

XXVII.

Vindication from treason.

(Delivered during the recent rebellion in Ireland.)

MY LORDS,—It is my intention to say a few words only. I desire that the last act of a proceeding which has occupied so much of the public time should be of short duration. Nor have I the indelicate wish to close the dreary ceremony of a State prosecution with a vain display of words. Did I fear that hereafter, when I shall be no more, the country I have tried to serve would think ill of me, I might indeed avail myself of this solemn moment to vindicate my sentiments and my conduct. But I have no such fear. In speaking thus, accuse me not, my lords, of an indecorous presumption. To the efforts I have made in a just and a noble cause, I ascribe no vain importance; nor do I claim for those efforts any high reward. But it so happens, and it will ever happen so, that they who have tried

to serve their country, no matter how weak the effort may have been, are sure to receive the thanks and blessings of its people. With my country, then, I leave my memory, my sentiments, my acts—proudly feeling that they require no vindication from me this day. A jury of my countrymen, it is true, have found me guilty of the crime of which I stood indicted. For this I entertain not the slightest feeling of resentment towards them: influenced by the charge of the Lord Chief Justice, they could have found no other verdict. What of the charge? Any strong observation on it, I feel sincerely, would ill besit the solemnity of this scene; but I would earnestly beseech of you, my lord,—you who preside on that bench,—when the passions and the prejudices of this hour have passed away, to appeal to your own conscience, and ask of it, Was your charge as it ought to be—impartial and indifferent between the subject and the crown? My lords, you may deem this language unbecoming in me, and perhaps it may seal my fate. But I am here to speak the truth, whatever it may cost. I am here to regret nothing I have ever done—to retract nothing I have ever said. I am here to crave with no lying lip the

life I consecrate to the liberty of my country. Far from it: even here,—here where the thief, the libertine, the murderer, have left their footprints in the dust,—here on this spot, where the shadows of death surround me, and from which I see my early grave in an unanointed soil opened to receive me,—even here, encircled by these terrors, the hope which has beckoned me to the perilous sea upon which I have been wrecked, still consoles, animates, enraptures me.

No, I do not despair of my poor old country—her peace, her liberty, her glory. For that country I can do no more than bid her hope. To lift this island up, to make her a benefactor, instead of being the meanest beggar in the world; to restore to her her native powers and her ancient constitution;—this has been my ambition, and this ambition has been my crime. Judged by the law of England, I know this crime entails the penalty of death; but the history of Ireland explains this crime and justifies it. Judged by that history, I am no criminal; you are no criminal; you are no criminal: I deserve no punishment; we deserve no punishment. Judged by that history, the treason of which I stand convicted loses all its guilt; is sanctified as a duty; will be enno-

bled as a sacrifice. With these sentiments, my lord, I await the sentence of the court—having done what I felt to be my duty, having spoken what I felt to be the truth, as I have done on every other occasion of my short career. I now bid farewell to the country of my birth, my passion, and my death—the country whose misfortunes have invoked my sympathies, whose factions I have sought to still, whose intellect I have prompted to a lofty aim, whose freedom has been my fatal dream. I offer to that country as a proof of the love I bear her, and the sincerity with which I thought, and spoke, and struggled for her freedom, the life of a young heart; and with that life all the hopes, the honors, the endearments, of an honorable home. Pronounce, then, my lords, the sentence which the law directs, and I will be prepared to hear it. I trust I shall be prepared to meet its execution. I hope to be able, with a pure heart, and a perfect composure, to appear before a higher tribunal—a tribunal where a Judge of infinite goodness, as well as of justice, will preside, and where, my lords, many, many of the judgments of this world will be reversed.

T. F. MEAGHER.

XXVIII.

The Patriot's courage.

There is a sort of courage, which, I frankly confess it, I do not possess, a boldness to which I dare not aspire, a valor which I cannot covet. I cannot lay myself down in the way of the welfare and happiness of my country. That I cannot, I have not the courage to do. I cannot interpose the power with which I may be invested, a power conferred, not for my personal benefit, nor for my aggrandizement, but for my country's good, to check her onward march to greatness and glory. I have not courage enough. I am too cowardly for that. I would not, I dare not, in the exercise of such a trust, lie down, and place my body across the path that leads my country to prosperity and happiness. This is a sort of courage widely different from that which a man may display in his private conduct and personal relations. Personal or private courage

is totally distinct from that higher and nobler courage which prompts the patriot to offer himself a voluntary sacrifice to his country's good.

Apprehensions of the imputation of the want of firmness sometimes impel us to perform rash and inconsiderate acts. It is the greatest courage to be able to bear the imputation of the want of courage. But pride, vanity, egotism, so unamiable and offensive in private life, are vices which partake of the character of crimes, in the conduct of public affairs. The unfortunate victim of these passions cannot see beyond the little, petty, contemptible circle of his own personal interests. All his thoughts are withdrawn from his country, and concentrated on his consistency, his firmness, himself. The high, the exalted, the sublime emotions of a patriotism which, soaring towards heaven, rises far above all mean, low, or selfish things, and is absorbed by one soul-transferring thought of the good and the glory of one's country, are never felt in his impenetrable bosom. That patriotism which, catching its inspirations from the immortal God, and leaving at an immeasurable distance below all lesser, grovelling, personal interests