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Eugene Dupont, [*On the Fenian Question*]⁸⁴

[...] What is Fenianism? Is it a sect or a party whose principles are opposed to ours? Certainly not. Fenianism is the vindication by an oppressed people of its right to social and political existence. The Fenian declarations leave no room for doubt in this respect. They affirm the republican form of government, liberty of conscience, no state religion, the produce of labour to the labourer, and the possession of the soil to the people. What people could abjure such principles? Only blindness and bad faith can support the contrary. We hear that those whom the English law is going to strike down for their devotedness to such a cause are exclaiming: 'We are proud to die for our country and for republican principles.' Let us see of what value the reproaches are that are addressed to the Fenians by the English would-be liberators. Fenianism is not altogether wrong, they say, but why not employ the legal means of meetings and demonstrations by the aid of which we have gained our Reform Bill? I avow that it is hardly possible to restrain one's indignation at hearing such arguments. What is the use of talking of legal means to a people reduced to the lowest state of misery from century to century by English oppression – to people who emigrate by thousands, to obtain bread, from all parts of the country? Is not this Irish emigration to America by millions the most eloquent legal protest? Having destroyed all – life and liberty – be not surprised that nothing should be found but hatred to the oppressor. Is it well for the English to talk of legality and justice to those who on the slightest suspicion of Fenianism are arrested and incarcerated, and subjected to physical and mental tortures which leave the cruelties of King Bomba, [Ferdinand II of Naples] of whom

⁸⁴ This text is an excerpt from the synopsis of a speech by Eugène Dupont (see note 71) to the GC on 19 November 1867, dedicated to Ireland. The speech is reported in GC, II: 175–7.

the would-be liberators talked so much, far behind?⁸⁵ [...] Without having right on their side, such conduct is enough to provoke and justify resistance. The English working men who blame the Fenians commit more than a fault, for the cause of both peoples is the same; they have the same enemy to defeat the territorial aristocracy and the capitalists.

⁸⁵ Irish political prisoners in Britain were treated as common criminals, though Gladstone and the Liberals had criticized Ferdinand II's maltreatment of political prisoners struggling for Italian unification and liberty.