

FENIANS.

By John Mitchel.

From *The Irish People*, July 1st, 1865. (Originally from the *N.Y Daily News*.)

It is very apparent, from several indications, that the British Government is uneasy about our friends the Fenians. Not only has the London *Times* composed some elaborately facetious articles to ridicule that organisation, of which it knows nothing whatever, but one D'Arcy McGee, a renegade Irish patriot of 1848, has been sent over as one of the Canadian Commissioners to the Dublin Exhibition, expressly, as it would appear, to abuse Irish national feeling, and cry down, above all things, the terrible Fenians.

There is one sure way in which even an Irish rebel of 1848 can gain the applause of the British press; it is by denouncing his former leaders and proclaiming the stupidity and atrocity of all designs to abolish English dominion in his native land. This McGee's mission to Ireland was precisely the same as the mission entrusted to "Mr. Fudge" in Paris after the peace of 1815. He was to write a book against French principles and in glorification of the British Government; or, as his daughter describes the object of the work in one of her letters to her friend in Ireland:

"To prove to mankind that their rights are all folly.
Their freedom a farce – which it *is*, you know Dolly."

Accordingly McGee, being understood to be ready to abuse heartily the men of Forty-eight, and the Fenians, and in short everybody who preserves the traditions and cherishes the hopes of Irish nationhood, was invested with an official position, by way of cover, and sent over from Canada to Ireland to impress upon his fellow-countrymen the proper British ideas. He delivers a lecture in Wexford, and sends his own special report of it to the Dublin *Evening Mail*, the great Orange organ, interpolating into that report the remarks about "Fenians" which he had not dared to utter. It is scarcely possible to conceive a meaner proceeding than this. "We were a pack

of fools,” he exclaims, “in Forty-eight; but were honest in our folly.” As to both these assertions, there is quite a different impression prevailing among the men who were really prominent leaders in the movement of Forty-Eight; an impression, namely, that this very candid person was *not* a fool, and was *not* honest. So very strongly were they of this opinion, that in New York they unanimously refused to recognize the man. He soon went to Canada, because, he says he was disgusted at the low tone of morality prevailing in New York, and desired to “bring up his children in the moral city of Montreal.” This is his own account of his reasons for migrating across the border and becoming once more a British subject and British slave; but among those who knew him there is a prevailing opinion that there were other reasons for his change of residence, and that as for his disgust at New York that disgust was mutual. However, in Canada, he became a member of the provincial legislature, and soon obtained office as one of the colonial ministers; nobody so sure of promotion in a British colony as a renegade Irishman, except only a meritorious informer; and in the present alarm about Fenianism, this being is naturally employed to go to Ireland and preach it down. The London *Times* is delighted. This is the sort of an Irishman that the *Times* loves – a rational, sensible, practical Irishman, who exhorts his countrymen to submit to Anglo-Saxon dominion, and hold their stupid tongues, for “a pack of fools.” As for the Irish in the United States, he assures his countrymen (to the *Times*’ great delight) that those are “spoiled Irish;” and as for the “Fenians,” they are Bedlamites.

It is amazing what a very large number there are of these same Bedlamites and spoiled Irishmen. The *Times* says that in Ireland the Brotherhood is invisible; and must have used fern-seed; not advertent to the fact that it is not interested to be visible to British eyes at present. In fact, the *Times* obviously knows nothing whatsoever about the matter; not so much as the meaning of the name, which it declares mean *Phoenician*. That journal seems to have learned nothing on the subject, except from a highly sensational and poetic account of the matter given by a New York journal, which deals in “Startling Developments,” but which knew about as little of the affair as the *Times* itself.

Now we could give the London *Times* much information on this subject; could tell it the real meaning of the name “Fenian;” and give a rational account (not in poetry, but in prose) of the true objects of the Brotherhood. But in fact it does not court newspaper publicity at present; it is not a Startling Development, or an immense sensation, jut set. At the first note of war between England and the United States, upon any argument, it will be both the one and the other.

There is, however, no objection to its being known to all the world, friends and enemies, that the Brotherhood is an essentially military organization, waiting for such a war, and bound to use that opportunity to deliver to the British empire one single crushing blow right at the heart, which will make that empire a matter of history, and leave Ireland free. In the meantime, it is right to say that the Fenian Brotherhood in its constitution, its rules and proceedings, violates no law of the free land; and neither causes nor intends to cause any embarrassment to the foreign policy or relations of the United States. There is not the smallest ground or pretext for any demand on the part of the English Government, that the Brotherhood be interfered with, or placed under surveillance in the interests of peace or comity. The “Fenians” propose to themselves nothing more than what is the duty of every American citizen – to be ready for a war with England. If a knowledge of the existence of such an organization make that power reasonable and tractable in its dealings with this country – if an uneasy sense of the dark cloud of “Fenians” induce that insolent nation to yield to every demand, and even to swallow a gentle insult now and then, there will be so much gained in the meantime, and the dark cloud will be gathering still.

COPYRIGHT NOTICE – The transcription of this text originates from the scans of *The Irish People* available on the Villanova Digital Library. As such, this work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License. Please read the terms of the license to understand the rights and responsibilities entrusted to you via this license.

