

# A HEROIC CAPITAL!

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In civilised countries, the cities and towns invariably exercise immense influence over the affairs of the nation. The thoughts and deeds of citizens have far more weight than those of the rural population. Especially in the troublous days of transition, when great social changes are taking place – when old beliefs and old formulas are passing away – when ancient institutions, having done their appointed work, are worn out and tottering to their fall – when, in short, society on the eve of new births heaves with portentous throes – in such times, big with the fate of unborn generations, the dwellers in towns and cities make the destinies of civilised men!

But the capital city of a country frequently, if not generally, has more sway over public opinion, and can do more to decide national action than all the other towns put together. A vast population is brought within a narrow compass. All the talents come together. Great thoughts flash out from the collision of mind with mind. Problems, which bear on the vital interests of society, are discussed. Principles are evolved. Eloquence excites the dense population. The electric thrill of sympathy speedily passes from man to man. The vast mass is quickly set in motion. If it spring to action under the influence of real enthusiasm, it is irresistible, and its example will probably be followed by the nation at large!

Indeed, in highly centralized countries, where there are no permanent local bodies of much weight, the capital is everything. Thus the saying – “Paris is France” has passed into a proverb. This extreme centralization, however, is the parent of great evils. While it enables the executive to act with great promptitude and precision, it arms it with boundless powers to oppress. While it gives vast energy to the capital, in the provinces it tends to destroy all emulation and interest in public affairs – to paralyze all life and spirit. It is true that, in a highly centralized country, you can easily overthrow a tyrannical government, for you have only to get possession of the capital; but,

obviously, liberty is as insecure as the tyrant, for a new despot has only to do the same thing to become, in his turn, the master of the nation. There are no rallying points for popular resistance through the country at large. This state of things, then, where the entire land servilely obeys the behests of the capital, is not desirable. The other towns and the rural population should have at once some local life and a voice in the general affairs of the nation. Still the metropolis may, in all cases, reasonably expect to have a large influence over the thought and action of the country, and, in truth, there are few countries where this, at least, is not the case.

When so much, then, must ever depend on the capital, it is plain there is nothing which a nation should pray more fervently to possess than a heroic capital. With such a guide and example, the nation's thoughts will be lofty and her deeds will be great. Her history will be sublime. On the other hand, if the capital of a country be peopled with men of corrupt and craven soul, the mind and action of the nation at large will, in all probability, be base and cowardly, and her history nothing more than a record of infamy. When a brave capital gives the word and strikes, a nation will win or guard her freedom bravely. The nation that has a dastardly capital is likely to remain or become enslaved!

How grand is the history of Paris since the great revolution! How fruitful for man's good much of her thought and action! And France is worthy of Paris. How noble was Warsaw in the days of KOSCIUSKO, again, how self-sacrificing and glorious in her resistance to the tyrant NICHOLAS! And, recently, what sublime self-denial she showed in her passive resistance to BERG and the other barbarous minions of ALEXANDER! And as Warsaw was, so was the entire Polish nation. The memorable uprising of the Spaniards, which ended in overthrowing the giant might of NAPOLEON, commenced on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of May 1808 in the Spanish metropolis, when the people of Madrid, with the rapidity of lightning, destroyed five hundred French soldiers. In the struggle for Italian unity, the chief cities led the way gallantly, and national success and glory followed. Nor let us refuse praise even to the wild barbaric energy and devotion of the inhabitants of Moscow. In the day of trial and disaster, they gave their sacred city

to the flames, rather than let it shelter the invader. Fired by this tremendous deed of self-sacrifice, the fury of the Russians became irresistible, and the wreck of the hosts of France had no rest till the last Frenchman was hunted from the soil of Russia!

And now, turning to our own island, can we Irishmen boast that we have a heroic capital? Is Dublin worthy of her high place? Are the thoughts of her sons bold and patriotic? When the time shall have come for Ireland's supreme effort, will the men of this ancient city do their duty to Ireland? Will they prove they can act a heroic part? This is a vital question. Fortunate for all Ireland, if they can! Happy for themselves and full of glory! But if, on the other hand, the people of Dublin, in the crisis of their country's fate, should be found wanting in courage and devotion, deep and undying must be their disgrace, and the result possibly fatal to Ireland!

In short, Ireland must now look more or less to Dublin. Long ago it was a Danish city; afterwards it was a mere city of the Pale; but to-day it is an Irish city and the recognised capital of our race.

We believe the men of Dublin *are* true and sound. We believe they will never disgrace the Irish name. In all the struggles of the past century they have had their share. We believe that, when the great day arrives, they will do their duty as valiantly as the men of cities at present more renowned. We trust we shall live to see Dublin brilliant and famous – the worthy capital of a free Ireland! Her situation may not be the best in a military point of view for the capital of an independent country. But, even if a slight drawback exist in this particular, it or worse defects would be neutralized, if the actions of her people gave Dublin a title to be called heroic!

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