

THE CRIME OF POVERTY.

By Jeremiah O'Donovan Rossa.

From *The United Irishman*, June 24, 1882.

The English robbed the Irish, and having pauperized them, made poverty a crime. Then, the Irish were a proud people, and made desperate efforts to hide their poverty, and no greater offense could be given to one of the old stock than to have poverty thrown in his face – ‘twas the worst *aspuchaun* that could be thrown at him. We belong to the “ould stock;” there is not a drop of any blood in us, at father or mother’s side for generations, but Irish blood; and we inherit the pride and poverty of the race. But to have that poverty thrown in our face, after battling with the world for fifty years – and battling during the greater part of those fifty years against the powers that plundered our people – is a thing we will not quietly stand. And then the men that throw *aspuchaun*, at us – are men who are notoriously as poor as ourselves, men who have sworn to be loyal to England; who have sworn to uphold English rule in Ireland, and who have sworn to make known to England all combinations and conspiracies against the maintenance of English rule in Ireland!

No reader of this UNITED IRISHMAN can say that we have ever spoken an ill word in this paper against Mr. Healy, member of the English Parliament, or against Mr. Dillon, member of the English Parliament, and yet those two gentlemen have the ill manners to go into the Parliament House of England and there strike us in the most sensitive part of a proud Irishman’s person – strike him in his pocket – and proclaim, publish it to the world that we have no pocket at all – that we never had a pocket! ‘Tis true, and pity ‘tis ‘tis true, but we might have had a pocket, if we were as sensible as Mr. Dillon or Mr. Healy, and we will venture to say that more money that was never earned by the spender of it went into Mr. Dillon’s and Mr. Healy’s pocket during the past three years than went into our pockets during the past thirty years that we are struggling in Irish life. O’Connell said that a man who put himself heart and soul in the Irish cause was sure to die a pauper, and it would be well if these two young parliamentary

gentlemen had learned something of O'Connell and his life before they had entered on the burlesque game of trying to get liberty for Ireland by *talking* in England. We met Mr. Dillon in Philadelphia a few years ago; we were speaking with him, and we left him thinking he was very innocent – very “green.” In reply to a question of ours as to what in the world did he expect from “agitation” in that London Parliament, he told us that he thought they could shame England before the world into doing justice to Ireland. Mr. Parnell was present. We could only smile, and say we hoped Mr. Dillon would live long; and if he did, we were sure he would grow out of such a notion. And we were hoping lately that Mr. Dillon's recent experience had educated him out of those silly ideas of his. But it seems we are mistaken; his abuse of us is not personal; we don't take it as personal – we don't feel it as much. It is simply a kind of vexation on his part that there are a few men here in America who are standing very much in the way of agitators and humbugs, and that we are among the few.

We said last week, in connection with the “dreams” and delusions of Davitt and others, that we excepted Mr. Dillon and Mr. Parnell from any unpleasant remarks we were called upon to make. Mr. Parnell now stands alone. Were he allowed to follow his parliamentary course, unhandicapped by the Davitts and others who once swore it was by the sword alone Ireland could be emancipated, we could enjoy the joke of his giving all the annoyance and trouble to England that it was possible to give; but when he recruited himself from the Davitt breed, and made demoralization in the ranks of the revolutionary element of Ireland and England, then we could see nothing in the parliamentary patriotism but disaster.

The following two paragraphs are what have provoked us to make our remarks; this is a telegram:

LONDON, June 5. – New interest was developed to-night in Committee on the Crime Prevention bill, owing to the contention of the Irish members that the jurisdictions of the new court should not extend to trials for treason or treason felony when the acts were done or the words spoken outside of Ireland. This limitation was strongly resisted by the government through Sir William Harcourt, who declared that it was necessary to extend the jurisdiction of the court over all cases where a judge and jury would have jurisdictions. In order to

strengthen this view of the case he cited O'Donovan Rossa and stated that if there were only one reader of Rossa's paper the Crime Prevention act would necessarily deal with him. This statement provoked an irreverent demonstration from the Irish benches. Mr. Healy, in reply, taunted Sir William Harcourt with advertising Rossa for his own purposes. He said that Rossa's paper would have been dead three months ago if Sir William Harcourt would refrain from making attacks. He concluded by saying that Rossa was as necessary to Sir William Harcourt as Sir William was to Rossa.

And this is part of a speech delivered by Mr. Dillon in the House of Commons, as we find in the *Freeman's Journal* of May 20:

THE COERCION BILL.

In the House of Commons, on Wednesday, the adjourned debate on the motion for going into committee on the Prevention of Crime (Ireland) bill was resumed by Mr. Dillon, who, referring to an amendment he had put on the paper, but which he was precluded from moving, namely: "That in the opinion of the House the provisions of the bill were mainly aimed, not at crime, but at political agitation, and if passed into law would render impossible any public combination for protecting the rights of labour in Ireland, and were consequently calculated to drive the oppressed poor in Ireland into secret combination and crime." Criticising the provisions of the bill, and referring to the press clause, he stated that the only colour given to the complaints against the Irish press was that one or two of them had quoted extracts from THE UNITED IRISHMAN, edited by O'Donovan Rossa, a man who increased his income by furious attacks on the English Government, who was always on the verge of bankruptcy, and whose newspaper was only kept alive by the denunciation it was continually receiving in this house. (Hear, hear.)

Of course there was "Hear, hear," from the Englishmen, for Englishmen know very well that it is the action advocated by us that will root the Irish people in the Irish soil and root the English out of Ireland.

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