

LET EVERY IRISHMAN READ IT!

A POEM

FOR

ST. PATRICK'S DAY,

1870.



*"And must thy lyre, so long divine,
Degenerate into hands like mine."*

WRITTEN BY P. M. KING.

AND DELIVERED BY HIM AT THE BANQUET GIVEN AT THE
OCCIDENTAL HOTEL, ON THAT DAY.

SAN FRANCISCO:

ALTA CALIFORNIA PRINTING HOUSE, CALIFORNIA STREET,

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a. m. c., Aug. 1871

DEDICATION.

To his friend, countryman and kinsman,

DENIS J. OLIVER, ESQUIRE.

of San Francisco, at present in Rome, the following lines are dedicated, as a slight mark of esteem and respect to his many virtues as a quiet, unobtrusive gentleman, practical Christian, and warm-hearted Irishman,

BY

P. M KING.



PREFACE.

In publishing anything, however poor the effort, it is customary to write a Preface; and as I do not desire to be looked upon as an innovator in any sense, or lest I might be considered discourteous in any manner, I follow the custom. I shall not commence by excusing myself, *qui s'excuse, s'accuse*, but I shall endeavor, in plain language, to explain my reasons for appearing in print on this occasion.

On my arrival in San Francisco, after a short trip in the country, a few days previous to the 17th, I saw the programme for the day published, and it occurred to me that it would not be out of place for an Irishman to write a few verses for the anniversary of Ireland's patron saint. Acting on this impulse and governed by this motive, I wrote, hurriedly indeed, the lines which I recited at the Occidental banquet, which have been so kindly noticed by the manly, generous press of this city, and which, at the request of a few friends, I now publish.

As to the poem itself, if it deserves the name, I am aware that it has many imperfections; but, if intentions count for anything, I may put in my claim, as I can conscientiously declare my object was to arouse my countrymen to a proper sense of what I believed to be the cause of their political degradation—petty jealousy of one another and dissension among themselves. This I endeavored to point out in rather indifferent verse. I repeat the attempt in equally indifferent prose. With regard to the allusions to the ladies—God bless 'em—why, I only rendered the homage to the sex which is innate, which is born with every Irishman. With reference to the allusions to this great country and to her immortal Hero,

I but feebly indeed expressed what I felt, and what I am sure every right-thinking Irishman feels on that subject.

One word more and I have done. It is to express my regret that it did not occur to any of my gifted countrymen to write a Poem for this anniversary of our patron saint, so as to have spared so feeble a pen as mine. I am fully aware that in this city there may be found one hundred Irishmen more capable than myself, and from whom we should have had something really readable, had they given the matter one hour's thought.

One other word: I made a kind of half promise to the friends already alluded to, that I would add a few trifles in the way of stray verses, which, from time to time, during leisure hours, I have sent to some of the journals here. But, on reflection, I do not think this pamphlet is exactly the place for them. The following lines were written for a special purpose, and I hope, if they do not "adorn a tale," they will at least "point a moral." I may, on some future occasion, redeem my promise by including the verses, should this waif which I now cast forth meet with the approbation, not of those friends, for of their kind indulgence I am certain, but of the more general class for whom it was originally written. At present I shall not try

"Their patience further than by this short sample,
'Twere well if others followed my example."

SAN FRANCISCO, March 21st, 1870.

POEM.



THE SAINT'S DAY.

Irishmen! once more our day has come round.
This day our people greet where'er they're found,
Whether in the palace, or the humblest cot,
To them 'tis all the same. It matters not.
To-day; they ne'er feel weary, sad or faint,
For 'tis the birthday of our patron saint!

THE LAND WE LIVE IN.

Friends and fellow-countrymen! we meet again,
To-day, as *Irishmen*, as *countrymen*!
We meet not in our own old Shamrock land,
But here, on the Pacific's distant strand;
Not in our own Evergreen Isle, 'tis true,
But here in a land that is always new.

Where Nature ever smiling seems to be,
 Bounteous alike o'er Land and Sea.
 This fertile soil, which you may truly call
 The land of plenty, with *liberty* for all!
 Here in this land, but once so nobly won
 By Freedom's first of heroes—Washington!
 Ever sacred name! Thy banner when unfurled,
 Proclaims at once—Freedom to the world!

BEAUTY OF IRISH WOMEN, PAST AND PRESENT.

We meet to-day, not as your sires of yore
 Met the presumptuous Dane, on Erin's shore—
 When Brian's stalwart arm, with mighty sweep,
 Hurl'd back the proud invader to the deep;
 Not in the glory of those good days of old,
 When a "Malachi" won and wore his collar of gold;
 Not like them, in far-famed Tara's hall,
 To the mirth-resounding music of the ball—
 As lords were revelling with ladies bright,
 Whose eyes outshone the stars in heaven by night.
 But, in this sense, we are not yet undone,
 For here, to-day, is many a lovely one,
 With eyes as bright, and hearts as pure and warm,
 As any of those ancient heroes e'er did charm!
 Yes, my friends, it may be loud narrated,
 The beauty of our women has not degenerated,
 States may fall around them—perish, if you will,—
 But they, thank heaven, oh! they are lovely still.

This is a fine hall which you fill to-day,
 Oh, that 'twas your own hall, so far away!
 Your Hall of Parliament, once grand in every sense,
 Whilst echoing forth a nation's eloquence ;
 The hall which held your country's foremost rank,
 But now degraded to a paltry bank.
 That grand old hall, debased by Britain's yoke,
 The hall where Curran, Plunkett, Grattan spoke—
 Oh ! that these names we could again renew !
 Oh ! for such another year as Eighty-Two !
 Have we no living poet to diffuse
 The spirit of that one year by his Muse ?
 Are we at once of Fame and Hope bereft ?
 Is there not one spark of the old fire left ?
 Where is the music native to your land ?
 Gone, forever ! with each once mighty hand
 That touched the lyre in those bygone years,
 Which roused a nation's volunteers.
 Glorious Year ! the heart, it turns to you,
 My Country's one year—immortal Eighty-Two !
 Of all the years since * "Chaos was ended" or begun,
 Since or before, † Ireland had but that one.

* "Chaos was ended." This is the commencement of a Poem written by Mr. W. H. Rhodes, for St. Patrick's Day, 1869. I wish I could truthfully apply the expression to Irish affairs. That I cannot is but too evident. If any have doubts on the subject, I recommend them to read Mr. Bernal Osborne's Speech, just delivered in the British House of Commons.

† On that year, Ireland leaped from her place in the bed of the ocean and advanced one step nearer to the Sun.—*Meagher*.

IRISH TRIALS AND SUFFERINGS WITH NATIONAL
CHARACTERISTIC.

She's had, alas! her time of trial, shame and sorrow,
Her night of death without a coming morrow,
Ages of misery, so deep, so dire,
That they should set the tamest heart on fire.

'Twere vain, 'twere vain, that I should now rehearse
The story of her wrongs in idle verse.
To sum that sad list, even in the mean,
Would take me from this day till this day comes again;
And even then I should have left unsung,
Many who have nobly bled or were ignobly hung,—
Whose greatest crime, and that they dared to tell,
Was loving Ireland! not wisely but too well.
There is not one town or city in that land,
Not one house or castle, field or strand
On yon lone isle, so blest by Nature's God,
That has not felt the proud usurper's rod.

Alas! alas! it boots not now, to say
What deeds were done on each eventful day.
High Heaven, it saw them. I shall not describe
The valiant prowess of each gallant tribe,
Though I have read them all; aye, every one,
From glorious Clontarf to Slivenamon;
One feature all present, there is no denying,
From Brian Boru down to Smith O'Brien.
Here I assert it; it is no lie to fame—

'Tis Irish bravery, ever still the same.
 The same it ever has been, all o'er God's earth,
 For 'tis your heritage, born with your birth.

CAUSE OF IRELAND'S MISFORTUNE.

Why lost your cause then? I will tell you why.
 I'll speak the truth; let who dare deny.

The cause of all your misery and tears,
 The death, the worse than death, of these long years,
 Your estates sold, your altars overturned,
 Your brethren exiled, spat upon and spurned,
 What you have lost of glory and of fame,
 Your country's desolation, grief and shame,—
 All that we have borne, more than I can mention,
 All, all, has been owing to your own dissension.

Dissension was within you, on your flanks;
 Dissension foiled your leaders, thinned your ranks;
 Dissension stamped its curse upon the brow;
 Dissension made you powerless then, as now!

FUTURE GREATNESS OF IRISHMEN AT HOME AND
 ABROAD PREDICTED.

I am no prophet, but I hear a bird that sings,
 A bird with heavenly voice and angel's wings;
 I note its warblings, I listen to its lays,
 And as I construe, this is what it says:

Dissension helps out every wrong ;
Dissension never yet was with the strong ;
Dissension baffled Freedom has made sigh :
Dissension is the tyrant's best ally.
Cast out this demon ! fling it far amain !
And then your greatness comes to you again.
Great you will be on every land and sea,
Great in the nations struggling to be free,
Great in great deeds, among great men the great,
Great in your morality, in your estate,
Great in yourselves, your rank, your station,
Great with the greatest in this great nation,
Great forever, on every shore and strand,
And Great once more in dear old Ireland !

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