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MEMOIR

OF

JOSEPH MAZZINI.

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1861.

THE vital question agitating our age is a question of education. The point is not to establish a new order of things by violence. An order established by violence is always tyrannical, even when it is better than the old. The point is to overthrow by force the brutal force that now arrays itself against every attempt at improvement; to propose, for the consent of the nation, set at liberty to express its will, an order which appears better, and by every possible means to educate men to develope it, and to act accordingly. Under the theory of *rights* we can rise in insurrection and overthrow obstacles, but we cannot strongly and durably found the harmony of all elements which compose the nation. Under the theory of happiness, of *well-being*, set up as the first object of life, we should make men egotists, worshippers of the material, who would carry their old passions into the new order of things, and corrupt it in a few months. We need, therefore, to find a principle of education superior to such a theory. * * * * This principle is DUTY. It behoves us to convince all men that, as all are children of one God, they have all to be here on earth the executors of one Law—that every one of them ought to live, not for himself, but for others,—that the object of their life is not to be more or less happy, but to render themselves and others better,—that to contend against injustice and error, for the benefit of their brethren, and wherever they may be found, is not only a *right*, but a *duty*—a duty which cannot be neglected without sin—a duty for the whole of life. * * * *

Whatever strong faith springs from the ruins of old exhaustion will transform the existing social order, because every strong faith endeavours to apply itself to all the branches of human activity; because the earth has always, in all epochs, endeavoured to conform itself to the *Heaven* in which it believed; because the whole history of Humanity repeats under diverse forms, in stages different with the times, those words registered in the Sabbath speech of Christendom, "Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven!"

Be this, Brethren! better understood and applied than hitherto, your confession of faith, your prayer. Repeat it, and act so that it may be realised.—MAZZINI'S DUTIES OF MAN.

JOSEPH MAZZINI.

“An organized and powerful Italy is henceforth for the interest of Europe.”—*Constitutionnel*, Oct., 1860.

To win recognition from the bitterest and most calumnious of opponents, to have one's life-work acknowledged by those most interested in thwarting it and most careful to deny its worth, to be crowned with oak and laurel by the most reluctant hands: this is the rare fate of Giuseppe Mazzini. Ceaselessly and recklessly vilified by the *Times*, mobbed and threatened even in newly-liberated Naples, proscribed by the Piedmontese Statesman, and hated by the French Emperor, the great Italian yet holds his place; is still lovingly and reverentially owned by victorious Garibaldi as the Father of Italy; while the *Constitutionnel*, speaking with authority, gives an Imperial adhesion to his “dream” of Italian unity; and the *Times* (Oct. 26, 1860) endorses that adhesion, though with the grudging—“This is a truth, let it come from what quarter it may.” Once before, the very spirit of falsehood compelled by a stronger power, it had slipped out between its slanders those few notable words which do homage at once to his power and to his nobility—“Mazzini's hiding-place is in the heart of every Italian, and there his enemies will one day find him.”

Just thirty years ago, a young man of five-and-twenty, a law-student, and the son of a physician in Genoa, was arrested in Piedmont, on suspicion of Carbonarism,—such Carbonarism as the King of Piedmont himself had professed only ten years before. In prison his thoughts were of the passing revolutions in France and Poland; and he came out, after some few months, to begin his life of exile and

apostleship, by founding the association of "La Giovine Italia," starting at the same time, and under the same title, at Marseilles, a monthly journal, treating of the political, moral, and literary condition of Italy,—in a word, a revolutionary journal, aiming at Italian regeneration. Thirty years of martyrdom, of unflagging zeal, of marvellous activity, of incessant self-sacrifice, and the boy's dream becomes an European necessity: something more than that—"henceforth for the interest of Europe."

So much, at least, must be conceded to Mazzini, however widely we may differ from his views, and whatever strictures we may be prone to pass upon his conduct in the several circumstances of his career. His stern republicanism may yet be pronounced chimerical; his carelessness of political means and parties, and his distrust of princes and diplomatists, may seem unwise, and for a while brand him with the stigma of "The Impracticable;" we may doubt his policy and disapprove his alliances or his enmities; but, after all, we must allow that the work he set himself to do,—which for twenty years was almost only his—is done, and that his prophecy is fulfilled. His worst enemies bow down their heads to that.

And his friends may be content with that. To them, however, he is indeed the prophet in the completest sense of the word: with all its holiness, and all its dignity, and all its more than royal claim to allegiance and to worship. No man ever won more ardent love, more thorough trust and following. From the noble boy-brothers Bandiera, who, penetrated by his doctrines, could only—even against his persuasion†—devote their lives as an example to their countrymen; to old Foresti—Pellico's fellow-prisoner at Speilberg—whose first act upon being liberated was to seek the Apostle, and offer him his service; and yet more recently to Pisacane, leading that forlorn hope which was the summoning of Sicily and the first note of Garibaldi's triumph; men of all ages and all classes and conditions have gathered to him, like warriors round a beacon, ready and determined—a brotherhood of most devoted chivalry. And not alone by his Italians is he loved and honoured. Carlyle spoke out for him in England, sixteen years ago, such words of hearty and well-judging praise as, on the score of personal character, should have shut the mouth of any honest enemy for ever. The one noblest Frenchman of them all, good old Lamennais, was his closest friend and comrade. The Poles loved him as only exiles love, and esteemed him beyond all men. Those who have known him intimately, speak of him with more than womanly affection. For he himself loves and trusts; and love and trust ever command their like.

Thirty years a conspirator, and yet his trustfulness is almost child-like. That is the secret of his wonderful escapes from

† But misled and trapped by Austrian spies, to whom an English Home Secretary gave their unsealed letters.

danger; for his fearlessness and daring are not doubted, even by the *Times*, whatever the *Times*' writers say. In Marseilles, the police of the citizen-king could not for a whole twelvemonth track him, though his Italian propagandism never halted. In Switzerland and in England the hired assassin, face to face with him, quailed, confessed, and asked for pardon. In Paris or in Genoa, under double sentence of death from Charles Albert, and wanted by the imperial police, he went and came, as his presence was necessary, and no man stayed him. Only he was not so incapable a general, while he confronted peril, to foolishly give himself up to those who sought his ruin. Royal Saul never called young David cowardly for hiding in the caverns of Adullam; and none who ever stood beside Mazzini ever thought of his being charged with cowardice. That falsehood may fall back unheeded into the hollow heart of him who was base enough to utter it. How Garibaldi, the generous, the brave to very recklessness, would laugh to hear his friend accused of selfish fear; the friend to whom Garibaldi's own general, Medici, a hero too, wrote, in 1849:—"His conduct has been for us, who were witnesses of it, a proof that to the great qualities of the citizen Mazzini joins the courage and intrepidity of the soldier." Medici writes this in telling of Garibaldi's advance on Monza, just previous to the capitulation of Milan, in which advance, and afterwards during the retreat to Como, Mazzini served as a private soldier. "In this march, full of difficulty and danger, in the midst of continual alarms" (Medici is now speaking of the retreat), "the strength of soul, the intrepidity, the decision, which Mazzini possesses in so remarkable a degree, and of which he afterward gave so many proofs at Rome, never failed him, and excited the admiration of the bravest."

It was during this march that he gave up his cloak to one of the young volunteers more slightly habited than himself. The same tender solicitude for others was evinced at Rome, where he found time on one occasion to take an English family to the palace-top, and showed them the city defences, in order to allay their fears. His firmness and tact in moments of difficulty are equally remarkable. Once a deputation from some part of Rome demanded of him an interview, requiring the dismissal of the "military staff." "From whom did they come?" he asked. "From the people." "Well, he was the people's servant, but not their slave. If the people trusted him, well and good, he would do his best; if not, they could withdraw the authority with which they had invested him. But when they said the people, how many had deputed them?" "Some few hundreds only." "Some few hundreds," he remarked, "were not the people; but he would listen even to the few. Which members of the military staff did they wish dismissed, and what the complaints against them?" The complainants did not even know who constituted the staff; their objections were only general; they saw their error, and retired. But perhaps the most striking of all anecdotes concerning him is that of his behaviour

after the French had entered Rome ; when, to prove that his power had not been maintained by terror, and also to observe the bearing of his Romans, he for several days walked unarmed and unprotected through the streets, till his friends told him he was mad. But no man touched him, or said evil word. Even the French soldiers were awed by the sublime spectacle of that pale, worn, grey man (his hair grizzled with the past month's anxiety and toil) walking amidst them, severe and silent, like the Ghost of the Republic.

In private life, Mazzini is the perfect gentleman, accomplished, gracious, and with a ready courtesy and genial warmth of expression that wins regard upon the instant. No orator, as Kossuth is ; but in the midst of a few friends, none is more eloquent, or pours himself in a conversation more rich and various. At the same time he is singularly unobtrusive, and averse to anything like show or notoriety. His mode of life is of the simplest. His lodging was for many years in London one little room, where he supported himself by his unpolitical writings. His little patrimony he gave to the Italian cause. He, to whom thousands have intrusted their lives and fortunes, whose means only of late were said to be equal to Garibaldi's, who was able but recently to fit out two expeditions to the Roman States (suppressed by the Piedmontese authorities), he knows no luxury or self-indulgence except his cigar—his one constant companion—his only housemate and consoler.

In person Mazzini is rather below the middle height, slight, and spare (in youth, like our own Milton, he is said to have been exceedingly beautiful), with a small but finely-proportioned head ; eyes like coals of fire ; black hair (prematurely grey since the occupation of Rome by the French) ; a face sad and lofty, not so stern as Dante's, but full of heroic gentleness ; and a hand that grasps you with right Saxon heartiness. That is the outward presentment of the man who has set his stamp upon Europe—a stamp such as none has set since Loyola ; a man whom, if it please you, you may compare with Loyola, for his will, and for his strength of character, and for his genius in organizing and commanding men ; but not for the fierce licentiousness of Ignatius's earlier years, nor for the perversity of intellect which made the Spaniard seek his good in that strange-raising of the devil so banefully known to the world as Jesuitism. For Mazzini's private life has been always pure—irreproachable in everything ; and his public creed, consistently acted out, has been ever the doing good only by good means. Our peace friends will except of course his advocacy of insurrection, and his gallant defence of Orsini, when the admirers of Brutus and Harmodius (to say nothing of Ehud, who took "God's message" to King Eglon) fell foul upon *that assassin*.

On that question of continual, however hopeless, insurrection which Mazzini inculcated, two opinions may be held, even as a mere matter of policy. While Cavour and his constitutional admirers

represent it as impeding the progress of Italian freedom. Mazzini's friends on the other hand insist that it has prepared, and been the best, and indeed the necessary preparation, for all that has been accomplished. It is, indeed hard, in a long series of unsuccessful enterprises in Italy—blamed because unsuccessful—to find one looking more forlornly hopeless at the outset than that which but a few months since had its poor beginning upon the coast of Sicily. That, too, let it be said, was in the Mazzini programme. And is not the blood of the martyrs the seed of the church? Verily, as it was in the beginning, and shall be.

Of Mazzini's public acts and written works we need not give a detailed account. It is the old history of apostolic endeavour; his writings a tissue of protests against present wrong and teachings of a higher future; his deeds a series of—plots, if you will, conspiracies and insurrections. In 1831-2 he organized his "Young Italy," from Marseilles, flooding Italy with pamphlets, through the aid of Italian merchant seamen touching at that port. In 1834 he planned the expedition into Savoy. Immediately after that failure, he, in conjunction with his Polish friends, founded the "Association of Young Europe," as the nucleus of a new holy alliance of the peoples. In 1837, hunted out of Italy, France, and Switzerland, he came to England, and remained here, "conspiring," till the revolution of '48. In February, 1849, he was elected member of the Tuscan Provisional Government; and on the 29th of March, 1849, ascended the Capitol, to stand before the world as Roman Triumvir. The acts of that triumvirate are matters of history. Worthy of the most heroic days of the Eternal City, they testify at once to the greatness and capacity of the statesman, and the magnanimity of the man. That was *his* success, a successful culmination, however transient. And yet he oversteps success to the one steep height beyond. Grandeur even than triumph, so far as he is personally concerned, is the self-abnegation of his recent letter to Victor Emmanuel. As, during the Milanese campaign, he, the republican, and, for his murdered friend Ruffini's sake, the personal foe of Charles Albert, kept his republicanism in leash, and stood, as faithful henchman might, beside the king while fighting honestly for Italy, so now, let who will declare to the contrary, he gives up all for Italian unity, ready in his most patriotic self-sacrifice, and, let it be said also, in his faith in God's providence, to renounce that dearer "dream" of Italian republicanism, as the price of a really united Italy, an Italy strong enough to live her own life, whatever that may be. How great that sacrifice only those who have shared his dream can in any wise appreciate.

The great outward deeds of the world shadow and eclipse all else. Art, science, literature, all are dwarfed before the giant strife of peoples for their liberties, or that of nation pitted against nation, albeit in the vulgarest of kingly wars. So far we have spoken only of the politician. But Mazzini would have been notable under any circumstances. Master of his own Italian, at the same time

thoroughly conversant with European literature, he is not only the commentator upon Dante, but also, or rather was before 1848, an esteemed contributor to the highest and most thoughtful periodicals of France and England. He could spare time from politics to provide for the relief and education of poor organ-grinding boys in London; and from political polemics, to write in his *Apostolato Popolare*, for the benefit of Italian workmen, a sermon "On the Duties of Man," of which Kingsley or Maurice would be proud. There is no such masterly exposition of the errors and shortcomings of the Economic and the Socialist Schools as that contributed by him to the columns of the *People's Journal*; nor any so profound criticism on Carlyle as his in the *Westminster Review*. His *République et Royauté en Italie* is one of the very few good histories that exist. In all things, indeed, Mazzini is a man of mark, a man of notable worth, a man deserving of renown, and whom to study and to know must be of advantage to us all.

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