

GRAVESIDE ORATION AT TERENCE BELLEW MACMANUS'S FUNERAL.

By Thomas Clarke Luby.

From *Recollections of Fenians and Fenianism* by John O'Leary,
1896. Oration given at Glasnevin Cemetery, 10th November,
1861.

Fellow-countrymen,—A few months ago the sacred treasure we have just committed to the hallowed soil of Ireland lay in a grave thousands of miles away by the waters of the vast Pacific. We have raised him from the grave, and with feelings that no king has ever won—could ever command—have borne him over a continent and two seas—the greatest space over which the dust of man has ever been carried by the faith, love, and power of his kind. Oh! that some voice could have whispered in the dying ear of MacManus the prophecy of this unparalleled honour to his ashes! For even you, who, in the teeth of oppression, have with a sublime tenacity clung to the home where first you felt a mother's love, cannot realise the anguish of the exile doomed to die and leave his bones for ever in a foreign land. On his soul, if not the basest of his race, the shadows of death close in, trailing unutterable agonies.

Oh, God! that this should be the fate of any Irishman! much more of one who lived and died for Ireland! Yet this was the doom of many a noble patriot of our land. Alas! they fell in evil days. But now, with almost half her sons in arms, and all the others chafing in the chains, the stricken mother takes her latest martyr to her breast. Who can challenge his right to rest there, honoured and revered? It has not been left for me to tell—it has been often and eloquently told, and it is known to all—how for Ireland MacManus felt and strove, suffered and died. Who can forget how—a type of devotion, valour and constancy—he, at the call of duty, spurned beckoning fortune, and hurried where his spirit saw fame and victory weaving their crowns of

glory on our hills. And when the vision mocked his eager faith, and hard reality stood there to try his soul, he never blanched or wavered. Unawed by danger—unmoved by argument or entreaty—to the last he remained faithful to his country and his chief!

Who can forget his manly bearing in the dock, the convict ship, and the penal settlement? And when, by a bold and honourable effort, once more a freeman among the free, he shows himself still the same—faithful to the people, believing in them, loving them, devoted to them. He would rather take blame to himself than let fall a word that might slime the manhood of our sacred isle. I feel bound to signalise another proof of this man's truth to Ireland and to himself, as well as of scorn and defiance of the enemy of his race.

Far from seeking, or allowing others to seek, pardon for what he believed the glory of his life, every attempt to intercede for him he repudiated with strong disdain. A freeman, or a soldier bringing freedom, he would return to the land that bore him, else would he never see her shores again. He never saw them more! but even when disease was fast breaking down the stalwart frame, he spoke of Ireland, constantly asking, 'Is there any hope?'

That coffin speaks of more than hope to-day, for it gives us faith and stern resolve to do the work for which MacManus died. What honours could over-guerdon the worth of such a man? Great, however, as we know that worth to be, and deeply as we love and revere his memory, it is not to the individual patriot that this national funeral, with all its grandeur and solemnity, has been accorded. In our minds out there the spirit of Irish liberty when hand in hand with the spirit of the dead. We would honour the patriot, but at the same time we would know if the assertion—loudly reiterated by some, however stoutly and repeatedly denied by others—were true that the Irish people have proved false to their history, their destiny, not only to aspire after freedom, but to toil for it, battle for it, suffer for it, till they clasp it to their hearts for ever.

We believed that the funeral of MacManus would test the truth. If the Irish people—we reasoned—fail to honour this man, we shall look on them as a doomed race. If, on the other hand, they show the feeling and power we would fain believe vital among them, then shall

we return to our brothers rejoicing, confident in our country's future, and for ever and in all ways bound to the cause for which MacManus died.

Well, having seen with our own eyes, we are convinced that the Irishmen of to-day are true as any of their predecessors. We have always been so sure of our brothers in America that what we saw in New York gave us no surprise. It is only about the men at home that we could have had a doubt at all; and sometimes on the broad Atlantic, recollecting our assembled might in the Empire City, the question would recur—Has our faith been built on shifting sands? On Sunday last this question was settled for life in the city of Cork, for in presence of the feeling, power, and order witnessed on that day, the sceptical would be also base. Here I beg to allude to an incident of such touching beauty that I shall never think of it without a fresh delight.

At midnight a large body of men met at the Tipperary Junction the train that was bearing the hallowed dust. No voice or stir of any kind was heard, but all, uncovering their heads, knelt and prayed awhile. Then they rose, and, with heads uncovered and the silence of the dead, they remained in their places till the train drove away, when they knelt again, and so we saw them praying with earnest reverence till we were borne out of sight. A great and solemn greeting awaited the martyr's ashes at the Dublin station, where three to four hundred men, with uncovered heads and in reverential silence, stood ready to convey the funeral car to the hall in which the sacred treasure has since lain in state. The thousands that day and night, during the whole week, flocked to this sacred shrine, gave promise of the multitude—in numbers, still more in feeling and order, never equalled in the capital of Ireland—that to-day has followed MacManus to the grave.

Fellow countrymen, you have accomplished a great as well as a holy work this day, and I congratulate you with all my heart and soul, leaving to the future the unveiling of its full significance. I shall now but call attention to the fact, perhaps the greatest in our history, that from beginning to end it has been the work of the people alone. With the knowledge of your power this grand result should teach you the great, the essential virtue of self-reliance. You have hitherto proved yourselves fully equal to the conduct of your own affairs. Why did you

ever doubt your capabilities? You, the strong of heart and arm, are also strong in intellect—in the practical faculties needed to complete your task. Employ these faculties wisely—without noise or bustle—and with untiring persistence in the interests of your country, and the day for which our fathers yearned, struggled, fought and suffered cannot now be very far off.