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Letter to Patrick Guiney, 1863 October 4

Thomas Francis Meagher

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8

New York, 129 Fifth Ave.
October 7th 1853.

My dear Colonel,

Your hearty, honest
letter, from Culpepper, dated the 1st
of this month, gratified me ex-ceeding-
-ly.

The approval of intelligent and
accomplished young Irishmen I
have always esteemed - and
I think I may include you in
that category without being accused
of an indulgence in flattery!

As for the great bulk of
Irishmen in this country, I frankly
confess to an utter disregard, if
not to a thorough contempt, of
what ^{they} think or say of me in my
relations to the questions and
movements that are supposed or

designed to affect the fortunes
of this nation, or actually do so.
In their own discredit and
degradation, they have suffered
themselves to be bamboozled into being
obstinate herds in the political
field, contracting inveterate
instincts, following with gross
stupidity and the stoniest
blindness certain worn-out old
paths - ways described for them
by their drivers, but never doing
anything worthy of the intellectual
and chivalrous reputation of their
race. Democrats they profess
themselves to be from the start - the
instant the baggage-smashers and
cut-throat lodging-house-keepers
lay hands on them - and Democrats
they remain until the day of their
deaths, miserably and repulsively
regardless of the conflicting meanings
that name acquires through

the progressive workings of
the Great World about them.
To have been a Democrat in
the days of Andrew Jackson,
was to have been an American
citizen in the broadest and proudest
interpretation of the word. It was
to have been the devoted friend
of the country, whether it was
right or wrong, and to the
extent of being a fierce and
relentless enemy of all who
were not for it in the fullest
measure of its growth and
glory. Now-a-days to be a
Democrat, is to be the partizan
of a selfish and conscienceless
faction, which, under the captivating
pretexts of State-Rights, Habeas
Corpus, and other popular claims
and rights of the kind, would
cripple the National power,
play with the wildest or wickedest

recklessness with the hands of
every eye who would see that
power laid low, either to
gratify his jealousy or vengeance,
or better his mean condition on
the wreck furnished him by its
overthrow. Sadly, and almost
savagely, have I noted this
of late; and hence the energy
(if I can claim that quality for
my public action) with which
I have broken loose from what
might have, ^{been} considered my
inprescriptible associations and
traditions in public life. In doing
so, I have discarded with the
haughtiest viscerability and
disclaim the "Irish Opinion" of
this country, having come to the

9
conclusion that it was passed
redemption, and, therefore, passed
consideration or respect. That
such an "Opinion" should be in
a state of the most violent fermentation
against me, in consequence of my
letter to the Union Committee of Ohio,
was to be expected; and that, with
the estimate I had formed of it, this
circumstance would ~~affect me~~
affect me in the least, could not be
reasonably conjectured.

All this I am led to write, because
you may have seen in some of the
"organs" of that "Opinion", strictures
on ~~my~~ the letter in question; and I
am desirous of marking my
appreciation of your approval,
and that of your officers and
men, by giving my notion, very
distinctly and emphatically, of the
condemnation of others, and the
wretched and wretched element

from which it emanates. I shall
reserve myself, however, on this
subject until I see you in Camp,
promising myself the very great
pleasure, as I do, of paying my
friends in the Army of the Potomac
a visit between this and Christmas.

I beg you to remember me
most cordially to the Officers of
the gallant and glorious old
9th of Massachusetts,

and with sincere esteem

Remain

Most cordially yours
Thomas Francis Meagher

Solomon Guiney
9th Mass: Vols:
Army of the Potomac.