

## THE IRISH EXILES.

MARCH 17, 1910.

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To-night our thoughts turn to Ireland, but not to Ireland alone. What of the "poor exiles"? What of the seed scattered in five continents? Has it thriven and borne fruit? Their blood has reddened every battlefield; their voices have been heard everywhere preaching the gospel of liberty and humanity; their labor has enriched every clime; their energy and virility have founded and sustained tremendous enterprises which have prospered the republic.

But the black history of our race still throws its shadow over us. For hundreds of years all activity in Ireland was political, military or literary. The island was a welter of bloody onslaught and desperate resistance until there settled over it at last the desolate peace of the eighteenth century — the peace of a prison. Walled in by repressive enactments, menaced by the guns of an alien soldiery, this fairest land of Europe wore the grim aspect of a penal colony. The world passed on its way, adding new arts and inventions, all the modern machinery of industry and commerce to the stock of human achievement, while in Ireland the people vegetated in barren acres, dreaming of liberty and writing their passionate visions on the walls of their dungeons.

Is it wonderful that they came out of their experience bewildered and dreaming still; that, like the child torn from its home and only restored after long years, they did not at first know the face of the great parent of success — opportunity? The Indian, long a hunter, cannot turn farmer in a day. The Jew, a trader for centuries, does not take readily to the mechanical arts. We must allow the Irishman to shake off the dreams, legacy of the day when nothing was left him but a stifled inward brooding over wrong. He has to learn to look out upon the world as it is, to study anew the importance of skill in hand and eye and head — once, many centuries ago, his birthright.