

THE SPIRITUAL NATION

Preface

This tract continues and develops the argument commenced in "Ghosts" and should be read in connection with those Tracts (which form Nos. 10 and 11 of this series). It is not to be taken as an attempt to represent the whole of Davis's mind or to summarise the whole of his teaching. I consider him here chief as one of the Separation voices.

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I

I have said that all Irish nationality is implicit in the definition of Tone, and that later teachers have simply made one or other of its truths explicit. It was characteristic of Tone that he stated his case in terms of practical politics. But the statement was none the less a complete statement. To claim independence as the indefeasible right of Ireland is to claim everything for Ireland, all spiritual exaltation and all worldly pomp to which she is entitled. Independence one must understand to include spiritual and intellectual independence; or rather true political independence requires spiritual and intellectual independence as its basis, or it tends to become unstable, a thing resting merely on interests which change with time and circumstance.

I make a distinction between spiritual and intellectual independence corresponding to the distinction which exists between the spiritual and the intellectual parts in man. The distinction is not easy to express, but it is a real distinction. The soul is not the mind, though it acts by way of the mind, and it is through the mind one gets such glimpses of the soul as are possible. Obviously, a great and beautiful soul may sometimes have to express itself through a very ordinary mind, and a mean or a wicked soul may sometimes express itself through a regal mind; and these possibilities are full of confusion for us, so that when we think we know a man, it is sometimes only his intellect we know, the dialectician or the rhetorician or the idiot in him, and not the strange immortal thing behind. We can learn to know a man's mind, but we can rarely be quite sure that we know his soul. That is a book which only God reads plainly.

Now I think that one may speak of a national soul and of a national mind, and distinguish one from the other, and that this is not merely figurative speaking. When I was a child I believed that there was actually a woman called Erin, and had Mr. Yeats' "Kathleen Ni Houlihan" been then written and had I seen it, I should have taken it not as an allegory, but as a representation of a thing that might happen any day in any house. This I no longer believe as a physical possibility, nor can I convince myself that a friend of mine is right in thinking that there is actually a mystical entity which is the soul of Ireland, and which expresses itself through the mind of Ireland. But I believe that there is really a spiritual tradition which is the soul of

Ireland, the thing which makes Ireland a living nation, and that there is such a spiritual tradition corresponding to every true nationality. This spiritual thing is distinct from the intellectual facts in which chiefly it makes its revelation, and it is distinct from them in a way analogous to that in which a man's soul is distinct from his mind. Like other spiritual things, it is independent of the material, whereas the mind is to a large extent dependent upon the material.

I have sometimes thought (but I do not put this forward as a settled belief which I am prepared to defend) that spiritually England and the United States are one nation, while intellectually they are apart. I am sure that spiritually the Walloons of Belgium are one nation with the French and that spiritually the Austrians are one nation with the Germans. The spiritual thing which is the essential thing in nationality would seem to reside chiefly in language (if by language we understand literature and folklore as well as sounds and idioms), and to be preserved chiefly by language; but it reveals itself in all the arts, all the institutions, all the inner life, all the actions and goings forth of the nation. It expresses itself only partially and unworthily in an enslaved nation like Ireland. But the soul of the enslaved and broken nation may conceivably be a more splendid thing than the soul of the great free nation; and that is one reason why the enslavements of old and glorious nations that have taken place so often in history are the most terrible things that have ever happened in the world.

If nationality be regarded as the sum of the fact, spiritual and intellectual, which mark off one nation from another, and freedom as the condition which allowed those facts full scope and development, it will be seen that both the spiritual and intellectual fact, nationality, and the physical condition, freedom, enter into a proper definition of independence or nationhood. Freedom is a condition which can be lost and won and lost again; nationality is a life which, if once lost, can never be recovered. A nation is a stubborn thing, very hard to kill; but a dead nation does not come back to life, any more than a dead man. There will never again be a Ligurian nation, nor an Aztec nation, nor a Cornish nation.

Irish nationality is an ancient spiritual tradition, and the Irish nation could not die as long as that tradition lived in the heart of one faithful man or woman. But had the last repository of the Gaelic tradition, the last unconquered Gael, died, the Irish nation as no

more. Any free state that might thereafter be erected in Ireland, whatever it might call itself, would certainly not be the historic Irish nation.

Davis was the first of modern Irishmen to make explicit the truth that a nationality is a spirituality. Tone had postulated the great primal truth that Ireland must be free. Davis, accepting that and developing it, stated the truth in its spiritual aspect, that Ireland must be herself; not merely a free self-governing state, but authentically the Irish nation, bearing all the majestic marks of her nationhood. That the nation may live, the Irish life, both the inner life and the outer life, must be conserved. Hence the language, which is the main repository of the Irish life, the folklore, the literature, the music, the art, the social customs, must be considered. Davis fully realised, with the Gaelic poets, that a nationality connotes a civilisation, and that a civilisation is a body of traditions. He is thus the lineal ancestor of the spiritual movement embodied in our day in the Gaelic League. Tone had set the feet of Ireland on a steep; Davis bade her in her journey remember her old honour and her old sanctity, the fame of Tara and of Clonmacnois. Tone is the Irish nation in action, grey and heroic and terrible; Davis stands by the nation's hearthside, a faithful sentinel.

Ireland is one. Tone had insisted upon the political unity of Ireland. Davis thought of Ireland as a spiritual unity. He recognised that the thing which makes her one is her history, that all her men and women are the heirs of a common past, a past full of spiritual, emotional, and intellectual experiences, which knits them together indissolubly. The nation is thus not a mere agglomeration of individuals, but a living organic thing, with a body and a soul; twofold in nature, like man, yet one.

Davis's teaching on this head is resumed thus in one of his most lyric paragraphs:

"This country of ours is no sand bank thrown up by some recent caprice of earth. It is an ancient land, honoured in the archives of civilisation, traceable into antiquity by its piety, its valour, and its sufferings. Every great European race has sent its stream to the river of Irish mind. Long wars, vast organisations, subtle codes, beacon crimes, leading virtues and self-mighty men were here. If we live

influenced by wind and sun and tree, and not by the passions and deeds of the past, we are a thrifless and a hopeless people.

And in another passage he gives the Gaelic League its watch words:

"Men are ever valued most for peculiar and original qualities. A man who can only talk commonplace, and according to routine, has little weight. To speak, look, and do what your own soul from its depths orders you are credentials of greatness which all men understand and acknowledge. Such a man's dictum has more influence than the reasoning of an imitative or commonplace man. He fills his circle with confidence. He is self-possessed, firm, accurate and daring. Such men are the pioneers of civilisation and the rulers of the human heart.

"Why should not nations be judged thus? Is it not a full indulgence of its natural tendencies essential to a people's greatness?....

"The language which grows up with a people is conformed to their organs, descriptive of their climate, constitution, and manners, mingled inseparably with their history and their soil, fitted beyond any other language to express their prevalent thoughts in the most natural and efficient way.

"To impose another language on such a people is to send their history adrift among the accidents of translation - 'tis to tear their identity from all places - 'tis to substitute arbitrary signs for picturesque and suggestive names - 'tis to cut off the entail of feeling and separate the people from their forefathers by a deep gulf - 'tis to corrupt their very organs, and abridge their power of expression.

"The language of a nation's youth is the only easy and full speech for its manhood and for its age. And when the language of its cradle goes, itself craves a tomb....

"A people without a language of its own is only half a nation. A nation should guard its language more than its territories - 'tis a surer barrier, and more important frontier, than fortress or river."

The insistence on the spiritual fact of nationality is Davis's distinctive contribution to political thought in Ireland, but it is not the whole of Davis. It has become common to regard him as the type of the

'intellectual Nationalist,' who is distinguished from that other and more troublesome person, the political irreconcilable. And there is a passage of Gavan Duffy's which lends countenance to this. But the view is a false one as regards Davis and a false one as regards the irreconcilables. Davis accepts the political doctrine of the irreconcilables and the irreconcilables accept the spiritual teaching of Davis. The two teachings are facets of one truth. And Davis saw the whole truth. He saw that Ireland must be independent of England. It is necessary for me to prove this.

II

First to brush away a cobweb. It has been maintained that Davis would have been satisfied with what is called a Federal settlement. The only authority for this view seems to be the following passage in Gavan Duffy's *Young Ireland*: "some of them ("the moderate men" who are already with us) came to the conclusion that an Irish Legislature for purely Irish purposes, as a sort of chapel of ease to the Imperial Parliament, ought to be demanded. Mr. Sharman Crawford, on behalf of himself and others unnamed, but understood to include members of both Houses, announced that he desired the establishment of a Federal Union between England and Ireland. He wished to see a 'local body for the purpose of local legislation, combined with an Imperial representation for Imperial purposes'; and he considered that no 'Act of the Imperial Parliament having a separate action as regards Ireland should be a law in Ireland unless passed or confirmed by her own legislative body.' It is a fact worthy to be pondered on that Davis was favourable to the experiment. He desired and would have fought for independence, but he was so little of what in later times has been called "an irreconcilable," that such an alternative was not the first, but the last, resource he contemplated. He desired to unite and elevate the whole nation, and he would have accepted Federation as the scheme most likely to accustom and reconcile Protestants to self-government, and as a sure step towards legislative Independence in the end."

Thus Duffy on Davis. In a moment we shall let Davis speak for himself.

When Davis, in 1842, leaped into his place in Irish politics as the chief influence on the staff of the *nation* all Ireland was organised in the great constitutional movement and under the greatest constitutional leader known to history. The demand of that movement was for Repeal of the Union. Separatism was only an inarticulate faith of the common people, remembered for the rest by a few noble old men like Robert Holmes, by a few fiery exiles like Miles Byrne. The *Nation* ranged itself under O'Connell's banner, though from the beginning its writers described a wider horizon than O'Connell ever did or could. In 1843 O'Connell made what Duffy calls the 'portentous' announcement that he felt 'a preference for the Federative plan, as tending more to the utility of Ireland and the maintenance of the connection with England than the proposal of simple Repeal." Davis was away from Dublin, but Duffy, in a personal letter to O'Connell, which he printed as a leading article in the *Nation* objected to the change of policy foreshadowed, and insisted that 'the Repeal Association had no more right to alter the constitution on which its members were recruited than the Irish Parliament had to surrender its functions without consulting its constituents. When Davis returned to town he "cordially accepted," says Duffy, the policy of resistance.

Davis soon spoke in the *Nation*. He welcomed the overtures of the Federalists, but as to his own position and the *Nation's* position he had no doubt. He settled it in one sentence:

"let the Federalists be an Independent and respected party, the repealers an unbroken league - our stand is with the latter."

So that, as between Federalism and Repeal, Davis defined himself a Repealer. But was he not something more?

Davis died before Young Ireland had reached its full political stature or found its full political view. Just as the United Irishmen spoke first the language of constitutionalism, so did the Young Irishmen. Davis, as their spokesman, spoke their official language, but he hinted, and more than hinted, at a fuller utterance. Mitchel, who took up Davis's post in 1845, spoke the fuller utterance, but at his fullest he said nothing that had not been just as fully implied by Davis. For Davis was a Separatist.

Davis wrote of Tone that he was "the wisest... of our last generation." And he applied the adjective "wise" to Tone in contradistinction to Grattan, whom in the same sentence he called "the most sublime" of the last generation. Now, Tone was the Separatist and Grattan was the British Connectionist. When Davis wrote of Tone that he was wiser than Grattan he did not mean that he was more worldly-wise, that he was an able business man; for Tone died a pauper and Grattan died wealthy; Tone died in a dungeon and his body with difficulty obtained Christian burial, Grattan was buried with pomp in Westminster Abbey. Davis meant that Tone was a wiser statesman than Grattan, that Separation was a wiser policy for Ireland than British-Connectionism. And he meant that he, Davis, was a disciple of Tone.

In the light of this recognition such a passage as the following, which were otherwise mere froth and foam, becomes substance:

"this is the history of two years never surpassed in importance and honour. This is a history which our sons shall pant over and envy. This is a history which pledges us to perseverance. This is a history which guarantees success.

"Energy, patience, generosity, skill, tolerance, enthusiasm, created and decked the agitation. The world attended us with its thoughts and prayers. The graceful genius of Italy, and the profound intellect of Germany paused to wish us well. The fiery heart of France tolerated our unarmed effort and proffered its aid. America sent us money, thoughts, love - she made herself a part of Ireland in her passions and her organisations. From London to the wildest settlement which throbs in the tropics or shivers nigh the Pole, the empire of our misruler was shaken by our effort. To all earth we proclaimed our wrongs. To man and God we made oath that we would never cease to strive till an Irish nation stood supreme on this island. The genius which had organised us, the energy which laboured, the wisdom that taught, the manhood which rose up, the patience which obeyed, the faith which swore, and the valour that strained for action, are here still, experienced, recruited, resolute.

"The future shall realise the promise of the past."

This is Davis's passionate appeal to his own; and here is how he talks to the enemy:

"And if England will do none of these things, will she allow us, for good or ill, to govern ourselves, and see if we cannot redress our own griefs. 'No, never, never,' she says, 'though all Ireland cried for it - never!' Her fields shall be manured with the shattered limbs of her sons, and her hearths quenched in their blood; but never, while England has a ship or soldier, shall Ireland be free."

"And this is your answer? We shall see - we shall see!"

"And now, Englishmen, listen to us! Though you were tomorrow to give us the best tenures on earth - though you were to equalise Presbyterian, Catholic and Episcopalian - though you were to give us the amplest representation in your Senate though you were to restore our absentees, disencumber us of your debt, and redress every one of our fiscal wrongs - and though, in addition to all this, you plundered the treasuries of the world to lay gold at our feet, and exhausted the resources of your genius to do us worship and honour - still we tell you - we tell you, in the names of liberty and country - we tell you in the names of enthusiastic hearts, thoughtful souls, and fearless spirits - we tell you, by the past, present, and the future, we would spurn your gifts, if the condition were that Ireland should remain a province. We tell you, and all whom it may concern, come what may - bribery or deceit, justice, policy, or war - we tell you, in the name of Ireland that Ireland shall be a Nation!"

Now, when Davis told England that, some bribery or deceit, justice, policy, or war, *Ireland shall be a nation*; when Davis reminded the men of Ireland that they had sworn 'never to ease to strive until '*an Irish nation stood supreme on this island*,'" he meant what he said. By an Irish nation 'standing supreme' he did really mean a Sovereign Irish State living her own life, mistress of her own destinies, defending her own shores, with her ambassadors in foreign capitals and her flag on the seas. He tells us that he meant this, the most important of Davis's political articles are those in which he develops a foreign policy for Ireland. And the most significant passage in all Davis's political writings is this (the italics are his own):

"Again, it is peculiarly needful for *Ireland* to have a Foreign Policy. Intimacy with the great powers will guard us from English interference. Many of the minor German States were too deficient in numbers, boundaries, and wealth to have outstood the despotic ages of Europe, but for those foreign alliances, which, whether resting on

friendship or a desire to preserve the balance of power, secured them against their rapacious neighbours. And now time has given its sanction to their continuance, and the progress of localisation guarantees their future safety. When Ireland is a nation she will not, with her vast population and her military character require such alliances as a security against an English *re-conquest*; but they will be useful in banishing any *dreams of invasion* which might *otherwise* haunt the brain of our old enemy."

As a Separatist utterance this is as plenary as anything in Tone. The 'Irish nation' contemplated by Davis pre-supposed the breaking of the connection, for it was to have military resources sufficient to guard against "an English *re-conquest*," and was to seek foreign alliances in order to banish any '*dreams of invasion*' cherished by "our old enemy."

To Davis, as to Tone, England was 'the enemy.' Davis was as anti-English as Tone, and, for all his gentleness and charity, more bitter in the expression of his anti-Englishism than Tone was. To him the English language was 'a mongrel of a thousand breeds.' Modern English literature was 'surpassed' by French literature.

"France is an apostle of liberty - England the turnkey of the world. France is the old friend. England the old foe, of Ireland. From one we may judge all. England has defamed *all other countries* in order to make us and her other slaves content in our fetters.

Davis saw as clearly as Tone saw that the English connection is the never-failing source of Ireland's political evils, and he stated his perception as clearly as Tone did.

"He who fancies some intrinsic objection to our nationality to lie in the coexistence of two languages, three or four great sects, and a dozen different races in Ireland, will learn that in Hungary, Switzerland, Belgium, and America, different languages, creeds, and races flourish kindly side by side, and he will seek in English intrigues the real well of the bitter word of Ireland."

Again:

"Germany, France and America teach us that English economics are not fit for a nation beginning to establish a trade, though they may be

for an old and plethoric trader; and, therefore, that English and Irish trading interests are directly opposed."

Yet again:

"The land tenures of France, Norway and Prussia are the reverse of England's. They resembled our own old tenures; they better suit our character and our wants than the loose holdings and servile wages system of modern England."

And finally:

"We must believe an act up to the lesson taught by reason and history, that England is our interested and implacable enemy - a tyrant to her dependants - a calumniator of her neighbours, and both the despot and the defamer of Ireland for near seven centuries. "

It has thus been established, and established by his own words, first, that as between Federalism and Repeal Davis was a Repealer: but, secondly, that as between Repeal and Separation Davis was a Separatist. In other words, he held the national position which Tone held, which Lalor and Mitchel held, which the Fenians held, which the Irish Volunteers hold. The fact that he would have accepted and worked on with Repeal in no wise derogates from his status as a Separatist, and more than the fact that many of us would have accepted Home Rule (or even Devolution) and worked on with derogates from our status as Separatists. Home Rule to us would have been a means to an end: Repeal to Davis would have been a means to an end.

In one of the phrases in which such men as he give watchwords to the generations, a phrase which strangely anticipates the most famous of Parnell's phrases, Davis tells us what that end was:

"Ireland's aspiration is for unbounded nationality."

I have shown what he meant by "unbounded nationality"; he meant sovereign nationhood, he meant spiritual, intellectual, and political independence. The word "nationality" I have used here and elsewhere for the inner things which is a nation's soul, and the word 'nationhood' I have made to include both that inner thing and the outer status, political independence. It is obvious that Davis uses the

term 'nationality' in the sense in which I use the term 'nationhood,' for if he meant only the inner spiritual thing his phrase would be meaningless.

In order to the proper adjustment of values we may now usefully set down:

First, that the Federalism with which O'Connell dallied for a moment, but which Davis and Young Ireland protested against and O'Connell promptly disowned, abandoning it, indeed, with the contemptuous phrase: 'federalism is not worth *that* (snapping his fingers) contemplated a domestic Irish legislature to deal with domestic Irish affair, adequate Irish representation in an imperial Parliament, and *power of veto in the Irish Parliament over acts of the Imperial Parliament having a separate action as regards Ireland*. It was thus a vastly bigger thing than modern Home Rule, which reserves everything of real importance from the jurisdiction of the Irish Parliament, which far from giving the Irish Parliament a veto over the acts of the Imperial Parliament regarding Ireland, gives the Imperial Parliament a veto over all acts of the Irish Parliament, and which preserves intact the power of the Imperial Parliament to pass all sorts of laws binding Ireland and to impose all sorts of taxation in Ireland, the Irish representation in the Imperial Parliament to be a negligible quantity.

Secondly that the Repeal of the Union, which, apart from his momentary aberration into Federalism, was O'Connell's life-long demand, contemplated a sovereign Irish Parliament co-ordinate with the English Parliament and with absolute control of Irish taxation; and while there was to be a common king, army, navy, and foreign policy, not a penny was to be raised from Ireland for the financing of these corners except by the vote of the Irish Parliament. It will be seen that Repeal was as much a bigger thing than the Home Rule of 1914 as O'Connell was a greater man than Mr. Redmond. Repeal contemplated a sovereign co-ordinate Parliament; Home Rule specifically contemplated a subordinate Parliament. Under Repeal the Imperial Parliament would have had no jurisdiction over any man of Ireland, over any sod of Ireland's soil, over any shilling of Ireland's money; under Home Rule the jurisdiction of the Imperial Parliament over these things and all other things in Ireland was to have been absolute, for the Act laid down (Clause One) that the supreme power and authority of the Parliament of the United

Kingdom shall remain unaffected and undiminished over all persons, matters and things in Ireland, and every part thereof."

Thirdly, that even the noble and semi-independent status which would have been secured to Ireland by Repeal was not sufficient for Tone, who rose against the very constitution which Repeal sought to restore; for Davis, who aspired to 'unbounded nationality"; for Lalor, whose object was 'not to repeal the Union but the conquest," and who "for Repeal had never gone into agitation and would never go into insurrection"; for Mitchel, who, far from accepting that partnership in the British Empire on which Repeal was founded, avowed it as his aim in life to utterly destroy the British Empire. What was it that these men wanted? They wanted Separation; they wanted 'to BREAK the connection with England, the never-failing source of all our political evils." Davis's principles, then were Tone's; and as to methods. That Davis would have achieved Irish nationhood by peaceful means if he could, is undoubted. Let it not be a reproach against Davis. Obviously, if a nation can obtain its freedom without bloodshed, it is its duty so to obtain it. Those of us who believe that, in the circumstances of Ireland it is not possible to obtain our freedom without bloodshed will admit this much. If England, after due pressure, were to say to us "Here, take Ireland," no-one would be so foolish as to answer, "No, we'd rather fight you for it." But things like that do not happen. One must fight, or at least be ready to fight. And Davis knew this:

'the tribune's tongue and poet's pen
may sow the seed in slavish men;
but 'tis the soldier's sword alone
can reap the harvest when 'tis grown."

And Davis was ready to fight. No-one knew better than he that England would yield only to force or the threat of force; and that England, having once yielded, could be held to her bargain only by force. The nation that he visioned was to be an armed nation; and armed for the precise purpose of preventing any "reconquest" by England. No one saw more clearly than Davis that Ireland made her mistake of mistakes when her Volunteers abdicated their arms. Referring to Madden's defence of Grattan against Flood on the question of Simple Repeal, Davis writes:

"This is unanswerable, but Grattan should have gone further. The revolution was effected mainly by the Volunteers, whom he had inspired; arms could alone have preserved the constitution. Flood was wrong in setting value on one form - Grattan in relying on any; but before and after '82 Flood seems to have had glimpses that the question was one of might, as well as of right, and that national laws could not last under such an alien army.

"Taken as military representatives, the Convention at the Rotunda was even more valuable than as a civic display. Mr. Madden censures Grattan for having been an elaborate neutral during these Reform dissensions; but that the result of *such* neutrality ruined the Convention proves the comparative want of power in Flood, who could have governed Convention in spite of the rascally English and the feeble Irish Whigs. Oh, had Tone been in that council!"

the astonishing thing about Davis is that, writing in the still constitutional *Nation* of 1842-5, he was able yet express his Separatist faith so clearly, and to avow so openly his readiness to fight for that faith. It took Duffy three years longer to reach the point which had been reached in 1845 by his dead friend.

III

If we accept the definition of Irish freedom as "the Rights of Man n Ireland" we shall find it difficult to imagine an apostle of Irish freedom who is not a democrat. One loves the freedom of men because one loves men. there is therefore a deep humanism in every true Nationalist. There was a deep humanism in Davis. The sorrow of the people affected Davis like a personal sorrow. He had more respect for aristocracy than Tone had (Tone had none), and would have been less ruthless in a revolution than Tone would have been. But he was a democrat in this truest sense, that he loved the people. And his love of the people was an essential part of the man and of his Nationalism. Even his rhetoric (for Davis, unlike Tone, was a little rhetorical) cannot disguise the sincerity of such passages as this:

"think of the long, long patience of the people - their toils supporting you - their virtues shaming you - their huts, their hunger, their disease.

"To whosoever God hath given a heart less cold than stone, these truths must cry day and night. Oh! How they cross us like Banshees when we would range free on the mountain - how, as we walk in the evening light amid flowers, they startle us from rest of mind! Ye nobles! Whose houses are as gorgeous as the mote's (which dwelleth in the sunbeam) - ye strong and haughty squires - ye dames exuberant with tingling blood - ye maidens whom no splendour has yet spoiled, will yet not think of the poor?....

The real Davis must have been a greater man than the Davis of the essays or the Davis of the songs. In literary expression Davis was immature; in mind he was ripe beyond all his contemporaries. I cannot call him a very great prose writer; I am not sure that I can call him a poet at all. But I can call him a very great man, one of our greatest men. None of his contemporaries had any doubt about his greatness. He was the greatest influence among them, and the noblest influence; and he has been the greatest and noblest influence in Irish history since Tone. He was not Young Ireland's most powerful prose writer; Mitchel was that. He was not Young Ireland's truest poet: Mangan was that, or, if not Mangan, Ferguson. He was not Young Ireland's ablest man of affairs: Duffy was that. He was not Young Ireland's most brilliant orator: Meagher was that. Nevertheless, "Davis was our true leader," said Duffy; and when Davis died - the phrase is again Duffy's - "it seemed as if the sun had gone out of the heavens." "The loss of this rare and noble Irishman," said Mitchel, "has never been repaired, neither to his country nor to his friends." What was it that made Davis so great in the eyes of two such men, and two such different men, as Duffy and Mitchel? It must have been the man's immortal soul. The highest form of genius is the genius for sanctity, the genius for noble life and thought. That genius was Davis's. Character is the greatest thing in a man; and Davis's character was such as the Apollo Belvidere is said to be in the physical order - in his presence all men stood more erect. The Romans had a noble word which summed up all moral beauty and all private and civic valour: the word *virtus*. If English had as noble a word as that it would be the word to apply to the thing which made Thomas Davis so great a man.