


JUSTIN McCARTHY

USTIN McCARTHY, Irish political leader, journalist, novelist, and man of letters, was born at Cork, Nov. 22, 1830, and educated privately. He was a journalist in his native city, 1848-52, and in Liverpool, 1852-60. Proceeding to London he joined the staff of "The Morning Star," as foreign editor and parliamentary reporter, 1860-68, and during the next three years travelled and lectured in the United States and was for a time one of the editors of the New York "Independent." He returned to London in 1870 and joined the staff of the "Daily News," as a radical leader writer. In 1879, he entered Parliament and soon became a leader of the Home Rule party and after the fall of Parnell was chairman of the Irish parliamentarians. In 1886, he revisited the United States where he delivered a number of public addresses. He has achieved distinction both as an historian and a novelist. His novels have attained considerable popularity, and include "The Waterdale Neighbors," "Lady Judith," "A Fair Saxon," "Dear Lady Disdain," "Maid of Athens," "Red Diamonds," "Miss Misanthrope," and "Donna Quixote." His miscellaneous writings embrace: "Modern Leaders" (1872); "History of Ireland from the Union," "Epoch of Reform," "History of Our Own Times," his best-known work (1880); "History of the Four Georges" (1889); "Ireland's Cause in England's Parliament" (1888); "Life of Sir Robert Peel" (1891); "Life of Pope Leo XIII" (1896); "The Story of Mr. Gladstone's Life" (1898); "Modern England" (1898); "Reminiscences" (1899); "The Story of the People of England in the Nineteenth Century" (1899). He is a versatile, industrious, and entertaining writer.

IN DEFENCE OF HIS COLLEAGUES

[In the adjourned debate on the amendment proposed on the main question affecting Irish affairs in the Queen's speech, Mr. W. E. Forster charged Mr. Justin McCarthy and his colleagues with complicity in the recent outrages and crimes in Ireland. Mr. McCarthy replied in the following speech in the House of Commons, February 23, 1883:]

THE fate of the amendment now before the House gives me very little concern. Neither its fate, nor its purport, nor its wording is of much account to me, or to those with whom I have the honor to act. One thing is clear, that the amendment is directed not against the Irish members, but against her Majesty's ministers. I care not whether it is rejected or passed, and I do not propose to make my business either the arraignment or the defence of the government as regards its general policy.

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I shall confine myself to two speeches delivered in the course of this debate — that of the right honorable gentleman the member for Bradford [Mr. Forster], and that of the right honorable gentleman the chief secretary for Ireland. Now the speech of the right honorable gentleman the member for Bradford was undoubtedly what writers in the newspapers sometimes call "a great effort." It was a tremendous effort. I always thought the right honorable gentleman had a good deal of theatrical talent, which he had not up to the present fully developed. Those who heard his remarkable speech will agree with me that it was mimetic as well as historic. It gave us that entertainment which is often described in the playbills of theatres and music halls as "imitations of popular performers." I wish I saw him in his place in the House at present. I am hardly mistaken in thinking that he favored the House with what he believed to be imitations of the voices and manners of some honorable members of the Irish party. I am content that he shall have all the favor which his familiar attacks upon some members of that party, and his erudition in American newspapers, can win him for a time from this House and the public.

I know, too, that his motive was not merely, although it was mainly, to discredit the Irish members. He had his mind fixed also upon discrediting and damaging the government from which he has been discarded; and I am convinced that there are members of that government—aye, members who are at this moment sitting on the Treasury Bench—whom he had in his mind with a wish to discredit my honorable friend the member for the City of Cork [Mr. Parnell]. Whatever his speech was made up from — from American newspapers, from reports of meetings in the country, from hints, and more than hints, in the passionate press of London — there

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was one quality of that speech which was all the right honorable gentleman's own, and that was its envenomed malignity.

I never heard in this House a speech more entirely inspired with the purpose of deliberate defamation. I believe it was the right honorable gentleman's intention to do all the damage he could to the characters of some members of the House by a process of systematic calumny. He accused some of my honorable friends, and with them of course myself, of conniving at outrage and assassination. He talked of offering us an alternative; but he gave none. He made it clear that his charge was nothing short of deliberate connivance with outrage and assassination. Here is the sort of alternative the right honorable gentleman offered us —

“I give the honorable member an alternative, that either he connived at outrages, or, when warned by facts and statements, he determined to remain in ignorance; that he took no trouble to test the truth of whether outrages had been committed or not, but that he was willing to gain the advantage of them.”

I point out that this is no alternative; that men who are informed that outrage and assassination are going on, and who determine to remain in ignorance, and are willing to gain the benefit of outrage and assassination, are distinctly conniving at those crimes.

Therefore, I tell the right honorable gentleman that when he pretended to give us an alternative he did nothing of the kind; and that as he had made up his mind to charge us by implication with conniving at murder, he ought to have stood boldly up and said so. He ought to have said so in those plain words he sometimes is able to use, and ought not to have shielded himself behind the pretence of an alternative. I should have thought that the right honorable gentleman

would be the member of this House least inclined, owing to certain memories he must have, to fling accusations of sympathy with murder recklessly at other men.

When charging us with these crimes, he must have recalled a time when a newspaper, then far more influential than it now is — the “Times” — charged him with sympathy with secret assassination. I do not charge the right honorable gentleman with having sympathy with crime; but for the reason I have stated he ought to have felt a sentiment which would have prevented him from recklessly hurling similar charges in the faces of men as honorable as himself, and who feel as little thirst for blood as he does.

On the 14th of March 1864, one who was then a member of this House, and is now high in her Majesty's colonial service — Sir John Pope Hennessy — brought forward certain statements in this House with regard to a right honorable friend of mine, for whom I have the highest respect, the member for Halifax [Mr. Stansfeld], and who was accused by certain newspapers of sympathy with assassination because he had harbored Mazzini and some of his friends.

This became the subject of debate in this House, and led to the right honorable gentleman the member for Halifax resigning his position in the government. The right honorable gentleman the member for Bradford stood up for his friend. I do not blame him for that — he believed him to be innocent. But what were the evidences given, and the assassination theory held, by the man for whom the right honorable gentleman the member for Bradford stood up in this House? Extracts were then read from Mazzini's letter, “The Theory of the Dagger.” Such passages as these were read —

“Blessed be the knife of Palafox: blessed be in your hands every weapon that can destroy the enemy and set you free.

The weapon that slew Mincovich in the Arsenal initiated the insurrection in Venice. It was a weapon of irregular warfare like that which, three months before the Republic, destroyed the Minister Rossi in Rome. . . . Sacred be the stiletto that began the Sicilian Vespers."

The right honorable gentleman the member for Bradford rose and said —

"The honorable and learned gentleman has brought forward a charge against an absent man — Signor Mazzini — who, whatever his faults, was a man of high character."

Whatever his faults? What though he blessed the knife of one man and the dagger of another, and the system of "irregular warfare" which removed Count Rossi, the minister of the late Pope Pius IX, who was murdered on the steps of the capitol, he was "a man of high character!" The right honorable gentleman's leader of the present day did not agree with his estimate of Signor Mazzini. The present prime minister had written in a preface to a translation of Signor Farini's "Roman States" — "The Satellites of Mazzini make common cause with assassins." After those extracts had been read and four days had passed, during which the right honorable member for Bradford had time for reflection, the subject was again raised, and the right honorable gentleman said —

"I should not be ashamed of being the friend of Mazzini." [Irish cheers, and a cry of "The Dagger!"] "I am not ashamed of being his acquaintance."

Well, I think that that incident is not without its interest and moral. The Irish members who brought forward that question at the time did not charge the right honorable gentleman, or think of charging him, with sympathy with

assassination. The charge was that he and his companions showed a levity which disregarded what a man might do, so long as that man was a foreign patriot.

The "Times" of March 15, 1864, had a leading article on the subject, which is not without its application to the present circumstances. The right honorable gentleman was not then in the flush and heyday of youth. He was able to judge whether Mazzini and his associates and satellites were what they were represented to be. The "Times" said —

"Who, then, is this M. Mazzini, to whose innocence this gentleman [Mr. Stansfeld] and Mr. W. E. Forster pledge themselves? Let any one read the passages quoted by Mr. Hennessy last night, and say whether the friends of M. Mazzini have any right to indulge in high-flown indignation when it is alleged that he might possibly be engaged in a conspiracy against a potentate's life."

I ask whether the right honorable member for Bradford was justified in seizing at the chance of high-flown indignation because the newspaper that accused him then of sympathy with assassination accuses some of us now of the same thing. I wonder that the memory of that episode in his career has not made him more generous — yes, I will say, more honest — toward men whom, in his heart, he no more believes to be guilty of that charge than honorable men then believed him to be.

I pass from that not uninteresting incident to the right honorable gentleman's attack on Irish members, and the grounds on which that attack was made. He had something to say about myself in connection with "United Ireland," a paper published in Dublin. He said much the same thing about a year ago. He then went over the story of some articles that he said appeared in that paper. I believe they were

not articles, but headings of paragraphs; and he appealed to me, though I was not in my place at the time, to know whether I approved of all these various paragraphs and headings.

Now, the right honorable gentleman must have known — at all events he might have known — that I could not have seen that newspaper then. He knew that I had been out of England the whole of that recess, from the end of one session to the beginning of another. [An Irish member: "He did."]

He did, and he said so himself in this House, for he indulged in some more or less graceful satire at my expense, and complained that, instead of helping to keep order in Ireland, I had been enjoying myself among the monuments of ancient Greece.

But since I was so culpable as to be enjoying myself among the monuments of ancient Greece, and in countries much farther off, he might have known that it was not likely that a Dublin paper followed me in all my wanderings. He knew that at the time he was speaking — at the time he was so playfully chiding me for the amusement of the House — he must have known that that paper was prevented from coming into this country; and though I made strenuous efforts shortly after to get copies of it, and see if it contained the terrible things it was said to contain, I was unable to obtain a copy.

However, I allow that to pass. It would not much matter if the right honorable gentleman could have sustained his charge. If he had not returned to it, I should not have cared to raise it. But I am quite willing to tell him, if it affords him the slightest interest, the history of my connection with that paper. It was started to get rid of a notorious

print, which appears lately to have lived by the levying of blackmail in Dublin. It was founded by a committee of gentlemen in whom I have the greatest trust; and the editorship was given to a man whom I regard and respect, and whom I know to be incapable of conducting a journal on the principles the right honorable gentleman described.

Under these conditions I felt content, having no control over the paper, to go abroad among the monuments of ancient Greece, and to leave the paper in the hands of the able editor who has already shown his ability in this House. I did not inquire in my absence how he conducted it. I know he conducted it honorably and well; and we have learned that the only things the right honorable gentleman objects to are the paragraphs and headings which got into the paper while he had the responsible editor under lock and key in one of his prisons.

I have said enough on that point. I do not believe that any investigation would convict that editor of publishing any articles which men of honor would be ashamed to sanction.

The right honorable gentleman went over many points with the object of associating me and others with plots and assassinations. For example, he spoke of a telegram sent by Mr. Brennan, who was the correspondent of the "Irish World," to that paper. The telegram is given variously in the different journals, but I would ask the right honorable gentleman, Is this which I am about to read the right version?

"All sorts of theories are afloat concerning this explosion" — that is the Salford dynamite explosion — "but the truly loyal one is that Fenianism did it."

What is the plain and evident meaning of that? Is it not that the fashionable and loyal theory, as a matter of course,