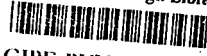


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IRISH IDEAS

By the same Author

WHEN WE WERE BOYS

A NOVEL

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New York: 15 East 16th Street

IRISH IDEAS

BY

WILLIAM O'BRIEN, M.P.

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P R E F A C E

MOST of the papers here reprinted were first read to audiences of young Irishmen during a period ranging from 1885 to 1893. The material arguments for Home Rule Englishmen can master for themselves. They are summed up in one principle of government, which is true in all countries and of all races—that, if you set up a ruling caste to be aliens by profession in their own country, the inevitable consequences of their ascendancy will be loss of self-respect and energy, with disaffection and decay, on the part of the subjugated nation. What is called the sentimental side of Irish patriotism is not so easily understood. There are even people who have their doubts whether it is not a fiction which agitators have invented. These pages may help outsiders to understand that the passion of Irish Nationality is at least so genuine that it is of more importance than all the other elements of the Irish problem put together—that it regards arguments drawn from material success as of inferior force in the affairs of nations, and is capable of throwing material advantages to the winds altogether when they are only to be purchased at the sacrifice of

national traditions and aspirations. The only merit claimed for the lectures here submitted to English eyes is, that they admit strangers to the inner sanctuary of the Irish cause, and afford them some glimpse of the ideals which captivate youth and age alike in Ireland, and to which so much generous passion and self-sacrifice are consecrated, generation after generation.

One other remark has to be made. It is one of the stock taunts of the Unionists that Irish representatives address meetings in Ireland in language which they dare not bring under the eyes of Englishmen. The first of these lectures was delivered before a complete understanding with any English party on the question of Home Rule seemed possible. They were all prepared for audiences of young Nationalists, the most hot-blooded, perhaps, to be found in the island, and assuredly the least capable of listening without protest to doctrines which they did not fully share. They are republished here without any, even verbal, alteration. However modest may be their pretensions as to form, these lectures may, therefore, claim to represent the feelings of the youth of Ireland in their full intensity and sincerity. Englishmen may find it instructive to note how completely the passionate national aspirations of the days before Mr. Gladstone's policy was promulgated have come to harmonise with sentiments of kinship with the British people, without losing anything of their own native tenderness and enchantment for young Irishmen.

WILLIAM O'BRIEN.

November 2, 1893.

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