JOHN MITCHEL
AN APPRECIATION
WITH SOME ACCOUNT OF YOUNG IRELAND

P. S. O'HEGARTY

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TO
MY MOTHER

PREFATORY NOTE

This sketch of Mitchel was written originally in 1903 as a lecture, and was revised and enlarged for serial publication in 1912, in which latter form it is now printed with a few minor emendations.

It is impossible to touch at all on Mitchel's life and work without touching also upon the Young Ireland movement, while at the same time it is quite impossible, within the scope of this book, to do detailed justice either to Mitchel or to Young Ireland. The reader must therefere bear in mind that this is meant to be primarily an appreciation of Mitchel's policy and actions during that most poignant of our national crises of the nineteenth century: and not a history. The writer has been more concerned to put Mitchel in what he considers to be his proper place, as the greatest and wisest of the Young Irelanders after Davis, and therefore to fasten on the incidents (*e.g.*, the Confederation Split), which most profoundly affected national policy at the time, than to give anything in the nature of a history. That is to say, the reader is presupposed to possess some knowledge of the general course of events during the period dealt with.

The quotations have been taken in all cases from

the original reports, and leading articles, in the *Nation* and *United Irishman*, and many of them have not previously been printed in book form.

There will be found, I daresay, the perennial critic to ask why some account has not been given of the relations between Lalor and Mitchel, and of the influence which Lalor had on Mitchel. I have made a careful study of both men, and of their writings, and in each case from the original newspapers, and I think it is a fallacy to hold that Lalor was in any way responsible for Mitchel. The utmost that his letters to the Confederates may have done is to accelerate an evolution that was steadily on the way. Mitchel's evolution from the moderate patriot who was caught by Davis to the revolutionary leader of 1848 was natural and inevitable.

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JOHN MITCHEL

CHAPTER I

PRELIMINARY

It is forty odd years since the body of Mitchel was laid to rest in Irish earth, and it is more than seventy years since he first raised his thunder-shout in the ears of an astonished people. In those seventy years we have travelled far on many roads, on any road save the road along which, as Mitchel saw and preached, salvation lay. The practical politicians have "advanced" us almost to the "not far distant day" of our boyhood, and each "advance" has bound us more and more to the British constitution, while pretending and appearing to slacken the bonds. The unpractical politicians have kept the soul of the nation, as a thing apart from an oratorical and mouthy manifestation of it, alive, and so it is that still there are people in the land who believe in "the policy of me, J.M.," and who cannot be blinded by any snug shibboleth which has its basis or its conditions in an acceptance of any bond with England. Mitchel's body is dust, but his fierce spirit, his scorn and hatred of England, his contempt for her constitution and her statesmen, his belief in man's essential manhood, these things have remained overground, and we do not forget them, nor do we intend to. Clear and resonant above Tenant League Parliamentarianism, above Sadleir and Keogh, above Home Rule ancient and modern, above all the corruption of the Irish body politic which the last thirty years has seen, above it all rings a voice, crying to the multitude as it cried sixty years ago, "No good thing can come from the English Parliament or the English Government." "All legal and constitutional

agitation in Ireland is a delusion." Ireland is, in short, governed, not by "law," but by the sword. And as our grandfathers hearkened to it seventy years ago, John, so we hearken to it to-day.

Very rarely, indeed, it is given to a nation to have born unto it a hero-soul, a spark of the divine fire, a hater of shibboleth and shibboleth-makers, a tearer away of the mask from cant and hypocrisy and expediency, an eternal deadly enemy of simulacra. By their deeds shall ye know them, the hero-souls, theirs is no acceptance or admission of defeat in a righteous cause, no paltering with compromise or debasing expediency, theirs it is to raise the people and guide them on the rugged, true path, the thorny but honest path, rather than on the smiling, false path, the path garnered with roses, which leads but to abasement and moral corruption. Theirs it is to live by the fixed principles of truth and justice, rather than the weather-vane principle of expediency; theirs to go down with the ship rather than be saved without it; theirs to gain the calumny and the sneers of contemporary wiseacres, but theirs also the eventual justification, eventual victory, the victory of truth over untruth, of principle over its negation. Not by bread alone do nations live, not by clothes nor respectability, not by the name of nationality but its substance, not by instalments of nationality served up with claptrap, not by loud-voiced screechings or profuse self-conceit, but by the hard reality of hard work and sacrifice, "The truth, in God's name and the Devil's," blood and iron and strength of soul. The hero-soul comes to point out the way, to give example himself, to do as he preaches, and a people sunk in the abyss will crave inwardly for light and leading, for a man to lead them out of a prevailing darkness into the light and sanity which is theirs by right, and ultimately the hero-soul is born of their travail, bone of their bone, and flesh of their flesh. Not his comfort nor happiness nor ease, but expiation of

the sins of his people, expiation, and at the same time scourging.

Ulster, rugged, stalwart Ulster, the last stronghold of Irish Independence, the province which gave to Ireland her greatest leaders and to England her greatest disasters, gave us also Mitchel. He was born near Dungiven in 1815, his father a Unitarian Minister, who had been a United Irishman in his time. When he was about seven years old the Mitchels moved to Newry, with which town Mitchel is more particularly associated. He grew up a nature-lover, a lover of mountain scenery, and especially a lover of rivers, to whose music he was never tired of listening. Like most people of strong character, he was solitary and self-contained, fond of long solitary rambles over the mountains, especially at night time. One can imagine how this habit of constant rambles, this close communion with Nature at its best, the mountain solitudes with nothing but the moon and the pale stars, and an occasional scurrying cloud, and the cadences of rivers softly running in the distance, the whistling of the wind through trees, and all the indefinable, unutterable things that throng the night time in the Irish country places, moulded and formulated the intensity of his character, its freedom from the grosser modern elements. In his youth he showed no special intellectual promise, though he was very quick at his studies, but he was a lover of books rather than a student of them. His father destined him for the Church, but John had no vocation—what an astonishing parson he would have made—and finally he chose the law as his profession, was duly admitted a solicitor, married in 1837, and practised at Banbridge. And there he was in 1840, settled with his wife and family, keeping up a close friendship with John Martin, discussing literature with him to the huge delight of both, and bidding fair to develop into just a little better than the average lawyer. There were then no national politics, no

national party, to remind him that he had a country which needed him more than law, to arouse his fierce wrath against injustice and tyranny and hypocrisy sitting in high places; and though he and Martin followed the Repeal Association idly, neither of them dreamed of it as a National movement or of themselves as part of it. But at the end of 1842 Mitchel, on a visit to Dublin, met Davis, and a strong friendship was the result, a friendship which drew Mitchel into the Repeal Association and Young Ireland. When we think or speak of the Young Ireland movement our thoughts go naturally and inevitably to these two, Davis and Mitchel. The other men in the movement are some of them brave figures, and all of them honest, but these two colossal figures overshadow them. And in their personalities and their work they represent exactly the two sides of the movement, Davis the educational side and Mitchel the militant side. Some men concentrate in themselves the hopes and fears of their generation, and Davis and Mitchel embody the best of the emotions and hopes and possibilities generated in Ireland in the forty odd years since the Union, the one, earnest, thoughtful, universal, essentially constructive and tolerant, the other fiery and passionate, a scorner of lies and hypocrisy, a prophet, a trumpet-call, the very embodiment of that militant Nationalism which gets in him its most perfect expression. Both men possessed to a high degree the gift of personal magnetism, and both prized sincerity and truth above all else. Well, it was forced into Mitchel's mind that behind O'Connell and his brawling agitation there was another force, another Party, which worked for a broader and freer Ireland: it was forced upon him that the common people of Ireland were also his people, that they were a people in bondage, bondage of the body and bondage of the spirit: and that it was his duty to do one man's part in freeing them. Davis it was who pulled Mitchel

into Nationalism, as he pulled in also most of his comrades. "It is very safe to say," writes Mitchel, "that to the personal influence of Davis, to the grandeur of his aims, to his noble tolerance, to his impassioned zeal, and the loving trust which all generous natures were constrained to place in him, the Association was indebted, not for O'Brien only, but for Dillon, McNevin, Meagher, O'Gorman, Martin and Reilly; and to the same influence they were indebted for their fate, pining captivity, long exile, death in madhouses, or foreign graves. Yes, to them and hundreds more he was indeed a Fate, and there is not one amongst them, still alive, but blesses the memory of the friend who first filled their souls with the passion of a great ambition and a lofty purpose."

The remainder of Mitchel's career is mixed up so effectively with the Young Ireland movement that no separation of the two is practicable, and for the proper understanding of that it is necessary to take a bird's eye view of Irish history for the fifty years previous. Induced by promises of full emancipation, which Pitt never intended to realize, the Catholic Aristocracy and Bishops kept the people comparatively quiet during the Union fight, and then busied themselves in formulating slavish petitions to the Westminster Parliament. In this, of course, they represented only themselves and not the people who, during the eighteenth century, had minded their own business and built themselves up again around the language, a building up which was threatened as each relaxation of a penal law opened up further preferment to Catholics—the price being the learning of and thinking in English. The Protestant middle classes, who had been the revolutionary element since 1775, now developed into the Ascendancy Party, the Aristocracy became Absentees, the Seoinin Catholic Aristocracy kowtowed and presented petitions, which the English Parliament treated as they deserved; until Keogh and O'Connell rallied the common people in a

great organization which performed practically all the functions of a government over three-fourths of Ireland —the Catholic Association. Catholic Emancipation was passed "to avoid civil war," passed because of the threatening aspect of the people, and because of the certainty that if it were not passed it would be forced, aud much more with it. And the manner of its passing outweighed any dubious advantages it contained, for it gave the people the delusion, carefully fostered by O'Connell, that moral force and constitutional agitation within the law were the essentials. Emancipation carried, O'Connell devoted himself to what he termed "Repeal of the Union" when the Tories were in office and "Justice" when the Whigs were in office. In 1839, the Whigs being in office, he framed the "Precursor Agitation," which demanded "justice," and in 1841, the Whigs being out of office, he formed the "Loyal National Repeal Association," which demanded Repeal. And with this Association we come to the connection of Davis and Duffy and Mitchel with Irish Nationalism.

CHAPTER II

YOUNG IRELAND AND O'CONNELL

For some time after its formation the Repeal Association was just the same as O'Connell's previous Associations—it did nothing but pass resolutions and make speeches and provide a framework for O'Connell to work upon; but in 1841 Davis, Duffy, Dillon, and others of their friends, students and barristers mostly, joined it. They took no prominent part at first, confining themselves to Committee work, though O'Connell for his part felt afraid of them from the beginning, and on the 15th October, 1842, they founded the *Nation* and gave Repeal its great impetus. In the Association they had gathered to themselves those members who were of the intellectual type as apart from the merely oratorical, and had become even in a short time a recognized force; but through the *Nation* newspaper they now reached the Nation itself, and reached units of it who never did, and never would, listen to the declamations of O'Connell and Steele and the others who were his echoes. Obeying O'Connell loyally as the chosen leader within the Association, they pushed their own educational policy in the columns of the *Nation*, and concentrated all their energies on the awakening of national self-respect and national pride, the fostering of national education, national literature; they sent nationality like a whirlwind into every corner of the land, into every atom of the nation's life which they could influence. They vindicated the men of '98, slandered by O'Connell foully, and while they did not openly oppose O'Connell's subservience to British Royalty, his constant drinking of "The Queen and the

Royal Family," the whole tendency of their work and the whole spirit of their lives and their writings was antagonistic to any connection whatever with England. They gradually restored to the people the conviction that it was not immoral to work for an Ireland wherein English law or suzerainty would have no place, they checked O'Connell's arbitrary power by creating a public opinion which was patriotic enough and intelligent enough to exercise its will irrespective of his wishes, and by their enthusiasm and high principles, by their campaign in the *Nation*, their preaching of courage, truth, work, and ideals, they made of the Repeal Agitation the essence of a National movement. They found the Irish people thoughtless and careless, a supine mass will-less in O'Connell's grip, suffering his changes of policy, his shameless coquetting with the English Whigs, his bargaining with them for patronage, without a murmur; and in one short year they roused them out of that death, despite the prevalence of cant and mob oratory, despite the sinking of Nationality into minor and unworthy things, despite the break in the tradition of an independent Ireland, they brought it home to thousands in the Association and outside it that beyond O'Connell there was the Irish nation, for which Tone and Emmet and Fitzgerald had died. They found Ireland divided into three divisions —the first obsessed by England, the second by O'Connell and by the "practical" conceptions of patriotism for which he stood, and the third, the greater of the three, cynically indifferent to their country under any aspect; and they strove and toiled to shake them all up and unite them in the common bond of their common Nationality.

The impetus given to Repeal by the *Nation* had resulted in a vast increase in the membership of the Association, an increase which came from all classes, and all over the country there were local branches, with Repeal wardens and Repeal Reading Rooms and

Repeal Meetings. The Government accordingly began to grow anxious, especially as France and America began to notice it and to back the Repealers up. All over Ireland the people organized, and read the *Nation*, and declared for Repeal, and gave unstinted support to O'Connell. Finally Dan was carried away by the prevailing enthusiasm, projected a series of monster meetings, so that Nationalist Ireland would have all met and declared for Repeal, and announced that this was to be the Repeal year (1843). He meant these meetings as demonstrations to Government of the strength of the feeling behind Repeal, as threats to them that he would utilize that material against them, while he really never intended, and they knew it, to do anything but demonstrate. At the same time there is little doubt that a great many of the people believed his moral force attitudinizings to be just bluff, and they came to many of their meetings with their hearts ready for anything. At this time he led them even as Napoleon led France; they would have followed him with naked arms against bayonets. And his greetings to them were cunningly contrived to kindle their patriotism and give them the impression that he meant fight. He threatened fight only because he believed that Government dared not risk it, but they had taken his measure and they did risk it, for the risk of Repeal was a much greater risk. At Mallow, for instance, addressing a meeting of 500,000 people he said:—"The time is coming when we must be doing. Gentlemen, you may learn the alternative to live as slaves or die as freemen. . . . We will violate no law, we will assail no enemy; but you are much mistaken if you think others will not assail you. (A Voice—We are ready for them.) To be sure ye are. Do you think I suppose you to be cowards or fools?" And later, in the same speech, he said:—"Are we to be called slaves? Are we to be trampled under foot? Oh! they shall never trample me, at least. I say they may trample me, but it will

be my dead body they will trample on, not the living man." It was of course impossible for the whole of the multitude to hear him, but they knew they were there as a demonstration of strength, and not in order to listen to speeches, however admirable; and to this Mallow meeting, and to the subsequent meeting at Tara Hill where between half a million and three quarters of a million Leinstermen assembled, they marched and stood in position with the discipline and confidence of trained soldiers; until the English press began again to shout "more Irish disaffection" and to call for measures for the "safety of the Empire." The final monster meeting was announced for Clontarf, and Government resolved to strike. On the Saturday night before the meeting—which was on Sunday—they proclaimed it and posted horse, foot and artillery to command the ground at Clontarf. It was the test. "For O'Connell and the Committee of the Repeal Association," wrote Mitchel, "there were but two courses possible—one to prevent the meeting and turn the people back from it, if there was still time; the other was to let the people of the country come to Clontarf—to meet them there himself as he had invited them, but, the troops being almost all drawn out of the city, to keep the Dublin Repealers at home, and give them a commission to take the Castle and all the barracks, and to break down the Canal Bridges, and barricade the streets leading to Clontarf. The whole garrison and police were five thousand. The city has a population of two hundred and fifty thousand. The multitudes coming in from the country would probably have amounted to almost as many; and that handful of men between them. There would have been a horrible slaughter of the unarmed people without if the troops would fire on them—a very doubtful matter—and O'Connell himself might have fallen. But those who have well considered the destines of Ireland since that day may reasonably enough be of the opinion that

the death of five or ten thousand men at Clontarf might have saved Ireland the slaughter by famine of a hundred times as many shortly afterwards." O'Connell's decision was to cancel the meeting and send them back —then to congratulate them on having kept the peace, and to taunt the Government with what he termed their failure to induce the people "to commit the crime of rebellion." He orated and blarneyed and pretended to regard the whole thing as a great victory, while the enemy laughed and knew the Repeal Association was no longer dangerous, and the young men went about with gloomy faces and desperate hearts, and Davis wrote in the *Nation*:—

Earth is not deep enough to hide the coward slave
who shrinks aside;
Hell is not hot enough to scathe the perjured wretch
who breaks his faith.
But calm my soul! we promised true; her destined
work our land shall do.
Thought, courage, patience will prevail; we shall
not fail! we shall not fail!

This was the turning point in the Repeal movement. Although it makes a big figure for some years afterwards, it was never again dangerous or effective; the Clontarf business had drawn its sting, and O'Connell, having had his moral force smashed to atoms by the Clontarf guns and bayonets, never afterwards attempted a monster meeting or any other demonstration which would be in any way provocative. He carried on the agitation because he could think of nothing else to do, and would not admit defeat, but everybody knew it was a broken weapon. To the Young Irelanders, to the *Nation* Party, now turned all the intellect of the movement. Duffy and Davis determined to stay in the Association and not to have a break with O'Connell, although he now used all his efforts to drive them out

of it. He knew that he had failed, and he knew that they knew it, and he resented their creation of a public opinion which he could not control, their creation of a paper which had helped him more than he cared to acknowledge, above all their determination to pursue their own policy whether he helped or hindered, and their undoubted ability. They, too, knew that there could not again be effective co-operation between them, but they knew that he was an old man, while they were in the early thirties, and they shrank from a quarrel which would have split the Association. They devoted themselves, therefore, to the work incidental to the *Nation*, literature, history, education, etc., waiting until such time as they could take the Association into their own hands without any opposition. And, as it happened, this was a fatal mistake. It gave O'Connell a free and undisturbed field in the Association for his moral force deliveries, which he clung to more fiercely the more thoroughly they failed him, and eventually they found themselves with a starving, fever-swept people on their hands, and a people so demoralized with sayings like—"He who commits a crime, (*e.g.*, eats his own corn) gives strength to the enemy." "The liberty of the world is not worth the shedding of one drop of blood," that they could not be galvanized into manhood. They could not foresee the death of Davis and the demoralization of the Starvation, and they gave O'Connell too much rope. Had they broken away after Clontarf, or after any of his many attempts to drive them away, attacked his moral force cant, and founded the "Irish Confederation" in 1844 instead of in 1847, they would have put enough manhood into Ireland to prevent the Starvation of 1847, and they would have taken the field finally, at their own good time, with an armed nation at their back.

CHAPTER III

THE DEATH OF DAVIS

The Government followed up Clontarf by arresting O'Connell, Steele, Duffy, and others of the prominent Repealers on a charge of conspiracy. They were of course found guilty and sentenced, but the English House of Lords quashed the sentence on appeal on a technicality in the indictment, and O'Connell had another opportunity to gloat over a Pyrrhic victory. Three weeks earlier they would not have dared to arrest him, but Clontarf gave them his measure and they feared him no longer. It is true that Clontarf and the conspiracy trial were followed by a numerical accession of strength to the Repeal Association, by the accession, amongst other notables, of William Smith O'Brien, but it is undoubted that the backbone of the movement was broken, and that the Government no longer feared it. It had reached that point at which an aggressive movement, a popular movement, must strike or perish, and it had preferred, or O'Connell had preferred, to perish. Although its numbers increased, and its finances, it was only a make-believe agitation compared with what it had been, and all the virility it possessed was gathered around the Young Irelanders, to whom the British press now began to devote its particular attention. O'Connell, too, began to turn his attention to them, for he found that he could not do things without taking their influence into consideration. After Clontarf he could never stimulate himself to do anything definite, he just talked generalities, mostly abusive, and hung on desperately to the agitation in the hope that something would turn up. His grip upon

essentials seemed to slacken, and he was prepared to consider proposals which, before he found out that the Government meant fight before Repeal, he would have scorned. At one moment he backed up a project propounded by Sharman Crawford that Ireland should accept Federalism, a solution which fell as much behind Repeal as it was in advance of the present Home Rule solution, and which was the first watered down solution propounded on behalf of either Nationalists or '82 men. But after a very able and stinging letter from Gavan Duffy in the *Nation* O'Connell found the tide rising against him, and threw over Sharman Crawford as rapidly as he had embraced him. But he did not forgive the Young Irelanders, and he encouraged the campaign of slanders which John O'Connell, petty and little-minded, engineered against them, to the effect that they were Atheists, anti-Catholic, and what not, and took advantage of every opportunity possible in the Repeal Association to quarrel with them, and to draw the line sharply between the Old Irelanders, as he called his own party, and the Young Irelanders. He had never been accustomed to criticism from within the ranks of the Association, or to opposition even on a minor question, and he could not stand it now, more especially as the critics were usually in the right. When the *Nation* ridiculed his statement that the quashing of the conviction by the House of Lords was a miracle, he grew religiously indignant, and thus furthered the infidel myth, and when the Young Irelanders objected to the introduction into the Repeal discussions of such subjects as "the authenticity of miracles" and the "horrors of negro slavery," as being things with which Repeal had nothing whatever to do, he tried to force a quarrel also. and intimated to them that they might leave if they liked. Then came the "godless colleges" question, upon which he openly attacked them and widened the breach beyond repair. A Bill was introduced to establish colleges at Belfast,

Cork and Galway—afterwards established as the Queen's Colleges—non-sectarian, and with power to all sects to endow Professors of Theology, and it brought a storm of controversy. Providing as it did for the intermingling of Catholic and Protestant, Davis and his comrades accepted the Bill, but O'Connell promptly christened it the "Godless Colleges Bill," and fought it with all his strength, making it an excuse for an attack upon the *Nation*. "The principle of the Bill," said he, "has been lauded by Mr. Davis, and was advocated in a newspaper professing to be the organ of the Roman Catholic people of this country, but which I emphatically pronounce to be no such thing. The section of politicians styling themselves the Young Ireland Party, anxious to rule the destinies of this country, start up and support this measure. There is no such party as that styled 'Young Ireland.' There may be a few individuals who take that denomination on themselves. I am for Old Ireland. 'Tis time that this delirium should be put an end to. Young Ireland may play what pranks they please. I do not envy them the name they rejoice in; I shall stand by Old Ireland. And I have some notion that Old Ireland will stand by me." It was a breach, a practical breach, although there was no open breach for two years. Davis, who rose to reply, was so moved by the situation that he burst into tears, saying that he and his friends, "in their anxiety to co-operate with O'Connell, had often sacrificed their own predilections, and never opposed him, except when they were convinced in conscience that it was a duty to do so." That attitude was precisely the most injudicious attitude to adopt towards O'Connell—to turn the other cheek. What he wanted, to keep him reasonable, then and at other times, was an active and persistent and fearless criticism from his own side, and not too much christian forbearance. He did not understand christian forbearance, and very probably despised it.

At any rate the reconciliation which Davis tried so hard to effect, did not operate outside that meeting. The infidelity campaign grew in volume and in intensity, and the Young Irelanders went to the Repeal meetings less and less as time went on, busying themselves in their educational work, and in the well-known "Library of Ireland," the first volumes of which were at this time in the press.

And just then came death, death in the most fatal attack. Just when the land wanted wisdom and sagacity, understanding and resolution, strength and leadership, when it wanted all that Davis had to give it, Davis died, and Ireland was left without her strongest son to fight Starvation, as two centuries before she had been left to fight Cromwell without Owen Ruadh O'Neill. It is difficult to write calmly or dispassionately, even now, of the death of Davis. One can only feel, as the Young Irelanders felt at the time, stunned and appalled at the awfulness of it. It is so unnecessarily brutal and inexplicable. Why? Why? And that is as far as one can go. With his brief illness the fate of Ireland stood in the balance, and his death sent the balance to the wrong side. It is safe to say that had Davis lived even five years longer there would have been neither indecision in the counsels of Young Ireland nor a split amongst their ranks. He held amongst them the same position which Parnell held in our day amongst the Parliamentarians. He held them together, informed them, inspired them, told to each what work he ought to be doing and made him do it. He radiated Nationality from his personality and coloured them with his mentality. He was their chosen leader, the leader of a group of intellects the like of which Ireland has not seen since, and he had just that shade of superiority of capacity and intellect, which we may term genius, to give him undisputed right to leadership and to make them concede it as a natural right. He was their natural leader, holding both the

moderate and the revolutionary minds under his influence—disciplined units of a Party—which was both moderate and revolutionary in its effects, as he was himself, getting the best out of them all and welding them into one great progressive force. When he died in 1845, the unity and homogeneity of the Party died, as happened to the Parliamentarians after Parnell: there was no leader, no rallying mind, no central directing impulse, and consequently a tendency to disagree, to dissipate energy, a slackening of effectiveness. Mitchel was the one commanding intellect left, and he had up to then been a silent member, writing merely two or three articles in the *Nation* and his "Life of Aodh O'Neill," about to be published, but his genius was for the leadership of a revolutionary party, a forlorn hope if you like, but an attacking party, not for the moderate revolutionary party which Davis was forging: and the result was that finally the Young Irelanders found themselves split off into a moderate party, and a revolutionary party, and that the enemy won once more.

Davis had been the chief political writer of the *Nation*, and Duffy invited Mitchel now to come up from Banbridge and take his place on the paper, an offer which Mitchel accepted at once. He came into Irish national journalism with a style peculiarly his own, a bounding lyrical pulsating and passionate style which even today carries the reader away. And henceforth his pen may be found, biting and passionate and logical, all over the paper. Even in his earliest writings may be found the framework of that outlook of his which he afterwards expanded to its full in the *United Irishman* and in his "History," and the "Last Conquest." In this preface to the "Life of Aodh O'Neill," he says, referring to the Northmen: "And are not Derry and Enniskillen Ireland's, as well as Benburb and the Yellow Ford? And have not these men and their fathers lived, and loved, and worshipped God, and

died there? Are not their green graves heaped up there; more generations of them than they have genealogical skill to count?" And again with his biting irony: "And if any reader shall see a striking similarity in the dealings of England towards Ireland then and now; and if such reader shall recognize the policy recommended by Bacon, directed by Cecil, and practised by Mountjoy and Carew, in the proceedings of certain later statesmen of England; and if (which is not impossible) he shall arrive at the conclusion that the bitterest deadliest foe of Ireland (however peopled) is the foul fiend of English Imperialism; and further, if he shall draw from this whole story the inevitable moral, that at any time it only needed Irishmen of all bloods to stand together in order to exorcise that fiend for ever, and drive him irrevocably into the Red Sea—*surely it will be no fault of the present writer.*" This spirit Mitchel put into his *Nation* leading articles, and side by side with it went the other work which Davis and Duffy had planned and begun: the educational propaganda which owed much to Duffy, the pushing of the Library of Ireland series, the making of ballads, and the general outlook, not forgetting to keep a sharp eye on O'Connell and the Repeal Association.

There John O'Connell had been surpassing himself, and when in the American House of Representatives a member of Irish descent proposed that "the House favourably receive any proposal from the Irish people to be incorporated in the American Union," John said that "rather than see Ireland independent and polluted by sending representatives to a Congress that sanctioned negro-slavery, he would prefer to see her overwhelmned and submerged forever by a swelling and upheaval of the wild Atlantic Ocean." This was a further driving in of the policy by which O'Connell himself had offered England, in 1843, Ireland's help to "pull down the Stars and Stripes" on condition of the granting of Repeal. This was the pass to which the Repeal

Association had come, and Mitchel on the other hand supplied the antidote in the *Nation*." In November 1845, for instance, the London *Standard* commented on the new Irish Railway as enabling the authorities to mass troops rapidly if necessary. Mitchel immediately wrote a "few practical views" on the subject, and this is one of them:—"Troops upon their march by rail might be conveniently met with in divers places. Hofer, with his Tyroleans, could hardly desire a deadlier ambush than the brinks of a deep cutting upon a railway. Imagine a few hundred men lying in wait upon such a spot, with masses of rock and trunks of trees ready to roll down; and a train or two advancing with a regiment of infantry, and the engine panting near and nearer, till the polished studs of brass are distinguishable, and its name may nearly be read. 'Now, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost! Now!' But 'tis a dream, no enemy will dare put us to realize these scenes. Yet, let all understand what a railway may and what it may not do."

CHAPTER IV

THE MORAL FORCE REPORT AND RESOLUTIONS

In December 1845, Peel resigned and the Whigs came in, with Lord John Russell at their head. O'Connell immediately planned to support them, and again he found the *Nation* and the Young Irelanders in the way. In the Repeal Association he said: "But what shall I say of the incoming Ministry? I will say this, let them give the Irish people food, let them abolish the corn laws. On this question we will join the people of England, we will make common cause with them, we will insist with the English upon cheap food, we will raise our voices for the opening of the ports and join in the cry for the abolition of the corn laws. I will support the incoming Ministry in all zeal and in all earnestness in that cry. . . . Am I for giving up Repeal? No such thing. Am I for supporting the new administration in any other measures? That will depend upon the nature of the measures proposed. There is a little bird that always whispers me—'Get something good for Ireland.'" But that little bird never whispered to him except when the Whigs were in office. It was clear from his speech that he had bargained to support the Whigs in return for minor measures, that Repeal was not to be mentioned, and the *Nation* opened fire at once. The next issue contained an article from which I quote:—

"The only question Ireland can pause to ask is—Which will advance Repeal? There can and shall be no other consideration. Whichever helps Repeal is dear to us; whichever is indifferent to Repeal is

indifferent to us; whichever retards Repeal is our enemy, to be resisted and overthrown, and flung, like a nuisance, out of our path.

"Lord John Russell's Cabinet may be one or the other.

"And yet, already the Whig journals speculate on our falling down before any obscene idol they please to set up for our worship. 'After twelve months of a Whig Ministry,' says the *Globe*, 'Repeal will be a thing of history.'

"If there be any Repealer who doubts of our manifest duty and policy in this matter he must have considered the subject loosely. Nothing can be clearer than that a Whig Ministry who do not promote Repeal will weaken our strength and postpone it. They would weaken our strength. Who forgets the debasing influence of Whiggery here before. Not the thunder of the monster meeting, or the wail of the imprisoned, or all the inspiration of our great struggle, have entirely purified the country from the mire of corruption into which it was plunged by the reign of Whiggery. It had rotted in to the core. Rich and poor, high and low—the baronet who intrigued for a peerage, the popular member who begged for a place, the peasant who ambitioned to be a policeman, the freeholder corrupted with money from Dublin—one and all were debased by it. The moral nature of the country was lowered; and it was no wonder that many men despaired of ever kindling great passions in a people who had gone through such a process. But we have got over this, and we must pray heaven to protect us from such a heavy judgment as its return. What have we left but this true earnestness in the heart of the country? We are poor, oppressed, dishonoured—but that treasure, beyond gold, still remains—and we will guard it as the second religion of the people. Worse than the penal laws would be the system which would rob us of that."

And in another portion of the paper appeared the following significant sentences commenting on the *Whig* interpretation of O'Connell's speech as putting Repeal in the background—"When will they understand that O'Connell is not Repeal? that O'Connell cannot undo what has been done, that powerful, and justly powerful, as he is he *cannot* (even if the base speculations of these newspapers as to his intentions were well founded) he *cannot* bid us forego the noble struggle in which the heart of Ireland is set. O'Connell is not a traitor; and, if he were, Irishmen are not idiots." This and similar writing, and the effect produced thereby, finally determined O'Connell to drive the Young Irelanders out of the Repeal Association. He had invited them several times to retire, and both he and John O'Connell did their best to make them uncomfortable, but they had steadily refused to be drawn into any open quarrel. He got his weapon at last in moral force. He introduced in July, 1846, into the Association a report made by one of its committees, with himself as chairman, which firstly dissociated the Association from any connection with, or any responsibility for, any newspaper published in Great Britain or Ireland; and secondly, reaffirmed the principle that the Association was based upon the "principle of seeking the amelioration of political institutions by peaceable and legal means alone—disclaiming and abhorring all attempts to improve and augment constitutional liberty by means of force, violence, or bloodshed." In his speech introducing the report he plainly designated the *Nation* as objectionable, and hinted that any who believed in physical force ought not to be members of the Repeal Association. [As a matter of fact they ought not, but there was nothing in its constitution to prevent them.] The Young Irelanders opposed the report—or rather its principle—and in the debate Mitchel said—"In so far then as these resolutions purport to embody the rules and

constitution of this Society, and in so far as they disclaim, on the part of the Society, all intention of reverting to force of arms, I cordially concur in them. And as for the abstract and universal principle which seems to be contained in them, the principle that no national or political rights ought at any time, or under any circumstances, or by any people, to be sought for with an armed hand—that it is essentially sinful and immoral to right national wrongs by the sword, and that those who have at any time rid their country of oppression on the field of battle are to be held up to the abhorrence of mankind, even upon that abstract principle, widely, irreconcileably, as I dissent from it, I do not feel it necessary to raise any question here. I content myself, therefore, with saying that I do not approve of that principle. . . . These resolutions, in so far as they have anything to do with the practical operations of this Society, I applaud and approve most heartily. In so far as they convey, or seem to convey, a general condemnation of other societies and other people, I altogether dissent from them." Meagher and O'Gorman spoke similarly, raising no objection so far as it was sought to emphasize that the Association was not a physical force Association, but objecting to the general principle; and O'Connell replied—" I drew up this resolution to draw a marked line between Young Ireland and Old Ireland," but the Young Irelanders did not withdraw from the Association as he wished, contenting themselves by repudiating the moral force principle outside the Association. That week the *Nation* leader was on " Moral Force," written, I fancy, by Duffy. It followed the same lines as Mitchel's speech, and it is doubly interesting as indicating what Duffy and Davis thought of the monster meetings. I quote as follows :—

" In '43 all Ireland arose to the trumpet call of nationality, and sprang to an attitude of defiance and resistance. Sixty years before her traders and yeomanry

in the same tone and attitude demanded and achieved her independence.

"To England, to France, to America, to all Europe the monster meetings—these great musters of passionate men—fighting men—battalioned, disciplined, marshalled, with banners and music; uttering vehement threats against England, swayed by their leaders like an ordered army, had a meaning beyond the vulgar gatherings of faction, and looked the legitimate and adequate successors of the Volunteers. To us, too, they had such a meaning. . . . To the eyes of the Irish millions who knelt by the croppies' grave with brother's love, and sung the fierce songs of the era by their hearths, and on the sunny hillsides and at their wakes and fairs and merry meetings, there was clearly discernible in all these sudden and tremendous assemblies an intense under purpose which filled their souls with vague passionate expectations. What it meant to the majority of them needs no oracle. It would be false and shameful to deny that during that era we shared the excitement and stimulated it. We believed it deep, intense, stern and universal, and desired to guide it to a great issue—the liberation of Ireland. The mode of liberation was exclusively a question of policy. From Judas Maccabeus to Washington, Grattan, La Fayette, and the patriot priests who shared the Belgian Revolution, great and pious men have guided the armed hands of a people stretched forth to snatch their rights—and if they were snatched again to-morrow in Poland or Naples mankind would rejoice and applaud. But this question of policy must always involve the highest moral considerations. To disturb the peace of a nation rashly, unnecessarily, unpreparedly, is the height of wickedness and folly. But in the fiery enthusiasm of '43 good men may have thought —did think—that a time was at hand when this country would negotiate best, as it had done under Grattan and Charlemont, with arms in hand. . . . We fully

confess that much was written in this journal tending remotely to that end, calculated to stimulate the hope and desire of great and speedy changes wrought by a people's might. . . . But gloomy changes came over our prospects. The Government suppressed a monster meeting, tried and imprisoned the popular leaders. France and America fell away from us. Religious disputes grew up; jealousies were created or fostered. Great hopes were disappointed, great opportunities were lost, and the hope that stirred the heart of the country existed no longer. It passed away like a glorious dream, to come back no more.

"From that hour the tone of this journal on the *means* of liberation altered. We promised speedy and sweeping success no more. The men conducting it saw there was now but one mode left—a slow, deliberate one; and throwing away their former policy, like weapons that had become useless, they turned with all their energy to create a real moral force in the country. Education and conciliation were their means. . . . And now let us add that we cannot applaud the time chosen by the Association for passing the resolution which has suggested this statement. . . . If it be intended for the meridian of Ulster it is not likely to find much favour with the sons of the Volunteers and United Irishmen. If for England, the policy of presenting ourselves to our old relentless, hereditary enemy, bound hand and foot by a renunciation for ever, under all circumstances, of the last resource of oppressed nations, does not seem politic or manly. . . . The abstract theory, introduced in a clause of the resolutions, that force is never legitimate but in *resistance*, we will not stop to argue. We do not hold it, or, indeed, understand it."

O'Connell took advantage of this article to write from London, where he was tacking himself on to the Whigs, to the next meeting of the Association, refusing to work any longer with the Young Irelanders, and the

matter was again discussed at the two following meetings of the Association. In the course of this further discussion Mitchel laid bare the cause of the whole trouble. "This unfortunate discussion, too, is especially absurd, because it is plain to all the world that the real source of all our dissensions in this Hall is not physical force, nor any apprehension of such. There are certain members who have within the last few weeks been urging a more determined opposition than others to the new Whig Government—who have been censured for their violent aversion to any connection, active or passive, with an English faction—who have sought to keep the national tone as high, and the flag of Repeal flying as boldly since the accession of Lord John Russell as before. These men have loudly demanded that Whig officials should not be permitted to represent Repealers—they believe that the people of this island want National Independence, and are determined to have it, and nothing short of it. They believe that any amelioration that may come from England will come grudgingly and by compulsion, and at best will be trifling and superficial; and they are unwilling that the Irish nation should be allowed to fix their minds upon such paltry reforms as they are like to obtain, and attach themselves once more to an English party. They are unwilling that Ireland should for one moment seem to acquiesce in the monstrous usurpation by which a foreign people assumes to govern it. . . . I will explain what I mean by tampering with the Whigs; I will say at once that I mean the system which I have heard advocated in this Hall of keeping Repeal an "open question" with the Whigs. . . . It is our aim to prevent their governing the country at all. It is our business to make that government not only a difficulty but an impossibility to them; and therefore, in my opinion, no Repealer ought to give them aid in any official capacity. In short I do not understand this system of an open question, except as

a kind of compact by which Repealers, still calling themselves by that name, may be admitted to situations and places under the Government; and I do not see how active agitation to throw off a foreign Government is compatible with holding comfortable places under that foreign Government." Meagher followed with his well-known sword speech, in which he was interrupted by John O'Connell, who said the Association was not broad enough for the two of them; and, after an interruption of Smith O'Brien, also by John O'Connell, O'Brien, Mitchel, Meagher, Duffy, Devin Reilly, Father Meehan, and many others, retired from Conciliation Hall. This completed the disintegration which began in the Association with the fatal weakness of the Clontarf meeting, and henceforward it was of no account as a political organization, being merely, as Mitchel put it, "A machine for obtaining office for O'Connell's dependents."

CHAPTER V

THE STARVATION

The death of Davis was one of the things which exercised a dominating influence over the course of Irish History in the years 1846, 47, 48, and the Starvation was the other great dominating influence. The first of these undisciplined and scattered the Young Irelanders, and the second sapped the manhood of the people, shaken as it was already by O'Connell's debasing teaching and by the demoralizing effect of the Clontarf fiasco. The great Starvation has been written down in history books as a "Famine," but it was not a famine; "when a country is full of food and exporting it there can be no famine" writes Bernard Shaw, with his usual clearness, and there was no famine in Ireland. But there was a devilish and deliberate starvation. Men and women were starved to death, and the food that should have fed them, the food they had sown and reaped and should have eaten, it was sent out of the country guarded by British bayonets, lest the "normal course of trade" be interfered with, lest the garrison in Ireland, the landlords and landowners, should not get their rents. The years of the Starvation make horrible reading, and there is no need now to go into them in any detail. The people were helpless within the law, and starved and weak without it. They were recommended nothing but resignation, resignation and charity, and they died by the thousand of starvation and fever, died in the midst of food, without striking a blow for their manhood. It was not their fault. They had been trained from their youth in moral force and moral cowardice, in keeping the peace, and in this crisis none

of the people's leaders gave decent leading until Mitchel started the *United Irishman* in 1848, and then the starvation had done its work. The manhood of any people would not have withstood two such catastrophes as the long leadership of O'Connell, and the three years' Starvation.

The first breath of the Starvation came immediately after the death of Davis, and until 1849 it stayed over the country like a funeral pall. Through these years it goes darkening and corroding everything, depopulating whole districts. The Government drove our corn and cattle to our quays between bayonet-points, with a starved people looking on weakly, keeping the peace as O'Connell and their clergy advised them, and then they went home, and blocked up the doors and windows of their cabins so that no one might see them die. The Irish demand for "measures" in these years was universal. All parties and all shades of opinion—save the Landlords and Garrison—the press, the Church, Smith O'Brien and O'Connell, Mitchel and Duffy, and every man with any patriotic instincts, all called for the closing of the ports, that chiefly. But to no purpose. In any free country, in any country with a Government which was not a hellish device, that would have been the first and most obvious measure, but the British Government had had too narrow a shave and it took its chance of clearing Ireland. Its measures for relieving the Starvation were to keep all the Irish ports wide open, to pass a Coercion Bill and to increase the police force, to increase the military force, and to take charge of the relief funds which were provided by sympathetic foreign nations like Turkey. The very administration of relief funds was turned into a weapon for further clearances, for relief was given only to paupers and the farmer had to give up his farm and become a pauper before he was recognized as worthy or fit to be given relief. And the relief works! Building bridges at haphazard, digging

holes and filling them up again, making roads which led nowhere and which nobody wanted. Care was taken that it was all unproductive and of no value to the community. No Irishman, not even O'Connell in his old age and in the decay of his faculties, asked for alms: but Sister England asked for us, and took charge of the proceeds. In vain all Irish opinion called for humane and national measures, Government went its way undisturbed, kept its bayonets bright and its powder dry, and hoped that the Irish were going for good. Mitchel travelled through Connacht in the winter of 1847 and here is what he saw. "In the depth of winter we travelled to Galway, through the very centre of that fertile island, and saw sights that will never wholly leave the eyes that beheld them: cowering wretches almost naked in the savage weather, prowling in turnip fields, and endeavouring to grub up roots which had been left, but running to hide as the mail coach rolled by: very large fields where small farms had been 'consolidated,' showing dark bars of fresh mould running through them, where the ditches had been levelled: groups of families, sitting or wandering on the high road, with bending steps and dim patient eyes, gazing hopelessly into infinite darkness; before them, around them, above them, nothing but darkness and despair; parties of tall brawny men, once the flower of Meath and Galway, stalking by with a fierce but a vacant scowl, as if they knew that all this ought not to be, and knew not whom to blame, saw none whom they could rend in their wrath; for Lord John Russell sat safe in Chesham Place, and Trevelyan, the grand commissioner and factotum of the pauper system, wove his webs of red tape around them from afar. So cunningly does civilization work!

"Around those farmhouses which were still inhabited were to be seen hardly any stacks of grain; it was all gone; the poor-rate collector, the rent agent, the county cess collector had carried it off, and sometimes

I could see, in front of the cottages, little children leaning against a fence when the sun shone out—for they could not stand—children who would never, it was too plain, grow up to be men and women. I saw Trevelyan's plan in the vitals of these children; his red tape would draw them to death; in his Government laboratory he had prepared for them the typhus poison."

Charitable persons all over Ireland in these years organized themselves, and subscribed, and did their utmost by these means to cope with the Starvation; but they only touched the fringe, and they were aiming at alleviating effects and not at their prevention. One thing only could have stopped the disease at its source, the holding of the harvest, the feeding of every man woman and child in Ireland before a grain of corn or a head of cattle should be exported, and when Mitchel finally preached that it was too late. The country had been in Hell.

As a class, the landlords of Ireland at this time saw the people sicken and die quite unmoved. There were exceptions, of course, aud there were many who spent their all in the relief of the people, and finally died themselves of starvation or fever; but as a class they failed that test. And since that day they have themselves rotted off the face of the earth, and their places have been taken by the descendants of those who starved that they might get their rent, and they leave not a wrack behind of pity or regret. "The Celts are gone," said an English newspaper—"gone with a vengeance! The Lord be praised!" But it was the knell of the landlords they heard—the Celts are still here.

The starvation played a big part in turning Mitchel from an educational policy into a revolutionary policy. The revolutionary was always in him below the surface, but it was overladen with theories about the patriotism of the landlords and other things which broke down

utterly under the horror of the Starvation. Mitchel hoped, as Davis and Duffy hoped, and as in normal times Nationalists always hope, to build up an Irish nation which should include everybody—to build it up slowly and permanently—and events drove him to the conclusion that it should be built quickly and forcibly, revolutionarily and by physical force. Here are some extracts to show his views at various times. In January 1843, he wrote to John Martin : "If Ireland be not ready to achieve the Repeal with a strong hand she ought to make herself ready without delay ; and if she be worthy of the place she seeks among the nations she will do that." In 1845 he wrote, also to Martin : "What people ever broke the neck of a vicious system except by making those who profited by the system, who robbed under the system, suffer ? Who ever heard of stringing up a system ? But this, you think, is talking as if a bloody French revolution, not a peaceful regeneration of Ireland, were contemplated. Indeed I have small faith in peaceful regeneration where there is such a diseased body politic. Instruct and convert landlords, and that otherwise than by terror and imminent peril. Think over it again and don't grow euphemistical." And writing again about a Coercion Bill which was brought in in 1845, he writes : "This is the only kind of legislation for Ireland that is sure to meet with no obstruction in that House. However they may differ as to the propriety of feeding the Irish people, they agree most cordially in the policy of taxing, prosecuting, and hanging them." And in April 1847, when he was almost wholly revolutionary, he wrote : "Now, if the island do, as I think it plainly does, and easily, yield food enough for all its inhabitants, then I think they ought to be taught, as a fundamental postulate, that they have an absolute right to be sufficiently maintained out of that produce first. That is, of course, not that any individual has a right to take another's property, but that the whole community has, and ought

to exercise, that clear right, no matter what legal, social, or physical obstacles may now be in the way. . . . On reading over what I have written I find I have expressed myself with more revolutionary vehemence than I really feel—as yet. I do think it is still in the power of the aristocracy to save this nation and themselves at the same time." These extracts, which might be multiplied tenfold, show the revolutionary spirit that was always in him, and that was his natural bent, growing stronger and stronger. And when in November, 1847, the landlords called for another Coercion Bill Mitchel gave them up altogether. A break with Duffy was then inevitable.

CHAPTER VI

THE IRISH CONFEDERATION

When the Young Irelanders left Conciliation Hall and the Repeal Association they had no fixed intention with regard to the future, and probably no feeling that it was a final separation. At the outset they did not contemplate the formation of any political organization during O'Connell's lifetime, and at the outset they would hardly have succeeded in forming one. At first the tide of opinion went unmistakeably with O'Connell, although the *Nation* still continued with only a slightly reduced circulation. The mass of the Irish people knew and revered O'Connell since their childhood, and naturally they took his side in the secession. But very soon the position changed. O'Connell was at this time, and had been since 1845, suffering from softening of the brain, and was no longer effective from any point of view. His initiative, his virility, his good sense and his generosity, all were gone; and the Repeal Association fell altogether into the hands of John O'Connell, who was a Whig of the most extreme type, with no belief whatever in an Irish nation. And all over the country the Repeal Association dwindled and the virile elements in it gathered round the *Nation*. In that paper the young men concentrated all their energies, concentrating especially on the starvation, and upon practical subjects of all kinds, and for a time they found no pressing need for a new organization. Their work did not directly infringe upon that of the Repeal Association, and they had not yet themselves formulated a definite political policy; they had merely set down and pushed with brilliancy and enthusiasm

certain broad lines of patriotic education and of general political principles. They had gone in for Repeal, on the general lines of the Repeal Association, but they had not put forward any concrete proposal for achieving Repeal, being too fearful of seeming to antagonize or to attack O'Connell. In the autumn of 1846 proposals were made for a reconciliation, it having become evident that the *Nation* party in the country was now strong and increasing, and although O'Connell himself was willing to agree to a reconciliation the evil influence of John O'Connell prevailed and the attempt came to nothing. The logic of events then rendered the formation of a new organization inevitable. The Repeal Association had no policy save to stand by O'Connell and attack the "infidels" and "wreckers," and the large volume of intelligent public opinion which had been generated in the country since the start of the *Nation* found itself in need of something to draw it more closely together, to give it more force and confidence, than the mere buying of a common paper. The demand for a new organization became insistent, and on the 13th January 1847, the "Irish Confederation" was formed. It was inaugurated by a meeting of 1,500 people, from all parts of Ireland, at which the Confederation was formed in these words:—"That a society be now formed, under the title of the "Irish Confederation," for the purpose of protecting our National interests and obtaining the legislative independence of Ireland, by the force of opinion, by the combination of all classes of Irishmen, and by the exercise of all the political, social and moral influences within our reach." Other resolutions declared that the Confederation was to remain absolutely independent of all English parties: that any member of it accepting office from any English Government ceased automatically to be a member, and that no discussions on religious questions were to be allowed. In his speech introducing the resolution O'Brien, and the other speakers in their speeches,

emphasized the fact that the new organization was not being formed as a rival to the Repeal Association, but because those who formed it and those whom they represented, "large masses of the people of this country," had been excluded from participation in the Repeal Association. Mitchel's contribution to this meeting was less rhetorical and more to the point than most of the speeches, which dealt with Repeal in general terms, and differed but little from what might be heard any week at Conciliation Hall. "Who in Ireland," said he, "obeys the law for love of it? Who in Ireland honours the State or trusts the legislative Government? What is the thing which we call Government here? A machinery for ensuring payment of our annual subsidy to England. What is the Viceroy? A steward that superintends England's store farm and keeps the labourers in order. What is the Castle? An office where England's business is done. Since the first year of this century you have been strangers on your own soil. The laws are made not for you but against you. . . . The nation that governs not itself has nothing —nothing in heaven above or in the earth beneath. . . . If one organization fail another must be created. If one weapon break in our hands we must grasp another. Disaffected! To be sure we are deeply disaffected. I should like to know which of you is well affected to a foreign Government. I believe, my friends, the time is coming when plain speaking will be needed in Ireland, and I for one make no scruple to say (speaking only for myself and not pretending to express the sentiments of others) that until we have an Irish Legislature I shall be irreconcilably disaffected towards the Government of the country, that I mean to excite disaffection in others, and that I think it a sacred duty to rear up my children in that sentiment."

As one reads over in the *Nation* the proceedings and plans of the Confederation the predominating impression received is that they were much too general and

that they failed altogether to recognize the urgency of dealing at once with the situation created by the Starvation, which was at its height when the Confederation was formed. They did not, even then, formulate any definite connected policy, anything in the nature of a policy or an object which went beyond the general reference to an Independent Legislature which was in their incorporating resolution. They had plenty of meetings of the Council of the Confederation, and plenty of meetings of its many sub-committees, and plenty of reports on various practical subjects were discussed and approved at these meetings, but one looks in vain for any political plans, or political organizing, or for anything beyond educational and explanatory propaganda. Smith O'Brien still continued, as member for Limerick, to make admirable speeches in the English Parliament, and to be consistently voted down on Irish questions, and the Confederation itself wasted its time by adopting Parliamentary action as one of its "constitutional means" for achieving Repeal, not that most of them believed at all in its efficacy, but that they had not yet got themselves to the point of facing the naked facts of political work in Ireland. Some of the members of the Council probably believed in the efficacy of an independent Irish Party in the English Parliament; Duffy, we know, did have great faith in such a party, but Doheny and Mitchel had no such illusions. "It is not," said Mitchel, in March 1847, "for the sake of the mere votes to be gained in an English Parliament that we need to trouble ourselves about the elections. If our independence were only to be gained when that Parliament shall be persuaded by reason or moved by justice to grant it, why, we should never gain it at all, and, what is more, we never ought to gain it. I never yet heard or read of any nation which had liberty voted or granted to it by strangers. It is here, here on our own soil, the real work is to be done. And I

confess that I look to a simultaneous struggle to return Repealers at the general elections, not because there is any hope that these Repealers will be able to do service for Ireland at St. Stephen's, but because the struggle itself will spread and strengthen, and make manifest the undying, unsleeping hatred of foreign rule which must never be suffered to slacken or abate so long as there is a vestige of that foreign rule to curse the land." Some months later, with the continued failure of Smith O'Brien and other Irish members to even get a decent hearing at Westminster, the Confederation decided against further support of Parliamentary action, and passed a resolution calling on Smith O'Brien and the Irish members generally to withdraw and to remain in Ireland amongst their constituencies. But they substituted for this no alternative—they were as vague as ever. O'Connell had once spoken of organizing a Council of Three Hundred, to be chosen out of all Ireland, and to fulfil the functions of an Irish Parliament. It was the only statesmanlike idea he ever conceived, and it was welcomed enthusiastically at the time by Davis. The Confederation now resurrected it, or at least they resurrected discussion of it, under the title of a "National Council." But that got no further than discussions. They declared for the principle, talked about it a good deal in the Confederation, but took no steps to bring the Council into being. And in all other respects they were equally vague—a great deal of a debating society and very little of a definite conception either of what they wanted or how they proposed to get it. In truth, they were practically all people who had not got their national bearings properly fixed, who were not themselves quite out of the O'Connellite atmosphere, and who, worst of all, had no leader and no common direction. It is in this period particularly that Ireland missed the genius and the power of Davis. He would not have merely written

articles and raised vague discussions while the Irish peasantry starved in their thousands.

In the end, the absurdity of this position became clear to the Confederation themselves, and they began to ask one another, and to be asked by the public, what they were aiming at and how exactly they proposed to get it. And when they did attempt a definite framing of a policy and a means, the result was that they drove Mitchel out of the Confederation on the question of physical force, the very question on which they had themselves broken with O'Connell. One may trace in his speeches of this year, 1847, and in the leading articles in the *Nation*, and the other articles in which his hand may be traced, the gradual evolution of Mitchel's political faith, his growing bitterness on all kinds of constitutional or legal proceedings, his faith in the patriotism of the landlords gradually giving way to scorn, his gradual conviction that all this talk and discussion must cease and some work be attempted. Odd phrases here and there give a glimpse of change, of revolutionary desperation; he had been through the Starvation district to the Galway election; he had seen the landlords call for another Coercion Bill; he had seen all efforts to gain a hearing from England, all efforts at constitutional proceedings, to result in nothing; and he was coming to the temper wherein, as he afterwards put it, he determined "to cross the path of the British car of conquest," no matter what the consequences. In September 1847, he had got thus far: "Now, I think if such an answer be attempted at all (an answer to the question how the Confederation proposed to repeal the Union) it must develop, not one sole plan carried out to the end, but three or four of the possible and probable series of events which may evidently lead to that result. It must show (for one way) how a Parliamentary campaign, conducted honestly and boldly, might bring the state of public business in Parliament to such a position that Repeal

would be the only solution; for another way, how systematic opposition to, and contempt of, *law* might be carried through a thousand details so as to virtually supersede English dominion here, and to make the mere repealing statute an immaterial formality (this, I may observe, is *my* way); and for a third way how, in the event of any European war, a strong national party in Ireland could grasp the occasion to do the work instantly, with perhaps half a dozen other contingencies and their possible use. It should also show how, and to what extent, all these methods of operation might be combined."

CHAPTER VII

MITCHEL LEAVES THE *NATION*

In dealing with this portion of the life of Mitchel I do not propose to in any way touch upon the personal quarrel which afterwards developed between Mitchel and Duffy. At the time of the separation they parted good friends, and not as the result of any personal disagreement, but because of a radical difference in policy. It was the misfortune of both men, years after, after Mitchel had escaped from Van Diemen's Land, that they should have said hasty and ill-considered things about each other, and should have ten and twenty years after the event imputed to each other motives which probably never existed. In the whole business my own sympathies are with Mitchel. His outlook was right and his policy was right, *me judice*, but I only propose to set down here the actual cause of the separation, as set down by both men at the time, and let what happened afterwards pass into oblivion. Both men served Ireland well, and we ought to remember that, remember their worth and their achievement, and forget the unavailing bitterness born of their human frailty. This was one of the things Ireland would have been spared had Davis lived.

In the *Nation* for January 8th, 1848, there is a statement by Duffy and one also by Mitchel. I extract the main portions. Duffy wrote as follows:—

"It is not true, for example, that there has been any personal quarrel, or the smallest possible shade of angry feeling, between us. It is not true that a difference has arisen on the right of Ireland to win her freedom by force of arms. It is not true that the settled policy

of the *Nation* has undergone any change. The difference between us is entirely a moral one."

He went on to describe the need felt by the Confederation for a declared and settled policy and plan of action, and that Mitchel and himself had been deputed to prepare a report upon the subject, upon which they disagreed.

"I believe I will not err in stating generally that Mr. Mitchel, after the experiment of the 'Irish Council,' despairs utterly of the landlord class; that he regards the middle classes as fearfully corrupt or cowardly, and sees no basis to rest upon safely but the peasantry and small farmers. And regarding the present poor law as an instrument designed to ruin that class; the present commercial system as a drain of our wealth to England; and all English law as the natural enemy of the Irish people, he sees in the universal refusal of the poor rate, in the withdrawal of the people's money from the savings banks, and in the repudiation and defiance of certain laws, the natural protection and security of the people.

"To these views I endeavoured to oppose my own convictions. First—that the landed gentry, though in general without public spirit and shockingly selfish, had sent from among them such men as Smith O'Brien, Lord Wallscourt, Mr. Monsell, Mr. Ross, Mr. Sharman Crawford, and others, who gave promise of many more. That though as a class they would probably never be won to Nationality, yet enough of them would be won to represent that interest in a national struggle. That we knew of important accessions which we could positively reckon on, and that it would be a national crime to deliberately throw away this element of strength. Second—That the middle class, though admittedly corrupt and mean-spirited, had still good men enough to redeem it from abandonment. That it was the upper and middle classes who had won '82, and were as competent to win a new '82 if they were inspired again

with the spirit of that era. Third—But mainly, that though the agricultural classes must be the substantial strength of every national organization in Ireland, no mere class movement was adequate to the work we had undertaken. And especially that that work could not be effected by such means as he contemplated. That, instead of exciting the national spirit, he would probably produce social confusion; that, if he disregarded this consequence, the road leading from that confusion ought to be clear and certain—whereas it remained a positive fog of obscurity."

Duffy went on to say that they had discussed the matter with "eight or ten of our most intimate political associates," all of whom, except Devin Reilly, disagreed with Mitchel; that in these circumstances Mitchel seemed willing to acquiesce in the general view. "But the Coercion Bill came and altered his resolution. . . . I urged in the strongest way that he ought to bring his scheme of policy deliberately before the Council, or before the entire Confederation, and obtain their assent for it before he took any steps to promulgate it through the public meetings of that body. I assured him that maturer reflection had only deepened my dislike to it, and that I would rather perish than help it by act or word. In the matter of the poor rates I declined being a party to stopping the collection of them, till some other sure and specific method was shown of feeding the people through the coming winter; and though it was probably true, as he maintained that the Poor Law would be a wholly insufficient provision for that purpose, I still urged that it was better than no provision. I fully conceded that if any adequate mode of meeting the famine could be put in its place, resisting it would be justifiable; but I refused to leave the people to chance, for a most uncertain result; or for any result possible in the case. He, of course, did not deliberately contemplate leaving them to chance either. But I assumed that that would be

the necessary result of a general refusal of rates. We debated the question long and anxiously, but with no apprehension to agreement.

"One relation we have not altered, that which first brought us together. However marked our present difference is, however wide it may grow with time and events, by one belief I will hold fast (for I have proved it well) that a man of purer and more unselfish patriotism never existed than John Mitchel. He is incapable of the smallest exaggeration of his opinions for any political effect, or the smallest concealment of them from fear; and such as they are he will uphold them at every sacrifice. His errors, fatal as I believe them, are those of an heroic heart."

Mitchel wrote as follows:—

"For some months past I have found myself precluded from speaking to the public through the *Nation* with that full freedom and boldness which I had formerly used, by objections and remonstrances from you, to the effect that what I wrote was 'seditious' or 'impolitic.' This kind of restriction, slight and casual at first, became gradually more constant and annoying; and that while the times demanded, in my opinion, more and more unmitigated plain speaking, as to the actual relations of Ireland towards the English Government, and the real designs of that Government against the properties and lives of Irishmen.

"The failure of the 'Irish Council,' the hurried calling together of the English Parliament, the Bill for disarming the Irish people, and the horrid delight with which that Bill was hailed by the landlords of this country—these things rapidly brought our differences to an issue. The effect brought upon me by the events I saw passing was a thorough conviction that Irish landlords had finally taken their side *against* their own people, and *for* the foreign enemy—that all the symptoms of landlord 'nationality' which had deluded us into the 'Irish Council' and had kept us long vainly

wooing the aristocracy into the ranks of their countrymen, were a deliberate fraud—were, in fact, a demonstration intended to act upon the English—and that the disarming bill was the first fruit of a new and more strict alliance between traitors at home and foes abroad.

"I desired to say all this to the people plainly. I desired to point out to them that this infamous Bill, falsely entitled 'for the prevention of crime,' was merely an engine to crush Tenant Right, and all other popular rights, and to enable the landlords to eject, distrain, and exterminate in peace and security. I desired to preach to them that every farmer in Ireland has a right to his land in perpetuity (let 'law' say as it will):—that no landlord who denies that right ought to receive any rent:—that Tenant Right, however, though the universal right of all Irish farmers, never had been, and never would be recognized or secured by English law:—that there was and will be no other way of establishing and securing that right except, as in Ulster, by successful intimidation, that is to say, by the determined public opinion of *armed men*:—that *therefore* the power calling itself a government which called upon the people of Ireland to deliver up their arms under any pretext, must be the mortal enemy of that people, their rights, their liberties, and their lives. I desired to warn my countrymen accordingly that if they should carry their guns to the police station when ordered by Lord Clarendon, they would be putting weapons into the hands of their deadly foes, and committing virtual suicide. I desired to preach to them that the country is actually in a state of war—a war of property against poverty—a war of land against life; and that their safety lay, not in trusting to any laws or legislation of the enemy's Parliament, but solely in their determination to stand upon their own individual rights, defend them to the last, and sell their lives and lands as dear as they could.

"I desired also to show them that the new Poor Law, enacted under pretence of relieving the destitute, was really intended and is calculated to increase and deepen the pauperism of the country; to break down the farmers as well as the landlords by degrees, and uproot them gradually from the soil, so as to make the lands of Ireland pass, unencumbered by excessive population, into the hands of English capitalists, and under the more absolute sway of the English Government. In short, I wished to make them recognize in the Poor Law what it really is—an elaborate machinery for making final conquest of Ireland by 'law.' I therefore urged, from the first, that this law ought to be resisted and defeated; that guardians ought not to act under it, but in defiance of it; that ratepayers ought to offer steady and passive resistance to it; and that every district ought to organize some voluntary means of relieving its own poor—and for this purpose, as well as to stop the false traffic with England, that the people should determine to suffer no grain or cattle to leave the country.

"With reference to the future direction which should be given to the energies of the country, and of the Irish Confederation, I desired in the first place, once for all, to turn men's minds away from the English Parliament, and from Parliamentary and constitutional agitation of all kinds. . . . Therefore, I desired that the *Nation*, and the Confederation, should rather employ themselves in promulgating sound instruction upon military affairs—upon the natural lines of defence which make the island so strong, and the method of making these available—upon the construction and defence of field works, and especially upon the use of proper arms—not with a view to any immediate insurrection, but in order that the stupid 'legal and constitutional' shouting, voting and agitation that have made our country an abomination to the whole earth should be changed into a deliberate study of the

theory and practice of guerilla warfare; and that the true and only method of regenerating Ireland might in course of time recommend itself to a nation so long abused and deluded by 'legal' humbug.

"These are my doctrines; and these were what I wished to enforce in the *Nation*. Therefore when I found, which I did during the progress of the Coercion Bill, that no one journal could possibly represent two sets of opinions so very incompatible as yours and mine; and when you informed me that the columns of the *Nation* should no longer be open even to such a modified and subdued exposition of my doctrines as they had heretofore been I at once removed all difficulty by ending the connection which had subsisted between us more than two years."

Mitchel went thus fully into his ideas because he considered Duffy's summary of them in his statement as unfair, but there was no quarrel of any kind then. He wrote privately to him—"I do not blame you in the slightest particular; and, moreover, I am quite certain I could not have worked in subordination to any other man alive near as long as I have done with you. And lastly, I give you credit in all that is past for acting on good and disinterested motives, with the utmost sincerity, and also with uniform kindness to me personally."

It is clear from these extracts that the separation was the result of the development of Mitchel's national faith, and also of the necessity which the Confederates were at of framing a definite policy to put before the country. They were agreed on generalizations, but when it came to a common and definite line of action they went apart. Duffy was naturally of a conservative tendency, orderly and evolutionary, whereas Mitchel was naturally revolutionary. He reckoned rather whether a thing were right and proper than whether it was tactful or certain. And in the year 1847 he had come steadily to the convictions which are

so forcefully set out above, to a disbelief altogether in legal and constitutional agitation, in the Irish landlords, and in trusting to England or English law in any particular. He had come to believe in revolution, whereas Duffy still believed in evolution and reform. In these circumstances Mitchel's retirement from the *Nation* was inevitable. But it is clear that it was purely on difference of principles of political action, and that there was no personal quarrel.

CHAPTER VIII

THE REPORT ON POLICY

The events which followed Mitchel's departure from the *Nation* show clearly that the cleavage between himself and Duffy was a cleavage of policy, that he and Duffy had, as a matter of fact, come to represent the two wings of Irish Nationalism, the revolutionary wing and the so-called constitutional wing, and that they were perhaps the only two members of the Confederate Council who had any idea of a definite policy.

The "Irish Council," of which mention has been made, and the failure of which was one of the things which sent Mitchel to revolutionary nationalism, was a Council which had been formed shortly after the break out of the Starvation. It numbered many of the Confederation, including Mitchel, a few landlords like Sharman-Crawford and Lord Wallscourt, and a few patriotic Unionists like Samuel Ferguson, and its business was to act as a kind of National Council and take what measures were practicable against starvation and fever. It failed because it attempted nothing beyond resolutions and appeals to landlords, and endeavours to regulate the supply of whatever food was available in the stricken districts. That is to say, it was acting on effects and leaving causes untouched. It could only act on the cause by appealing to the people and by becoming revolutionary, and it could only act on the effects by gaining the hearty support of the main body of the landlords, which, needless to say, it did not gain. And when the landlords got their Coercion Bill the Council practically collapsed. That was one of the little things which drove Mitchel out of

quietness and "moral" agitation. It was just a straw to show how the wind was blowing, but as the months went by and the Starvation and fever went unchecked, and England stood calmly by, and the landlords and gentry got their Coercion Bill, and still the Confederation continued with its indefinite, general pushing of Repeal of the Union, its reports and discussions, Mitchel grew more and more out of it all, and into the conviction that Ireland would never be saved that way. The change is clearly traceable in his leaders in the *Nation* in 1847. First there is the hope of a unity of all classes on the Starvation, a pathetic welcome of any flash in the pan of landlord patriotism, then gradually there comes a change—Poor Law, Coercion Bill, Disarming Act—and in these Mitchel sees just new instruments of torture and degradation, until his articles grow so revolutionary and seditious that Duffy, in his capacity as responsible editor, refuses to print them as written.

On the Council of the Confederation the cleavage had also appeared. The Confederation found that it could not continue on the vague basis which it had adopted, and the Council set itself to frame a policy. Smith O'Brien did so in the first instance, but his policy was not satisfactory to either Duffy or Mitchel. Then they undertook to prepare a joint report, and in its preparation found so many radical differences of opinion that a joint report was impossible. Finally Duffy brought in a report of his own, carried it in the Confederate Council clause by clause in the month of January 1848, and then, Mitchel having been beaten in the Council, Smith O'Brien brought in at a general meeting of the Confederation a series of resolutions which excluded Mitchel and Devin Reilly from it on what was practically moral force. The discussions on these resolutions show very clearly how very embryonic most of their political opinions were. But before I come to that I want to refer to Duffy's report.

The report appears to have been published in 1884 as a pamphlet by the Confederation, but I have been unable to trace a copy of it. In the *Nation* for February 26th, however, there is a full page report of a lecture, "Ways and Means of Attaining an Independent Irish Parliament," by C. G. Duffy, which I take to be practically the report. It bears the same name as the pamphlet, and defines the policy which Duffy afterwards tried to put into operation and which failed with Sadleir and Keogh. The new policy was simply what we now know as Parliamentarianism, that is to say, a reliance upon action in the British Parliament as the main weapon for winning Repeal of the Union—for the policy did not aim at independence any more than the policy of the Irish Confederation did at the time. But it was a much more virile and a much more statesman-like Parliamentarianism than the thing with that name which we know. It was a policy whose natural end was Mitchel's policy of "Passive Resistance" or Lalor's "Moral Insurrection," and it was the whole failure of Duffy's work and plans that he failed to see that moral force and the weight of opinion are just lath painted to look like iron, and depend for their effectiveness upon primitive force.

However, here are extracts showing exactly what Duffy was aiming at:—Dealing first with the Repeal agitation generally he gives as the reason for the non-success. "They have not succeeded, as I believe, because they had no plan of action; they have not succeeded because their agitation was not governed by fixed principles and a predetermined scheme of policy, deliberately framed and systematically worked out to its issue." Then he discussed the general question of Repeal, put the case for Repeal in the form in which it is familiar to all of us, *i.e.*, the '82 case, the incompetence of the Irish Parliament to vote away the Irish Constitution, and the right of the Irish people to vote that Constitution back at any time. Then he wrote:—

"The first principle that runs through this policy is, that wherever there is freedom of speech and franchise, moral weapons exist to win independence on which the people are bound to rely until they prove inadequate. . . . In Ireland our National movement is capable of operating through all the institutions that still remain to this country—through the corporations, grand juries, boards of guardians, and the representatives of the country in the Imperial Parliament. . . . But on one institution modeled to ensure our slavery we mainly rely. I believe the Imperial Parliament, the stronghold of our enemy, may be made an auxiliary to freedom. Our policy requires for its success the election of a Parliamentary Party. . . . Parliament is a platform which all Europe looks upon, and from that stage they could receive the sympathy of foreign nations lost in '44, and win that of just Englishmen. . . . In an assembly so divided as the British Parliament is and ever must be; against party leaders so weak as those that govern England in our time, such a league would be formidable. There are Parliamentary impediments which no Ministry could resist. A score of Irish members of adequate capacity and character might rule the House. And no previous failure counts anything against this project because there never has been such an Irish Party in the British Parliament. All who know the nature and temper of the House of Commons know they would succeed. They would not compel it to Repeal the Union by a specific vote, but they would dispose multitudes of Englishmen to that measure; some by demonstrating its justice and policy, some by making Irish interests cross and impede and rule the British Senate. For it is not by Parliament, but in spite of it, not by its grace and influence, but because of its utter imbecility against the right vigorously asserted that we should succeed. . . . The Repealers at home growing daily more powerful with the confidence of success and the security that strength and

purpose beget, would have *their* work to do. They could secure the elections to the corporations and boards of guardians of men of trust, intelligence and perseverance; these representative bodies, so chosen, might act as local parliaments, and supply by counsel and guidance the present want of a legislature. They might take measures to procure employment for the people, to promote the use of native manufactures, and by all measures to extend and secure the authority of native institutions. Ireland clamouring for justice, has never since '82 put forth systematically the power that lies in the awakened public spirit of a nation to help itself. That power may be developed as effectively in great industrial and commercial efforts, or in conquering natural impediments to prosperity, as in war. . . . If the power so attained were widely used, hurting no Irish interest, many of the grand juries would speedily be won to the same view. Ulster, too, would follow. For with the North nationality is only a question of time and securities.

"And now the policy would begin to draw to an issue. When the representatives in Parliament had made the cause of Ireland plain to all men; and when the organization at home had been so successful as to raise these representatives, however few in number, to the undeniable position of the spokesman of a nation, it would be their right and duty (as it is demonstrably within their power) to stop the entire business of Parliament till the Constitution of Ireland be restored. But this is a measure which to be successful must be taken on behalf of a nation. It must have the authority of an outraged nation to justify it, and raise it above the tactics of mere party strife, and the strength of a banded nation *to maintain it* if it be violently suppressed. For from such a position there seem but two paths—that of concession to Ireland, or the forcible ejection of the Irish representatives from the House of Commons.

"If the former, our end is speedily and cheaply

attained; if the latter, our end is attained, too. Let the ejected members fall back upon the banded and organized people whom they represented. For by this time they would be banded. Let a *Great Council of the Nation*, consisting of its elected representatives in Parliament, in the Municipalities, and in the Unions, and elected delegates from classes not otherwise represented, be convened, and a final demand made on behalf of the Irish Nation, calling for the reassembly of the Irish Parliament. . . .

"But if the Minister of the day blindly and wickedly refuse to recognize this right, Ireland has ample means to vindicate it. The Grand Juries, Boards of Guardians and Corporations hold the national purse; and such a Council would be able and entitled to wield the men of Ireland in sustainment of the national rights against armed aggression. . . .

"Against the will of the Irish nation the Minister would be powerless. Of necessity, he would capitulate, as the Peel Ministry capitulated with Canada in 1842—as the Russell Ministry is about to capitulate with it at this hour again. But should he persist, seven millions of people firmly knitted together and represented by its wise councillors, deliberately chosen and authorized, are impregnable; the rights of Ireland would be safe. Under the present circumstances of the country this is the policy which I consider alone calculated to win an independent Parliament for Ireland."

Such was Duffy's scheme, a scheme whereof modern Parliamentarianism has taken the shadow and thrown away the substance. Once having stated the Irish demand in the British Parliament, through an Irish Party clearly representing a majority of the Irish nation, as Parnell did many times afterwards, Duffy would have withdrawn and gone to Ireland and set up his "Council of the Nation." And it was there that the weakness of his scheme lay and that it required supplementing. He believed that England would not

dare to refuse Repeal in the face of an overwhelming moral demand for it by the Irish people, but she would. She would have broken up the Council of the Nation by bribery, as she broke up the Sadleir-Keogh Party, or by violence—as she threatened the Clontarf gathering —unless behind all this moral demand there were a physical demand also, and that physical demand needed preparation quite as much as the moral demand. It was the misfortune of the Young Irelanders, in their whole career, to regard England's determination to keep Ireland as a bluff. When Mitchel told them that all their moral palaver and constitutional agitation was humbug, and that if they wanted to free Ireland they would have to fight, they got angry with him for rudely disturbing their dreams; but eventually they were forced into a fight unprepared for it, and their moral attitudes went for nothing. There were three men in the whole movement who faced facts nakedly, whether they were ugly or pleasant—Davis, Mitchel and Lalor. The others were theorists in the main, makers of literature, makers of practical reports, good workers under supervision and direction, but they were not political thinkers, and they could not visualize the essential facts of the Irish situation. They had no objection to revolution as an adventure of the soul, but when it came to an adventure of the body they were not ready.

CHAPTER IX

MITCHEL DRIVEN OUT OF THE CONFEDERATION

The absolute fog in which the majority of the Confederates were is best shown by their extraordinary conduct now on the old question of moral force. They had quarrelled with O'Connell and seceded from the Repeal Association because he objected to what he regarded as their physical force attitude, and, as my quotation in a previous article from a late leader of Duffy's shows, they did look to physical force as an end of the struggle. Now they in their turn, grown prudent, drove Mitchel out of the Confederation on this very same question, objecting to his physical force policy. And this it was which led to the foundation of the *United Irishman*. He did not at the outset contemplate starting a rival paper to the *Nation*, but the action of the Confederation left him no choice but to make his appeal to the country in a paper of his own.

Duffy's report, advocating an aggressive Parliamentarianism, had been carried through the Confederate Council, clause by clause, Mitchel and Martin and Reilly steadily resisting it. But its passage made no breach in the Confederation. Mitchel remained working in it as previously, putting his own beliefs at meetings and trusting to time to bring the whole Council over to his view of things. But his and Reilly's letters to Duffy on the occasion of Mitchel's leaving the *Nation* frightened the more moderate members of the Confederation, and even some who were afterwards most advanced—*e.g.*, Meagher and Doheny. Smith

O'Brien especially became alarmed lest the views of Mitchel on the Poor Law, on Aristocracy, on Landlords, might be taken to represent the views of the Confederation, and lest the Confederation might suffer a loss of membership in consequence. One would imagine that a publication of Duffy's Report on Policy, with a statement that it had been adopted by an overwhelming majority by the Confederate Council, should have been all that any sane person would consider necessary to put the Confederation right. But Smith O'Brien would be satisfied with nothing less than a complete repudiation of Mitchel by the Confederation. He accordingly brought the matter up at the first February (1848) meeting of the general body of the Confederation, and it was discussed at great length for several days. Eventually O'Brien's motion, seconded by J. E. Pigot, repudiating definitely the doctrines propounded by Mitchel, *and forbidding him to propagate them within the Confederation*, was carried by two-thirds of the meeting.

In proposing his motion O'Brien made a long speech, a great deal of which need not concern us now. After referring to the letters of Mitchel and Reilly he said, plunging at once into the point he had most in mind: "Now, I say authentically that the welfare of this Confederation, perhaps I may say its existence, depends on the question whether or not it adopts the sentiments contained in Mr. Mitchel's and Mr. Reilly's letters. I am authorized to state that two of the ablest men in the South of Ireland, Mr. Shea Lalor and Mr. Shine Lalor, one of whom took the chair at our first meeting, and the other gentleman who is well known in the South of Ireland to be a man of the highest character and respectability—I am able to say that their adhesion to the Confederation depends on the decision which you may take with reference to that question. I believe, I may say, that there are many others whose adhesion depends on that decision, and

I have no hesitation whatever in stating that my own continuance in connection with this body depends on it also." He went on to refer to Mitchel's recommendation as to the course to be followed in Poor Law Administration, which he also opposed, and finally to his general policy and his recommendation that the Confederation should "rather employ themselves in promulgating sound instruction on military affairs." "Now this advice," said Smith O'Brien, "seems to me to be utterly fatal to the liberties of the country," and he went on to say, in terms with which we are all familiar, that a physical force movement was wrong and impracticable. "Do not attempt to win freedom by anarchy," and he ended by proposing ten resolutions which reiterated the fundamental rule of the Confederation as to obtaining "the legislative independence of Ireland by the force of opinion, by the combination of all classes of Irishmen, and the exercise of all the political, social and moral influences within our reach," repudiated Mitchel's recommendation to the people to pay no taxes, declaring that "in maintaining that the right to bear arms and to use them for legitimate purposes is one of the primary attributes of liberty we have had no intention or desire to encourage any portion of the population of this country in the perpetration of crimes," repudiated Mitchel's attempt "to divert them [the people] from constitutional action," and finally declaring "that this Confederation was established to attain an Irish Parliament by the combination of classes and by the force of opinion, exercised in constitutional operations, and that no means of a contrary character can be recommended or promoted through its organization."

Michael Doheny supported Smith O'Brien in a speech which contains this extraordinary passage: "The object is, in my mind, totally incompatible with an armed struggle. An armed struggle could not end in Repeal, but Separation. Circumstances forbid the

consideration, even remotely, of Separation." And he spoke, as did all the others, as if Mitchel were recommending an immediate appeal to arms, asked him where he was to get them, when to begin, and so on. We have all been asked that in our time.

P. J. Smyth supported Smith O'Brien. "By adopting Mr. Mitchel's views it is not alone the landlord class who would be outraged, but the more influential, and in this country the most powerful class of any, the middle class. Upon what class of men is it proposed that we rely? Upon the lowest class of all."

John Blake Dillon, R. D. Williams and Richard O'Gorman supported Smith O'Brien.

C. G. Duffy supported Smith O'Brien, and supplied the only glimmering of an understanding of the situation on Smith O'Brien's side. For the question—although ultimately it meant Constitutionalism or Revolution—was not whether physical force was good or bad, but whether Mitchel was to preach it within the Confederation, though most of the speakers spoke on the question of immediate physical force. "Consider what would be the result of your leaving things exactly as they are, if that were possible. Two parties relying upon different means, teaching different principles from the same platform, contending for different objects in the same Council. Both cannot go on together without ruin to both; for men and classes whom we regard as essential to success will be driven away by irrational violence. You must choose between them and pronounce that one or other shall be the legitimate opinion of the Confederation."

Meagher supported Smith O'Brien. "Is it not come to this, that we have to choose between a constitutional policy and an insurrection? Is an insurrection probable? If probable, is it practicable? Prove to me that it is and I for one will vote for it this very night, I support this constitutional policy, not from choice, but from necessity."

T. D. McGee supported Smith O'Brien. "I dislike and oppose these principles and this policy, not because they are bold, but because they are mad; not because they are seditious, but because they are insane; not because they are treason to the law of the land, but high treason to the commonsense of the Kingdom."

As an amendment to O'Brien's resolutions Mitchel proposed:—"That this Confederation does not feel called upon to promote either a condemnation or approval of any doctrines promulgated by any of its members in letters, speeches, or otherwise, because the seventh fundamental rule of the Council expressly provides 'that inasmuch as the essential bond of union amongst us is the assertion of Ireland's right to an Independent Legislature, no member of the Irish Confederation shall be bound to the adoption of any principle involved in any resolution, or promulgated by any speaker in the society, or any journal advocating its policy, to which he has not given his special consent, save only the foregoing fundamental principles of the society.'" He was supported by John Martin, Devin Reilly, Eugene O'Reilly, M. J. Barry, and a Dublin Confederate named Byrne, the other speakers being all against save Fisher Murray, who was neutral. In support of his own amendment he made two brilliant speeches, which are unfortunately too long to quote at length. But he smashed up completely the whole case of O'Brien and his supporters, showed that it was they, and not he and Reilly, who wanted to alter the fundamental rules of the Confederation by their ninth resolution—which I have quoted—which would automatically exclude him and those who agreed with him from membership. He pointed out that in Belfast, with Smith O'Brien in the chair, he had himself promulgated the Confederation policy as one which "does not exclude any kind of operation consistent with morality and duty. It does not exclude an organization to resist and defeat foreign laws, for instance, neither does it

prohibit a resort to arms should the time ever come when we shall have the power to use them," and that his views on the land laws had been publicly expressed in two lectures which were actually at the time being printed as pamphlets by the Confederation; that he was as eager for a combination of all classes as any of them, but had become convinced that it was impracticable then; that the landlords had quite gone over to the enemy; and finally that he was advocating preparations for insurrection, not anarchy nor an immediate appeal to arms. Here are extracts:—

"There is not in the whole of our rules one word about constitution, or about law, or about 'patience and perseverance,' or about 'peace, law and order.' I drew up the original draft of these myself, and took good care to put into them no such balmy balderdash. To be sure, the rule says we expect to achieve our country's freedom, amongst other things, by the force of opinion. Well, and must the force of opinion always be legal, always be peaceful? Does opinion then mean law. Does opinion cease to be opinion the moment it steps out of the trenches of the constitution? Why, sir, I hold that there is no opinion in Ireland worth a farthing which is not illegal. We are told it was opinion and sympathy, and other metaphysical entities, that rescued Italy and scared Austria back from Ferrara without a blow. Yes, but it was Opinion with the helmet of a National Guard on his head, and a long sword by his side; it was Opinion standing, match in hand, at the breach of a gun charged to the muzzle."

"I ask my brother Confederates do they, in their consciences, think that the landlords of Ireland will help them to set this island free? Is it a fact, or is it not, that the Irish gentry have called in the aid of foreigners to help them to clear their own people from the face of the earth, to help them to crush and trample down, in blood and horror, the rightful claim of the tenant classes to a bare subsistence on the land they

till? Is it a fact they invented a sham council called the 'Irish Council' and talked what they called nationality there for a few meetings until they got what they wanted—a Bill to disarm and transport the Irish—and where is their nationality now? . . . . And in what position do we see these landed proprietors now? Are they flocking to our standard, as we have so often invited them to do? Are they marshalling us the way to win our freedom from the English? Have they not taken pay from the English against us, and are they not now turning upon us sword in hand?"

"The real issue here is whether the Irish Confederation shall now definitely shape itself into an organization for purely constitutional or parliamentary agitation, to the utter exclusion of those who, like me, take no interest in that kind of procedure, or whether it shall be open, as before, to those who think it is only by a steady passive resistance to English laws that Ireland's independence is to be won. For my part I admit that I am weary of constitutional agitation, and will never lift a finger to help it more. *I believe we have not the materials for it, and that the show of constitutional power we possess was exactly devised by our enemies to delude us into an endless and drifting agitation.*"

"Most of the arguments advanced to-night I have no need to controvert. Generally speaking they are arguments against the declaration of immediate war upon the Queen of England—against leading out a starving peasantry to be mown down in the open field by regular troops. None of these things, as of course you are aware, I have recommended. But even if I had there are far worse things going on around us than bloodshed. Mr. Dillon has a great horror of local insurrections—perhaps he prefers local starvation—local desolation and pauperism, local exterminations. Sir, I hold that the most disastrous insurrections were not half so horrible as any of these things; I hold that it is a more hideous national calamity for ten men to be cast out to

die of hunger than for ten thousand to be hewn to pieces, fighting like men and christians in defence of their rights. But beware, says Mr. McGee, beware of exasperating class against class; once disturb the ethereal calm, the sweet confidence and affection that reign between classes in Ireland, and you know not where it may end. I answer Skibbereen! Bantry! Schull! Westport! I point to the exterminations, the murders, the hangings, the Coercion Act!

"And now, I say, adopt these resolutions and you seal the fate of the Confederation; you make it merely one of the long series of moral force agitating associations that have plagued Ireland for forty years. Adopt these and all the world will see that you have thrown the people overboard to conciliate the gentry."

The voting was:—

For Smith O'Brien's Resolutions	314
For Mitchel's Amendment	188
Majority	126

Considering the fact that all the prominent members of the Confederation, save Reilly and Martin and Barry, spoke against Mitchel in this debate, it was a very respectable minority. Reading over the whole discussion now, and the arguments of both sides, the failure of O'Brien and his supporters to grapple at all with Mitchel's masterly exposition of the situation, one is struck more than ever by the fact that they were still in a fog, still concentrating upon minor things but leaving the central problem of the country unfaced. Mitchel's analysis of the whole system of government in Ireland, his denunciation of the Poor Laws, of the landlords, of the whole so-called constitutional machinery, his stripping of constitutionalism to the skeleton it is, all this sent them into a panic, and they moved to exclude Mitchel lest he should convert the main body of the Confederation to his views. They

wanted, in spite of the naked facts, to go on believing in the patriotism of the landlords as a class, to go on believing in Opinion, in Reason, in Persuasion, and what not, although all these had failed and the people were still being starved and hanged. It was just a panicky refusal to face ugly facts, or to consider revolution as a physical necessity as well as a feeder of the soul. They had preached guns and swords in a general rhetorical kind of fashion since the inception of the movement, the whole tendency and atmosphere of themselves and of their writings had been revolutionary. "What is the tone of the *Nation*," said somebody once to Chancellor Plunket, and he replied, aptly and truthfully, "The tone of the *Nation* is the tone of Wolfe Tone." None of them were loyalists or imperialists, and if they drank loyal toasts in the early days at Repeal banquets it was only to avoid antagonizing O'Connell and because they hoped, by remaining in the Repeal Association, to make it a national organization. But although they were all revolutionaries intellectually, save Duffy, they never really thought of revolution as an actual course of action; they believed that they could go on for ever, or until some kind of Repeal was conceded, writing fiery articles and making fiery speeches, and attitudinizing generally, doing nothing beyond words. And when they found Mitchel actually taking revolution seriously, actually proposing that, in addition to writing ballads about pikes and guns, they should procure pikes and guns, and practice their use, and drill, and discipline themselves and all who would follow them—why, they threw Mitchel aside and tried to shut out his trumpet call, his terrible truths. It was the move of men in a panic, and when they had got over the first feeling they were ashamed of themselves. For men who talk revolution must either prepare revolution or rot in their souls. And four months after this memorable debate they had all adopted Mitchel's views.

CHAPTER X

THE BREAK UP OF CONSTITUTIONALISM

Immediately after the debate which culminated in the passing of Smith O'Brien's Resolutions, Mitchel, Reilly and John Martin withdrew from active connection with the Confederation and resigned the Council: they did not resign membership but temporarily suspended their connection with it. Mitchel, indeed, who was essentially clear-sighted and a man of very different intellect to that man with the flamboyant, impractical and visionary mind which people who never read through the *United Irishman* call him, had no illusions whatever as to how the resolutions would react on the Confederation and as to how they would be received by the country at large. He had been given to understand that, before the resolutions or anything approximating to them were brought in, Duffy's report on policy would be printed and circulated amongst the branches of the Confederation through the country, and that then a full conference would be called. But the resolutions were sprung on the Confederation with what he regarded as unfair haste: as a matter of fact they were "panic" resolutions: and this, coupled with the fog in which the debate revealed the Confederates to be determined Mitchel to start a weekly paper of his own, to disseminate the principles in which he had come to believe, since he was barred from the *Nation* and the Confederation. Events, he considered, freed him from any obligation not to start a rival to the *Nation*, and that must certainly be conceded. I shall come later on to a full examination of the policy advocated by

Mitchel, in the *United Irishman*, but it may be said here, generally, that the influence it wielded from the first number, and the irresistible logic of the writing of Mitchel, were powerful factors in changing the Confederates from constitutionalists to revolutionists.

Mitchel himself had seen clearly that the policy outlined by Duffy was not a practicable policy in the then condition of Ireland; he believed that a bolder and more revolutionary policy—the policy he himself wished to advocate—would appeal to the majority of the Confederates, and he believed that public opinion would sooner or later compel the leaders to give up constitutionalism and go in for revolution. In the letter which he wrote to the Confederation he said that he believed that "public opinion will soon compel the Council to reverse the act of imbecile despotism which they consummated on Friday night. . . . Paralysed as the Irish Confederation is at present, mesmerised by landlord influence, and bewildered by constitutional law, it is still the only body in Ireland that is making, or thinks it is making, any single honest effort to rid the island of English dominion. I therefore only withdraw from active interference in the proceedings of the Confederation; and so soon as it shall once more be open to all Repealers of the Union (be they physical force revolutionists, aristocrats, democrats, Chartists, Orangemen, Whigs, or thugs), I will be found in your ranks again." In commenting upon the debate, the *Nation*, to give the other side of the picture, dwelt upon the folly of trusting to one class, and that the lowest. "The course of the Confederation then seems clear. It must win the middle class, and all it can reach above and below them. . . . Our chance of winning this class is increased by the late debate. It will give them confidence that in staking their honour and character in the struggle they do not make common cause with reckless men. This was the security they awaited."

[Oh, patient reader, ponder. How many promising Irish movements have been wrecked on this same sunken rock of the middle class.] Then the *Nation* and the Confederation set themselves to evolve a constitutional policy which should be respectable and virile at the same time—a very hard thing to do, and an attempt which failed. They had roused the patriotism and courage and enthusiasm of the people by preaching virile and aggressive Nationalism, by fighting ballads and fighting articles and fighting speeches. Now, they sought to quiet the people by recommending to them Irish trade, and tenant right, and parliamentary elections. And, naturally, it did not do, and they were driven, speedily and naturally, to make common cause with Mitchel and plan revolutionary battles as well as revolutionary ballads.

Three things made all attempts at constitutionalism hopeless, as the Confederates soon saw. They were :—

(1) The *United Irishman*, the first number of which appeared a week after the debate.

(2) The Waterford Election, where the constitutional policy failed.

(3) The French Revolution.

As regards the first of these, the Confederation was hopelessly beaten from the start. It had never got down to a definite or conscious policy—that is the fact which comes home clearer to me the more I study it—never gone beyond a general adherence to an "Irish Legislature," leaving the how and the when beautifully vague, and although the Council had approved Duffy's report nothing was done to translate that approval into something to answer the growing demand of the rank and file for a definite and understandable policy. As against that you had Mitchel, clear-headed, certain of himself, facing the naked facts, putting forth with all his soul the most complete and most moving and most overwhelming exposition of Irish Nationalism that had been offered to Ireland since Tone—a policy

which threw away altogether all pretence of the maintenance of any connection with England, and declared quite openly for an absolutely independent Ireland. People will say sneeringly that Mitchel had no policy; but he was the only man of his time who had both a complete and unanswerable policy and method. Of course the method was uncomfortable, and that is why there have been so many critics, not honest enough to confess the real grounds for their objections. In the prospectus of the *United Irishman* Mitchel said that the projectors "believe that Ireland really and truly *wants* to be freed from English dominion. They know not how many or how few will listen to their voice. They have no party prepared to follow at their backs; and have no trust save in the power of Truth and the immortal beauty of Freedom. 'He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.'"

"The principles on which the *United Irishman* will be conducted are shortly these:—

"1st—That the Irish people have a just and indefeasible right to this island, and to all the moral and material wealth and resources thereof, to possess and govern the same for their own use, maintenance, comfort and honour, as a distinct Sovereign State.

"2nd—That it is in their power, and it is also their manifest duty, to make good and exercise that right.

"3rd—That the life of one peasant is as precious as the life of one nobleman or gentleman.

"4th—That the property of the farmers and labourers of Ireland is as sacred as the property of all the noblemen and gentlemen in Ireland, and is also immeasurably more valuable.

"5th—That the custom called 'Tenant Right,' which prevails particularly in the North of Ireland, is a just and salutary custom both for North and South: that it ought to be extended and secured in Ulster, and adopted and enforced, by common consent, in the other three provinces of the Island.

"6th—That every man in Ireland who shall hereafter pay taxes for the support of the State shall have a just right to an equal voice with every other man in the government of that State and the outlay of those taxes.

"7th—That no man has at present any 'legal' rights or claim to the protection of any law, and that all 'legal and constitutional agitation' in Ireland is a delusion.

"8th—That every free man, and every man who desires to become free, ought to have arms and to practice the use of them.

"9th—That no combination of classes in Ireland is desirable. just, or possible, save on the terms of the rights of the industrious classes being acknowledged and secured.

"10th—That no good thing can come from the English Parliament or the English Government."

Imagine these ten propositions, expounded, elucidated and applied in every conceivable fashion by the burning fire of Mitchel, and you will understand what the effect was on a people who had been awakened out of O'Connellism by dreams of war and independence, and who had at last found a leader.

As regards the Waterford Election, it was an election which the Confederates fought on their new constitutional policy, with Meagher as candidate. Mitchel opposed his candidature in the *United Irishman*, saying that he would not be elected, and ought not to be. All the Confederate forces were sent to Waterford, but in a three-cornered contest Meagher was beaten hopelessly, and came in a bad third.

The great wave of European liberty in 1848, and especially the French portion of it, finished the work; and when the news of the establishment of the second French Republic came, constitutionalism vanished from the Confederation and revolution took its place. The tide swept them all with it, and it was agreed that once again Ireland's opportunity had come. O'Brien,

Dillon, McGee, Duffy, Meagher, were now as eager to recommend military study and military preparation as they had been four weeks previously to throw scorn and contempt upon them. "The minds of intelligent young men," said O'Brien, "should be directed to the consideration of such questions as how strong places can be captured and weak ones defended; how supplies of food and ammunition can be cut off from the enemy; and how they can be secured to a friendly force. The time has also come when every lover of his country should come forward openly and proclaim his willingness to be enrolled as a member of a National Guard." Meagher, in an eloquent and moving speech, said the time was come to "up with the barricades and invoke the God of battles!" and others followed. The most significant conversion was that of Duffy, the only man who could have provided an alternative policy which had an element of statesmanship in it—the one of them who was least revolutionary by nature. Speaking at the Confederation, he said: "You were patient, you did bide your time, and now I, for one, proclaim that that time is at hand. Aye, the opportunity which we have been promised so long has come; and if we are not slaves and braggarts, unworthy of liberty, Ireland will be free before the coming summer fades into winter. . . . Whoever voted as I did at the last meeting of the Confederation against rash words and rash courses, is doubly bound when the opportunity which we promised has arrived to prove that wise caution, not slavish cowardice, was our motive. We are brought to that test soon, and we will not flinch from it." And in the *Nation* that week he wrote:—

"Hear it, and rejoice, all men of Ireland, living within the four seas, or eating the bitter bread of exile—the day of our deliverance is at hand. Ireland's opportunity, for which patriots sighed, swearing to make it memorable in the annals of mankind, is coming fast. If we

be not braggarts and perjurers, accursed of God and despised of men, the knell of our slavery has already rung on the night. We were peaceful, we were patient, we bided our time (oh! heavens, with what bitter and humiliated hearts!) and now by the sacred name of justice, and of God, that time is come. Now, now, now. Already the dawn of freedom bursts like a May morning in the East."

"Ireland's opportunity, thank God and France, has come at last! Its challenge rings in our ears like a call to battle and warms our blood like wine. It demands of us what mission we have to entrust to its ministry, so often and so fervently evoked. We must answer if we would not be slaves for ever. We must unite, we must act, we must leap all barriers, but those which are divine; if needs be we must die rather than let this providential hour pass over us unliberated.

"If, after all we have vowed and sworn, promised and prophesied, this opportunity is to be lost, let us be the victims of any fate but not the survivors of such a shameful self-abasement. Any death but such a suicide!"

Mitchel, Reilly and Martin returned to the Confederation at once, amidst tumultuous enthusiasm, and so Smith O'Brien's resolutions were torn up before they were a month old, and the Confederates set about preparing for war. The Confederate Clubs were armed and drilled, and everywhere it was nothing but arming and drilling, and the feverishness of a people wound up to fighting pitch. Liberty was abroad in Europe, France was free, Hungary, Italy, Poland, all fighting gallantly, and the manhood of Ireland wanted to fight also. The only question was, now or later; and it proved to be now.

CHAPTER XI

THE *UNITED IRISHMAN*—POLITICAL PRINCIPLES

The *United Irishman* ran for less than four months—for sixteen weeks, to be accurate—and in that time it made a successful revolution possible, possible if the other men had been up to the level of Mitchel and Lalor. Twelve months previously Lalor had written to the Confederation: "Are you up to the mark and work of this one hour, instead of the 'life's labour' you promise? *Strip*, then, and bid Ireland strip. *Now or never*, if, indeed, it be not too late." Mitchel had not then lost faith in the upper classes, but when he did he stripped, and called on Ireland to strip also. And all over Ireland his message came with the divine compulsion of a new Gospel, and men said that this was he whom they had been waiting for. There is more political wisdom, more passion and fire, more inexorable logic, more facing of fundamental political facts, in the sixteen numbers of the *United Irishman* than there are in all the journals which have been produced in Ireland since.

The paper had a very large circulation and a very big influence, a circulation which went on increasing with each successive number. The debate in the Confederation and certain of Mitchel's public speeches had roused the public attention, and the first number of the paper was bought up like wildfire and completely sold out in a few hours. Thenceforward Mitchel had his public: he had the ear of that portion of the people which was actively interested in Irish freedom, and he preached to them with a fervour and a sincerity which are biblical in their candour and unflinchingness. He

had come from a vague patriotism to Repeal of the Union, from Repeal of the Union to Independence, from the ideal of Grattan to the ideal of Tone; and in the paper he now stood out, his soul quite free, free wholly and for the first time from any shackles of constitutionalism, or '82 'ism, or any other ism save Nationalism. It was a great soul, a heroic unconquerable soul, calling to other souls to be great also, each according to his capacity, calling on Ireland to save her soul, calling with a passionate intensity which we hear yet, seventy years after the clank of the chains upon Mitchel's limbs as he passed from Dublin aboard the Shearwater frigate. He who reads through the sixteen numbers of the *United Irishman* will see that here was a man who concentrated in that short time the energy which would have been half a lifetime to an ordinary man: who rose to a great call, strove passionately to accomplish the mission he was meant for, the rousing of the Irish people of that generation to manhood, and who failed through no fault of his own. The people were roused, ever ready to follow Mitchel anywhere, even with bare fists, but the other leaders restrained them at the psychological moment, and it never returned in that generation. Limpid, clear, lyrical, and compelling, the great soul of Mitchel pulsates through the pages of the paper like a torrent, washing away from its path all petty things, and all wrong things. There is in his writing that subtle quality which we call inspiration, that which only the appointed few possess. Mitchel had it, and so his writings are for all time: and to-day they apply as forcibly as they did seventy years ago.

Modern phrasemongers would, perhaps, call Mitchel an Ulster Scot, but he was an Ulster Scot, if we allow the term, who stood out as the greatest Irish Nationalist since Tone; an Irishman simply, who accepted Ireland, loved Ireland passionately, hated England passionately, and spent himself in the

service of his country. He had set himself free, gradually, from all bindings and limitations in the matter of Irish National principles and policy; instead of starting with a provincial Ireland and a strong powerful England, with how much England would grant, he started with the *Irish Nation* and how much it was entitled to of right. He examined the whole course of English dealings in the country and stripped from them the mask of constitutionalism, the mask of protector of the Protestants of Ulster; he stripped the mask likewise from the mass of Nationalists, pulled them out of lip loyalty and compromises and fear, and put to them the straight issue, independence or an honourable death; he put Ireland up, a free and unconquered nation, free by virtue of her great spirit, of all the children of hers who have died for her, of her steady refusal to admit defeat, up in place of a toast-making, respectable, law-abiding, fawning satellite, as O'Connell made her; he preached action and endurance and courage instead of ease and respectability and words. Never in so short a space of time did a Nation in idea emerge from so many ugly trappings, and stand out before the face of her people, almost blinding them with her glory. How it was done cannot be set down in one article or in half a dozen. One feels it in reading the files of that paper even yet. It was soul, soul and inspiration. Mitchel's soul lives yet for us in his writings, and his voice still comes out of the clouds, thundering. Heed ye.

He set himself deliberately to rouse Ireland into insurrection, believing that the psychological moment was at hand: to upset all the "moral" teaching of O'Connell and all the degradation of his agitation, believing that to nothing but to force would the British Government yield, and that Ireland had the power, had she the will, to apply that force. He took up Irish Nationalism where Tone and Emmet had left it, and preached a people dying like men instead of living like

slaves. And, as always, the people hearkened, for all they want is proper leading. The political creed of Mitchel was that in Ireland there is no law and no government, nothing but tyranny grinding a people down, that all the constitutional trappings are but so many devices to sap the energy of the people and distract their attention from the real issue, that Ireland and England are always at war, and that Ireland can only free herself by force. That force he believed she could and would exert.

But extracts from his writings will give a better idea of this than anything I can write by way of summary. In the first number of the *United Irishman* he has an open letter to Lord Clarendon in which he enumerates the maxims of the paper, and declares his intention of expounding them weekly to the people. He goes on: "For, indeed, they are a simple and credulous people, and have had much base teaching. They have been taught, for instance, that 'patience and perseverance' in rags and starvation is a virtue—that to eat the food they sow and reap is a crime, and that 'the man who commits a crime (this sort of crime) gives strength to the enemy.' They were not taught by these bad teachers to avoid real crimes, lying, boasting, cringing, rearing up their children as beggars, taking their children's bread and giving it unto dogs. None of all this have they learned yet; but, please God, they shall. . . .

"But you will ask for additional powers? You will resort to courts martial, and triangles, and free quarters? Well that, at least, will be the end of 'constitutional agitation,' and Irishmen will then find themselves front to front with their enemies, and feel that there is no help in franchises, in votings, in spoutings, in shoutings, and toasts drunk with enthusiasm—nor in anything in this world save the *extensor* and *contractor* muscles of their right arms, in these and in the goodness of God alone. To that issue the 'Condition of Ireland question' must be brought.

"In plain English, my Lord Earl, the deep and irreconcilable disaffection of this people to all British laws, law-givers, and law-administrators, shall find a voice. That holy hatred of foreign dominion which nerved our noble predecessors fifty years ago for the dungeon, the field, or the gallows (though of late years it has worn a vile Nisi Prius gown and snivelled somewhat in courts of law and on spouting platforms), still lives, thank God! and glows as fierce and hot as ever."

And fully, in the succeeding numbers, did Mitchel act up to his threat to Lord Clarendon. Letters to the small farmers of Ireland, letters to the Protestants of the North, letters to everybody: everything, land, law, famine, helped to give point to the naked facts as to the connection of Ireland with England. There was no slurring over of truth, no hesitancy with regard to ugly and unpleasant facts—everything came out, and Ireland began to stir. "But I am told," he writes in the fourth number, "that it is vain thus to speak to you; that the peace-policy of O'Connell is dearer to you than life and honour—that many of your clergy, too, exhort you rather to die than violate what the English call 'law'—and that you are resolved to take their bidding. Then *die*—die in your patience and perseverance; but be well assured of this—that the priest who bids you perish patiently amidst your own golden harvests, preaches the gospel of England, insults manhood and commonsense, bears false witness against religion, and blasphemes the Providence of God. . . . Oh! my countrymen, look up, look up! Arise from the death-dust where you have long been lying, and let this light visit your eyes also, and touch your souls. Let your ears drink in the blessed words, 'Liberty! Fraternity! Equality!' which are soon to ring from pole to pole. Clean steel will, ere long, dawn upon you in your desolate darkness; and the rolling thunder of the People's cannon will drive before it many a cloud that has long hidden from you the face of heaven.

"Pray for that day; and preserve life and health that you may worthily meet it. Above all, let the man amongst you who has no gun, *sell his garment, and buy one.*"

And here is an extract from a biting letter to Lord Clarendon in number seven, an extract which states exactly the Nationalist case for all time:

"But the case is this: I assert and maintain that in the island of Ireland there is no government or law —that what passes for 'government' is a foul and fraudulent usurpation, based on corruption and falsehood, supported by force, and battening on blood. I hold that the meaning and sole object of that Government is to make sure of a constant supply of Irish food for British tables, Irish wool for British backs, Irish blood and bone for British armies; to make sure, in one word, of Ireland for the English, and to keep down, scourge and dragoon the Irish into submission and patient starvation. This being the case, I hold that the Irish nation is, and has long been, and ought to be, in a state of *war* with 'Government,' *albeit* the said Government has heretofore had clear victory, and is at this moment in full possession of the island, its inhabitants, and all that is theirs. But your Lordship, on the other hand, maintains, I presume, that the thing called a Government is not a foreign usurpation, but one of the 'institutions of the country' —that the persons composing it are *not* robbers and butchers but statesmen—that their object is not the plunder and starvation of the people, but the good order and peace of society, the amelioration of social relations, and the dispensation of justice between man and man.

"Here are two very distinct propositions, and it is impossible that they can both be true. Either there is a Government or there is none; law or no law—either the Confederation and the *United Irishman* are a nuisance, or else *you* are a nuisance. You ought not

have suffered our existence so long, or else we ought to have extinguished yours. You and we are mortal enemies; and now that issue has been happily joined, I fervently hope it will result in the utter destruction of one or other of the parties. When I speak of *your* destruction, my Lord, I mean only official extinction —the abolition of that Government of which you are the agent; when I speak of *ours*, I mean our death on field or scaffold, by your weapon of 'law' or your weapon of steel. I mean, simply, that we will overthrow your Government or die."

Later, he writes in number eleven: "We must have Ireland, not for certain Peers, and nominees of Peers, in College Green, but *Ireland for the Irish.* I scorn and spit upon 'Repeal of the Union.' The 'Queen, Lords, and Commons of Ireland' will never be seen in bodily form upon this earth; 'the golden link of the Crown' is as great a humbug as the great *Peace-Principle* of the mighty leader of the Irish people."

This writing, and the kindred articles upon many other subjects, had their effect, and sank deeply into the minds of the Confederates everywhere. The best of Ireland had been raised by the *Nation* out of the influence of O'Connell and his brawling agitation, out of subservient loyalty to the English connection, out of contempt for the men who in past days had died for Irish freedom, into the enthusiasm that comes with an uplifting of the soul, with a new and ennobling ideal. From being mere members of an agitating association, drinking toasts, cheering speeches, thankful for small mercies, they had been given a new soul, a new idea of Ireland, by Davis and Duffy. Once again they remembered Shane O'Neill, and Owen Ruadh, and Sarsfield, and Swift, and Tone, and Emmet, and Fitzgerald, and the Ireland for whose sake men died—died gladly and unrepentantly. By thoughts of war, and ballads of war, and murmurings of war, by promises of action, by all the things that appeal to the heroic and

the enthusiastic, they had been pulled into a passionate enthusiasm—only to find, after all, that their leaders stopped short, that they warred only intellectually, that at bottom they were only a little more dignified, a little more intellectual, than the Repealers proper. That they were negotiators, and peaceful negotiators, too, instead of armed negotiators, and that while they scrupled not to call upon the men who died for Ireland as good exemplars, they had no intention of emulating them. The mass of the rank and file of the Confederates were a generation who had come out of semi-darkness into a great light and wanted to follow that light to its source, obstacles or no obstacles. Here in Mitchel they found the man to lead them, one who not only held up the dead patriots as exemplars, but proposed to follow their example; one who tore down the mark of hypocrisy from every manifestation of the subtle devilry of the English Government in Ireland; one who wrote with the inspiration of a prophet and the clarity and simplicity of a man of genius, one who did not make revolutionary ballads but did make revolutionary minds—above all, one who loved Ireland with a great love and hated England with a great hate. He stood in his generation for the spirit of militant Ireland, and they hearkened. Everywhere people armed, and organized, and made themselves ready. Mitchel published in the paper many military articles—articles on pike making, upon the street-fighting in the recent revolutions, hints upon military discipline, military formation, military manœuvres, hints for pikemen receiving cavalry, and so on. There was no organization in the sense in which the United Irishmen and the Fenians had one, but revolution, war and heroism were in the air. Everywhere men got themselves ready.

CHAPTER XII

THE *UNITED IRISHMAN*.—LAND AND LANDLORDS

It was not in long and in deliberate leaders and letters alone that Mitchel sent the new spirit through Ireland. Every line of the paper, every news item, every comment, drove home the separate existence of Ireland, the state of war that existed with England, and the general tension. It had been the practice of the *Nation* to print a great many things which, in their setting and their arrangement, made no distinction whatever between Ireland and England, and assumed, unconsciously of course, a certain community of outlook. The proceedings of the Westminster Parliament and of the English House of Lords were copiously reported under the heading of "The Imperial Parliament," and many odd items regarding English doings in other countries found their way in as "news" items, without special comment, being clearly clipped in from other newspapers. In the *United Irishman* the English Parliamentary doings were chronicled under the heading, "The English Parligment," and chronicled in a very abridged manner, save when the debates were on Irish subjects. Mitchel reported the Irish debates and abridged the rest, but always under the very plain heading, "The English Parliament," and the doings of the English in other countries were chronicled briefly and caustically under the heading, "The Enemy in Africa," "The Enemy in Asia," and so on; and this method of propaganda, of driving home the fundamental principles of Nationalism, was one of the most effective of all. It introduced into Irish National journalism a

spirit which, since, has never been wholly absent, although often represented by only one journal, an outlook which was wholly and absolutely Irish, and which refused to recognize England as anything but an enemy. To-day, thanks to Parliamentarianism, most of our daily papers are indistinguishable from English newspapers—as they were in Mitchel's time. But his point of view, familiar to Ireland since his time, and always with the *people* now, was quite new to the Ireland of his time, and came upon them, as his general preaching did, like a revelation. The *United Irishman* breathed forth Nationalism from the first page to the last, and the way in which that Nationalism was pushed, indirectly, and through the most unlikely channels, was a powerful help to Mitchel in his mission. The whole paper was given up, in a fashion we have never had since, to the preaching of the Irish Nation, with the last link severed by the sword; to the demonstration that Ireland's weakness came from England's strength, and that Ireland's strength would mean England's weakness; to the exposure of the whole philosophy which would parley with the enemy or consider the possibility of peace on any basis save separation. There was not in the paper one unworthy or selfish or personal line; it was all Ireland. In the first number he printed a report of the Confederation Debate, which had just concluded, but never a word of comment upon it—never a word of explanation of his own policy as against the policy of the Confederates. Although the *Nation*, in the four weeks between the debate and the French Revolution, printed articles more or less reflecting on the debate, justifying the Parliamentarian and educational policy and hitting at the revolutionary policy as a species of wild madness, Mitchel never replied even by a word. He was too big a man ever to think of himself personally, ever to seek any little personal gratification at the expense of others; he was in the grip of his great inspiration, had had his

call and followed it, and bent himself to doing what it demanded of him without worrying himself to attack the Confederate policy. He was only concerned with one thing, to get at the people and preach to them, and on that he spent himself. Many there were then who, no doubt, expected to find the *United Irishman* full of references to the differences in the Confederation, and who found instead a new national inspiration, a new and compelling policy. Instead of a personality in irritation they found a great soul in realization and in eruption.

Amongst all the letters which appeared in the *United Irishman*, the letters to the Small Farmers of Ireland and to the Protestants of the North rank amongst the highest. Much nonsense has been written and spoken, by men who never read Mitchel through, of his doctrine on land and on taxation. His doctrine on land was, briefly, that the land of Ireland belonged to the people of Ireland, that the Irish were entitled to be fed, clothed and housed out of the land and the products of Ireland before any surplus in the shape of rent or taxes was paid, and that a nation where there is no settled agricultural community must of necessity rot. In the fourth number of the paper, and the second letter to the Small Farmers, here is how he drove his doctrine home :—

"It is not that Ireland does not produce enough to sustain all her peoples; it is not that *you* do not raise, with your own hands, far more than enough to support you and your families. It is because—and only because—out of your harvests and haggards the English claim a *tribute*, the State claims *taxes*, and the landlords claim *rent*—all enormous in amount, and all prior to your claim for subsistence. You must pay them *all* before you touch a grain: they have 'law' for it.

"Suppose you have your whole produce in your haggard, in the shape of six stacks of corn; two of these, if paid in kind, might be a fair rent for the land-

lord; *one* might discharge the taxes to the Government (supposing we had any Government) and the remaining *three* might maintain your family. But look what becomes of these six stacks. Before your crop is off the ground you are hunted hard by bailiffs; you must sell off, when corn is *cheapest*, as much as will pay the rent, besides costs of distress, bribes to bailiffs, fees to keepers, and other sundries. So, instead of two stacks for rent, go full *three and a half*, the increase being all clear tribute to the British nation, through their shipping interest and their mercantile interest. Then the Imperial taxes (to pay red coats, and keep pirate war-steamers, and keep flying that Union Jack you love so well), the taxes, instead of one stack will take one and a half. Well, there remains *one stack*, but, Lord help you, it is already half devoured by the Grand Jury Cess Collector and Temporary Rate Relief Collector; and the remainder will barely cover auctioneer's charges and interest, and the cost of decrees and renewed decrees. And then the Poor Rate Collector comes and looks for a *seventh* stack. And *you?* Why you give up your farm under the quarter-acre law and get seventeenpence a week for outdoor relief, or, in all probability, you get nothing at all; and so you are a homeless and hopeless beggar, till your death on a ditch-side, which, pray that it may be soon!

"This description will seem exaggerated, of course, to some of our platform patriots—our carpet patriots. *You* know that it is true. You know that the case of Boland, lately reported in the newspapers, is but one of thousands.

"On Tuesday, the first day of February, inquests were held by James H. Martin, Coroner of Tulla, on the bodies of William, Margaret, and Mary Boland, of Gurthiveha, in the parish of Feakle. It appeared from the evidence that Mary Boland (a girl of about twelve years of age) left home early in the morning to look for something to eat, and was found dead by one of her

neighbours on the side of a ditch, not far from her wretched home. From the evidence at the inquest on William Boland, it appears that about five or six weeks ago every particle of furniture, with beds and bedding, was sold for the rates; that since then they never lay on a bed; that for three days suceessively they had not a morsel to eat; that they had nothing to keep them warm: that the deceased, William Boland, and his daughter Margaret, lay down on some straw on the night of the 31st January in their house, and that they died of cold and starvation during the night. Gurthiveha is the property of Colonel Windham, and the Bolands hold *over twenty acres.* There is a rate of 7s. 6d. in the pound, which is collecting fast. The jury found that they died of cold and starvation.—*Limerick Chronicle.*

"Now, what became of poor Boland's twenty acres of crop? Part of it went to Gibraltar to victual the garrison; part to South Africa to provision the robber army; part went to Spain to pay for the landlord's wine; part to London to pay the interest of his honour's mortgage to the Jews. The English eat some of it; the Chinese had their share; the Jews and the Gentiles divided it amongst them, and there was *none* for Boland.

"The plain remedy for all this—the only way you can save yourself alive—is *to reverse the order of payment,* to take and keep, out of the crops you raise, your own subsistence and that of your families and labourers, *first*; to part with none until you are sure of your own living—to combine with your neighbours that they may do the like, and back you in your determination—and to *resist,* in whatever way may be needful, all claims whatever, legal or illegal, till your own claims are satisfied. If it needs *all* your crop to keep you alive, you will be justified in refusing and resisting payment of any rent, tribute, rates, or taxes whatever. This is the true doctrine of Political Economy."

There was no paper which Irishmen could take up that year, or the year before that, or the year before

that, which did not contain stories similar to the stories of the Bolands. People nowadays who look, with the eyes of a soft and comfortable generation, out on the times of Mitchel, wonder and wonder why there was such a passion in his writing, such an answer from the people. There was in him the passion of the heaven-sent prophet and leader, awakened at last to the significance of things, and there was in them the answering blast of recognition of his leadership, of his authority. Hundreds of cases like the Bolands were familiar to them, but they never had any explanation of them, save the Hand of God; a heavy and a British hand; it seemed to them always to be unjust and horrible, that there was something wrong somewhere, but those whom they trusted, their clergy and their leaders, they had preached resignation and agitation, resignation and peace, marchings and resolutions and no deed. They had seen the produce of Ireland carted away from famishing people at the bayonet's point, and because of the magic of the names of rent and rates and taxes, of this rate and that cess—because these things always had been, and because they could find no explanations of them other than law—law which seemed natural, if British, they had done nothing. And now here was the explanation: here were rent and rates and taxes and law, explained and riddled: here was the fundamental principle of Irish freedom and of human freedom laid bare to them. What wonder if the Confederates everywhere followed Mitchel, and the *Nation* turned revolutionary also.

Later, in the eighth number, Mitchel writes thus of the landlords:—

"Seventy years ago the gentry were for Ireland, now they are against her. Seventy years ago the conditions of the labouring and farming class was still *tolerable:* there was no struggle of class with class for the bare means of life—"Free Trade," "Free Parliament," and

the honour and dignity of the Irish Nation were then the themes, men had leisure to think of them. Hunger had not swallowed up other feelings and passions. The several "interests" of society could still exist together here without the one devouring the other: and it was then possible for the Irish gentry to trust themselves in the hands of their countrymen without English bodyguards. But *now*—now there is a total break up of the system; the old aristocratic social arrangement here will hold together no longer . . . Show us your materials for this Constitution of '82. Let us see the landlord that will ask it, or tolerate the thought of it. Let us see the tenant or labourer that will even pull a trigger or push a pike for it. The ambition of your gentry is not to unfurl a national flag, but to screw the uttermost mite out of the poor man's blood and marrow; the one great want—the prayer and passion of the poor—is not "Queen, Lords and Commons of Ireland," but simply, land and life. . . .

"For the *Government* of a country is simply the disposal of its produce. It is out of the pasture-fields and haggards of Ireland that England keeps her mercenaries here: without them (melted down into taxes) Lord Clarendon could not buy so much as a whetstone for his slaughtering-knife: without them (diluted into *rents*) your better classes could hardly procure paper whereon to write 'addresses of confidence.' If the men who plough and dig, who sow and reap, will but eat the food they raise—if they will but consent to live like Christians, instead of dying like dogs, there is an end both of foreign sway and domestic tyranny and treason: landlordism in Ireland, we say, is doomed—its cup is full—its gale-days are numbered."

Mitchel's land and taxation principles merely amounted to these—that the people of Ireland should be maintained and fed and clothed out of the produce of Ireland *first:* and that the really important class in the

Nation was the land tilling class. Without an agricultural community, firmly rooted in the land, he saw no possibility of a Nation, and he saw that community deliberately driven off the land by a combination of England and the landlords. "Not to the individual farmer only is this a life and death question, but to society and to the Nation. With the ruin of the tillers of the soil, *all* is ruined—in vain shall you adopt manufactured pledges, hold meetings to develop resources, form companies, make speeches, insist upon national rights, a national legislature, a national flag—once let the farmers of Ireland be swept off this Irish soil, and there is an utter end of us and of our cause. 'Ireland for the Irish' means primarily and mainly: *not* 'Irishmen for the Irish offices,' not 'political meliorations,' not 'assimilation to English franchise'—patient Heaven! No—it means, *first*, Irishmen fixed upon Irish ground, and growing there, occupying the island like trees in a living forest with roots stretching as far towards Tartarus as their heads lift themselves towards the clouds. In such a nation as this, industry, energy, virtue, become possible; manufacturers would grow up without even a pledge, or a speech, or a waistcoat pattern agitation; a national senate would meet, and sit, and rule the land, of its own native energy and by the necessities of the case, without even a foreign statute empowering it to do so: a national army would arise from the earth like the sons of the dragon's teeth of old; and a national flag would plant itself without hands, and wave in the dawn of freedom, defying all the ends of the earth to pull it down." And the landlord attitude to the Nation he had come to discern as merely the attitude of a garrison, the attitude which the servile majority of the garrison Parliament of the eighteenth century had adopted. "The bargain is this —keep for *us*, ye landlords, our Irish province, and we shall set your heel on the necks of all your enemies."

But the people of Ireland are still there, and still on the land, and the landlords have met the fate of all England's catspaws. They have rotted out of existence, and there is none to regret them. "Woe unto them that join house to house, that lay field to field, till there be no place, that they may be alone in the midst of the earth."

CHAPTER XIII

THE *UNITED IRISHMAN*—MITCHEL AND THE NORTH

The critics who write about Mitchel's lack of constructive thought, as all respectable critics do, seem to me never to have read Mitchel through. In the short existence of the *United Irishman* there is no phase of the Irish national question upon which he is not constructive in the best sense, for your truest constructor is he who constructs *via* revolution, who overturns rotten ideas and rotten things at once, instead of rebuilding them inch by inch, leaving them half rotten and half sound. In the ethics of the scornful, narrow-visioned timid apologists for the occasional outbreak of soul in Ireland any philosophy, any policy, which faces facts is a destructive policy and one which pastes facts over is a constructive policy. Whereupon issue is joined, as Mitchel himself once remarked: "Your destructive mind is also your best constructive mind: for your embattled tyranny will continue embattled tyranny to the end of time unless you uproot it, and out of the most frightful chaos some kind of order is sure to emerge."

But apart from that question, Mitchel was never purely destructive. Because he was a great soul in revolt, because he had to attack an octopus tyranny, tyranny which gripped at mind as well as body, tyranny which gripped every section in Ireland with equal bitter grip, he had to be mostly attacking. But the nature and quality of his attacks, even in the extracts I have given, are essentially constructive. There was no way of rebuilding Ireland save by first destroying

the tyranny, and Mitchel had to show that to all sections.

Ulster, his own province, he had studied with a patient and passionate earnestness, and he had early come to see the importance to England of the anti-Irish sentiment so carefully fostered in Ulster. Consider it well, O moderate, and respectable and inoffensive critic, since 1690 when the fighting Irish laid down their arms and surrendered them to the Williamite justice. Then the conditions were laid in the country which have since developed into well defined grooves of political inheritance. Since then England has held Ireland largely through Ulster. And in all that time only two attempts were made to reason with Ulster and the things for which Ulster stands yet, and one was by Wolfe Tone, anathema also to the critic, and the other by the "destructive" John Mitchel. Your other "constructive" politicians, your O'Connells, and your Parnells, and your Redmonds, have ignored Ulster's reason, and Ireland has paid bitterly. Irish national leaders have made odd speeches to Ulster, have delivered themselves occasionally of pious platitudes to the effect that Ireland cannot do without a single Orangeman, but the only two who saw the real significance of Ulster, who planned a deliberate campaign addressed to the reason and the intelligence of Ulster, were the two "destructive" revolutionaries—Tone and Mitchel. Neither of them offered Ulster safeguards, neither of them ridiculed her passionate beliefs or doubted her courage, both exposed the English game and appealed to reason and patriotism: and except for the two, Ulster has been left to be the prey of the basest and most ignoble of the English: Ulster, the greatest of Irish provinces!

In the preface to his masterly life of Hugh O'Neill, Mitchel wrote, after a satirical comment upon English dealings with Ireland: "And if any reader shall see a striking similarity in the dealings of England towards

Ireland then and now—towards Ireland Milesian and Strongbownian, and a later Irish nation consisting of Milesians, Strongbownians, Scottish Planters, and Cromwellian adventurers; and if such reader shall recognize the policy recommended by Bacon, directed by Cecil, and practiced by Mountjoy and Carew, in the proceedings of certain later statesmen of England; and if (which is not impossible) he should arrive at the conclusion that the bitterest, deadliest foe of Ireland (however peopled) is the foul fiend of English Imperialism; and, further, if he shall draw from this whole story the inevitable moral that at any time it only needed Irishmen of all bloods to stand together—to be even nearly united—in order to exorcise that foul fiend for ever and drive him inexorably into the Red Sea—surely it will be no fault of the present writer." There, in a few inches, you have the truth about Ireland and the Irish question, and it was Mitchel's discovery of that, and his building of it into everything he wrote, which make his writings permanent in literature, and make them as applicable to Irish affairs to-day as they were when they were first penned. Out of a soul at white heat he wrote with a burning pen, and out of "politics" he wrote himself into literature and Tir-nan-Og. For to the imagination of Ireland Mitchel is always young, and terrible, and glorious, a shining sword in her hand and the wrath of God in her face. The Protestant gentry he had given up, but he wrote in the paper four letters addressed "The Protestant Farmers, Labourers and Artisans of the North of Ireland." Their keynote was that of the extract which I have made from his preface to Hugh O'Neill, that England cared only for Irish plunder and not a bit for the Protestant religion or any other religion, and that the Protestants of Ulster were robbed and plundered at the butt end of British bayonets with equal facility to the Catholics at the bayonets' points. To the farmers, in his first letter, he wrote: "For your case

was, and is, just this—the farmers are gradually, in Ulster as in other provinces, losing hold of the soil, under the pressure of poor rates, rents and taxes, and becoming labourers; and the labourers and artisans, from the excessive competition of other labourers and artisans, are sinking gradually into paupers, so that there is a continual sliding downwards to perdition. . . . The Pope, we know is the 'Man of Sin,' and the 'Antichrist,' and also, if you like, the 'Mystery of Iniquity,' and all that; but he brings no ejectments in Ireland. The Seven Sacraments are, to be sure, very dangerous, but the quarter acre clause touches you more nearly. In short, our vicious system of government and especially the infamous land laws are the machinery that brought you to this pass," and, addressing the labourers and artisans more especially, he wrote: "We are told that the North is thriving because Belfast exports much linen, and Derry sends off innumerable boxes of eggs, and cargoes of corn. How much of the linen do you, who weave it, get to wear? How much of the corn do you, who sow and reap it, get to eat? Just think of this, labourers and artisans of Ulster—Ireland last year produced twice as much as would feed all her inhabitants, not with Indian meal, but with good Irish wheat, oats, and beef. And then of this—there is flax enough grown, and linen cloth enough woven, and wool enough shorn, in Ireland, to muffle up every Irishman comfortably, close buttoned to the chin. Where does it go? Who eats and wears what you make? Who has a better right to it than you?" In the second and third letters he drives these points home again and again, and comes closer to the national question. "I am not 'loyal'—quite the contrary—yet it is true that your ancient tenant-right is slipping fast out of your hands. I may be a revolutionist—but you weave and dig for half wages. I am a 'Jacobin'—but you are fast becoming paupers." And in the fourth and

last letter, written from Newgate goal, he makes a last passionate appeal to his "kinsmen," as he wrote, "Well, then, I established this newspaper, the *United Irishman;* and the programme of it, which appeared about four months ago, was universally reported one of the most seditious, felonious, treasonable, and burglarious productions that ever appalled society. And so it was, for do you know what I said in it?—Why, that the life of one labouring man is exactly equal to the life of one nobleman. Neither more or less! That the property of a farmer is as sacred as that of a gentleman! That men born in Ireland have a right to live on the produce of Ireland! That no good thing could come from the English Parliament, or the English Government! That all men ought to possess arms and know how to use them! These were doctrines to propound to a civilized nation! . . . I knew, by the outcry they raised, that I had found the right road at length. By the nervous excitement of Lord Stanley in the English House of Lords; by the tremendous abuse of the landlord newspapers in Ireland; by the congregating of the Government troops, and the whetting of their slaughtering tools; by the formidable looks of legal officials, the bubonic solemnity of the 'Inner Bar' and the parrot-clatter of the Outer—I knew that the monster called 'Government' was collecting all his energies. . . . So, being satisfied that I had the axe laid to the root of the right tree, I girded up my loins, and delivered blow on blow, not with any great strength or woodman craft, but with right good will. Into British civilization and commerce, into Britain's Crown and Law, into landlord Thugs, and all enlightened theories of consolidated farming, I made horrid gashes until, as I thought, the leafy top trembled, and the trunk groaned, and it became evident that if so vehement an attack continued, the tree would fall, and obscure birds would no longer have shelter beneath its branches. Then the

'law' discharged its first bolt, and I was arrested, and held to bail to take two trials, one after the other, for what they call 'sedition'—that is, for speaking the Truth aforesaid. But, to the amazement of all Parliament-men, and Government people, I still went on exactly as before. What I had to say was God's truth, and I would say it. What I had undertaken to do was a sacred work, and I would do it. Nay, I began to call you, the Protestant Democracy of the North, to my aid. I called aloud to you to come and help me to abolish the system that gave away the food you raised and the cloth you wove, to be eaten and worn by strangers. I asked you what profit or pride you had in supporting foreign Queens and Princes out of your hard earnings. I asked you whether you liked paying high taxes in order to fit out troops and ships to disseminate British civilization in India, and diffuse over China the blessings of British 'Christianity,' which turned out, when the bales were opened, to be nothing but printed cottons. I implored of you to give over your terror about the bugbear of Popery, and to join with your countrymen in taking possession of Ireland for the Irish; and you were beginning to hearken to my appeal—when Government flesh and blood could bear it no longer. Suddenly this short paper I spoke of was written out, was read three times, her most gracious Majesty gave it her 'royal assent,' of course; and, behold! it was an Act; and whom should thereafter write, or print, or openly or advisedly speak, God's truth in this matter, was to be a felon; and to be sent forthwith to the Antipodes, to labour there in chains for his natural life. And inasmuch as I still persisted in speaking, writing, printing and publishing the truth, I am now inditing to you this letter—possibly my last—in a cell of Newgate gaol. . . .

"I wish to say to you that I am more than ever convinced that the way I have been taking is the true and only way to deal with the 'Government,' to

right the wrongs of working men, and to achieve liberty for our country. Let the plain truth be told, the plain truth be acted, felony or no felony. Let Irishmen, North and South, reflect upon that maxim—the life of one Peasant is equal to the life of one Peer; and follow it out to its consequences, whithersoever it may lead, be that through prisons, or anarchy, or reigns of terror, or rivers of blood;—and, above all things, remember that no good thing can come from the English Parliament or the English Government.

"For me, I abide my fate joyfully; for I know that whatever betide me, my work is nearly done. Yes; Moral Force and 'Patience and Perseverance' are scattered to the wild winds of Heaven. The music my countrymen now love best to hear is the rattle of arms and the ring of the rifle. As I sit here, and write in my lonely cell, I hear, just dying away, the measured tramp of ten thousand marching men—my gallant confederates, unarmed and silent, but with hearts like bended bow, waiting till the time comes. They have marched past my prison windows to let me know there are ten thousand fighting men in Dublin—'felons' in heart and soul.

"I thank God for it. The game is afoot, at last. The liberty of Ireland may come sooner or come later, by peaceful negotiation or bloody conflict—but it is sure; and wherever between the poles I may chance to be, I will hear the crash of the downfall of the thrice-accursed British Empire,"

Thus Mitchel to Ulster, and since his time there has been no appeal to her reason or her intelligence. She has been given over to Unionist Politicians angling for votes in the English Parliament, and Irish Leaders have not considered it worth their while to include her in their campaigns—save to widen the breach.

In Ulster these letters were having their effect, and not in Ulster alone, for Mitchel's writings upon any subject were eagerly read all over Ireland, and every

trenchant line wakened an echo in thousands of good Irish hearts. It was a campaign, a direct and uncompromising telling of the Truth, which not alone was spreading like wildfire through Ireland, but was driving the *Nation* also into revolution: instead of the empty mouthings of the rhetorician and demagogue, here were the inspired pronouncements of the most revealing intellect that had searched Ireland since Tone: and Government knew that it was time to fight now, to strike hard, and strike quickly.

CHAPTER XIV

THE *UNITED IRISHMAN*—ITS EFFECT

The extracts which I have given from the *United Irishman* are typical of all Mitchel's work in that paper, of its quality and its temper, of its lyrical quality, its note of authority. I have extracted at some length in order to attempt to give an adequate idea of the kind of paper the *United Irishman* was, and to explain, as far as it can be explained, how and why it changed the thoughts of Irish Nationalists of that generation from a vague impulse towards freedom to a definite attempt to achieve freedom. The task of selection was a difficult one, not for want of pertinent writings to quote, but from excess of pertinent writings. Even in his most careless writing, in the answers to correspondents for instance, there is a fire and vitality which stir the blood to-day even as they did seventy years ago: the difficulty was to make a selection which should give some adequate idea of the man and his work; and that I hope I have done.

I shall come later on to an analysis, or, rather, an appreciation, of Mitchel's general policy and outlook; here I want to consider the influence which he had upon the Ireland of his time. We know now what that was. The awakening conscious Nationalism of the last years of the eighteenth century was halted at the Union, and under the demoralising influence of an agitation for *Catholic* Emancipation, an agitation carried on entirely in English, a language which the majority of Catholics—outside the seoinin class—did not understand, was gradually, but surely, deflected into a quasi-constitutional agitation, an agitation which

worked through the means which the enemy devised for the slavery of the Nation, which pretended to be loyal, tried to use their own weapons against them. But the directing force of these weapons was always in their hands, and the result, natural and inevitable, was that they won, even while we, by the dubious triumph of 1829, seemed to win, and their grip on the Nation got stronger. Davis and Duffy broke that horrible state of things: they reminded a forgetful Ireland that Ireland was no province of the British Empire, no Colony, no inferior Nation, but an ancient civilization, a once independent Nation, and England's superior in most things. Since the Union there had been no patriotism in Ireland outside the Ribbon Organizations. *They* still clung blindly to the old Irish tradition that Ireland belonged to the Irish, they still fought with the weapons at their hands for the Nation; but elsewhere there was no patriotism. The agitators who followed O'Connell wanted what the garrison had got—admission to place and power in the British Empire, and, above all, jobs in Ireland. Davis and Duffy sounded a nobler call, and sounded with no uncertain note, and the best and most disinterested minds in Ireland answered to that call, brought new help to O'Connell and his Association, livened up the middle classes and the people, and, finally evolved a separate Party, Young Ireland. Young Ireland had tried to guide and influence O'Connell towards a broad and tolerant nationalism, towards a self-respecting ideal of an Irish Nation, towards independence of all influences outside Ireland, instead of the intolerant pro-Whig atmosphere he loved, and which alone he understood. But Davis and Duffy were their only statesmanlike intellects; they only, the one from the depths of the Catholic Irish, and the other from the garrison class, they only of that brilliant band were capable of grasping the big facts of the situation, of legislating on that broad scale which advantages a nation. Of the two Davis was, of course, the bigger

man: he had a touch of what is known as impractical idealism, a big faith in ideals, which was not Duffy's strongest characteristic. Duffy was too near the influences that had produced O'Connell, and his bent was towards agitation, a gradually strengthening agitation which should win outpost after outpost by a system of constitutional agitation backed up by a big educational movement, and should culminate in an independent legislature. And after the death of Davis, as I have shown, there was no guiding spirit in the movement, no considered policy, no plan of development or of action, until Mitchel compelled the Irish Confederation to make up their minds. Davis and Duffy, we know, had, at the start, considered that the logical outcome of the Repeal Agitation, of the enthusiasm behind O'Connell, of England's firm resolve not to yield, would be an Irish Revolution. The whole tenour of the writings of Davis led to that, and Mitchel has left it on record that the last time he saw Davis he was studying military science. That is eloquent. The point is, however, settled by the statement which Duffy made later on, in reply to O'Connell, and which admits this. But after Clontarf it became clear to them that O'Connell would never fight, and while they were in a state of uncertainty as to whether they should go on without him and against him, while they were holding their hands, Davis died: and the older members of the Party, when it came to a decision on policy, naturally went with Duffy's constitutional policy.

How all this was viewed by the rank and file of the members of the Repeal Association and of the Young Ireland Party we have no doubt. O'Connell's agitations had always been taken by the common people as shams, with something more serious behind them. They came to his early Catholic Association meetings with blunderbusses and clubs under their great coats, and asked one another "when is he going to call us out?" They came to his later meetings on Repeal in military order

and discipline and in military mood. In his early days not ten per cent. of his audiences understood one word he said, for he spoke English and they did not understand it; and in his later days, although the understanding proportion was larger, still it was comparatively small. No orator can be heard by two hundred thousand men; and so the popular movements in Ireland, whatever they were, stood to the people as the successors of the United Irishmen and of Emmet. O'Connell's talk was of votes and franchises, but their dream was of pikes and bayonets, and green flags streaming on green hillsides. And then came Young Ireland, and it gave them ballads about pikes, and about battles, and about dead heroes that the people remembered, and they gathered around it and trusted it and followed it, even against O'Connell. But its ballads and battles turned out to be only literary adventures, and a bewildered people knew not where to turn, when out of the clouds came the voice of Mitchel.

With it came enlightenment, certainty, determination, enthusiasm, a clearing of the issue. Long before he had come out with the *United Irishman* his views had got abroad, and when he did open fire the response was instantaneous: so instantaneous and so unanimous that the rest of the Confederates, even Duffy and the *Nation*, were carried away on the crest of the Mitchel wave, carried away into revolution, into a bold and determined attempt to solve all problems in solving one. Forgotten were the years of agitation that had cursed Ireland in the years since Emmet, forgotten were the mighty meetings of O'Connell, forgotten the lip-loyalty which had been the bane of Ireland ever since the first of his Catholic Associations was formed, forgotten also the practical policy of three months ago; the great Parliamentary Policy, adopted by the Confederation, was buried by tacit consent, and in its place they set themselves to a policy of revolution. "Strip,

then," thundered Lalor, "and bid Ireland strip." And they did at length, over late, perhaps, but they did it, and won, though even for that brief period of glorious enthusiasm, to divine madness. The intellect of Mitchel, and the faith and loyalty to old ideals and old methods of the common people were irresistible: within a few weeks from the launching of the *United Irishman* the name of Mitchel was on all men's lips, and his paper was in all men's hands; here was one who stripped English hypocrisy naked for them to spy, who stood for Ireland even as Lord Edward, and Tone, and Emmet had stood; who counselled no slavish submission to foreign tyranny; counselled, instead, the holding of the land and the holding of the harvest; who thundered out truths about Ireland and England, truths which were so obviously true that men accepted them at once and wondered how they had lain hidden from them all these years. No other man could have done it; no other man in history ever has done it, to win over in a few weeks the support of vast masses of people, to win over in the same time hundreds of intellectually able folk who, just before, had denounced him as mad. The gospel of Mitchel went through Ireland like lightning, and no constitutionalism could stand against it. The people loved it, and they forced their leaders to adopt it. Popular fervour, popular sentiment, popular enthusiasm, were irresistible, and all the forces that were best in Ireland pulled themselves together for a fight. Duffy and McGee in the *Nation* became revolutionary, urged military preparations and training equally with Mitchel; everywhere the Confederate clubs armed and drilled; everywhere men were arrested by the police for walking in twos and threes in military guise; all over Ireland there was tension and expectancy: war and tumult in the air!

That was the effect and the influence of the inspiration of John Mitchel. To pull out of the dust of almost fifty years a flag which seemed to be buried for

ever under words and toasts and resolutions: to put into a despised and famine-stricken people a courage and a virtue which had been carefully drilled out of them for fifty years by their political and religious leaders; to put into the hearts of many men a blazing wrath and a blazing love, wrath against England and love for their country: to preach effort, and endeavour, and truth, and selflessness, and find that preaching not in vain; to stand up one man against an Empire, and to find, as if by magic, a Nation at his back. It was what you call a madness, respectable and apologetic latter-day critic; but it was a bracing, and purifying, and a divine madness, the madness which comes to all great teachers in some form or other. A madness which shall come upon Ireland yet again.

Against that kind of madness Government could not prevail, and it knew it. Revolutionary ballads and revolutionary articles might be only literary exercises, but this kind of thing led to revolutionary deeds, and therefore it was resolved to suppress Mitchel before he had solidified all Ireland behind him. But he had told the Truth, once and for all, and that Truth still faces us.

CHAPTER XV

THE CRISIS—ARREST AND TRIAL OF MITCHEL

It is easy for the respectable critic nowadays, looking back upon Young Ireland and upon what has been called "an insurrection in a cabbage garden," to be scornful of the intentions and sceptical of the power of the Young Irishmen of that generation, but to those who were faced by the issues at that time it was quite otherwise. Mitchel's mission was being done, his work was bearing fruit, and to the Government of the day it was evident that a spark might explode the powder magazine. They were no longer faced by an agitation for "justice" or for "repeal," but by a definite revolutionary movement, which could not be argued with, and they waited no longer. Lord Clarendon poured troops into the country and made all the customary military preparations, and then on the 20th March, 1848, O'Brien, Meagher and Mitchel were formally notified of a charge of sedition and ordered to give bail to stand trial. They did so, and, in the meantime, the Government passed a special "Treason-Felony" Act to deal summarily with political offences, and under which bail would be refused.

Towards the middle of May the trials of O'Brien and Meagher came on, and in each case the jury was not packed carefully enough and refused to convict. O'Brien and Meagher were freed amidst the growing excitement of all Ireland, and proceeded at once to more sedition. Mitchel's trial was to follow and the jury was struck, but in his case the Government could not afford not to convict. He had challenged them to

try him, defied Lord Clarendon, and told him that he should pack the jury, or else see Mitchel walk a free man out of the dock. They knew that his acquittal would let loose a force which they could neither control nor crush, and they suddenly dropped the sedition charge and arrested Mitchel for treason-felony under the new Act. Bail was not allowed, and he was thrown into Newgate.

Everybody amongst the leaders, save Mitchel himself, expected another defeat for the Government and an acquittal for Mitchel. Duffy wrote in that strain in the *Nation*, and others spoke to the same effect, but Mitchel himself knew that they would make no mistake this time and would convict. So did the people. All over the country the excitement grew, and the Dublin Clubs —numbering then ten thousand young men—clamoured to be led against the enemy. It was the beginning of the revolution. Mitchel had expected it. In his cell, waiting his trial, he waited also his rescue—the rescue which was to be the beginning of the revolution, the beginning at the least of an attempt at freedom which should be a bold and serious attempt, where men would at the least die like men, in the full flush of an unselfish enthusiasm. He had been working and preaching for just such a crisis as this, when the best minds and hearts of the Nation would be brought up to an intense fighting pitch, concentrated upon one issue, when a little thing might set the whole nation in a blaze, and he counted now on this imprisonment and arrest of his to give the signal. On the 15th May, his trial began, and the day before the leaders of the Confederation, alarmed at the temper and spirit of the people, at their avowed determination to rescue Mitchel, came to Mitchel in his prison and asked him to sign an appeal to the people not to attempt a rescue—a proceeding which shows how far they were from appreciating either Mitchel's work or the situation in which Ireland was. Mitchel, of course, refused to sign the appeal,

and the trial went on. The jury was well packed, and on the 26th May, amidst a tumultuous scene, Mitchel was solemnly found guilty. He said:—"The law has now done its part, and the Queen of England, her crown and Government in Ireland are now secure, pursuant to Act of Parliament. I have done my part also. Three months ago I promised Lord Clarendon and his Government, who hold this country for the English, that I would provoke him into his courts of justice, as places of this kind are called, and that I would force him, publicly and notoriously, to pack a jury against me to convict me, or else that I would walk a free man out of this court, and provoke him to a contest in another field. I knew I was setting my life upon that cast; but I knew that, in either event, victory should be with me; and it is with me. Neither the jury, nor the judge, nor any other man in this court presumes to imagine that it is a criminal who stands in this dock. I have shown what the law is made of in Ireland. I have shown that Her Majesty's Government sustains itself in Ireland by packed juries—by partisan judges—by perjured sheriffs"—here he was interrupted by Lefroy and continued:—"I have acted all through this business, from the first, under a strong sense of duty. I do not repent anything I have done; and I believe that the course which I have opened has only commenced. The Roman who saw his hand burning to ashes before the tyrant promised that three hundred should follow out his enterprise. Can I not promise for one, for two, for three"—here he pointed to Reilly, Martin, and Meagher, and out of the packed court-house came the answers—"Promise for me, Mitchel," "And me," "And me"—and then he ended—"For one, for two, for three; ay, for hundreds." Sentence was not pronounced until next day (fourteen years transportation), but immediately it was pronounced Mitchel was hustled out of the dock and back to Newgate, thence, after a few formalities, *in chains* to North Wall,

aboard the "Shearwater" Frigate, and the Irish revolution was over. The next day the *Nation* wrote:—"Let there be an end from this day of dying on platforms, amid thunderous words, that come as from the collision of windbags, and strike nowhere; let us be done with parades of our own poverty, meetings to look upon our slavery, and programmes of revolutions, made by pen and ink in battlefields of paper; let us prepare or we are lost! Let us prepare or our strength and the grace that gave it will have departed together. Let us prepare and say no more of Irish valour, Irish patriotism, and Irish resolution until we stand marshalled front to front with our enemy, and have got our own, or at least tried for it. Let us prepare or '48 will pass into history as a more boastful, lying, and destructive '43." But it was too late! The time had come, and the time had gone, and it returned not for that generation. John Mitchel was the one chance they had, and with him they let their chance go. He had preached revolution and had predicted revolution; he had carried them all with him by virtue of his passion and his genius; to the people he was the prophet, the leader, the inspiration; and when he was suffered to be taken in chains out of Dublin at four o'clock on a summer's day the revolution died. After that nothing could have resurrected it; the vital spark had departed; the time had come and gone.

It was against their own feelings and instincts that the ten thousand members of the Dublin Clubs had let Mitchel go without a fight. They had marched past Newgate before his trial, conveying a wordless message to Mitchel that they were ready, and on his conviction they clamoured to be let go. They would have rescued him that night even out of the jaws of hell, even if they had only bare arms against cannon, but they were held back by O'Brien and Duffy, McGee and Meagher, and by all the leaders. On the 26th, Mitchel was found guilty, but he was not sentenced until the 27th. In

the intervening night he could have been rescued, and he ought to have been rescued, and the revolution begun. But the leaders said that the time had not yet come, and so they waited. Martin alone had clamoured for a rescue. "When will the time come," said he, "the time about which your orators so boldly vaunt, amid the fierce shouts of your applause? If it come not when one of you, selected by your enemies as your champion, is sent to perish among thieves, and murderers for the crime of loving and defending his native land—then it will never come—never." But Martin was a voice crying in the wilderness, and a rescue was not attempted. Public feeling ran so high that the Council of the Confederation found it necessary to make a statement upon it, and they said:—"We will not conceal from you—we will not conceal from the Government—that nothing but the most strenuous exertions of our Council prevented the outbreak of an insurrection last week. Thousands of brave men had resolved that John Mitchel should not leave the Irish shore except across their corpses. We apprehended that, under present circumstances, an armed attempt to rescue him, and to free Ireland, might have proved abortive. We therefore interposed, and with great difficulty succeeded in preventing the fruitless effusion of blood." But nevertheless they all felt their mistake when it was too late. The spirit of the people was not broken, but they were overshadowed by a sense of defeat, a feeling that they had lost the first round and were unfavourably situated for the others. The spring had gone out of the movement, and the leaders left could not restore it. "Claiming your trust, however," said Meagher, "I well know the feelings that prevail amongst you—doubt, depression, shame. Doubt as to the truth of those whose advice restrained your doing. Depression, inspired by the loss of the ablest and the boldest man amongst us. Shame, excited by the

ease, the insolence, the impunity with which he was hurried in chains from the island to whose service he had sacrificed all that he had on earth—all that made life dear and honourable and glorious to him—his honour, his genius, and his liberty.

"The address of the Council to the people of Ireland—the address signed by William Smith O'Brien—bears witness to your determination. It states that thousands of Confederates had pledged themselves that John Mitchel should not leave these shores but through their blood. We were bound to make this statement—bound in justice to you—bound in honour to the country. Whatever odium may flow from that scene of victorious defiance, in which the Government played its part without a stammer or a check, none falls on you. You would have fought had we not seized your hands and bound them.

"Let no foul tongue, then, spit its sarcasm upon the people. They were ready for the sacrifice; and had the word been given the stars would burn this night above a thousand crimsoned graves. The gilt is ours—let the sarcasm fall upon our heads.

"We told you in the Clubs, four days previous to the trial, the reasons that compelled us to oppose the project of a rescue. The concentration of ten thousand troops upon the city—the incomplete organization of the people—the insufficiency of food, in case of a sustained resistance—the uncertainty as to how far the country districts were prepared to support us—these were the chief reasons that forced us into an antagonism with your generosity, your devotion, your intrepidity. Night after night we visited the Clubs to know your sentiments, your determination—and to the course we instructed you to adopt you gave, at length, a reluctant sanction."

Depression and shame! They were, and they well might be, the dominant feelings of the Confederates,

but nevertheless they buckled to and started on preparations for a rising in the autumn. Mitchel had gone, but, as Meagher put it, "they seized him thirty years too late—they seized him when his steady hand had lit the sacred fire, and the flame had passed from soul to soul."

CHAPTER XVI

THE PASSING OF YOUNG IRELAND

Duffy, in his books, and various of the later respectable critics of Mitchel, have nothing but scorn for his insurrection-making, for his plans and his theories, and it has grown to be one of the myths of Irish history that Mitchel was a hot-headed, impulsive firebrand. The reader who has followed me so far will have changed that opinion, and it will perhaps be interesting to trace how the policy which Duffy lauds above Mitchel's fared in practice. One of the heaviest charges against Mitchel was that he made no preparation, collected no arms, had no drillings, and so on, but expected a revolution to come out of the ground. That, of course, is precisely where a revolution does come from, and Mitchel's grasp of that fact, in the times, is a big proof of his insight.

What of Young Ireland after the kidnapping of Mitchel? They were stung, as I have remarked, into a sense of shame at the business, and set vigorously about their preparations for insurrection. Whether they were any wiser than Mitchel, let the reader judge. Here is what Mitchel wrote in his jail journal on the 27th May: "I am not afraid of either cowardice or treachery on the part of our chiefest men. Meagher is eloquent and ardent—brave to act; brave, if need be, to suffer. I would that he took the trouble to think for himself. O'Brien is bold and high-minded, but capricious, unaccountable, untrainable; also, he is an aristocrat born and bred, and, being a genuine Irishman himself, he cannot be brought to see that his fellow-aristocrats are not Irish, but the irreconcilable enemies

of Ireland. Then who will dare to write or publish one word of bold truth? The *Freeman* will be tame and legal till the evil days are overpast. The *Nation* will be so busy giving 'the party' a properly Girondesque character, and discriminating carefully between the wild Montnagards—to wit, me and the like of me—on the one hand, and the truly respectable Lafayette-Lamartinists, on the other, that he will be of little use in dealing with the substantial Irish affair that lies before him. Dillon, O'Gorman—good and brave men, but not sufficiently desperate. My chief trust is in Martin and Reilly; but then they will probably be the very first devoured by the Carthiginian sea-monster." And that was a shrewd estimate of the men and of the way they actually did conduct themselves in the short period between his transportation and the proceedings which culminated in Ballingarry.

After Mitchel's removal, and after the Confederate Clubs had been quieted down, the Confederates set themselves to plan a set insurrection. Arrangements to purchase arms were made—I have been unable to get any details—envoys were sent to England and Scotland to organize the Irish there and, if possible, arrange some kind of co-operation, to America, and to France; men were sent around the clubs to keep their spirit up, not alone Dublin, but all the country clubs, Kilkenny, Waterford, Limerick, Cork, and so on; and a series of public meetings was held in the country, and addressed by O'Brien, Doheny, McGee, Meagher and the chief leaders of the Confederation. Finally, they dissolved the Council, elected a new Council of twenty-one, and selected out of these a Directory of five, which was supposed to be in charge of the proceedings in connection with the rising, was to co-ordinate them and give the word when ready. The five were Dillon, Meagher, O'Gorman, McGee, and Reilly; and what they did I do not know. They never, so far as I can gather, co-ordinated anything, or arranged any general

plan—but then, of course, arrests came thick and fast as soon as the Government realized that the dangerous man of the movement had been safely engineered out of the country. O'Brien went on a special tour through the south; Doheny addressed fifty thousand men at Slievenamon and ten thousand in Limerick; Meagher went through Waterford and Kilkenny; McGee went to the west. Everywhere they preached open revolution, advised the people to arm, and to prepare for fight; and the three journals, the *Felon*, *Tribune*, and *Nation* —all soon to be suppressed—followed suit. The clubs alone, at this time, numbered fifty thousand men, according to Duffy; and O'Brien came back from his southern tour enthusiastic and confident. At a public meeting in Dublin the night of his return he said: "It may be satisfactory to you to know that your feelings are shared in by the men of the most remote parts of Ireland. It is now a fortnight since I left home, and during that time I visited the County Kerry and the western portions of the County Cork, and in these remote regions I found as intense ardour, as patriotic devotion, as have been exhibited here to-night, and, shall I add, as much determination. At Berehaven, at Bantry, at Macroom, at Killarney—in short, wherever I passed there appeared but one unanimous feeling that the time was come when one simultaneous effort should be made by the Irish nation to accomplish its freedom." And the reports from other parts of the country were of a similar nature. John O'Connell and his party were as dead as Queen Anne, and in Ireland there were but two parties, the Irish Confederation and the British Government. If one thing is certain about this time, it is that the miracle Mitchel had worked and prayed for was accomplished, that the masses who had followed O'Connell were now emancipated from his evil influence and were ready and willing to throw themselves—even with naked hands—against the

enemy. Everywhere the Confederates went they were received with open arms, and they were assured of the support of all the able-bodied Nationalists, and not alone of those organized in the clubs.

So far, good. But all these preparations and plans depended upon one supposition, a supposition so horribly wrong that one wonders how they could ever have had it, the supposition that the Government would look on supinely while they organized the country into revolution. And, of course, Government had no intention of doing that. The Habeas Corpus Act was suddenly suspended, the *Felon*, *Tribune*, and *Nation* were suppressed, and such of the leaders as could be bagged were imprisoned, and the remainder went in hiding to various districts; O'Brien, Doheny, and Dillon to Tipperary, where eventually they tried to fight. Why, oh reader, you will say passionately, why did the people allow them to be arrested; why did they not tear them out of the hands of the police and begin the revolution? Let Duffy tell the story. "I was duly committed for trial and sent to Newgate in custody of a large body of police. By this time an immense crowd had collected, and as we could only drive to the prison at a walking pace it constantly increased. It was so dense when we reached Capel Street that the carriage came to a standstill, and a fierce shout arose, "Take him out! Take him out!" A president of a club well known to me got on the steps and whispered, "Do you wish to be rescued?" I replied, "Certainly not!" I had the same position to face in my own case which we had faced recently in Mitchel's, and I treated it in the same way. The crowd became very menacing, and the officers in command of the police appealed to me to quiet them. McGee and Dr. Callan, on my behalf, entreated them to desist, and warned them that the time for action had not yet come. After a parley, which occupied half an hour, a passage was at length cleared to

the prison, and a minute after I found myself within its iron grasp." . . . On Monday, Doheny was arrested at Cashel for sedition, and committed to the Bridewell; the people desired to rescue him, but he dissuaded them from the attempt, and as he was admitted to bail the excitement subsided. On Tuesday, Meagher was arrested in his father's house at Waterford. The news spread like a conflagration. The church bells were rung; his special partisans, the Ballybricken men, hurried into town, where the bulk of the population already crowded the streets. The route to Dublin lay over a long, narrow wooden bridge which spans the Suir. The club men insisted that he must be rescued forthwith, and Waterford occupied for his protection. As a beginning, this bridge was barricaded with huge logs of timber, and all traffic stopped. But Meagher, like his comrades, would not consent to begin an insurrection till the word of command came from headquarters. He had been placed in a travelling carriage guarded by a troop of Light Dragoons and a company of Fusiliers. He mounted on the top of this vehicle, where he could be seen and heard by the vast multitude, and exhorted them to desist; but they held their ground sullenly. At last he ordered the members of his own club to remove the barricade. "We must obey," they said, "but we fear you will be sorry for it, sir." And so on in other places. A people anxious to begin a revolution, having to be dissuaded and prevented by the supposed leaders of it!

Finally, in a kind of desperation, with half the leaders in prison and warrants out for the rest, with a rising in Dublin again decided against, O'Brien and Dillon and Meagher and Doheny—the latter two on bail—and McManus went to Waterford, and for some days hovered about Waterford and Tipperary. Even then, incredible though it may seem, they formed no plan, could not make up their minds to fight anywhere.

They went from place to place, haranguing and mustering, but never fighting. John O'Mahony, who had five hundred men organized, strongly urged them to fight at Carrick-on-Suir, but they discussed that and decided against it. Meagher wrote of the scene at Carrick afterwards: "A torrent of human beings, rushing through lanes and narrow streets, whirling in dizzy circles and tossing up its dark waves with sounds of wrath, vengeance, and defiance . . . eyes red with rage and desperation . . . wild, half-stifled, passionate, frantic prayers of hope, curses on the red flag; scornful, exulting defiance of death. It was the revolution, if we had accepted it! Why we did not, I fear I cannot with sufficient accuracy explain."

If they had accepted it, if at any time between the arrest of Mitchel and this Carrick business they had given the people their heads and risen in bloody red riot, there cannot be a doubt as to the result. There were 150,000 troops in the country, it is true; but the people were possessed then of that sacred flame which crumples walls and cannon like matchwood. At the worst, England would only come through by the skin of her teeth, and Ireland would have redeemed her manhood in blood. Writing forty years afterwards, Duffy enters into an elaborate defence of the policy of preaching revolution, and then holding the people back when they begin; but here is what he wrote about it at the time, in a leading article in the *Nation* of the 22nd July, 1848: "We are assailed in every point where the honour of a nation is most sensitive—the liberty of speech, the right of arms, the freedom of the Press, and, plainly, we must strip our back for the lash or strip our arms for the fight. We cannot evade the crisis. O'Connell did that, and he has left us a memorable lesson of how nations are lost. We cannot plead that we are taken by surprise. When John Mitchel was consigned to Bermuda we received formal notice that England had accepted our challenge,

and would fight it out to the death. We cannot doubt the sympathy of the people. A spirit bolder and sterner than '43 has reappeared amongst them. Whenever the English Government have laid hands on a prisoner, there the people, with the true instinct of manhood, prepared to resist. In Cashel, in Nenagh, in Waterford, in Kilkenny, in Carrick-on-Suir, by the doors of Newgate, on the hills of Castlewellan, the voice of one man might have sounded the tocsin of a National Revolution. More character, more individuality, more of the material from which God fashions the leaders of a rising nation, have appeared amongst us within one year than for two generations before. . . . For myself I will say that, if the people are robbed of their arms—if the clubs are broken up—if all the organization and discipline won with such toil are flung away in an hour—if the spirit of the country, so miraculously evoked, be again permitted to die out, while the leaders of the people look on in dumb submission—if these things can happen after the terrible lessons we have before us written in the blood and tears of the nation, I, for one, will not curse the packed jury that sends me far from such a spectacle. With me it was not a natural or instinctive resource; I accepted it only as the last alternative, but I accepted it without reservation. I counted upon resisting it at the last point where further delay would quench the ardour of the people. I knew well that there were limits to their patience—for they had been betrayed—that, a certain point passed, thousands of brave men would fly from the country in despair—that our self-reliance would die out like a setting sun, in a single hour; that the obscure vermin who have grown fat on our misery would reappear and a new reign of fraud begin, a thousand times more hopeless than the first." Which is exactly what happened.

The three modern Irish Revolutionary movements, '98, '48, and '67, all failed through the leaders, but the

one which failed most conspicuously from that reason was the '48 Movement. Mitchel, and Mitchel alone, could have pulled it through; the others had neither the capacity nor the revolutionary courage. They were not, as Mitchel shrewdly said, "desperate enough;" they were behind the people instead of before them, dragging them back and bewildering them, instead of leading them; revoluting in attitudes, instead of revoluting in guns. Duffy arrested in Dublin in broad daylight, ordering the people to be peaceable and orderly and not to rescue him; Doheny arrested in Cashel, ordering the Tipperary men not to rescue him; Meagher arrested in Waterford, ordering the Waterford clubmen to destroy the barricades they had erected and not to rescue him; Smith O'Brien, finally, leading a rising as a matter of principle, anxious only to be arrested and put out of it; no commissariat, no idea of organizing it, refusing to allow his men to commandeer food from the villages they marched through, refusing to allow them to cut down trees on the wayside to form a barricade unless they first obtained the permission of the owners. Dillon, after the actual rising was supposed to have begun, striking up James Stephens's gun behind the barricade in the square at Callan, ordering his men to allow a British officer with despatches pass through unharmed, with his escort: this is what the Young Ireland leaders made of revolution. They were backed by a revolutionary courage and determination which had not appeared in Ireland since '98, but they were afraid of it, they understood it not, and they threw it away.

If they did not bring a new soul into Ireland, they raised up again and stiffened the old soul; they brought patriotism, honesty, and national pride into the public life of Ireland, and gave Ireland for the rest of the nineteenth century an ideal in literature and in effort which she never wholly forgot at any time afterwards. It was Young Ireland which made Fenianism possible,

and it was Fenianism which made the Land League and the Gaelic League possible, and without it Ireland might conceivably have been buried in O'Connellism and Whiggery. They saved the soul of the nation at a time when it was in the gravest danger, and no generation of Irishmen has done more. They began as Repealers, as Federalists, as practical politicians of one class or another, working for Ireland, for love of Ireland, constitutional agitators in the beginning, men fitted especially to rouse and guide patriotism on lines of ordered agitation, to build up a movement on a passive resistance basis, to build up Ireland as Deak and his fellows built up Hungary; and it was their fate to find themselves cast in a time when revolution, and nothing but revolution, was necessary. They wrote revolutionary ballads and revolutionary articles, and when these had produced revolutionary enthusiasm, were not able or willing to go as far as revolutionary action; they thought that England must yield to some kind of ordered expression of public determination. And finally, when the revolutionary wave swept them also with it, they could neither prepare nor plan, neither fight nor give in; but they never faltered in their allegiance to Ireland. They understood neither the British Government, nor Revolution, and between both they were hammered. But their work from 1843 to 1848, and it alone, secured to the Irish nation a future resurrection.

They began with rhetorical speeches, with many feastings and many toastings, with banquets and resolutions and addresses; and they ended in the dock. May we all end as well!

CHAPTER XVII

MITCHEL IN EXILE—TIPPERARY—DEATH

"But we drink to Mitchel that is gone, boys, gone!
Here's the memory of John Mitchel that is gone!"

In 1848 Mitchel was transported, and in 1875 he died. In the intervening twenty-seven years he had roamed the world, now in New York, now in Knoxville, now in Washington, now in Richmond, now in New York again, now in Paris, and finally home in Ireland, to lay his bones in Newry, there to await "the crash of the downfall of the thrice-accursed British Empire." In those years John Mitchel never abated a jot of his faith, of the principles he had hammered out in the years of striving in Ireland and enunciated in the few short months of the *United Irishman*. He went into other causes, notably into that of the Southern Confederacy, in the American Civil War, but back of all his life and thought was Ireland, and as the years passed Ireland loomed only the larger in his horizon. In all his papers, in the first of them the *Citizen*, of New York, then the *Southern Citizen*, of Knoxville, the *Enquirer* and *Examiner* of Richmond, the *Daily News*, of New York, and finally the *Irish Citizen*, of New York; in them all, side by side with Mitchel's American outlook, was his Irish and anti-English policy. Time did not change him, make him more tractable, more conventional, less rebel, less loyal to Ireland; not the Ireland of a Home Rule agitation, but the Ireland with the great spirit, the Ireland which is Ireland to all revolutionaries, to all who have the faith and the vision, all who are sufficiently unpractical and desperate to stand up to

weakness and lies and cowardice, and compromises and deny their right to stand for Ireland. Men of little faith and less understanding have always marvelled at Mitchel and his like, but we, we of the greater faith and the greater understanding, we know him, bone of our bone is he, and flesh of our flesh, and our minds beat time with his and with Ireland's.

"But yet we shall rear her throne aloft in golden sheen."

Save for a short period during which he acted as Fenian Financial Agent at Paris, Mitchel had no active connection with any later Irish movement, but he criticized and chronicled the doings of all of them in his newspapers, and always from the standpoint of an unrepentant and unyielding rebel. For the Tenant League Movement, and the Home Rule Movement, and the other short-lived similar attempts between '48 and his death, he had nothing but contempt. To the end of his life he held to the truth he had discerned in the "starvation" period, that the only way is by force of arms, and that all shoutings, toastings, and agitations are useless. All his writings on Irish affairs were on that basis, that Ireland should put on her armour, and fight. And, so, Fenianism was the only one of the latter movements for which he had any sympathy, and that, curiously enough, was rather for the spirit of it than for the actual movement. In the early days, when Stephens was first in America, he had tried to get Mitchel to join him, but Mitchel refused, giving him fifty dollars for the cause, all he could spare at the time. He came afterwards, when Fenianism was strong, to a certain dislike and distrust of Stephens, and this is said —erroneously—to have influenced him in his attitude towards the movement, which he actively supported only so long as it seemed probable or possible that England would be involved in a European war. Secret organization he had always distrusted—this I shall come to in my final consideration of his policy—and he

believed to the end of his life that Ireland would only win by a kind of passive resistance, non-parliamentary, non-recognition, policy in peace, and by striking in suddenly and heavily in the event of England getting involved in a war—a kind of spontaneous outbreak such as that he had seen coming in '48. And so, in the years that followed his escape from Van Diemen's Land, in 1853, his value to the nation was that of an unrepentant rebel, a prophet and a trumpet, a shining example of patriotism and truth, a figure to remind all Irishmen that even in their own time there had come out of Ireland a Man. A great portion of Ireland has forgotten Mitchel, dead, but all Ireland remembered and listened to Mitchel while he was alive, even though he was three thousand miles away, and while his spirit filled the land, no weakling dared to preach compromise in the names of the great dead. Duffy wrote of him: "He was a trumpet to awake the slothful to duty, and to sound defiance to the enemy. More than a quarter of a century after his conviction they elected him member for Tipperary with passionate enthusiasm, and would have followed him cheerfully on any route to which there was a visible issue."

During these years his love for Ireland and his longing to see her again grew and grew. Yet he preferred to eat his heart out rather than go back and live there while the enemy's flag flew there. In his correspondence this constant longing for Ireland breaks out again and again. "An exile in my circumstances," he writes once, "is a branch cut from its tree; it is dead, and has but an affectation of life. Ever since that banishment from my own country, and the sudden severing of all the roots that bound me to the soil, cutting off all the moorings that held me to the firm shore, I am conscious of a certain vagabond, or even half-savage propensity." And sometimes there creeps out a poignant little sentence of self-revelation, as in this from a letter to his sister:—"Dear Matilda, I wish I were at Tullycairne,

and could stroll down to the Lagan and wade a little." There are those who still assert that Mitchel's mainstay was hate, but there never was a greater calumny. No man loved Ireland with a greater love, not alone the Ireland of the spirit, the Irish Nation, but the Irish soil, the visible Ireland. It peeps out of all his writings, it was a part of his being. Of all the '48 exiles, he was the one who remained most faithful in his love for Ireland, and the heart-burning of never seeing her, broke him down entirely. Again and again he returns to the thought. "Paris is a hateful place. . . . After all you know, Dublin is my real place of abode. All the world can't alter that." Anybody who has known the pangs of exile can see what Mitchel's life was in these years. In his office there hung near his desk always a map of Ireland. "He would often stand," writes his biographer, William Dillon, "before this map, sometimes for half an hour at a time, 'twirling his lock,' and going over it from top to bottom and side to side. The longing to see Ireland once more seemed to grow stronger with him as he felt himself growing physically weaker."

At length, in 1874, he determined to risk arrest and to pay a visit home, and this led to the famous Tipperary election. It was only a short visit, and most of it was spent with his sister at Dromalane, near Newry. His attitude towards the Home Rule movement can be deduced from a letter he wrote to P. J. Smyth at this time, in which he says, "I will be the guest of no Home Ruler in Dublin, not even with John Martin. In fact, I am savage against that helpless, driftless, concern called Home Rule, and nearly as vicious against your simple Repeal." He was asked, however, whether he would stand for one of the counties in the event of a vacancy, and he agreed, taking it as a testimony of the appreciation of the Irish People for "Convict Mitchel," on the understanding that he would never enter the English House of Commons. And when a vacancy

occurred in Tipperary in 1875 he came over for it. "I am in favour of Home Rule," wrote he in his election address, "that is, the sovereign independence of Ireland." And on that ticket he was elected by three thousand one hundred and fourteen votes against seven hundred and forty-six. This pleased Mitchel immensely. "In offering myself to the electors of Tipperary," he wrote, "I had nothing to go upon but my past life, and I take it that the chief part about my past life which recommended me to the people of Tipperary was that I had made no peace with England. . . . I wanted to offer to the gallant people of that county one more opportunity of telling the whole world what value they set on the verdicts of packed juries, what respect they have for the decision of the judges whom England hires to do her work in this country." The attempt has sometimes been made to distort this election into a countenancing of Parliamentarianism by Mitchel, and it may be as well, therefore, to quote the following from an address to the electors, which he wrote on the 17th March, 1875. "Then at once arose the question for me—Having been honoured with this high responsibility, what am I to do with it? Not that I laboured under any doubt or perplexity on that subject. I thought there was no man in Tipperary, or in Ireland, who really supposed that I was going to creep up to the bar of the English House of Commons and crave permission to take oaths and my seat, or that I would appear, cap in hand, before Monahan and Keogh and the other election judges, to defend my election against a petition by Mr. Moore. In short, I concluded that all was already done. All that was possible for the Tipperary franchise, or Tipperary freeholders to accomplish was already done. . . . Your county has used her franchise in the very best manner possible—that is, in making a desperate protest against the whole system of pretended parliamentary government in Ireland. If, nevertheless, any friend of mine in Tipperary

thinks he has reason to be surprised at my manner of meeting the present emergency, or that I have ever, at any time, or in any manner, led him or others to suppose that I should act otherwise than I am doing, I can only refer him to my whole past political career, and to all my published writings and speeches, so far as they relate to this subject of Irish representation in the English House of Commons." His election, of course, he regarded as an act of defiance to the enemy.

Three days later, on the 20th March, 1875, Mitchel died peacefully at Newry, and his bones rest in the Unitarian Cemetery in the High Street there. A great lover of Ireland, a great hater of England, a great lover of truth, a giant, with a cleansing, prophetic intellect, fearless and single-minded and just, we have not seen his like since. But his spirit is still in the land he loved so well. Of his policy and his place in Irish history, in the history of national evolution here, I have yet something to say. Of the man, only that he was one man in a thousand years: the authentic, trumpet-toned, giant-voiced, Doer and Hero-Soul that comes at odd times into a Nation like ours. From the spell of his passion and the travail of it Ireland shall never free herself, and even yet the thunder of his voice is amongst the echoes of the land. Young people here and young people there catch it, and so the immortal part of him goes on working. That keen, resolute, competent face: the deadly resolute eyes, letting forth the glimpses of a soul belonging rather to heroic antiquity than to the Nineteenth Century; the giant intellect, potent to love Ireland and all things Irish, potent to hate England and all things English; the unrepentance and defiance of his whole life: these things overshadow all the meaner men who have come after him and defaced the vision he gave to his generation. And the vision of Mitchel shall prevail in the end.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE WRITINGS OF MITCHEL.

It is in his writings chiefly that the soul of Mitchel lives for Ireland to-day, and it is his writings that form his main influence over Young Ireland of any generation. His life was beautiful, an antique heroic life, but so very few of us have the patience and the energy to study that life fairly, and so very many have the *laissez-faire* temperament which accepts plausibilities without examining them, that Mitchel's life, as a whole, is misunderstood in our time. All the moderate historians and politicians and writers have, of course, damned him with faint praise, and insulted him with their pity, their smug reflections on the anti-climax—as one of them called it—of Mitchel's life in exile. And yet Tone, Emmet, Fitzgerald, and Mitchel—how naturally we think of them when we think of a virile Ireland: the other names sink back, but these four stand out, three who died in battle and one whose manhood and age were a battle also, the same battle, and who neither asked for nor gave quarter, neither apologised nor explained. "The Jail Journal" and "The Last Conquest" have made many Nationalists, have had an influence upon the minds of young Irishmen akin to that of Carlyle upon his countrymen, a trumpet blast and an awakening, a call to action.

Before nationalism Mitchel wrote nothing, save letters. In these the rudiments of his style may be discerned, but it was not until the gospel of nationalism had seized him that his genius began to express itself in the way which was most natural to it—in literature. Given his purpose in the world, he began

to write and express himself, and everything he wrote bears the impress of that purpose. Ireland, and his passionate love for Ireland, and his deliberate and sword-sharp hate of England, these lie behind everything he wrote, and everything he wrote, even to-day, breathes them back to us. That is why his writings have so powerful an influence in spreading nationalism. You have genius, national inspiration, and an unrivalled and compelling literary style, and the combination is irresistible.

In our own day, the writing of Irish history has come to take a turn for the better, thanks to Sean Ghall and Mrs. Green, and to other minor scribes who in recent years have stood up to the "savage" school of Irish historians. The Irish nation, the virile Irish nation, which could neither be exterminated nor cowed nor bribed, is beginning to have justice done to it. In that Mitchel was a pioneer. His book on Aodh O'Neill is a masterly example of popular biography, and a truthful and accurate account of the career of the wisest of Ireland's uncrowned kings. It is permeated with an acceptance of the Irish nation, and that is the key to the power and attraction of Mitchel's historical writing. He discovered the obvious, that the history of the Irish nation must be written from within, not from without, that it must accept the nation and not deny it, and above all, that it must never apologise for or explain itself. His "Aodh O'Neill" is the first example of that in modern times, and it remains the only biography of the Ulster hero that we have.

"The History of Ireland" is a longer and a bigger book, and it challenges comparison at once with Lecky's more monumental book on the same period, and in the comparison it gains. In the days to come, the great reputation which Lecky's book now enjoys as a History of Ireland will vanish into thin air, and the book will be valued for what it is, an interesting

and conscientious study of the evolution of a colonial nationalism amongst the English garrison in Ireland in the eighteenth century. Lecky did not accept the Irish nation, did not want it or recognize it, and while in his book he does justice to the Irish in some things —as, for instance, in his scathing exposure of Froude —in so far as he touches upon the Irish nation in the eighteenth century it is as a negligible thing. For him, Ireland meant just the English garrison in Ireland, and the Irish people were merely a kind of obstinate and troublesome evil. And on two of the big things with which Lecky concerns himself—the Union and the United Irishmen—he allows his historical judgment to be overwhelmed by his political Unionism. The value of the book is not as a History of Ireland, but as a History of the English Garrison in Ireland, and a valuable sidelight on the methods by which England manipulated that garrison. Mitchel's, O all ye reputation-worshipping dry-as-dust Academics, Mitchel's is the better history and the better book. It deals both with the Irish nation and the English garrison, never forgetting that it is a history of a nation and not the history of a colony, the history of a noble people in bondage, not the history of a slave civilization. Lecky was concerned with English policy in Ireland, mainly as it affected the English garrison. Swift and Molyneux and Malone and Flood and Grattan, these are his headlines; of the poets and wanderers who kept the soul of Ireland alive in that century, making and singing songs, telling the old tales, going from parish to parish, who kept the soul in the people and gradually rebuilt them a social and political fabric behind the impregnable rock of the Irish language, of these and kindred types who made the nation to more than hold its own, Lecky has no conception. The little men in the limelight took up all his attention. Both Mitchel and Lecky will finally be superseded as history when the true history of Ireland

in the eighteenth century is written; but meantime, O Reader, your Mitchel is the better book.

The "Last Conquest" and the "Apology" are books of a different order. They are expositions of Mitchel's political faith, and discussions of the methods of English government in Ireland. In the one he sets out, with a grim humour which only a literary master could make effective, the motive and cause of English interference in Ireland, and strips the mask off all pretences and lies that are used to bolster up that interference. It is a masterpiece of political exposition. And in the other he gives us his own recollection of Young Ireland and '48. There are in that book pages upon pages of brilliant writing, and the whole book carries one on like a torrent. O'Connell, Davis, Meagher, all the Young Irelanders, flash into it and out again; and into every happening of the period, every mistake and every success, Mitchel has put the meaning. And in it he has laid bare the cunning and deliberation with which the whole Famine business was engineered, and the way in which England's huge scheme for finally fettering the country was devised and worked. And all with a vividness, a clarity, and a simplicity which make the book as easily to be understood as an elementary reading lesson.

The immortal "Jail Journal" is a book of still another order. In it we get Mitchel the man and Mitchel the Nationalist by turns and together, and there is nothing quite like it anywhere else, save, perhaps, Tone's Journal. From beginning to end it is a national tonic and a joy, and in it, more, perhaps than in any other book of his, we come in contact with the many-sided soul of Mitchel—his hatred of all cant and humbug, his hatred especially of that hypocrisy which is England's national character, his love for nature, and the antique, heroic mould of the man. Scathing criticisms of men like Macaulay are sandwiched in between self-revealing personal notes and pungent

comments upon the latest news from Ireland. And always there is the brave spirit of a very brave man facing you; setting down facts, commenting on them, judging them, but never covering them up or running away from them. One of the masterpieces of Irish literature and at the same time, as John Eglinton once put it, "The Bible of Irish Nationalism."

These are very inadequate and rough notes on Mitchel's published writings, but no study of him would be complete without some reference to them. In all his writings, literary or historical or political, there are general characteristics. The style is vigorous and clear and sledgehammer: there is never any ambiguity, never any doubt as to what he wants to convey, never any fear or hesitation: it possesses that mysterious living rhythmic something which gives permanence and charm. Neither in politics, nor religion, nor letters, have established conventions or established names any reverence from him, save in so far as they may command that reverence of their own worth. And generally, even in his most insignificant writings, sounds the call to all his readers to work and not to idle, to stand up for truth and justice and the right, to be a worker in the world and not a sluggard, to cultivate the antique virtues, patriotism, heroism, courage: things which no one may do without being a greater asset than before to the nation. The qualities which go towards the best type of nationalism are so inherent in his writing that it all leads, by one path or another, to nationalism.

CHAPTER XIX

THE POLICY OF MITCHEL

The policy of John Mitchel was not a policy which a nation of slaves, or half slaves, either could or would adopt, and it was not a policy which either could or would be adopted save by two classes of the people—(1) those who, like himself, had pulled themselves clean out of the obsessions of constitutional and Parliamentarian and agitating platforms into the cold, virile light of a facing of the facts of the Irish situation; (2) those, the great majority of the common people, whose instincts were right, who were always uneasy under O'Connell, never wholly believed his loyalty and toadyism to be other than put on, and instinctively followed the bolder and more manly national policy when they got a fair chance. It was a policy which, bluntly, may be stated as "no compromise." No compromise either upon the broad national principle of the nation or upon any of its subsidiary manifestations. It carried with it an acceptance of the Irish Nation to the full, and an acceptance of all the duties and responsibilities which that acceptance entails; it led inevitably and naturally to revolution, because it meant the absolute ending of the connection between Ireland and England, by negotiation or by force, "sooner or later, by peaceful negotiation or bloody conflict," as Mitchel himself put it. It involved not only a whole-hearted belief in the Irish Nation, but a whole-hearted work for the nation also, such as Mitchel himself gave to it.

The big mistake which Nationalists, and national movements, in Ireland have made is to fall into the trap of constitutionalism, to think that you can hold

your own against the subtle enemy whilst willingly embracing any of his constitutional devices, to think too little of the little things, little things which in the aggregate make up everything. And non-recognition of British authority in Ireland was the great weapon which was implicit, ay, and explicit, in Mitchel's whole teaching, from the day when he definitely formulated a teaching in the first numbers of the *United Irishman*.

Life comes to all of us in either of two ways, either sharply cut or as a mixture of shades; either as a series of compromises or as a straightly simple business; with a clean and definite right thing or wrong thing to do, or with a muddled medley of choice. And nationalism is similar. Either you have it wholly, and stand definitely for the Irish Nation, or you take it mixed and launch out both ways, timorously and hesitatingly, counting every step, weighing possibilities and probabilities, forces and obstacles. That is what loves to call itself sanity, and commonsense, and wisdom, and practical politics, and so on. And it is always ineffective and always a weakness. Situated as we are, every departure from the full heroic measure of national principle is dearly paid for, and the more sane—in that sense—we get, the bigger slaves we get. There is no permanent or dignified half-way house between Independence and Slavery: and all compromises between them are vanity.

That was the guiding principle which Mitchel developed in the years of his thinking, that Ireland must stand for absolute independence or for nothing, and for her honour's sake and her soul's sake a non-recognition of British authority and a passive resistance to it where practicable were a necessity. He believed that Ireland had the capacity to win her freedom by the strong hand and that as a matter of preparation she should obstruct and resist the British Governmental machine at all points. "Therefore," he writes, "I had

come to the conclusion that the whole system ought to be met with resistance at every point; and the means for this would be extremely simple; namely, a combination amongst the people to obstruct and render impossible the transport and shipment of Irish provisions; to refuse all aid in its removal; to destroy the highways, to prevent everyone, by intimidation, from daring to bid for grain or cattle if brought to auction under distress (a method of obstruction which had put an end to tithes before)—in short, to offer a passive resistance universally, but occasionally, when opportunity served, to try the steel."

A word may be said as to the charge which is most commonly made against Mitchel, that he advocated an undisciplined and unarmed rising of peasants against the British Army, without plan, without preparation, without proper leadership. Now, there are two methods of conducting a revolutionary movement in Ireland. One was adopted by the United Irishmen and the Irish Republican Brotherhood, that is to say by a secret organization, with an executive, a war chest, military organization and preparation, and a rising at a certain time, more or less arbitrary. It is the more obvious way for such a movement to proceed. Now, Mitchel, all his life, disbelieved in the efficacy of secret military organization in Ireland. He held that, things being as they are, such a movement was bound to be ineffective in the long run, that its membership could not be kept secret, nor its plans, and that it would be impossible to make any adequate organized preparations on a large scale—*e.g.*, the importation of arms and ammunition, and so on. And, therefore, he pinned his faith to the second method, that is, to initiate and keep up in the country a wide system of passive resistance and active obstruction, to recognize British authority only so far as that was necessary in order to live in the country—(brilliant Parliamentarians used to tell us in Sinn Féin

days, for instance, that if we were consistent we would emigrate and not live under the British flag)—to obstruct and clog the machine of Government everyhow and anyhow. And all this while to carry on a kind of guerilla warfare, to keep the people up to fighting temper, educate them on military topics, as was done in the *United Irishman*, encourage them to arm with whatever weapons they could get, and trust to the national instinct to begin the revolution at the psychological moment. One may have preferences for the older method, but that this method of Mitchel's is a sound and a practicable one nobody can deny who looks into it. The best test of it was '48 itself, for the three or four months during which Mitchel got the opportunity of pushing that policy brought the people to fighting pitch, and the revolution would actually have begun, and with a good chance of succeeding, if Smith O'Brien and the other leaders had not stopped it—as I have pointed out in one of the previous chapters. The Irish Revolution, I believe, will come eventually that way. There may be a secret organization, or there may not, but the work will be done in the end by a spontaneous effort of the people, after years—many, many years—of discipline and work and suffering. Of all the theories and plans which were propounded in his time for the freeing of Ireland, that of Mitchel was the plan which had the greatest chance of succeeding. Your practical politician who demands, before he will risk his skin, a trained army to save it, a quarter or half a million of trained, disciplined, armed men, with artillery, commissariat, and perfect liberty to plan and concentrate, as a preliminary to action: well, he has no business worrying about the question at all. *That* we should never get, and people who hold out for that, who say, as they do say, that they "would be out in the morning if there was any chance," are simply people without faith in their nation or sense of duty to her.

Whenever and however it begins it will be "flying in the face of Providence," "running heads against a stone wall," and so on. The odds will always be heavily against us, on paper. And yet, one day, we shall win. The main thing is to go on, to do the work that is urgent, to go out when that time seems to be at hand, and damn the odds. And it is only by men imbued with the spirit of Mitchel, men ready to risk everything for the nation, that the nation will be built. Remember that Lalor wrote, "Somewhere and somehow and by somebody a beginning must be made." And remember that three months of Mitchel, three short months, brought Ireland from talk to action.

I hold John Mitchel to have been the greatest Irishman of the nineteenth century, her greatest political genius, and her greatest literary figure as well. There is nothing else in Irish literature which comes up to the level of the "Jail Journal" and the "Last Conquest." It was given to him to comprehend, not easily or quickly, but after years of evolution from mild Repealism to Nationalism, the greatness of Ireland, to feel the appeal of the nation and to answer that appeal, to comprehend that England held Ireland because Ireland compromised in small things, helped England ever to rivet the chains firmer; to comprehend that every extension of "constitutional power" rendered the avenues of corruption of the Irish body politic broader and more effective; to comprehend that, without Irish aid, Ireland could not be held for twelve months; to comprehend that it was only necessary for the whole people, or any considerable portion of them, to meet the system of government with resistance at every point to achieve freedom; to throw out in two words the key to the whole question, "No compromise." It is compromise, and not drink, that has brought us low. The last century was a series of compromises, each leaving us lower in morale,

in spirit, and in efficiency. Would it not have been better, O peaceful and harmless condemners of blood, if Smith O'Brien and Duffy and Dillon and Doheny had let the clubs loose in '48 in Dublin, and Callan, and Thurles, and if Meagher, instead of tearing up the barricades at Waterford, had extended them and held the town ?

And the message of Mitchel is a gospel of work and preparation, for the present as well as for the future. That is where the Nationalism of our time fails most. It is too occupied with the future, with the prospect of handing on the lamp, to be really effective. Admitted that it has a harder task, a longer and a more "forlorn hope" road to travel, yet the great thing should be to be prepared for the chance which may come. We cannot tell you, wrote John O'Leary in the *Irish People*, when the time will come, but neither can we tell you when it may not come. And his short speech on the subject at the unveiling of the Stephens' memorial may be quoted:—"This is not a time for making speeches. There is work to be done in Ireland, and everyone of you knows what it is. Go home and make ready." Mitchel would have said that also, that would have been his message to us to-day. The message of Mitchel to Ireland of any time is "No compromise." Rightly understood, that covers all. Assuredly. And the lesson of Mitchel is to take Nationalism and the things of Nationalism as a serious, urgent, and responsible call, a call requiring sacrifices, even the final sacrifice if need be, and to work and prepare as if we, even we of this generation, were to be called upon to make the effort which our grandfathers in '48 tried to make, under the leadership of John Mitchel.

And so, John Mitchel, we do not forget. Your bones lie in Newry this many a year, but over Ireland your wrathful and thunderous spirit still moves, and no part

of Ireland is wholly uninfluenced by it. It is in us, too, even in a generation that is soft with a softness of which you have no conception, and some day we hope we shall do it justice. In the meantime, we go on, remembering many things of the things you did and wrote, and wholly forgetting none of them. And, in the end, the victory shall be with us, or our children, or our children's children. Ireland breaks many of her children, but she remembers them, with pride and with gratitude. *Vale!*