

OUR PATRIOT PRELATE.

By Charles Kickham.

From *The Irishman*, 15 November, 1862.

We were glad to see WILLIAM SMITH O'BRIEN and J. B. DILLON acquiescing to the resolution, in reference to the projected statue to O'CONNELL, that the great Tribune should be honoured as the "Emancipator of the Catholics." This acquiescence came with a peculiar grace from Messrs. O'BRIEN and DILLON, remembering the implacable enmity with which what was called the Young Ireland party was pursued by some who proclaimed themselves, *par excellence*, the adherents of O'CONNELL. We are sure our readers will understand us – and will require no words of ours to elucidate the paradox – when we say we are even more gratified by the protest of Archbishop McHALE against the same resolution.

"As for myself," writes the illustrious prelate, "well knowing O'CONNELL's sincere aspirations to restore its Nationality to Ireland, and the epitaph he was most anxious to have inscribed on his tomb, I cannot be a party to any resolution to ignore on any monument of his, this most striking feature of his character." He believes that such a resolution would imply the abandonment of O'CONNELL's struggle "to restore his country to the dignity of a nation, of which it had been stripped by fraud and coercion." He further declares that this aim of the great Tribune's life would have been crowned with success "had he not been opposed by some of the very men now so loud in praise of emancipation, *but whose fathers were fiercely opposed to him in his labours for that measure.*"

The great Archbishop of the West has ever been true to Ireland – has ever upheld, through darkness and sunshine, her claim to that independence, to which, by right, and national endowment, she is entitled.

The aspiration of our people for a distinct National existence, which defeat and persecution and centuries of sufferings have failed to extinguish, has always found in him a constant and a courageous apostle. He has never bent the knee to BAAL, or sighed for the flesh

pots of Egypt. He has never fawned upon the oppressor and begged for favours or emolument, in order that aspiring relations might bask in the smile of power and receive the slave's pittance from hands red with "the periodical slaughter of the people." He has never, from a weak expediency, justified successful treachery; nor flung the shelter of his sacred mantle over the betrayers of the people. Nor has JOHN of Tuam ever sought to brand patriotism as a crime. For all this his name is a household word in every clime where an Irish heart beats true to the old land and the old faith. And millions of Irish hearts swell with emotion at the thought – that if Heaven so willed it that the children of our race who have "gone with a vengeance," should return to lift their bleeding motherland to her feet, the hands of, at least, one anointed bishop would be raised in prayer to the Lord of Hosts for the success of the most righteous effort for freedom and life ever made by a people, since the waters of the Red Sea closed over the baffled task-masters of the chosen people of GOD.

The longing for the restoration of their long-lost freedom, and their fealty to the faith of PATRICK, are so closely entwined in the heart of the Gael, that we do most firmly believe they will never flourish apart – that they must live or die together. We are tempted to relate her an incident which occurred at the Synod of Thurles: -

The assembled Prelates in their robes were moving in solemn procession from the college to the cathedral. Hundreds of people knelt upon the ground, to whom the bishops imparted their benediction as they passed. One fine looking specimen of an intelligent Tipperary peasant was observed to have knelt down repeatedly, starting to his feet as the procession passed, crushing his way through the crowd and again kneeling with clasped hands and eyes rivetted upon the holy men who were every moment approaching nearer to the cathedral door. It was evident to all who watched the fervour and anxiety depicted in the peasant's fine manly countenance, that he had some object in view which he dreaded might escape him. At length he sprang forward into the line of the procession and flung himself down before the two Archbishops in front. Only one of the Archbishops observed him and held out his hand to give him his benediction, when the peasant flung up his arms and exclaimed, while his frame shook

with emotion – “Not you, my lord – ‘tis Dr. McHALE’s blessing I want!!” Dr. McHALE turned quickly round, and while he prayed over the prostrate man many a lip quivered and many an eye grew dim – for the little drama had a deep meaning; and the cry of the peasant was an echo from the heart of Ireland. Yes, religion and the aspiration for freedom are indissolubly bound together in the hearts of the people. But it is too plain, now, that we cannot exist much longer upon *aspiration*. Therefore the aspiration must become an accompanied fact, or the grave is fated to close at no distant day over an ancient nation.

Well, let us hope for the best, and labour. Let us remember that the classes who scoff at Nationalists today were opposed to O’CONNELL in his struggle for Catholic Emancipation; and that until he had rallied the democracy around him, he found them, as WOLFE TONE found them, “in love with their chains.” Let us base our hopes and plans upon “that most respectable portion of the community, the men of no property.” In them, and in the right arms of our exiled warrior brothers, lie the strength and the hope of our land. And, haply, the day may come when the statue of O’CONNELL, and of many a sage saint and hero besides – amongst them the statue of one whom the great Tribune thought it no impiety to designate “the lion of the fold of Judah” – shall be lifted in the gaze of a nation in the full fruition of that priceless liberty, of which they were confessors, and the martyrs, and the soldiers.

sliað-na-mban.