ROSSA

BORN 1831. DIED 1915.

BURIED GLASNEVIN CEMETERY, DUBLIN,

SUNDAY, AUGUST 1ST, 1915.

"Oh, do not fear for Ireland,
For she has soldiers still."

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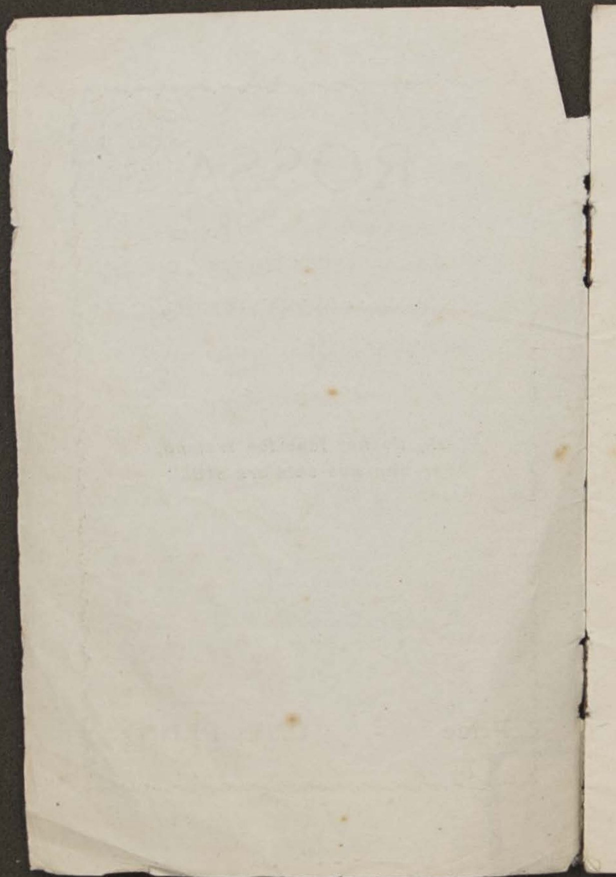

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I.—THE ENGLISH LIE.

England's chief weapon in her long struggle with Ireland is the English lie. Every Irish Nationalist knows this. And every Irish Nationalist ought to know it is a weapon for use, unscrupulous, treacherous, far-reaching and deadly. Most of us thought we had comprehended the English lie, and some of us prided ourselves on not underestimating it. But till Rossa died not one of us had the exact measure of its possibilities; and now we can only know that as there are infamies in Hell which we cannot fathom, we henceforth must be ready against every surprise of Hell. For Hell is the source of the Lie. From the agony of his prison Rossa cried out: "They can lie like Hell," and even then with all the revelations that revolted the world we did nor realise that this was literally and exactly true, that, black and infamous as the pit from which their inspiration comes: they can lie like Hell. But now when Rossa's body is hardly cold in death, the lie is flashed across the Atlantic, that not only was he reconciled to England, but he even called to us to fight for her as he died; and we begin to realise that the Lie like Hell is unfathomable. Our answer is the fit answer. We rally to the graveside of the heroic dead and show we are not deceived; and by that graveside it would be fit also to repeat what Rossa said and wrote, that those who have not heard may now be wise. To the good people at home who counselled surrender he wrote: "I am sorry that I forfeit the esteem of any of my people on account of my firm adherence to the principles of my life." To

those who believe in parliamentary agitation he wrote: "With the history Irishmen have or ought to have, by heart, it is surprising how easy it is to lead them to expect redress for their grievances from the Parliament of England—from that Parliament that has so often cajoled and deceived them, that Parliament whose proper function is to rivet the chains by which they are held in bondage." Of how to fight England he wrote: "I believe with John Mitchel that for Ireland's wrongs, her artificial famines, her packed juries, her perjured judges, her grinding landlords, there is but one sole remedy—**the edge of the sword.**" And he made this acute maxim of his own: "The work that England fears most is the work that Irishmen should practise and study most." But it is when we come to his prison experiences, when the enemy had their grip on his throat, and the Lie in all its hellishness used against him, that we get his most passionate utterances; and we begin to get some measure of the lie that flashed out at his death. "They will never scruple to carry out their ends by falsehood, and here we are not able to meet them," wrote Rossa of the false evidence sworn against him and others in connection with the Phœnix Society on the occasion of his first arrest. But not until he is undergoing penal servitude for his work in the Fenian movement is he fully in the meshes of the Lie. Rossa himself only gradually realised it and then it became one long struggle to get the truth to the outer world. He was allowed to write to his wife, but if he wrote about his prison treatment his letters were intercepted. When given a chance to write another letter in place of one that was stopped, he always accepted the offer, but made it a point to repeat what was in the first. This may seem strange till we read his own explanation, and it shows how keen he was in meeting his enemies: "I was by this time wide awake to some of their trickery. If I refused to write they would put my refusal on record, and thus gain a strong point against me in that battle with public opinion to which I was determined to bring them, if at all possible. If I wrote out a letter, stating nothing of my treatment, while they were treating me in a manner calculated to bring me to an early grave, they, in case I died, and that any question was raised about my ill-treatment, would cry out, 'It is all false. Look at his last letter to his wife; see if there is a word in it about ill-treatment.' Acting with the doom of death staring me in the face, I, every time I was allowed to write a letter to my wife, wrote of my prison life. For three years they kept suppressing these letters, during which time she never heard from me. The reflection that she might imagine I did not care about writing to her was painful enough to me, but I had put everything into the fight, and I made up my mind to sacrifice everything before I would play into the hands of such a hypocritical, heartless, merciless enemy as I had to deal with." When he was denied open communication, he resolved to try other means. He writes: "I went back to my cell and determined that, right or wrong, by fair play or by foul,

I would never stop till I found some means of reaching the world, and getting out an account of our treatment." From that forward the ingenuity he displayed in getting through fellow-prisoners bits of pencil and bits of paper and trying to smuggle out letters is astonishing. In the end he succeeded. But before his success he was being constantly detected, and discovery was always followed by punishment. The story of his first effort to get out a letter secretly will show how the Lie goaded him through every punishment till he at last laid it bare. He got the materials and he wrote his letter; and he tells us: "As I feared that letters addressed to 'Mrs. O'Donovan Rossa' would be opened in the post office, I directed this one to the mother of Michael Moore, and on the cover of the envelope I wrote in very small writing the words 'For Mrs. O'D.' But the letter was discovered. One of the prisoners who promised to get it smuggled out was suspected and searched before he could get it away. And Rossa was brought before the Governor, and the Governor said: 'You are charged with endeavouring to get a letter out of prison surreptitiously to the wife of another prisoner.' This was actually recorded against him on the books as an intrigue with another prisoner's wife. Rossa took it at first as a joke, but he found it was no joke when he tried to have it corrected, lest as he says, "it might remain on record and be brought forward at some time to defame my character—for this is a trick England plays on dead enemies." Mark those prophetic words: "This is a trick England plays on dead enemies." Keep them in mind now and in the future; and think how Rossa must have felt when he was brought to see—that not only his body and his life but his very character itself was at the mercy of his unscrupulous enemies. It nerved him to persevere till he at last reached the world. Something got into the press; then came exposure, the Commission of Inquiry, and revelations. But first Rossa had to suffer for years the dread of dying in prison, branded before the world, and the agony of that fear will remain in mind as long as his words, literally true, remain: "They can lie like Hell." Yet despite of it the Master Lie itself comes forth to proclaim that Rossa yielded at the end, but we nail the Master Lie with Rossa's own words:

> **"I have made no peace with England. I am at war with her, and so help me God! I will wage that war against her till she is stricken to her knees or till I am stricken to my grave."**

II.—THE PHŒNIX SOCIETY. ENTER ROSSA.

It was necessary to dispose of the lie before taking a brief view of Rossa's career. That career in its National activities begins with The Phœnix Society, which was later merged in the Fenian Movement. In his "Recollections" Rossa tells us how it came into

being : " I remember when Gavan Duffy left Ireland. I think it was in 1854. He issued an address to the Irish people in which he said that the Irish national cause was like a corpse on the dissecting table. Yet, the cause was not dead though it was certainly stricken by a kind of *trom-luighe*—a kind of heavy sleep that came upon it after the failure of '48, and after the recreancy of the Sadlier and Keogh gang of parliamentary patriots. The " corpse " came to life again. Thus he throws some light on the state of the country and he goes on to say : " Two years after the time I am speaking of a number of young men in Skibbereen, realising the sad state of things came together and started The Phœnix National and Literary Society. I think that Society was started in 1856. I remember the night we met to give it a name. Some proposed that it be called the Emmet Monument Association.' Others proposed other names. I proposed that it be called the Phœnix National and Literary Society—the word Phœnix signifying that the Irish cause was again to rise from the ashes of our martyred nationality. My resolution was carried, and that is how the word ' Phœnix ' comes into Irish National history." Nothing particular happened for a couple of years ; but the Society kept together somewhat like the Celtic Literary Societies we have known in our own day. The members celebrated their first anniversary on the 2nd January, 1858, the consequences of which were far-reaching. The proceedings were reported and the reports reached James Stephens and John O'Mahony. Stephens was in Paris, and Rossa thinks O'Mahony was, too. " Anyway," Rossa writes, " they were in communication with each other, or got into communication with each other." The report of the Skibbereen meeting showed them that the old cause was not dead ; that the seed of national life was in the old land still. They agreed to start into action. James Stephens was to act in Ireland and John O'Mahony was to act in America. From that the Fenian movement grew. Before passing on to consider it, interest will be found in some extracts from the speech Rossa delivered on the occasion of the anniversary. It will show how the report brought encouragement to Stephens and O'Mahony. Rossa spoke to the toast of " Our Country." How apt the following is to-day : " Too much talk and too little action have been the characteristics of Irish patriotism during a large portion of the last half century ; and as we are supposed to learn from experience, it is believed that less of the former and a corresponding increase of the latter will, in the future, serve our country's cause best and our enemy's cause least. . . . It is an established fact that we have no country. We are the most cosmopolitan race in the whole universe ; but Irishmen should have a country ; they have a right to the country of their birth. By the use and aid of one steel—the pen—our committee have taken possession of that right, and as their title one day may be disputed, I trust they will be able and willing to prove it by the aid of another steel—the sword." The boast of " The Times " that the Irish were

gone with a vengeance was still recent. Rossa replies: "The Irish are not gone, but part of them are gone, and in whatever clime their pulses beat to-night, that 'vengeance' which banished them is inscribed on their hearts, impregnates their blood, and may yet operate against that oppressor who, by his exterminating and extirpating laws deprived them of a means of living in the land of their fathers." And here is how Rossa concludes: "It shall ever be my pride to stand, as I stand here to-night, amongst men who are prepared to assist in any and every agitation or undertaking to obtain their rights, or an instalment of their rights, which may ultimately result in qualifying them to write the epitaph of Robert Emmet." By the report—which appeared in "The Dundalk Democrat" of the time, to which paper it was sent—the proceedings were enthusiastic. From the temper of Rossa's speech we can understand the encouragement to Stephens and O'Mahony Stephens lost no time in coming to Ireland. And this brings us to the Fenian movement.

III.—THE FENIAN MOVEMENT.

James Stephens came to Skibbereen in May, 1858. In his "Recollections" Rossa says: "He had a letter of introduction from James O'Mahony, of Bandon, to Donal Oge—one of our members. He initiated Donal Oge (Dan McCartie) into the Irish Revolutionary Brotherhood. Donal Oge initiated me the next day; I initiated Patrick J. Downing and Morty Moynahan the following day; and so, the good cause spread." In his "Prison Life" Rossa gives an account of the promises made by Stephens. "In the month of May, 1858, one of my companions called into my residence in Skibbereen and asked me to take a walk with him, as he had something of importance to communicate to me. I went out, and during our ramble up the Steam-mill Road he informed me that on the preceding evening he had received a note of introduction from a stranger, given to him by a mutual friend in Bandon. The stranger told him that the Irishmen in America had resolved to aid us at home in achieving the independence of Ireland, and the aid was to consist of arms and men. If we had a certain number of men sworn to fight, there would be an equal number of arms in Ireland for these men when enrolled, and an invading force of from five to ten thousand before the start. The arms were to be in the country before the men would be asked to stir; they would not be given into their hands, but they were to be kept in hiding-places until the appointed time, when every centre would take his men to the spot and get the weapons. As soon as we had enrolled the men willing to fight we were to get military instructors to teach us how to do as soldiers. I jumped at the proposition of 'joining'; and

next day I inoculated a few others whom I told to go and do likewise. The stranger who came to the town that May evening was Mr. Stephens, and I was promised an introduction to him in a short time if I would work well." Rossa tells us they had about one hundred members in the Phœnix Society at that time and, he writes, " before a month had elapsed from the day of Mr. Stephens' visit we had over ninety of them enrolled in the new movement. Before the autumn months had passed away we had the whole district of country in a blaze, and in October we had a drill-master sent to us from Dublin." Soon other districts were ablaze and the fire spread; and Rossa was able to write: " In Ireland, when it was a question of uniting to fight against England, we were too fast for our brothers across the Atlantic, for we had the men ready to fight before they had given us the arms to do so." Of course the Government took alarm, as the Government always does when Irishmen begin to drill and look for weapons. And before the end of the year Rossa and some twenty of his friends—arrested in Skibbereen on 5th December—were lodged in Cork jail. Some Bantry men were also arrested and all were held in Cork awaiting evidence on a charge of conspiracy.

Rossa calls this the " arrest of the Phœnix men," which keeps it distinct from the arrest of the Fenian leaders seven years later in 1865. But it was, of course part of the Fenian movement in its beginnings and had a very direct bearing on the 65 trials, especially as it touched Rossa himself. All the men arrested were released on bail except Rossa and five others, who were detained in prison from December, '58 to July, '59. The Government then offered to release them if they would plead guilty. This they had already refused to do; but they were now offered the release of a friend who had been sentenced to ten years penal servitude on a similar charge (Daniel O'Sullivan, Agreem, convicted at the March Assizes in Tralee). They took counsel at this and decided to accept the terms. John O'Leary says in his " Memoirs" that word was sent to them **not** to plead guilty. Rossa says they never got such a message; but that they understood from men in Cork with whom they were in touch that the work seemed dead and they might as well accept the terms. The temptation to secure the release of their friend from penal servitude won them over; but the terms were fatal for Rossa himself in the sequel; for they (the prisoners) were bound to come up for judgment on the plea of guilty, if ever there was a repetition of the charge against them. So, when Rossa was brought up again for trial in '65, there was no escape for him.

Notwithstanding the danger, Rossa was active again soon after his release. In his " Prison Life " he writes: " I recommenced my pursuits, political and commercial, a few months after my release from prison, and I found it much more difficult to be successful in the legal than the in-illegal one. . . . For, of course, the stock-in-trade lies were told of us, that we were going to massacre land

lords, and overturn altars." Still the movement seems to have practically dropped for a couple of years. Rossa speaks of a new stir in 1860, but the great stimulus came with the McManus funeral in '61. Rossa writes: "The McManus funeral tended very much to increase the strength of the Fenian movement. Men from Leinster, Ulster, Munster and Connaught met in Dublin who never met each other before. They talked of the old cause and of the national spirit in their respective provinces and each went back to his home strengthened for more vigorous work." And the work went ahead. "The Irish People" newspaper was established in '63, and Stephens invited Rossa to become its manager. This brought Rossa into touch with the movement through the whole country; and thenceforward it was constant activity with him up to the seizure and arrests in September, '65. From this we will pass on to consider his attitude at the trial.

"The jury was duly packed," writes Rossa, "and . . . . I resolved to throw up my counsel and to commence my own defence on Monday morning." To Judge Keogh he said: "I believe this trial is a legal farce, and I won't be a party to it by being represented by counsel." And he began his defence. He made use of the occasion not to defend himself, but to expose the court and chiefly Judge Keogh. He spoke for eight hours. This will give some notion of how he worried and baffled the court, to get an adequate idea of which one must go to the report of the trial itself. At six o'clock in the evening he asked for an adjournment, which was refused, whereupon he threw up his defence. Next day when the usual question was put asking him to say why sentence should not be passed upon him, he said: "With the fact that the Government seized papers connected with my defence and examined them—with the fact that they packed the jury—with the fact that the Government stated they would convict—with the fact that they sent Judge Keogh, a second Norbury, to try me—with these facts before me, it would be useless to say anything." And he was right. The sentence was penal servitude for life. When asked subsequently why he took the defiant course at his trial, he said: "I saw myself doomed, and thought I might as well have the value of my money out of them as be standing in apparent awe, silently looking on at the farce of giving me a trial." Bear in mind that he had pleaded guilty to the charge against the Phœnix Men in '59, and they had him at their mercy. There were adverse comments on the course he adopted, but Rossa himself was satisfied in having the approval of men whom he respected, such as Mitchel, who wrote: "Your readers must have followed with intense interest the reports of the trials (as they were called) in Ireland. Our poor friends who have been called upon this time to stand before courts and juries have all behaved nobly; but to my mind the conduct of O'Donovan Rossa was the noblest of them all. It was very imprudent of him to take this course, and, in fact, it brought on him a sentence for life.

instead of twenty years. But at any rate, he did the thing that was right, and just, and manly."

IV.—PRISON TORTURES.

It would be quite impossible in the brief space here to give even a faint idea of the presistent hellishness with which Rossa's jailers tortured him in prison. Examples may be quoted to show that, not content with starving and torturing and chaining the body, they struck at his mind by heaping on him shame, disgust and insult. For these fiends made the infliction of pain such a devilish art, that they passed from the torture of the body to the torture of the mind. Rossa speaks of the shame of the first examination in Pentonville Prison. Six of them were ordered to strip naked. He writes: "There we were in a row, quite naked, before the gaze of these officials, and then commenced that examination of us which cannot well be described, but which left an impression on our minds never to be effaced. These English people speak of their sense of decency—nay, they have laws in the interest of morality that punish wanton exposure of the person, but such gross ruffianism as attended our entrance into a residence in the civilised city of London is something that should be put an end to, even in a convict prison." But this shame was pushed to the uttermost. When later on he was in Millbank he had to submit to it every day for a period of three months. He writes: "For three months, day after day, two of these officers came and put me through the same process. I felt it more than anything connected with my prison life; and when the supervision came so close upon me, that, when taking a bath, a jailer had to stand over me, I have no words to describe my feelings of shame. I am not very sensitive, nor very thin-skinned, not very refinedly fashioned, but I owe to some early association the possession of some very strong prejudices against my fellowman looking at me in a state of nature." But Rossa had to endure the shame. Here is how they added disgust. A jailer ordered two men to clean a closet one day. Subsequently, he told Rossa that his turn would come next. Rossa appealed to the Governor, but he had to submit. The jailer noted this and improved the occasion. When Rossa went out he (the jailer) said: "You went to the Governor to know if you would be made to clean the closet, but now instead of having two of you to clean it once every three weeks, I will make you clean it every Monday morning." Rossa told his companions he would refuse, and they remonstrated with him. Luby spoke of the example of Mitchel in submitting to prison discipline as more in accordance with the dignity of the Cause; but Rossa could not imagine Mitchel

shovelling dung out of a closet. Rossa, however, yielded on John O'Leary's argument: "that some four or six of our party had cleaned the closet before me, and my refusing to do it would look like a reflection on their spirit or a presumption of my own superiority." But the temptation to resist became a resolution when to shame and disgust was added insult, studied and continuous. One day his jailer said to Rossa, "You're a man that would suck another man's blood." Rossa complained to the Governor and was told not to be "too sensitive," and the Governor added to the insult, "nothing can make you more degraded than you are." Yet with this treatment Rossa had to stand to attention and salute the Governor. This was the last straw. He says: "While undergoing punishment in solitary confinement, I began to think these salaams meant nothing more than my humiliation, and with that came into my mind all the vile words of wanton insult heaped on me from time to time by Director and Governor, such as—"Do you think I can believe you convicts?" "You're better fed than when you fed yourselves." Rossa resisted, and his resistance culminated in his refusal to salute the Governor. More, he resolved to turn the insult over on the enemy. He tells us: "I had determined when the Governor came for his salute to-morrow to have my slop-pail full of water, and to pitch it right into his face, and once I had made up my mind to do it it was done." The morning came, and with it the Governor. The officer outside cried, "Attention; salute the Governor." The Governor looked through the bars to see where I was, and as he did he got my salute right full in the face. It was the fairest shot I ever saw, and while the water was streaming down his clothes—'That,' said I, 'is the salute I owe you,' and then laying hold of the timber door, I slammed it with a force that shook the building." Rossa could see a touch of humour in his darkest hour, and he does not omit to tell us how the warder cried out to the Governor to console him, "Oh, sir, 'tis clean water." But for this he had to suffer savagely. His hands were handcuffed behind his back from morning till night for thirty-five days, except at meal time, when they were handcuffed in front, which required him to lap his food like a dog.

In these days of dubious atrocities it is well to know that the English atrocities above set down are authenticated by the English Press itself. It all came out at the Commission of Inquiry. "The Spectator" wrote: "It is true, then, we are sorry to say, that the complaints so angrily and persistently made in Ireland for the last three years, regarding the treatment of the Fenian prisoners detained in English jails, have been, if not literally maintained, certainly in their substance justified. . . . In one case, the case of O'Donovan Rossa, punishment was carried to the extent of torture—torture of a novel kind, certainly, but quite as brutal as the boot, and protracted with a vindictive pertinacity unprecedented, we hope and believe, in this century on this side of the equator."

V.—ROSSA'S RESISTANCE. THE MOTIVE.

A few words may be said of the motive and spirit of Rossa's resistance, since his friends at first tried to dissuade him from it. He saw that his jailers were bent on humiliating him in the hope of crushing his spirit, and he says : "I determined that there was one man who would go to his grave before he gave them the satisfaction of seeing they could lash him into submission, by insult, chains, and bread and water." His resistance was studied, well planned, and kept up with astonishing perseverance. The preserving of his spirit unbroken required that he should fight. His temperament made it so, and in the spirit and character of his resistance his temperament is clearly seen. Here he is a contrast to John O'Leary. O'Leary had all the restraint and dignity of a Roman stoic ; he scorned to argue with the enemy. But Rossa had that irrepressible disposition that must, not only act up to but, speak out the truth that is in him or die. To argue with his jailers brought him punishment ; he took every punishment rather than be silenced. He and O'Leary were equal in constancy though the character of their constancy made such contrasts. Another thing to note about Rossa is that with his inflexible determination he united a high good humour. In fact to his disposition to joke in his misfortunes he attributed his life : "To this disposition of mine I believe I owe the fact of my wife not being a widow to-day, for had I given way to passion on every indignity being heaped on me, I would have burned myself up long ago." Where O'Leary would have been cold with withering disdain, Rossa burned with passionate indignation. That was why Rossa had to fight ; and when he began to fight that was why he had to joke. His humour runs all through his resistance. Sometimes as you read of his prison treatment and feel like cursing his jailers for, their savagery, you suddenly catch yourself chuckling at his remarks. On one occasion he was undergoing starvation punishment and the Deputy Governor came to visit him. When the lantern was held into the black hole where he was lodged, Rossa hailed the Governor : "Governor, is there any chance at all of getting eggs for breakfast here ?" But his jailers were hopeless. He was reported for insolence and asking for an "extra breakfast." That was how they took the joke. It is but one of many examples. What we should bear in mind is that Rossa's was no passing misfortune in which many of us might make a virtue of forcing a joke ; we have to remember the implacable savagery he was enduring for years, that for years he was trying without success to get a word of truth to the world—and suffering for every failure, and in spite of it all keeping his gaiety alive : when we think of it, we see how just was Mitchel in paying tribute to the nobility of the man. Kickham, too, among others, paid Rossa his tribute. From his estimate as genuine as Mitchel's, we can take one word which perhaps more aptly than any other single word can be used to sum up the character of Rossá—indomitable.

VI.—ROSSA'S CHARACTER AND FENIAN DIFFICULTIES.

A little further consideration of Rossa's character will throw more light on the man and on some difficulties of the movement. While he had the resolution of a man, he was as open as a child. He was frank with every one and perfectly candid in stating his views. We have seen that where injustice had to be met, he would speak his mind at any cost; and this characteristic appears frequently when there was trouble with the priests over the Fenian oath. Rossa always resented the charge that they were irreligious, and fought with anybody and everybody who brought it forward. He stated the simple truth when he said: "Those who were banded together to fight for civil and religious liberty would be the first to stand in defence of their faith if any foe threatened their altars." On the question of the oath he always held with the view of John O'Mahony expressed in his correspondence which Rossa published in his "Recollections." O'Mahony wrote in 1859: "Our association is neither anti-Catholic nor irreligious. We are an Irish army, not a secret society. We make no secret of our objects or designs. We simply bind ourselves to conceal such matters as are needful to be kept from the enemy's knowledge, both for the success of our strategy and the safety of our friends. I hold that I do not exceed the bounds prescribed by my religion when I swear this, nor shall I ever tax my conscience with it in the confessional." That was the view held generally by fenians. In publishing the letter Rossa writes: "I bring into my book that letter of John O'Mahony's that it may live in the history of Fenianism, to stand against what may be said about the movement being opposed to the Church." But Rossa even went further. He said: "I do not wonder that any priest would turn away from his confessional any Irishman who would kneel at it, confessing to him as one of his sins, that he had taken a pledge or an oath to fight as a soldier for the freedom of his country." But sometimes a priest would put the question himself in confession, and so a fenian could not be sure of escaping the difficulty by simply obeying his own conscience; and many of them were troubled. Rossa, who was faithful to his religion in every difficulty, always sympathised with these difficulties of his comrades. He generally found a way out himself and was glad to record: "It is right also to add that there was no diocese in which there were not many priests to bless the labourers and wish God-speed to the work." In another passage he summed up the situation very accurately: "The majority of them (the priests) are rebels at heart; the minority pro-English. But in consequence of the discipline or of the government of the Church, this minority could speak and did speak; the majority could not speak and had to remain silent." Those who read Rossa's books with understanding cannot fail to see his genuine loyalty to his religion. Little touches bring it out better than long arguments. When he was approaching manhood he became familiar with Davis, Meagher and

Mitchel through their writings and he says: "I well remember how sorry I felt that these men were 'Infidels.' I used to say, what a pity it is, little dreaming that I, in my own day, was to be the victim of denunciations similar to those which were hurled at the '48 men." In his manhood he wrote: "No man can find his way to my heart more easily than the good priest, the soggarth aroon." And in his old age he wrote thus of his childhood: "That time, when I was only a very little boy, I must have been a very big sinner, for I remember the day of my first confession, when I came out the chapel door, relieved of the weight of my sins, and faced the iron gate that stood between me and the main road, I felt as though I could leap over that gate." How many of Rossa's critics would fail to produce so natural and so true a touch as this. I, myself, saw Rossa in his old age going to his Easter Duty in the Cathedral at Cork; and the picture I have in mind of him, then, taken with that picture he himself gives of his childhood, makes for me a perfect picture of the consistent life. Rossa never wavered in his allegiance to God or country. He could speak for eight hours together in defence of his faith as he did at his trial, but he could also condense his faith into a line, as in this: "I believe in God, but I defy the Devil." If we all have as pure a faith as Rossa's and act up to it with as fine a constancy, Ireland shall have no need to despair.

VII.—ROSSA AND THE LANGUAGE.

Rossa was a native Irish speaker. As a child he lived for years with his grandfather and there he tells us his tongue learned to carry the Irish language without any strain. "The Irish language was the language of the house at my grandfather's place. It was the language of the table, the language of the milking baan, the language of the sowing and reaping, the language of the mowing, the "mihal" and the harvest home. The English language may be spoken when the landlord or English-speaking people came the way, but the language natural to everyone in the house was Irish, and in the Irish language I commenced to grow." Not only were there native Irish speakers in the ranks of the Fenians, but there were native speakers and scholars among the leaders; and if the Fenian movement had triumphed, the cause of the language was safe. Rossa had a proper conception of the value of the language. He wrote: "Notwithstanding all that English laws have done to blot Irish history, the Irish people in the Irish language still hold their own. That is why England has tried hard to kill the Irish language." And that is why the first principle of the Language Movement now should be to kill English rule in Ireland. That is the obvious moral. Let those learn it, who at the mention of it

hold up their hands, crying " politics " ; and yet who plead to have Ireland made wholly Irish. For they are very illogical. When Ireland was wholly Irish, Ireland was wholly free.

VIII.—THE LESSON FROM ROSSA.

And what, in conclusion is the lesson to be drawn from Rossa's life ? It lies in that word of Kickham's, indomitable. Where we mobilise in our armed thousands to receive his remains, his spirit cries to us : " Be indomitable." And that resolution should be formed and fixed in every heart if we have caught the inspiration from his soul as we march to the grave with his body which we are privileged and proud to guard. And we should remember that oath of his to make no peace with England as a sacred pledge true to his faith. " I believe in God, but I defy the Devil "—a renunciation of English rule as a sacred necessity like to his Baptismal bond to renounce the Devil and all his works and pomps. This is literal truth. Rossa hated English tyranny as Mitchel hated it, and, like Mitchel, he made no compromise. But, like Mitchel, too, there was no more malice in his heart then in the heart of a child. He never nursed a personal wrong. Even before he left the shadow of Chatham prison he could write like this to a sympathiser, apparently an Englishman : " I should wish to see Irishmen and Englishmen friends as well as neighbours. . . . . No course of life will ever find me fostering ill-will between Englishmen and Irishmen." Like Mitchel, Rossa saw that friendship between neighbouring countries should be natural, but it could only come with the breaking of the political bond ; and against that bond the oath stands. He never ceased to warn his people against English laws, English statesmen, and English promises ; and we are not deceived to-day ; but if ever the disciples of the Lie should send a cloud across our judgment, the voice of Rossa will call to us as it came years ago from the agony of the prison, pleading for truth : " They can lie like Hell." When a phrase, some time used in exaggeration, is suddenly spoken with the utter nakedness of truth, it burns with a fierce meaning. So it is with that cry of Rossa's ; and so we take his meaning to-day. But his torture is now at an end ; and his spirit we can be assured is proud with the pride of the angels, and free and happy. He must be happy, too, to look on us. For we recall the time in early days when he told us how he exhibited a rifle and other weapons on his premises to prove to his timid friends that they were entitled to possess arms ; and now he can see us marshalled in thousands as soldiers and carrying our weapons bravely in the sun. In our weapons lies our assurance for the future : they are the symbols of our faith, our strength and our discipline : they are the pledge of our preparation for battle. When or how that battle may come

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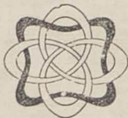
we cannot say; that there will be vicissitudes is probable; but that there can be but one end is certain; and the end is victory. Whatever checks we may yet receive, and for however long, we have won ground that can never more be lost; and the question of Irish freedom is but a question of time. Be indomitable. The battle will come; and with the promise of Ireland's freedom would we not all pray to survive—to survive and proclaim her victory, to assert her greatness, to build up anew the foundations of her glory: that is something to live for—the goal of a life's ambition. But in the battle some must fall. Be indomitable, and who can be sure which is the better part? Think of Rossa, gone to join the spirits of O'Leary, whom he revered, and Kickham whom he loved, and all their comrades; and think of the gathering to meet them of the noble spirits of the earlier years—the martyrs of many a persecution, and the heroes of many a field—we can imagine them gathering together to await the issue of the last fight. Why, then, pray either to stand or fall, when either way we are happy? But pray for courage and constancy. And if we survive, we shall rejoice in putting Ireland, as Lalor dreamed, at the head of the nations: and if we fall, our spirits rising from another battlefield shall be found worthy to enter what must surely be one of the noblest companies of Heaven.

TERENCE J. MACSWINEY.

25/7/'15.



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