

**LETTERS ON THE  
IRISH NATIONAL  
QUESTION; PP. 1-50**

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Letters on the Irish National Question; pp. 1-50 by John Martin

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**ON**  
**THE IRISH NATIONAL QUESTION.**

*[Price Sixpence.]*

# LETTERS

ON

## The Irish National Question.

BY

JOHN MARTIN.

"Your land strangers devour it in your presence, and it is desolate as  
overthrown by strangers."

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## PREFACE.

THE following letters appeared in some of the Irish journals at various dates between the end of last April and the present time. They are republished in the present form, with the hope that they may serve in some measure to excite the attention of the upper and middle classes of Irishmen to the political condition and prospects of Ireland. The writer would fain believe that the apathy in which those classes of his fellow-countrymen remain while their country is falling to ruin around them, is the apathy of ignorance and thoughtlessness rather than of conscious and intentional disloyalty. The malignant influences of the foreign rule prevent the upper and great part of the middle classes from looking at the facts of their country's condition and judging for themselves upon the national question. To look and examine and consider and judge for themselves—to open their eyes to the sufferings of the population for whose state *they* are responsible, if they pretend to be politically free—to examine and understand what are the real causes of the misery, the baseness, the danger, of Ireland's actual condition—nothing more would be needed and they must become patriots. *Noblesse oblige*. Is it not so, gentlemen of Ireland?

The aim of the writer being chiefly to draw attention to the question of Ireland,—to provoke or in any way induce the apathetic among his fellow-countrymen to consider the subject for themselves,—he has in most cases been content with merely stating his own opinions upon the important questions which he treats. He asserts and explains, without labouring to prove. His readers ought to prove for themselves whether the opinions and the aspirations expressed in these letters be right or wrong. It ought to be sufficient

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to move them to take this trouble, that even so inconsiderable a person as the writer solemnly declares his belief that the intense disaffection towards England and the irrepressible desire for Self-Government which he proclaims, are felt in the hearts of five-sixths of the population of Ireland.

The letters are reprinted with scarcely any changes except the corrections of errors of the press and the omission of a few sentences which are not required in the present form of publication.

KILBRONEY, BOSTON, MASS.  
19th Oct., 1868.



## CONTENTS.

	Page
LETTER I. Inquiry by the Dublin Corporation into the Financial Relations between Ireland and England—Whigs and Tories ... ..	1
LETTER II. Speeches of the Catholic Bishop of Cloyne and Mr. Maguire, M.P.—Ruinous condition of the country—Only Remedy Self-Government—Shall we attempt to obtain it? ... ..	4
LETTER III. Apology of the writer—Sketch of argument for National Movement ... ..	7
LETTER IV. English diplomatic intervention in Polish affairs—Marquis Wielopolski—State of Poland compared with state of Ireland—Church Establishment—Conduct of Irish Gentlemen—Is there any <i>Opinion</i> among Irishmen favourable to English rule? ...	11
LETTER V. Relations of Landlord and Tenant—Agrarian murders, Tenant-Right, Probable Policy of Independent Ireland upon the Land-Question—Poverty of Irish Population, Provision for the Poor in England and in Ireland, Supplements to Irish Poor-rate—Deterioration, moral and physical ... ..	16
LETTER VI. State of Ireland intolerable, Recapitulation—Parliamentary Representation—Parliamentary Policy—Position of Irish Gentlemen in English Parliament ... ..	22
LETTER VII. Failure of Repeal Movement in 1848—Not a sufficient reason for political inaction now ... ..	29
LETTER VIII. Causes of the National Defeat in 1848—The Famine—England's Creature and Servant—English treatment of this country since—Prostration of National Spirit in Ireland caused by the Famine—Signs of revival of patriotic spirit—Form of Self-Government desired by Ireland—Chances of success for an Irish National Movement—Conclusion of Letters ... ..	33
SUPPLEMENTAL LETTER I. Objects and character of a National Association—Irish middle classes; causes of their political inaction—Allegiance of Irishmen not to England ... ..	42
SUPPLEMENTAL LETTER II. The Fenians—Chances of invasion from America—The Brotherhood of St. Patrick—Agitations for good measures from English Parliament—Land-tenures, Church Establishment, Taxation ... ..	47



## LETTER I.

Mr. Dillon's speech at the Dublin Corporation, in moving for a committee to examine into the financial relations between this country and England, seems to have met with general approbation. At least, I have not yet heard of any hostile comment upon it, while I have seen praises of it in several Irish journals. It has met with approbation wherever it has been noticed at all. The speech, indeed, was an admirable one. As a statement of the Irish case—of the motives which Irish patriots have for investigating those financial relations—it was full, clear, and accurate; the accompanying remarks of the speaker were singularly apposite and moderate; his tone and style were calm, serious, and dignified. It would be difficult to raise any plausible objection to either the matter or the manner of the speech. But I am not sure whether this very faultlessness in Mr. Dillon's performance of his task may not prove an obstacle to his political success. Journals in the English interest might notice the subject if Mr. Dillon had fallen into some error of fact, or had exaggerated or over-coloured his statement, or had betrayed feelings that seemed vindictive and ferocious. No matter how trivial and indifferent the error, no matter how righteous the passion, such journals would notice only *that*, and would use it for diverting public attention from the real question, and for confirming the prejudices which serve to keep a large portion of the Irish community ignorant of the political condition of their own country and careless about its interests. Journals in the English interest dare not let their readers entertain the question of our political relations with England. Nothing more than that, nothing more than merely to *entertain that question*, is needed to make every honest and reasonable man in Ireland a Repealer. The political success of Mr. Dillon's movement would be to induce the well-fed among our fellow-countrymen simply to consider the political state of the country. The ill-fed—that is, the millions—do not need to be asked to consider our political state; they feel it sorely enough.

You observe that the "Conservative" members of the Corporation received Mr. Dillon's statement with peculiar favour. But that is what I should expect. "Conservatives" or "Liberals" in Ireland are merely followers and servants of the English party so called. Among Irish patriots there are, properly speaking, neither Conservatives nor Liberals, neither Tories nor Whigs. Not by any means