

LETTER TO THE NATION

From *The Nation*, 14 February, 1863.

Among the recent batch of correspondence captured by our government on the person of Mr. Saunders was one addressed by John Mitchel, one of the Irish rebels of '48. The letter is addressed to the *Dublin Nation*, and commences by telling how he escaped into Virginia. He arrived incog. at New York, and proceeded as fast as possible to one of the Southern counties, where he, in company with two officers of the rebel army, crossed the Potomac, "close by four gunboats, and under the bows of a Yankee revenue cutter." He extols the people of the lower counties of Maryland, says they are loyal to the core of the rebel conspiracy, and that they are constantly smuggling contraband goods to their friends in the South. Mr. Mitchel says that north of the Potomac there is no law, and he was in doubt all the time whether he was in America, or Poland, or Venetia. Of course, the down-trodden and humiliated people of Maryland engage a great portion of the writer's attention, and he cannot find words enough to extol them for their patience and Southern patriotism. Richmond he finds very little changed, and that the Irish citizens are giving a hearty support to the government. The letter concludes with the following: -

There are, as I learn, about forty thousand Irishmen in the Southern army; but they are distributed, as they ought to be, through all regiments and all arms of the service, and have never been formed into an Irish brigade. They do not pretend to fight this American quarrel as *Irishmen*, nor do they desecrate the name nor prostitute the flag of Ireland at all. As for the Northern Irish, who seem to have got themselves persuaded that the enfranchisement of Ireland is somehow to result from the subjugation of the South, and that the repeal of one Union in Europe depends on the enforcement of another Union in America, our friends here do not well understand the process of reasoning which leads to that conclusion; nor do I. They call those Northern Irish, as well as all the other Northern forces, by the one

general name, *Yankees*; and indignantly protest that the green bunting under which Irish brigades have chosen to march to the invasion and subjugation of the South, is not the banner of Ireland at all – merely one of the Yankee insignia. In all this I agree with them entirely. Nobody has the right to unfurl the colours of Ireland in a war of invasion and plunder and coercion. These Irish at the South have never pretended to mix up their native country in the struggle; they indulge in no Fontenoyism; they flaunt no sunbursts! they display on their banners no round towers, wolf dogs, or crownless harps; but go a-head quite simply, under the stars and bars of their adopted country, to defend their own homes and hearths from a host of greedy invaders. If they should be ever overpowered and defeated, Ireland, at least, will not be dishonoured in *their* persons. But they have no thought of being defeated; and I will sum up my impression by declaring my conviction that this Confederacy can never be conquered.