

The Impossibility of Repeal.

"We are sometimes not a little amused at the settled composure and unruffled equanimity of spirit with which our most magnanimous countrymen contrive even now to convince themselves that Repeal cannot possibly be carried; that England will never listen to the demand for it; that the pretended confidence of Mr. O'Connell in the ultimate success of his agitation is all an imposture; and that a very little time must see either the present excitement die out, or else the commencement of a crisis in which England will unhappily, or much against her tender inclination, be forced to chastise, subdue and, by the aid of a rod of iron, tranquilize her very restless and unreasonable sister. These sentiments, or something like them, are not very uncommon; and we sometimes hear them enunciated with a tone of lofty wisdom and conscious superiority, which adds mellifluously to the natural weight and conclusiveness of their opinions. Whenever we hear one of our irrefragable doctors giving utterance to these words of wisdom, we say to ourselves—'Well, then, Repeal cannot be carried. It is impossible. How will Mr. O'Connell contrive to reconcile himself to this unalterable decree of fate?'

"But, withal, after we have had a little breathing time, and have managed to raise our heads, bowed down in reverential submission to the accents of instruction, a feeling has generally come upon us which we have not been very well able to shake off, that so much of the history of this world as is worth studying is the history of 'Impossibilities made Possibilities.' The jocose Protestant mis-translation of St. Austin's words, 'Creatio quia impassibile,' 'I believe because it is impossible,' contains what is not always to be looked for in Protestant sayings, a very profound truth. There are some things which are to be believed and achieved because they are impossible. What are the heroic actions of great men and of great nations, but the creation of facts out of impossibilities? Possibilities any body can accomplish. Possibilities are the staple performance of our common daily life. Possibilities are things for you and me, for the great and the little vulgar. Possibilities are the little peevish, necessary actions which every man does in accordance with the usages, maxims, and principles of society, and relying on the ordinary calculation of chances. But impossibilities are those things for which there is no rule and no precedent. They are the inspirations which God breathes into the hearts of his chosen, and for the most part unconscious instruments, when He sends them forth, equipped as He will, to accomplish purposes which are at variance with every known rule of discretion. To deliver the Israelites out of the hand of Pharaoh was an impossibility. But the ordinance of God and the obedience of Moses converted it into a fact. The slaves were led out of the house of bondage, and their tyrants were swallowed up in the Red Sea. To found an empire which should tame and discipline under one sceptre the savage lawlessness of Europe, Asia, and Africa, was an impossibility, and Romulus would have been mad to dream of such an achievement. But for all that he, or whoever collected the swarms of robbers within the circuit of the seven hills, unknown to himself achieved this impossibility, and sowed the seeds of a mighty and enduring empire. For any two or three men—fishermen of Rabbin—to sap the Pagan creeds of Rome, and bring the world to a belief in the crucifixion of Almighty God; this was a glaring impossibility, and it was brought about by the operation of that law through which God gives the victory to weakness over strength. That a few small towns, ill-defended and scantily supplied with inhabitants, should resist the myriads of Persia, and finally destroy that 'Monarchy of Silver,' and overrun the fairest provinces of Asia to found the 'Monarchy of Brass'—this, too, was an impossibility, considered as such by every calculation of wisdom and every dictate of prudence. But it was writ down in the decree of God, and accordingly it was done. And so with all the great achievements of which history makes mention. All of them, without exception were impossibilities, and the greater number were proved to be impossible just before they were accomplished. It was impossible to overturn the feudal monarchy of England.—It was impossible to root out the proud nobility of France, and bring her hapless monarch to the scaffold. It was impossible to combine the thirteen colonies of America in

a successful resistance to the might of imperial England. All these things were proved to be impossible, and in the ordinary course of events would never have been accomplished. But God setteth up one and plucketh down another, and by his power these impossible achievements were chronicled in the annals of the world.

"Look back, then, upon the past, most wise and most invincible Englishmen, and say whether in the problem of Repeal you see anything more impossible than the impossibilities we have just recounted. Look back, Oh! John Bull upon the ages that are dead and buried, and think within yourself whether there is anything more wonderful in eight millions of Irishmen wresting their independence from sixteen millions of Englishmen and Scotchmen than there was in the thousands of Greece withstanding the countless myriads of Persia. These Persian monarchs had their Arm-Bills, as well as Sir Robert Peel. They too, chastised their refractory subjects; and Xerxes sat upon a lofty throne to witness his own undoubted triumph and his ignominious defeat. Look back once more over the course of by-gone events, and when you have reflected on your many crimes, iniquities, and oppressions, on your abuse of empire, and on your sins that cry to Heaven for vengeance, then bethink yourself whether, if the Almighty have a mind to treat you according to your deserts, there is anything, in your sagacity to contrive and power to execute, by which you can hope to defraud Him of His portion. When we think of the stains of blood that are on our hands, these reflections make us tremble for the event.—Sir James Graham tells us that if Repeal be granted, 'the glory of the country is departed,' and 'England must be classed with those countries from whom power has dwindled away,' and as presenting 'the melancholy aspect of a fallen nation.' Alas! alas! Is then the day of our downfall so near at hand? We trust not. But no one can deny that if the hour of our punishment is approaching, it is most just that the first stroke of the rod should be laid upon us by Ireland. As the poet says of a supposed misdoer—'Strangle her in the bed she hath contaminated. Good, good; the justice of it pleases; very good. Ireland is the bed she hath contaminated; and if we be strangled in it, there are not wanting those to whom 'the justice of it' will be very pleasing.

"We say, then, that it behoves our countrymen to take note that empires have risen and fallen before now, that the grand Haman was long ago hanged on the gallows he had set up for the deposed Mordecai, that the continents victims of tyranny have before now become the terrible instruments of ruin. O'Connell cannot get Repeal: it is impossible—it would be inconvenient to grant it, and we therefore must refuse.' But how if God means to grant it? Will He take a refusal, think you? No; no. Never talk or think about the impossibility of Repeal. If we had right on our side, indeed, it is not the odds now against that would terrify us. But we have not taken the precaution to walk hand in hand with Justice, and we very much dread that when we enter the lists with Omnipotence, we shall not leave them without broken bones.

"Of a truth the impossibility of Repeal seems exactly one of that kind of impossibilities which has the stamp of victory upon it. We may not be able very readily to point out the exact mode of its realization. Much, in all these cases, depends upon unforeseen events. He must be a good chess-player, who, in addition to awarding rightly the chances of success to the more skillful player, can foretell all the moves by which the game is to be won. It would be foolish to pretend to tell all the coming moves of this great game. But we can see without difficulty several ways through which a partial success might crown the Repealer's efforts. Mr. O'Connell, in his speech at Tullamore, tells us that he will have Repeal by January, or at the latest before next May. How this is to be brought about we do not see; but by following out the track already entered upon, we find little difficulty in imagining a very probable course of events, which will overwhelm with sudden astonishment those tardy reasoners who sleep so soundly on their 'impossibilities.' See what the Liberator has done already. The greater half of the task is accomplished. He has got his numbers; the masses; the millions. He has made them know that he has got them. He has taught them obedience and discipline. He has made

them feel that they can rely on his wisdom and on the discretion and temperance of each other. Now let any wise man ask himself whether it is not much more difficult to bring millions of people to this state of perfect and peaceful discipline, than to accomplish great things by them when they are brought to this state. When the sense of numbers and power, the habits of order and the feeling of mutual confidence are sufficiently confirmed and made sufficiently widespread; in other words, when the machine is made perfect, then will come the time to use it. The machine will soon be perfect, the application is not far behind.

"What is Repeal? It is the establishment in Ireland of a Government not dependent upon England. Well, and what is the phenomenon we have just described but the exercise of such an independent Government on a great scale; without parchment statutes; without written laws; as when the chief sat in the gate of the city to a minister justice by word of mouth to every passer by. A next step is already marked out by Mr. O'Connell; and he has been helped to it by the present Government. Sir Robert Peel dismisses the Repeal magistrates, because he will have none but instruments on which he can rely. Good, very good. But this is a game at which two can play as well as one; and accordingly, the Repeal Association is about to recommend the practical dismissal of all the magistrates by means of the appointment of parish arbitrators, whom the people may obey or disobey as they please, but whom they will be very likely to get into the habit of compelling one another to obey by the moral force of social excommunication upon the refractory. When this is brought about, or even partially brought about, we imagine the gentlemen who hold the Queen's commission will find themselves rather shorn of their importance; and the people will begin to find that no Act of Parliament is required to procure the substance of a native Government.—*Tab'et.*

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