

DOUBTERS AND SHAMS!

By Thomas Clarke Luby.

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We have been accused more than once of intolerance and exclusiveness. The accusation is unfounded. We would go out of our way to conciliate any Irishman worth having. On the other hand, it is true, that we have always denounced *false* notions of conciliation and toleration. We think the adhesion of dishonest politicians a misfortune rather than a gain. Many kinds of weakness too, unfit men from rendering the national cause any real service.

There is one class of men, especially, to whom we would ever give a wide berth. We alluded to the doubters. It always vexes us when we hear of a doubter enlisting in the national movement. Unluckily doubters frequently have a sort of half-alive, half-dead patriotism. Do we not every day come across men, who would, indeed, like Ireland to be an independent nation, who, moreover, like to see a national movement set on foot, who are even nervously anxious to join it; but who, at the same time, have no faith whatever in it? At bottom, they think it impossible to deliver Ireland from the yoke of England, but they like talking about it; they love to listen to patriotic speeches and songs; in short, they find a keen pleasure in the excitement of national politics. It is just possible your doubter may have some vague dreamy notion, that some time or other in the distant future, Ireland may, somehow or other, become free. Who knows? Such curious combination of things turn up! And he may farther solace himself with the comforting hope, that the little game of politics, with which he daily amuses himself, may in some inexplicable way form a link of the mysterious chain, which slowly drags on the "good time coming" out of the misty depths of the far-off future!

While we consider these doubters to be, in all probability, a better class than the aspirationists, against whom we warned our countrymen, in a former article, we cannot help looking upon them as exceedingly mischievous. The great evil they do is to sow the seeds of doubt all around them. Wherever they go, distrust is likely to spring

up. As the man of strong belief infuses faith into all, who come in contact with him, so whatever men the doubter gets into close communication with, if they be not in the highest degree faithful and strong-minded, he poisons with hesitations, doubts, and fears unknown before. Your doubter spreads abroad his subtle venom the more easily, because his apparent patriotism oftentimes wins the ears of true men. No doubt it argues weakness in the true men to allow themselves to be thus warped. But even excellent men have weak moments. A rotten sheep is not more mischievous in a sound flock, than among a band of patriots the doubter, who goes about shaking his head in melancholy fashion, and bewailing the poor prospects of "the cause." As doubters never can be got to hold their tongues and keep their doubts to themselves, would to God! they could be persuaded to keep aloof altogether from every real national movement. If they must needs play at politics, let them join sham movements like the Irish National League. There they may find plenty of fun and no danger!

Your doubter is fond of giving reasons for his want of confidence in the cause of Irish independence. He dwells emphatically on the enormous extent of British power. In truth, the doubter is frequently a flunkey, in which case he is sure to believe implicitly in the invincibility of all existing greatness, and equally sure to have no faith whatever in the strength or resources of a down-trodden people. These require to be made manifest to the senses by actual success, before his craven soul can comprehend the fact of their existence. Some of these doubters are also prone to bewail the absence of grandees from the cause of Ireland. This, they sometimes say, makes the success of our case almost hopeless. We have more than once endeavoured to show that, in the peculiar circumstances of our country, our so-called aristocracy, who are virtually English not Irish, so far from serving the national cause by joining it, would, in reality, seriously injure it. We shall at present content ourselves with calling the attention of such of our readers, as might be influenced by the desponding talk of the doubters, to a recent example which proves how much may be done by a people without patrician leadership. When we read the names of the five young chiefs of the late Polish

secret government, who were executed the other day, we find that all, save one, belonged to what flunkeys call the humbler classes of society. The man of highest position amongst them had been no more than a Russian Colonel!

We believe, then, we may safely affirm that the doubter is a nuisance in the national ranks. But there is a class of men more mischievous still than the mere doubters. These are the men who have no earnestness whatever, who join a movement, resolved, at the same time, never in any case to do real work, who ever strive to hold the movement back, who, in short, if things actually came to a practical crisis, would fight shy. Some of these are downright dishonest men, who join from some sordid motive. Others of them, the greater number possibly, are weak and vain rather than knavish. They are idle talkers, who like to delude themselves into the notion that they are conspiring against the Queen and her Government. This tickles their vanity and yields them pleasant excitement. They strive to believe themselves objects of anxiety or terror to “the powers that be.” Meanwhile they would have all dangerous work adjourned *sine die*.

In short, no man should join the National cause, who is not animated by strong faith and fully prepared to brave all hazards. Let us have no ten-table revolutionists, who join a cause while danger is remote, who love at once to frighten and fascinate weak girls by “tall-talk,” but who sing small when danger pops on them. He who joins in a national struggle incurs the most serious responsibility. It is a terrible thing to trifle with your country’s welfare and to sport with men’s lives. The conduct of cowards, who join a movement to gratify their petty vanity and then, in the day of danger, shrink into concealment, tends to lead brave men to destruction, by giving them false notions of the support they may reckon on in a bold enterprise. The blood of the brave, who perish so deceived, is on the head of the recreants who deceive them. Wise leaders, however, will be sure to see through the hollow professions of sham-patriots and calculate the strength to be relied on in a struggle.

Far better it were, in a struggle for freedom, to have but 300 true men, on whom you could rely for support to the last drop of their blood – who, if called upon, would conquer or die with you, like the 300

unforgotten heroes, who perished with LEONIDAS at Thermopylae – better, a thousand times, such a small band (worth their weight in gold) than 30,000 doubters or shams. What better are such adherents than the vilest caitiffs?

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