

# IRELAND AND THE EMPIRE

## A SPEECH

BY

NICHOLAS FLOOD DAVIN.

*Mr. President, Ladies and Gentlemen :*

So pressed am I with private business affairs calling me to New York that almost at any other time, or on any other occasion, much as I have desired to meet an audience, and especially an Irish audience, in Montreal, I should have declined the honour of addressing you. But at a time when revolting crimes, and meaningless as revolting, are connected with the name of Ireland, I felt that nothing should prevent my being present at a meeting of Irishmen on St. Patrick's Day in that city of the Dominion where there is the largest Irish population, to ask you to join with me in protesting against outrages which are as much without meaning as morality, and with which I would fain hope no Irishman, acting as an Irishman and aiming at Irish objects, was ever connected. (Cheers.) As I wrote to your president when he conveyed to me your invitation, I have ever held it a privilege to address an audience of my countrymen, and not only a privilege, but a duty, if for no other reason than this, my views may differ, nay, on certain points, are certain to differ more or less from yours,

and mental progress does not depend on hearing or reading our own ideas, but on hearing ideas different from our own; not on uniformity but variety of thought. The mental glance which sees facts in their true relation, the comparing faculty which co-ordinates these facts and draws from them just and fruitful inferences, the sinewy vigour which can take up great themes and master them, the cold clear head which does not grow intoxicated on the frothing goblets of self-glorifying verbiage—these are things which do not come from imitation or egotism disguised under vague raptures respecting the indefinite and unhistorical in the past, or the indefinite and impossible in the future. They are to be had only in that arena where thought grapples with thought, and independent minds try themselves and their conclusions against others.

I have addressed many audiences of my countrymen in Canada calling themselves by various names of national significance. More than once, and this has happened in the present case, on such occasions friends of mine, older men, more experienced in the ways of