

government to decide what they want and then do it. A large part of liberty consists in the right of decision as to whether we shall do a thing or let it alone.—Prof. W. G. Sumner, of Yale.

ROBERT EMMET, LEADER OF A FORLORN HOPE.

A lecture by Rev. H. S. Bigelow, of the Vine Street Congregational church, Cincinnati, O., delivered January 15, 1899, being the third of a series of five lectures on the subject: "Leaders of Forlorn Hopes." From the author's MS.

Macaulay, in language wonderfully suited to a modern application, has said: "Many politicians of our time are in the habit of laying it down as a self-evident proposition, that no people ought to be free until they are fit to use their freedom. The maxim is worthy of the fool in the old story who resolved not to go near the water until he had learnt to swim. If men are to wait for liberty until they become wise and good in slavery they may indeed wait forever."

A traveler of the sixteenth century, in commenting on the provinces of Lower Austria, said: "In them there are five sorts of persons, clergy, barons, nobles, burghers and peasants. Of these last," the writer significantly adds, "no account is made because they have no voice in the diet." This is the universal testimony of history. No people have ever yet had their rights respected who have not first established their right of self-government. The experiment has always failed. Those circumstances never yet arose when it was safe for one people to intrust their liberties to the guardianship of another. That nation never lived, no matter how advanced or enlightened, that could safely be intrusted with the liberties of any other people, no matter how weak or benighted. When a man arrives at years of discretion it is conceded that it is best for him to exercise his own judgment and be left free to determine his own conduct. A man may sin, he may prostitute his God-given powers, he may throw his life away, yet even God himself has not seen fit to lay the least straw in the way of such a man, or to curtail in the slightest degree his right to think his own thoughts and live his own life. To do so would be to destroy his manhood. To do so would be to deprive him of his only hope of becoming a man.

Nations are collections of individuals. It is just as disastrous to a nation to deprive it of the right of self-government as it would be to the individual to take from him the right of free choice in matters pertaining to his private

conduct. No matter how good government may be, if it is not self-government, it fails in its chief end; for the end of government is the development of the character of a nation; but without freedom character is impossible. This observation has much to do with present day politics, but what has it to do with the life of Robert Emmet?

My words will be idle indeed if I do not make it clear that Robert Emmet died for this principle, and only for this principle, that all just government must be derived from the consent of the governed, and that all government not so derived is tyranny, resistance to which is obedience to God. If I were to dip my pen in the blood of Irish patriots and write across the sky the meaning of Irish history I would have to write those words of Thomas Jefferson: "Governments derive their just powers from the consent of the governed;" I would wish to write them there as a warning to those so-called statesmen whose fashion it is to sneer at that principle; and I would hope that those words might flame across the sea, a beacon light to those who are fighting to be free. Every page of Irish history is bespattered with the blood of her martyrs, and in that dismal record may be read the history of England's colossal failure. One does not know which is the more wonderful in that story, the heroism with which that unhappy island has fought for her freedom, or, the infatuation with which England has persisted in the exercise of a dominion that is a failure in the eyes of the civilized world, and as unprofitable to herself as it is hateful to Ireland. I do not see how any man can turn from that history without offering up the prayer that his country might be saved from a similar infatuation, and that every island of the sea might learn from Ireland's sad experience the folly of surrendering their liberties for an hour.

What were Ireland's grievances? In the first place, she had a religious grievance. The vast majority of the Irish people were Catholics, yet as Catholics they were denied any voice in the government. They were not permitted to enter any of the professions. They had no vote and could hold no office. They had not even the right of educating their own children. They could be banished for life for refusing to attend Protestant churches. How did it come that a people that made up the vast majority of the population should have been thus proscribed by the laws of their land? Because Ireland was ruled not by the people of Ireland, but by a bigoted old king and by a bigoted Prot-

estant parliament which sat in London and had nothing in common with their subjects across the Irish sea.

But Ireland had another grievance. She suffered from English landlords, in whose interests laws were enacted as prejudicial to the welfare of the people as the laws which proscribed the faith that was dear to the people's hearts. Well might Dean Swift suggest that Irish babies should be fattened for the tables of the landlords who devoured as their right the substance of the people. Every improvement which the tenant put upon his farm, thus increasing the value of the land, was made the occasion for a rise in the rent. If he refused to pay he was promptly evicted. The law allowed him no compensation for the labors, perhaps, of a life time. "Summer or winter, day or night, fair or foul weather, the tenants were ejected. Sick or well, bed-ridden or dying, the tenants—men, women or children—were turned out. They might go to America if they could, or they might die on the roadside if it so pleased them. They were put out of the hut and the hut was unroofed that they might not seek its shelter again, and that was all the landlord cared about. The expiring tenant might, said Mitchell, "raise his dying eyes to heaven and bless his God that he perished under the finest constitution in the world." The Irish patriot cried out: "We wish to let the world know that we are slaves, but not contented slaves. We protest against this intolerable tyranny and denounce to the world the hypocrisy of England in pretending to be the friend of freedom and of oppressed nationalities."

It is estimated that between the years 1847 and 1857 nearly a million people left the country. Evictions occurred by the thousands yearly. In 1880 it was found that 2,110 families had been evicted. In 1881 and 1882 over 3,000 were evicted. The population of Ireland in 1845 was 3,000,000; in 1880 it had been reduced to 5,000,000. Was not John Bright right when he declared that the Irish people were dispossessed of their soil? In 1880 Gen. Gordon, of Chinese fame, traveled through Ireland. When he returned he declared that the condition of the Irish people was worse than that of any people in the world, let alone Europe. "I believe," said he, "that these people are made as we are, that they are patient beyond belief, loyal, but at the same time, broken spirited and desperate, lying on the verge of starvation in places where we would not keep our cattle." Furthermore, Justin McCarthy tells us that the Irish peasant is convinced in his

heart that the land is his; that the landlord to whom he pays his rent and the agent to whom he touches his hat are alike, whatever their nationality, the representatives of a hostile rule; of a coercion which is no conquest.

Well, if the Irish peasant was convinced that the land belonged to him, why did he not change the laws by which he was torn from the one spot on earth he had learned to love and turned loose by the roadside to beg or starve or steal? The simple answer is that the Irish had no voice in making the laws or changing them. England very graciously did that for them, or, rather, for their landlords. What wonder this island was a network of secret societies? What wonder it was like a smoldering bed of fire always breaking out anew, always pouring forth its hot but ineffective indignation against the masters who laid upon them such burdens? What respect could we have for Ireland if her sons had not raised the torch of insurrection and welcomed even the gallows in preference to such servitude? Against that dark background of English hypocrisy, against the century of blood and crime, there is one redeeming feature, one glorious sight; it is the spectacle of the Irish patriot bidding defiance to overpowering armies in the face of certain defeat, stimulated by each new martyr who gave his life to the cause, rising again and yet again to demand that sacred right of self government without which they could hope for no relief from the intolerable burdens which England with protestations of kindness and paternal care had put upon them.

One of the noblest of the men who were put to death for demanding that Ireland should have a voice in her own government was Robert Emmet. Ireland had once a parliament of her own. That parliament was abolished at the close of the last century. At its last meeting it passed what is known to history as the act of union. By this act the Irish parliament was abolished. Henceforth Ireland was to be ruled from London. Why was this done? Says Justin McCarthy: "I say with grief and shame that it is my own conclusion and my own conviction that the main object of the Irish legislative union on the part of those who planned it and brought it about was to depress and weaken, and if possible to extinguish the spirit of Irish nationality." But why did the Irish consent to the abolition of their parliament? They never did consent. But their representatives in parliament were bought up by as shameless a piece of bribery as history knows. We have

not time to dwell on this disgraceful chapter. It is a plain fact, however, that England deliberately conspired against the liberty of the Irish people and accomplished the overthrow of their parliament by the use of enormous bribes. Maybe some Irishmen were foolish enough to think that England would rule them better than they could rule themselves. England made beautiful promises. But the hidden motive was the desire of the English landlords to make Irish land laws to suit themselves, and the desire of the Protestants of England to suppress the Irish Catholics. But from the first this union was odious to every patriotic Irishman, and from the hour in which the act passed the perjured parliament all that was good and true in the nation consecrated itself to the effort to secure the repeal of that infamous bill.

When this parliament met in the year 1800 Emmet, a young man 22 years of age, sat in the galleries. The excitement was intense. An uprising was feared. Nothing, however, occurred except that those who were still true to their country vainly opposed with all the scornful eloquence at their command the passage of the bill. Among these Irish patriots who strove in vain to save the national parliament was the great orator, Grattan, already an old man, who had come back from his retirement to hold up to scorn and contempt this infamous transaction, making an epoch in the history of Irish oratory by the scorching invective with which he impeached the false members of the parliament. How the blood of Emmet must have tingled in his young veins as Grattan declared that "the treason of the ministers against the liberties of the people was infinitely worse than the rebellion of the people against the minister."

... Emmet was a traitor. He had failed. Yet, how great was his success compared with those who had purchased seats of power by selling their country's liberty. How great was his success compared with those who were too prudent to follow his example. . . . We may get a few glimpses of the young patriot as he awaits his trial. One morning as the keeper entered Emmet asked him if he had any news from his mother. He was quietly informed that his mother was dead. Died of a broken heart, now that her last son was to be offered up on the altar of English despotism. Emmet turned his head with a sigh. "It is better so," said he, glad, doubtless, that she had escaped the pain of the experience that awaited him. Again we see the young

man in the gloom of his cell quietly braiding a lock of golden hair. And yet again we see him. An angel form appears before his prison door. It is Sarah Curran. Let us turn from that scene. How those stony walls must have softened at the sight. The last press of the lips. The last silent look of love. And then the doomed man quietly led her, who, next to Ireland, was dearest to his heart, to the door where they parted forever.

Finally the hour of trial came. So hopeless was his case that he did not even try to defend himself. "I am arraigned here," he said, "as being engaged in a conspiracy against the English government in Ireland. I avow it; I am a conspirator. For that I am to undergo the penalty of the law and to answer for my intentions before God. I am ready to do the one and the other."

While asking no mercy, while not deigning to offer a reason why he should not suffer the penalty of the law, he used his opportunity to answer some of the false charges which had been made against him. One of these charges was that he had conspired to deliver Ireland over to the French. France and England, it must be remembered, were at war. Emmet expected promised help from Napoleon. But it was with the understanding that Napoleon was merely to assist in establishing Irish independence. His position was precisely analogous to that of Aguinaldo to-day who has welcomed the aid of Americans to establish independence for the Philippine islands. Emmet had expected France to help Ireland just as she had helped the American colonies to throw off the English dominion. But they charged him at his trial with having conspired to hand Ireland over to France. To this charge he replied in words that are graven on the hearts of every Irishman. We applaud his words to-day. It is always easy to sympathize with the patriot who struggles against despotism when that despotism is not our own government or when that patriot in no way opposes us. But I am not telling the story of Emmet's life for your entertainment. I shall have told it in vain if I do not make you feel that the principle for which he died is just as sacred now as it was then, just as applicable to the Philippines as it ever was to Ireland. It is easy to state principles and to enthuse over them, but it is not so easy to apply them. It is my opinion that these martyrs would not care for the plaudits of men who were unwilling to pay them the tribute of putting their principles into prac-

tice. Lest we deceive ourselves, therefore, and think that we honor Emmet, while in reality we are turning against the very thing for which he gave his life, let us take those immortal words of the Irish patriot and put them in the mouth of Aguinaldo. I will not change the speech of Emmet's in the least. I will only substitute in a single place in the speech the word "Americans" for the word "French." Suppose Aguinaldo were on trial before a Spanish tribunal on the charge of having conspired to turn the sovereignty of the Philippines over to the United States of America.

And suppose that, in denying this charge, he had used these identical words of Emmet. Would we applaud them? That is the test of our loyalty to the pure principle of liberty to-day. Let us hear, then, what this modern Emmet would say. "Were the Americans to come as invaders or enemies, uninvited by the wishes of the people, I should oppose them to the utmost of my strength. Yes, my countrymen, I would advise you to meet them on the beach with a sword in one hand and a torch in the other. I would meet them with all the destructive fury of war. I would animate my countrymen to immolate them in their boats before they had contaminated the soil of my country. If they succeeded in landing, and if forced to retire before superior discipline, I would dispute every inch of ground, burn every blade of grass, and the last entrenchment of liberty should be my grave. What I could not do myself, if I should fall, I would leave as a last charge to my countrymen to accomplish; because I should feel that life more than death is unprofitable when a foreign nation holds my country in subjection."

Let him who cannot cheer that sentiment waste no tears at Emmet's grave. Let him rather take the headsman's ax and strike this fairest of Irish patriots to the earth; for so in spirit every man does who questions for a single moment the right of any people to rule themselves. Only last week Gen. Shafter said to a sort of a Y. M. C. A. club in the city of Washington: "My plan would be to disarm the natives in the Philippine islands, even if we killed half of them in doing so." A member of the senate has expressed the belief that the Filipinos will never consent to become a dependent colony. In this same week a newspaper in our own city threw off the mask of hypocrisy and frankly argued in its editorial columns that the principle that just government could only be derived from the consent

of the governed was an old foggy notion. The ghost of Emmet rises in condemnation of this age. Let us not sully the reputation of these martyrs by our unmeaning praises. Let us take our rightful places by the side of those whose hands are stained with the blood of martyred patriots and frankly remain there until we repent of our apostasy and return to our old love, until we can claim once more the honor of believing in liberty, not for ourselves only, but for all mankind. . . .

THE GRANTING OF FRANCHISES UNDEMOCRATIC.

I feel constrained to announce myself as being unalterably opposed to any grant of municipal franchise for any purpose whatever, and I take this position as a matter of principle.

I maintain that the idea of granting franchises to private individuals or corporations to minister to, a city in social necessities is as wrong in scientific theories as it is mischievous and destructive of what is best in municipal life in practice.

The whole idea of granting special privileges to a few people to make profit of from all the rest of the people is undemocratic, and consequently is opposed to and stands in the way of progress toward the realization of our loftiest and best ideals—the equality of all men before the law. * * *

Private ownership of public franchises is a high crime against democracy. It is contrary to the spirit of republican institutions. It is a city granting a privilege to an individual to enrich himself, usually at the expense of the classes least able to bear it, the poor people.—Mayor S. M. Jones, of Toledo, Ohio, at Cooper Union, New York.

ONE OF FRANKLIN'S STORIES.

A gentleman received a letter, in which were these words: "Not finding Brown at hom, I delivered your meseg to his yf." The gentleman, finding it bad spelling, and therefore not very intelligible, called his lady to help him read it. Between them they picked out the meaning of all but the yf, which they could not understand. The lady proposed calling her chambermaid, "because Betty," says she, "has the best knack at reading bad spelling of anyone I know." Betty came, and was surprised that neither sir nor madam could tell what yf was. "Why," says she, "yf spells wife; what else can it spell?"—From Letter by Benj. Franklin, quoted in *The Century*.

Prof. —, a leading light of Edinburgh university, recently wrote on the blackboard in his laboratory:

"Prof. — informs his students that he has this day been appointed honorary physician to the queen." In the course of the morning he had occasion to leave the room, and on returning found that a student had added to the announcement the words: "God save the Queen!"—*Household Words*.

"What is a fraction?"

"A part of anything, sorr."

"Give an example."

"The sivinteenth of June."—*Harvard Lampoon*.

"The millennium will be a hard time for the cynics, if there are any left."

"Oh! I don't know. They can spend their time demonstrating that it can't last."—*Puck*.

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