till at length no one presumes to act in public who is not prepared to echo the rhapsodies of some morose and fanatical dogmatist who calls himself the friend of the people. And so it goes on, till the new tyranny, more odious than the first, is flung down and trampled in the gutter.—

Once, no man detested this organised anarchy more than you. It was individual liberty, and individual security you sought in a Revolution; not the despotism of a demagogue, a cabal, or a class. Recal that sentiment; it is a wise and a generous one. Study the career of the men who founded the only stable Republic in the universe, that one which has opened its arms to you; and you will be ashamed of a shallow unprincipled dogma, which, like Mormon prophecies, rests on the supposed convenience of the hour, and is liable and likely to be contradicted by the next.

Do not misconceive your present attitude. There is nothing noble, my friend, which is not based upon truth, and you are striving for that which is not possible to do, and which would be detestable if it were done. Look the fact in the face; in how many generations will you strip the Priest of his political rights? And when you have altered the fixed habits of a people—when you have abolished that tutelary power which stood him in the stead of a government and constitution, what hold will you have on the sympathy or confidence of the Irish peasant? He will curse your name. What you will have accomplished for him is to strike the light out of his sky, and lay him hopeless and guideless at the feet of his foreign master.

But the Church to-day demands more allegiance, and is less tolerant of neutrality than when you were in Ireland? Yes; undoubtedly. We are at war, my friend, and men must choose their side. For the last three years a vigorous, and preconcerted assault has been made on the Catholicity of this nation. The sectarian passions which we helped to put asleep have been lashed into fury against it. In parliament, the Catholic Bishops, Maynooth College, the Convents have each in turn been assailed with success. A hundred missionaries landed on our shores in one day, to preach a new reformation. English gold has been scattered through the pauper districts to bribe the poor from their faith—and not without a certain success. The migration of the Catholic people has been secretly stimulated; the policy by which Cromwell and William drafted our fighting men into French and Spanish Brigades still survives in the shape of emigration bounties and bonuses; and hideous rejoicings have broken out at public dinners—for example, at entertainments to men whom you would cite as confirmed nationalists, Mr. Butt and Mr. Whiteside—that emigration was rapidly making Ireland a Protestant country.

Do you fancy in face of insults and dangers like these, any Catholic in Ireland, lay or clerical, is in a humor for transcendental discourses on the beauty of brotherly love? We are attacked in our dearest interests attacked day by day, and every day without cessation; "peace is beautiful, but this is war;" and what men demand of you is not a lay sermon on abstract duties, but to know whether you are for us or against us? Consider how an O'Neil or an O'Moore would have rebuked neutrality in his holy war for the right to worship God in peace in his own land, and you will realize how it is regarded to-day. And no Catholic is so eager as generous Protestants to resist this diabolical crusade. In such a moment the Church has a right to look with suspicion on all who see her danger and are indifferent to it. I believe you have not seen it; or only half seen it, living in a distant country, and inhabiting, like a poet, the past and future more than the present. But Young Ireland has long since come of age, and must learn to take a man's part in junctures like the present.

What your actual relations are with Mazzini I do not know. Probably none; or at most that vague sentimental sympathy universal in '48. To me at that time he was but a name, corresponding to Petrach and Rienzi. I know him better now; and there is not on the face of the earth any man to whom I am less attracted. I think with Sismondi that he and his sect have been the ruin of Italian independence; with Gioberti, that he was a greater enemy to Italy than to Austria; and with Garibaldi, that "he spoils everything he touches." He seems to me essentially double-dealing and untrustworthy in public transactions. I noted of late, as a pregnant illustration of character, his angry denial in the *Times* that he encouraged the dagger among his followers, having at the moment under my eye, his "Advice to the Party of Progress," published in the *English Republic* a month or two before, in which that weapon of assassins is expressly and enthusiastically commended to them:—

"War to the knife," he says, "where there are no other weapons. The rhetoricians of our colleges who teach children to admire the dagger of Harmodius or Brutus, and who borrow the name of moralists to condemn the daggers of the Lombards, are hypocrites for the sake of pensions or royal favors. The dagger is the people's bayonet when all other weapons are taken away. The assassin's dagger, called a sword, is in

• Jules de Breaux's "Mazzini Judged."

the hands of the tyrant who kills, without danger and for his own personal profit, the patriot reclamer of those goods which God has given us—liberty of thought of speech, and of action."

What a ghastly light this *éloge* casts back on the murdered body of Rossi. I can comprehend a fanatic defending the dagger; Marat would have done so once; perhaps Blanqui would do so still—but what shall we say of him who defends it to his followers, and denies it before a foreign people?

But I push aside these reflections. Think as you please of Mr. Mazzini; impressions of character are quickly got and slowly lost. What I propose to demonstrate is, that if he were a model of patriotism and personal worth, no Christian, and above all no Catholic, can join hands with him. That a league with Calvi, in the sixteenth century, would not have bespoken a more rooted hostility to the faith in which we were born; or a league with Voltaire, in the eighteenth, to the creed of Christendom. And I will not judge him on mere hearsay evidence; he shall speak for himself.

It is barely three years since he published an edition of his political writings, with an elaborate preface, containing a defence and exposition of his opinions; framed for the meridian of England. What is the fundamental basis of the Mazzini school? Let him tell you himself—

"Young Italy rejected, at once and equally, materialism and superstition. It declared that, in order to acquire the strength necessary to become a nation, Italy must emancipate herself at the same time from the old Catholic belief, and from the materialism of the eighteenth century."

"Italy must emancipate herself from the old Catholic belief." Perhaps you will fancy this is some figure of speech, without practical import. The implacable anarchist denies you this illusion:—

"The Papacy," he says elsewhere, "is a corpse. But I do not quarrel only with the Papacy as a temporal power. We have higher, holier aims. We say the Pope is no Pope at all. We aim at the destruction, at the abolition of the Papacy, both as a spiritual power and a temporal power."

And where does Mr. Mazzini seek his allies in this work? From the No-Popery faction of England, who late Ireland as Cromwell and Carhampton hated her.

"There exists (he says) great agitation at the present moment in Protestant England on account of the attempted encroachments of Catholicism. Think you that these attempts would have taken place if the people's banner were still floating at Rome? Think you that the Pope would have sent his Catholic hierarchy from Gaeta?"

"Papacy excluded from Rome is, it is well known. Papacy excluded from Italy. Papacy excluded from Europe. Place the Pope at Lyons or Seville—he will no longer be Pope; he will only be a dethroned king."

This is the programme of Mr. Mazzini—to abolish, not the sovereignty of the Prince of Rome, but the authority of the Vicar of Christ. The exact bargain is proposed in terms: help us to pull down the Pope, and we will pull down his religion, and meshap set up yours in its place:—

"We have sometimes been asked if, when once emancipated, we should proclaim ourselves Protestants? It is not for individuals to reply. The country, free to interrogate itself, will follow the inspirations that God will send it. . . . But this, with my hand upon my heart, I can answer to them—

"Catholicism is dead. Religion is eternal. It will be the soul; the thought of the new world. . . ."

But, in order that the death of Catholicism may be revealed to men, the air must circulate freely and reach, in order to destroy, the corpse which stands as yet erect. In order that man may invoke with purity, enthusiasm, and love, the truth of God, he must be emancipated from a state which teaches him immorality, egotism, hatred, and mistrust; and, in order that the truth may triumph over error, it must be free to proclaim itself in the full light of day. This consummation we can offer in exchange for the support which we demand."

"JOSEPH MAZZINI."

Of this new creed two preachers have appeared in England and America—Mazzini's personal friends and political disciples: To name them supersedes all description—Achilli and Gavazzi; the libidinous priest, and the renegade whose last footsteps on the soil of America were splashed in Irish blood.

But Mazzini wants the common virtue of fidelity to his allies. More recently, to gain the Continental Deists, he has thrown Exeter Hall overboard, and proposed to substitute for the Catholic Church, not English Protestantism, but a hideous *salmagundi* of "notions" collected by the agency of universal suffrage! Let us not speak of the profanity of this shallow coxcomb laying his hand on the Holy of Holies; but consider the scope of his capacity, who thinks that our perverse human nature, which falls into continual insubordination, and neglect of laws delivered by the voice of God, on Sinai, or on Calvary, will bow down before the fortuitous progeny of the ballot-box. Here are his words:—