

## Rise and Fall, from 1858 to 1869 and beyond

### Part 2. 1868, 1869 and onwards

#### 1868

The news that Finlen was anxious to emigrate to America reached back to Somerset where our story began. On January 3rd 1868 the *Western Gazette* printed:

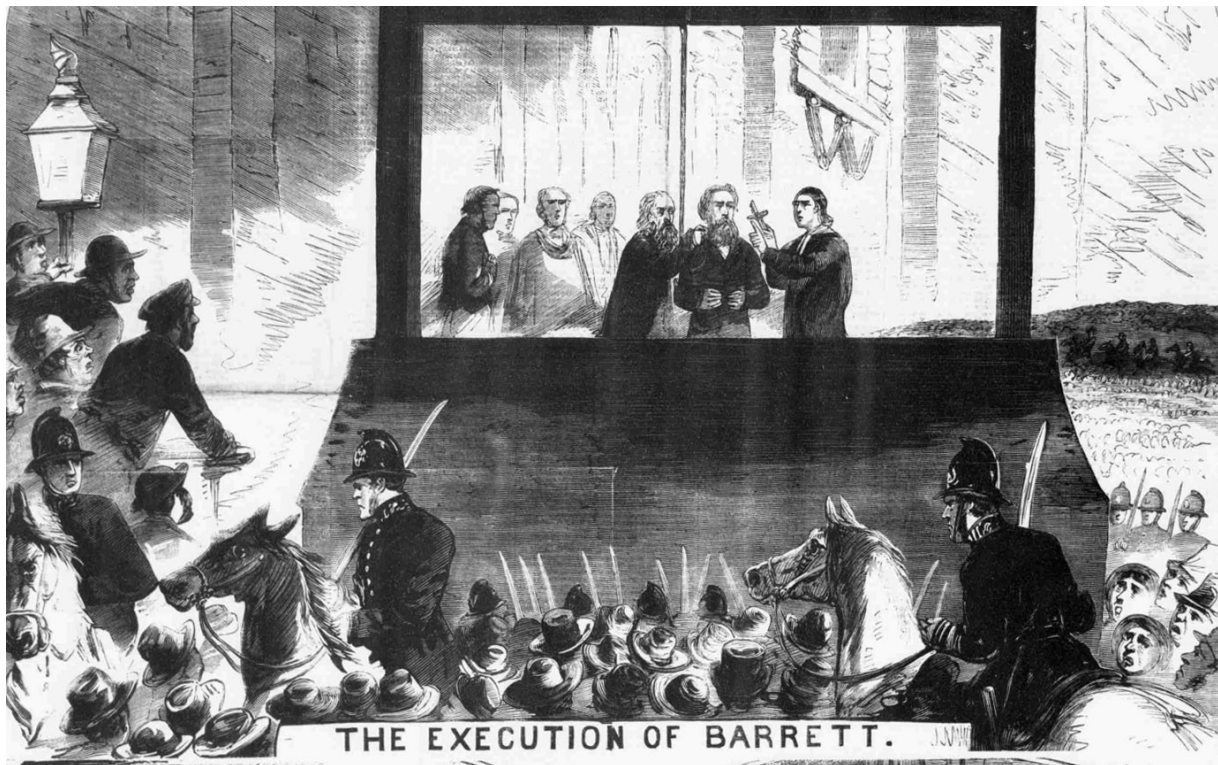
STREET We hear that Mr. James Finlen of Clerkenwell Green notoriety, **who is well known in this neighbourhood**, is anxious to emigrate to America, and has made an appeal to his old friends at Street to assist him to accomplish so laudable an object. We believe however, that his appeal has met with but little favour in this quarter.

In view of the *Gazette's* right-wing outlook, the last phrase may not be accurate, but it may reflect that many of his 'old friends' *had* turned their backs on him as a result of the 'notoriety' poured upon him by the Press. Other papers suggested that he should receive no help at all, or maybe a derisory pittance to help him on his way - 'good riddance to bad rubbish' being the sentiment of the day. On Wednesday the 8<sup>th</sup> January 1868 Finlen attended a meeting of the Reform League at Adelphi Terrace to discuss Ireland. Some members were derogatory about the Irish and linked Irish Republicanism with Fenianism cum terrorism and when Finlen asked to speak there was some objection in view of his previous speeches, which they felt had harmed the League. Finlen said "that he acted altogether upon his own responsibility. (Hear, hear) He had taken extreme views of subjects, and had been a thorough Republican - (Cheers) - in sympathy and persuasion for many years past; but it was not for him to compromise any body composed of men who did not take the same views. (Hear, hear)." On February 2<sup>nd</sup> he attended another meeting, of the Bloomsbury Branch, where they discussed "Would the Repeal of the Union be Beneficial to the Empire?" but it caused such division that it was then adjourned for a week. In February Finlen appeared as a witness in the case of the Nag's Head publican, Mr. Woodward, being threatened by the police with the loss of his license, which was denied by the police chief Sir Richard Mayne.

In March it was suggested that Finlen had previously arranged to go to America with a Mr. Goldwin Smith but that that gentleman was now going alone. On Tuesday March 31<sup>st</sup> the Holborn Branch held a meeting on Clerkenwell Green to discuss "the rate-paying clauses of the Reform Act of 1867". Finlen, was received with some cheers and denied he had been turned out of the Reform League. The meeting was attended by many police detectives and one of their chiefs [Gernon] announced that this was the last open-air meeting that would be allowed to the men of London. This announcement was received with much hissing and groaning. The Bloomsbury Branch held a Sunday meeting on April the 5<sup>th</sup> debating "The political results of Mr. Gladstone's resolutions on the Irish Church," which was followed the following Sunday, the 12<sup>th</sup>, when James Finlen opened the debate "Ought Ireland to be satisfied with the mere destruction of the State Church?"

Finlen's activities seem to have been somewhat curtailed but on May 10<sup>th</sup> he attended another mass meeting in Hyde Park. Previous meetings had been held on Clerkenwell Green to discuss oppressed nationalities - "winding up generally, with an appeal to the listeners for a copper in support of "Proletarian Propaganda," in other words, the hat has been sent: round to pay for the oration." An indication that the speaker was short on finance. On the 10<sup>th</sup>, however, as on the Sunday before, the police were under orders to prevent any assemblage on the "green," and sufficient detachments of police were in the neighbourhood, under Superintendent Gernon, and his inspectors, Bryant and Patter, to enforce the order. The police kept the 'Reformer's Tree' area pretty clear until around 3 pm when Finlen arrived and mounted the seat placed around the tree:

"He said he would now—in the presence, as he well knew, of the host of detectives who were mingled in that throng—that he was a Revolutionist. (laughter.) He had to announce that being out that morning with two brave young Irishmen who were bearing a banner, his two companions were taken into custody for nothing else than bearing that banner. (Shame.) That banner probably was the herald of the people's advent to power, and it had inscribed on it "God save Ireland!" the names of Allen, Larkin, and O'Brien, and "Remember Barratt."



[Barrett was the last man to be publicly hanged in England, on May 26<sup>th</sup> 1868, for his part in the Clerkenwell bombing, though he was innocent] Now, he stood there as the representative of that banner, and he called upon God to preserve Ireland, he pronounced the names of Allen, Larkin, and O'Brien, and he urged them to "remember Barratt." (Cheers.) The banner and its bearers were now locked up in a central station of London, and the police orders were to lay hands on the first possible chance on himself. He went on to say that the police could not tolerate that the working man should denounce the "brutal and bloody" actions of those in power. When they took him he hoped it would be after acting; and for being connected with barricades, and for being connected with that power without which no nation had been redeemed—physical power. (Cheers and laughter.) He declared he was no secret plotter, but he pronounced himself as associated with a Democratic League, as having worked for twenty years in the people's cause, and as being the "incorruptible James Finlen," who would work on to Free Ireland, that Niobe of nations, from the rule of the odious, sinister, and brutal English aristocracy. (Cheers) He pronounced the representatives of a penny paper to be "whisky-washed rascals," and the report in the organ he called Mr. Bright's he described as perfectly atrocious. He asked, however, for respect to be paid to the representatives of the press, and he then proceeded to declared shat he would sooner have to do with the Tories than with the Whigs or Radicals, giving as his reason that he had been denounced on behalf of the Reform League by one Osborne, who, he said, though now an Arch-councillor of the Reform League, was once a costermonger about the streets. He went on to denounce the proceedings of the Reform League, three of the members of which he declared had received a large sum of money, no one knew from whom, for electioneering purposes, and he declared that neither the secretary nor president cared about giving an explanation. He denounced the action of the Reform League with respect to the Fenians, and said the action of the League was taken because it feared his influence with the countrymen of his **father and mother**, who, he said, were **of Irish birth**. The laughter at this portion of his address attracted his attention, and he declared the outer circle of listeners to be composed of the myrmidons of Adelphi-terrace, meaning the Reform League, and said that as he had been one of the powers in the making of the Reform League, he could do much to unmake it. As to those who laughed at him, he could "skin them alive," and he called upon the people around to take no notice of them."

Groans were given for the Reform League at Finlen's call, and the meeting dispersed.

In the evening Finlen went to Clerkenwell-green, where he spoke to the 1500 men and told them he will not be satisfied with the abolition of the Irish Church; he goes in for nothing less than "the repeal of the Union." He went on to say that he "has not a big notion of Gladstone." He observes that "what Gladstone proposes to do now he might have done when in office." The *Bucks Herald* claimed that some of the Reform League then 'applied to him the physical force of which he is the advocate, and forced him to beat a hasty retreat, leaving his hat on the "green.'" Finlen was burning his boats and probably acting out of desperation coupled with anger. He mentions, for the

first and only time, his parents Irish ancestry, and how he had now fervently joined the cause of the Fenians and abandoned the Reform league, which had abandoned him.

## THE WORKHOUSE

On the morning of Monday, May 25<sup>th</sup> 1868 James Finlen was charged at the Police Court with deserting his four children. Mr. William Henry Messer said; "I am relieving officer of the parish of Islington. Four children of the defendant's - James aged nine; William, aged eight; Frank, aged six, and Mary Caroline, aged four and a half - were admitted to the workhouse on the 4<sup>th</sup> of the present month, and are still chargeable. On the 6<sup>th</sup> I received a note from the defendant, saying that he was astonished the children had been brought and admitted to the workhouse, and that he would in the course of a day or so come up and pay all the expenses that had been incurred and take the children away. Instead of doing so, he took no further notice, but on the 12<sup>th</sup> he sent another letter saying that on the following day he would come and take out the children. I heard nothing further of the defendant, nor did I see him until this morning, when he was in custody. The children were brought to me from 37, Catherine street, Caledonian-road, by the defendant's sister, who said that the defendant had neglected to send her money for their support.

The children had been languishing in the workhouse for three whole weeks and the magistrate decided that they would remain in the workhouse for a further three weeks until Finlen could prove he could provide for them. The Newspapers had a field day gloating over Finlen's downfall and in response he wrote a letter giving his side of the story - to which I have added in *italics* detail that emerged before the court;

May 31 1868 *Reynolds's Newspaper* - MR. FINLEN and his CHILDREN.

To the editor of Reynold's Newspaper.

Sir, - As I presume that you will, in your capacity as an independent journalist, reproduce in your invaluable paper a report of proceedings instituted against me by the parish of Islington, I seek the favour at your hands of being allowed the advantage of an explanatory statement appearing simultaneously with that report. Why I particularly crave the favour is because, after having addressed to most of the daily papers whose columns contained the garbled and slovenly report in question, letters containing necessary explanation, not one of them has had the decency or the honesty to publish such communications. Presuming that you will oblige me, I proceed to state as follows: —

It was well known to the female witness in the case [*his sister Kate Finlen living at 37, Catherine street, Caledonian-road*] that I was making strenuous efforts to have my children taken care of in the Country any time during the fortnight that they were unfortunately in her charge. [*He had found work at Lee. in Kent, as a French polisher, and had to leave for there on the morning that his sister tried to give them back*]

It must have been apparent to her, through my solicitude and assurances repeatedly made during that fortnight, that I was anxious, in an extraordinary degree, to have them removed and comfortably and suitably settled; yet within some fourteen hours of the time when it would have been both possible and prudent for me to remove them, she visits me, and insists upon my taking them away at once. The visit was made between ten and eleven o'clock on a Sunday night. Being at the time a lodger in Kent, and having **no home** in London, I urged how unfair, if not cruel, it was to peremptorily demand that I should go at once and take sleeping infants from her house into the night without having the least shelter provided for them. What I urged was of no avail, for anger, abuse, and threats succeeded each other in quick succession, until at last I left her, *walking quietly away* - not "running," lest I should be made to take part in a street scene. Upon the next day I wrote to her to say that I would call at her place for my children upon the following evening. In answer to that intimation I received a note from her, saying in effect, "You will find your children in the workhouse. I took them there yesterday."

[*She said in court "I am the sister of the defendant. and reside at 37, Catherine-street, Islington. I took the defendant's children to the workhouse because I could not afford to keep them any longer. It was not convenient for me to keep them any longer. I have had them for a fortnight before. The defendant paid partly for the support of his children. I gave the defendant notice on the Sunday night previous to taking the children to the workhouse that I intended taking them on the following day, and I did so. He did not make me any answer. He did not provide for them afterwards. He has had work during the last month or so. I received a letter from you, saying that you would come the following day and take out the children. I received from you for the maintenance of your four children for a fortnight, £1 6s. The main reason for my taking the children to the workhouse was because I had no proper convenience for them. The defendant ran away from me in Leather-lane, when I told him I was going to take his children to the workhouse."*]

*George Sustain* Master of the Workhouse at *Islington*

(No. in List, &c.)—London: Shaw and Sons, Peter Lane, Printers and Publishers of the Books and Forms of the Poor Law Board.

Date.	Day of the Week.	NAME.	Class for Diet.*									How Discharged; and if by Order, by whose Order.	In case of Death, say "Dead."	Observations on General Character and Behaviour in the Workhouse.	
			1	2	3	4	4a	5	6	7	8				9
28	1868	Brought forward	1	8	2	2	1	2	6						
29	May 4	Mon B. Treasuer Emma	✓											Deat	Aged 24 in No 4 ward Burred by Friends
30	"	" B. Punter John	✓											own request	To Barnet
31	"	" B. Carter John	✓											Removal Order	To Barnet
32	"	" B. Johnson William	✓											own request	
33	"	" B. Butler John Daniel	✓												
34	"	" B. Young Elizabeth	✓											Board of Guardians	Appointed a Nurse
35	"	" B. Gannon Mary	✓											own request	
36	"	" B. Hannah	✓											"	
37	"	" B. James	✓											"	
38	"	" B. William	✓											"	
39	"	" S. Finlan James	✓											Master	To Workhouse School
40	"	" S. William	✓											"	"
41	"	" S. Frank	✓											"	"
42	"	" S. Mary Caroline	✓											"	"
43	" 5	Tues B. Sutton William	✓											own request	
44	"	" B. Smith Robert	✓											"	
45	"	" S. Armstrong Alice	✓											Medical Officer	To Fever Hospital
46	"	" S. Phillips Nisa	✓											Magistrate	To Colony Hatch Asylum
47	" 6	Wed B. Hunt Rhoda	✓											own request	
48	"	" B. Walter	✓											"	
49	"	" S. Rodger Alice Jane	✓											"	To Service at Mrs Parry's & Barron's & Pentonville
			2	11	2	3	4	2	4	2	2	6	1		

\* Unless the Guardians require the Vagrants to be entered in another book, the word "Vagrant" must be entered in this column against every person admitted as a Vagrant instead of the name of the Parish.

**Workhouse, Islington - entry for May 4<sup>th</sup> 1868 - James, William, Frank and Mary Caroline Finlan**

That answer I received on the Tuesday. So it will be seen that because I would not on a late hour upon the Sunday night remove my children from the bed they had, and the shelter which a relative could furnish them with, they were upon the following morning precipitately packed off to the workhouse, and that, too, at the very moment when I had made arrangements for their reception. That frustrated my arrangements, my plans were upset, and then I was necessitated to resort to other means, which incurred a loss both of time and of money. Upon getting things somewhat adjusted again, I proceeded to the workhouse last Sunday, for the purpose of taking my children out, and not, as the report says, for the purpose of seeing them merely. I was accompanied to that place by my friend, Mr. James Meldrum, and he will be able, if required, to vouch as to the object of my visit, as well as to the accuracy of the short description I am about to give of the kind of reception I met with at the hands of some of the magnates of Bumbledom.

Immediately upon reaching the house, I told a very civil officer in uniform who I was and that I had come to remove my children. He thereupon sent for the master. Directly that worthy appeared, he began to rate me about my political views. Evidently he did not endorse them, nor could he look with calmness upon those who did. Vainly I tried to assure him that that was no place for political controversy; that in a proper place, and in due time—if he had, and he appeared to have, a *passion* for the thing—I would fain meet him in fair argument, although I did not covet the questionable honour. Still he went on lavishing his abuse upon all reformers, being most prodigal in his denunciations of Mr. Beales and other honourable leaders of the people. At last, I was obliged to say some hard things too; and then Mr. Master was very wrathful. Much time was thus employed by him, and I received from him occasionally parenthetical assurances that my children would be forthcoming shortly. Instead of the children being produced as promised the parish officer appeared with his warrant. Perhaps you will have perceived already my motive for thus alluding to the interview with the master. It is this: my prosecutors hastened in their work against me, because I was known to them as a busy and uncompromising reformer. In further proof of this let me say that one of their officers—a most humane and painstaking gentleman; one very superior, I should think, to the general tribe of workhouse officials—assured me that directly certain members of the board of guardians read in the daily papers that I was taking an active part in opposition to the State Church in Ireland, and in favour of Mr. Gladstone's resolutions, peremptory orders were given for a warrant to be drawn for my arrest.

From the above it will be seen that had I been a mere plodder on the one hand, or upon the other a slavish apologist of iniquitous wrongs, it is most probable that no action would have been so precipitately taken against me. Even parish officials can hunt down a poor man of independent mind! I must conclude. There are

many errors in the report, but the foregoing may much correct them. To one statement let me allude. It is said my children were visited about a year ago, and were found located with paupers. When the woman took charge of them, her husband was in work; he fell ill, and then, I suppose she got relief from the parish. When I found that my children could not be properly attended to by her, I at once removed them.

Respectfully yours, James Finlen. 48, Great Queen-street, May 28, 1868

[The court reference: Mr. Cooke asked if this was the first time the defendant's children had become chargeable to the parish. Mr. Messer said that the children had before been neglected, and that he had to send an officer to inquire about them. They had been left with parties who had themselves been paupers. Moss, the warrant officer, said he took the defendant into custody on Sunday afternoon inside the workhouse, the defendant having gone there to see his children. **He had about 12 months since** gone to see the defendant's children, and he then found them in a state of nudity [almost naked], and that there was but little food in the house at the time.]

Finlen had been described to the court as a French polisher and a lecturer in the employ of the Reform League but Finlen stated that **he had not received a farthing for his talking for more than eighteen months**. Finlen moved into No. 9, Prince's-row, Newport-market on or around June 4<sup>th</sup> 1868 and brought his children there - it was a slum or hovel. You cannot keep a good man down however - on the same day that this letter was printed in *Reynolds's* paper, Finlen spoke at eleven o'clock, on Clerkenwell-green, upon the execution of Michael Barratt, the Fenian.

On Sunday July 5<sup>th</sup> a very large meeting of working men was held on Clerkenwell-green, to "denounce the House of Lords, for their conduct in reference to the Suspensory Bill. The meeting was very enthusiastic, and numbered about 3,000 persons. Mr. McSweeney was called upon to preside. He called Mr. Finlen to move the first resolution. On Mr. Finlen presenting himself, he was received with a perfect storm of applause by the meeting." At least amongst his own class and the people that knew him, Finlen was still admired and supported. Finlen's resolution was "That the House of Peers has shown itself to be obstructive to the interests of the people; and we pledge ourselves to call forth the sentiments and activity of the people to oppose their pretensions, and make them responsible to the nation. And that a meeting be held in Hyde Park on the 19<sup>th</sup> of this month, the people to proceed there in procession, accompanied by flags, with appropriate mottoes and music." On the 15<sup>th</sup> he attended a similar meeting on Clerkenwell Green to call again for people to attend the Hyde Park demonstration. Fake news was still strong in the Press - the *Sun* says circa 200<sup>+</sup> attended the meeting, the *London Evening Standard* gives 1500 - 2000!

A handbill was issued which exhorted people;

"Down with the Irish Church! Away with the Bench of Bishops! Make the Lords amenable to the people! - Men of London, march in procession to Hyde Park, on Sunday, July 19<sup>th</sup>, 1868, to hold a monster indignation meeting; to protest against the shameful act of the House of Lords in rejecting the Suspensory Bill carried by a large majority of the House of Commons. The procession, accompanied by band and banners, will start from Clerkenwell-green at 3.30 and arrive at the 'Reformer's Tree' Hyde Park at five o'clock precisely. By order of the committee, James Finlen, Chairman; James Meldrum, treasurer; D. McSweeney, Secretary. The meeting will be addressed by the following gentlemen - Finlen, C. Wade, Thomas, H. Howell, W. Howell, J. Meldrum, J. Burk, and D. McSweeney.

Finlen was putting his neck on the line by acting as chairman and heading the demonstration. As the *Globe* reported on the 18<sup>th</sup> "Mr. Gladstone received a visit today from Messrs. Finlen, Bartlett, Tervey, Clarke, Gallagher, and Ballard of "the Hyde Park Demonstration Committee," to condole him on the defeat of his Suspensory Bill in the House of Lords, and to assure him that his cause should be advocated in Sunday open-air lectures. Mr. Gladstone expressed the pleasure he had derived from the interview, and left the matter of the demonstration in the able hands of its promoters." Gladstone recognised that Ireland needed reform which he desired to propose in Parliament and had sympathy with other reforms proposed by Finlen such that this innocent, even cordial, meeting would not have concerned either of them. However, it became a millstone for them both since the Press had now so vilified Finlen that they simply had to tie his name to that of Gladstone to bring similar opprobrium upon his name in an attempt to bring him down. The following account of this meeting and the subsequent demonstration in Hyde Park on the 19<sup>th</sup> appeared in the *Morning Herald* and the *London Evening Standard* of the 20<sup>th</sup> and a similar account appeared in the *Sun*. It is given in full since it may be considered the final nail in the coffin of Finlen's career in politics.

## THE ANTI-HOUSE OF LORDS DEMONSTRATION. DEPUTATION TO MR. GLADSTONE.

A deputation from the Hyde Park Demonstration Committee against the Irish Church waited on Saturday upon Mr. Gladstone, at his residence, in Carlton-terrace, to assure him of the continued support of the working classes, to express the hope that he would not be discouraged by the adverse vote of the House of Lords, and to inform him of the intention of the working men of London to hold a demonstration in Hyde Park on Sunday afternoon, condemnatory of the recent vote in the Lords. The deputation consisted of Messrs. Finlen, Bartlett, Tervey, Clark, Gallagher, Ballard, &c.

Mr. Gladstone said he was always pleased to receive a deputation of real working men, such as the one now before him. With respect to the object of their visit, he thanked them for their sympathy, and was pleased to hear his conduct on the Irish Church question was approved by the great mass of the working classes. He could assure the deputation he had not the slightest intention of flinching from the work he had undertaken, but was prepared to carry it through to a triumphant issue. It would be a tough job, but he was confident of success. He was not at all discouraged by the role of the House of Lords, and had no doubt they would be alive to the public opinion as it would be expressed at the next election. He desired to see Ireland happy and contented, and her people not driven, by England's injustice to a foreign country. The disestablishment of the Irish Church, accompanied by an improved land tenure, would do much to bring about a better state of things in that country. With respect to the demonstration alluded to, that was a matter for the consideration of themselves, and about which he was not called upon to express an opinion, further than to say that the reasons urged by the deputation why the meeting should be held were worthy of consideration. He had no doubt order would be preserved by those attending it. The deputation then retired, thanking the right Hon. gentleman for his courteous reception.

*[That night [18<sup>th</sup>] the committee met at the Middlesex Arms, Clerkenwell Green to discuss what had happened that day; Finlen was in the chair and told members that Gladstone thought the demonstration was worthy of consideration, he approving its aims. - Birmingham Daily Gazette 20<sup>th</sup>]*

In order to carry out the intended demonstration, a preliminary meeting was held yesterday [19<sup>th</sup>] on Clerkenwell-green: Mr. Howell in the chair; when Mr. Finlen and others addressed an assembly numbering about 500. It was rumoured that a meeting of Orangemen had been held, and that a counter demonstration would take place. The Reformers came to a conclusion that if the Orangemen interfered with the Hyde Park meeting, "they must be put down."

The afternoon demonstration was announced for three o'clock, at which hour several hundreds assembled at Clerkenwell-green. A procession was formed, headed by twelve marshals carrying wands, followed by the band of the Milton Phoenix Temperance Society. Green was the all-prevailing colour, the Leaguers wearing pieces of green ribbon in their hats or on their coats. Many wore green scarfs and some green neckties. Green banners were carried bearing the following inscriptions:—"Down with the Irish Church," "Away with the Bench of Bishops," &c. The illuminated banner of the Labourers Society was also displayed, the members of that club mustering in force. Other persons, from various metropolitan districts joined the procession, which numbered about 2000. The motley mob that followed was much more numerous than the processionists themselves. This meeting, it was understood, was not joined in by many of the original Reform League, and one member boldly expressed his regret that the demonstration had been held at all, especially on Sunday; but, encouraged by the reception Mr. Gladstone had given the deputation on Saturday, the leaders of the movement were bold, defiant, and abusive in their denunciations of the lords, the bishops and the Protestant Church. The route selected was from Clerkenwell-green, through Farringdon-road, Farringdon-street, Fleet-street, Strand, Charing-cross, Cockspur-street, Pall-mall, St. James's street Piccadilly, Hyde-park-corner, to the Reformers' Tree, from whence the addresses were delivered. Twenty-four of the League were then ordered to the front, and they marched arm-in-arm, clearing the way as they passed on. The band played several selections *en route*. As the crowd passed the club-houses there was some excitement. The Reform Club was cheered, as a matter of course, and the Carlton hissed. Some ridiculous mistakes were made by the noisiest portion of the throng. Passing the other clubs (many of the members were at the windows) a cheer was led off, when it was discovered that the club was "the wrong side." The hisses would follow the cheers. This occurred several times, much to the satisfaction of the hatless and shoeless boys and girls who walked with the procession. An enthusiastic "Reformer" shouted, "Three cheers for Gladstone," and the mob replied lustily, cheering because others cheered. The gates of Hyde Park were reached at five minutes to five, and the League betook themselves to the shade of the elm trees. From four platforms addresses were delivered, and from 300 to 500 assembled around each stand. Mr. Charles Wade presided at the principal point, and began by congratulating the meeting on the success attending the movement. The working men had met there in thousands, and he believed the effect of the meeting would be felt.

Then Mr. Finlen denounced the insolent conduct of the House of Lords for setting itself against the declared sentiments of the commons. They were there to tell the Lords that the Irish Church must come down, and if they (the Lords) were determined to prop it up the House of Lords must come down also. The labourers of England could do without peers, but the peers could not do without labourers (loud cheers). They were there to perform a duty made sacred by its necessity to that unfortunate country Ireland that had been oppressed by an

alien and bloody English aristocracy. (This elegant phrase called forth loud and long continued cheers). They were there to say they would have something more than the demolition of the Irish Church. Mr. Gladstone told society at large on Saturday—when he graciously received the deputation of working men—that something more than the demolition of the Irish Church was necessary for the pacification and happiness of Ireland (cries of 'Bravo Finlen, bravo Gladstone' followed). Mr. Gladstone had said that the land question was of vital importance to Ireland (cheers). Having eulogised American institutions, he argued that democracy was spreading in England, and the development of democracy among the people sounded the death knell of peer, aristocracy and all luxurious scoundrelism that might stand in the way of progress. They did not want to hurt a lord, that was to say if they knew nothing. Then they would tolerate the Lords; they would rely on the House of Commons, and back up Gladstone. He proposed "That this meeting records its thorough condemnation of the Irish Church Establishment, and is of opinion that the conduct of the House of Lords in rejecting the Suspensory Bill, passed by a large majority of the House of Commons, is subversive of national liberty and merits an indignant censure." He asked them to vote unanimously. Resist the attempt to continue the Irish Church; down with the Irish Church; and, if needs be, the House of Lords, too, will go down as easily against their strength as did the Park railings when Tories tried to keep them out (loud cheers). A Mr. Meldrum seconded the resolution, which was unanimously carried.

Mr. Upshall proposed—"That in the event of the House of Peers persisting in its obstructive policy, this meeting pledges itself to support Mr. Gladstone in his noble and patriotic endeavour to effect the entire disestablishment of the Irish Church."

Mr. Thomas seconded the resolution. He hoped Mr. Gladstone would not only be the future Liberal leader, but a great Democratic leader. On the previous day Mr. Gladstone received the deputation like a father receiving his children; very different from the way they were received at the Home Office (three groans for Hardy).

The Chairman said that Mr. Bradlaugh and Mr. Baxter Langley has promised to attend and speak, but had not kept their engagements. He put the resolution, and it was carried unanimously amidst cheers."

The mob became somewhat disorderly after the meeting had broken up. Several hats were removed from the heads of individual wearers, and thrown into the air, to be kicked as they fell. Itinerant vendors of doggerel ballads drew little crowds around them, and exceedingly coarse language was used by some of the roughest of the roughs. A man, dressed to caricature a clergy man, accompanied by another acting as his clerk, sold "An Entire New Litany on the Irish Church Question." The "New Litany" was blasphemous, and the fellow acting the part of clerk mockingly travestied the original, saying, in a solemn tone, "Save us, good Gladstone!"

*[A full copy of this amusing Litany was printed in the Morning Herald of July 23<sup>rd</sup> see References]*

These incidents were very widely reported and contorted in the general Press - the mock priest had nothing to do with the demonstration and seems as though he was a 'plant' by a group or newspaper trying to smear Gladstone. Apart from the Press, weekly magazines also printed articles against the Reform League and began a process of terrifying the public about Fenian atrocities.

The 'Punch' magazine of 1868 has numerous digs at the Fenians - the Manchester Martyrs are murderers, without a doubt; the Police 'Specials' were a necessity to counter their threat; sewage passages and entries had to be sealed or guarded to prevent their use by Fenians; Ireland should be 'colonised' and more English settlers introduced; 'Home Rule' was a threat since the Catholic population might unify with the French; it is good that so many Irish are emigrating. There are even 'fake news' counter claims that the police might have set the Clerkenwell bomb in order to turn people against the Fenians. A feverish atmosphere had developed that was magnifying alarm under its own steam.

At this moment in his life, matters took an even more serious turn for Finlen and we get a glimpse of just how bad his financial situation must have been and the pressures that he was under. His family's living conditions were amongst the worst in the city and the next step down would have been living on the streets or the whole family being separated and moving into the workhouse.

The following newspaper reports contain perversions of the truth as Finlen's landlord tries to get him removed, but Finlen's explanation doesn't ring completely true either. One thing is apparent, Finlen's four-and-a-half year old daughter Mary Caroline was no longer with them, she wasn't taken into the workhouse - she had presumably already been taken in and looked after, either by George Hoppey and his wife, who later adopted her, or possibly by Finlen's sister Kate, to save her from the humiliation.

**July 24 1868 Globe** A MODEL POLITICAL AGITATOR

Mr. Bacon, [*Morning Post* calls him a plumber and painter] No. 28, Church-street, Soho, yesterday applied to Mr. Knox at the Marlborough-street Police-court, for advice. He said he had some small houses which he let out to working people, one of which is at No. 9, Prince's-row, Newport-market. He had let one of the rooms—a back room, second floor—at 3s. 6d. a week to James Finlen, the person who went with deputations to Mr. Gladstone's house and made speeches at the Hyde-park and Reform demonstrations. He would neither pay rent nor go away. He had occupied the room for seven weeks, but had only paid two weeks' rent. His wife, the applicant believed, was in some asylum. There were three children in the room, filthy and starving. There was not a chair, cup, or a plate in the room, and, indeed, there was nothing in it but a piece of old sacking. The children had no one to look after them: they were covered with vermin and nearly naked. The father came home generally about three o'clock in the morning. [*MP*; I called in a police-sergeant to look at the place and the poor things, and he said it was as bad a case as he ever saw] Finlen had been twice convicted for deserting his children. One of the other lodgers sometimes gave them food, and another lodger not long ago got a shirt and a pair of boots and gave them to one of the boys. The other lodgers threatened to leave the house if Finlen stayed there. Mr. Knox asked what Finlen did to get a livelihood. Mr. Bacon replied that he belonged to the Reform League, and not long since he had a collection from 400 Fenians of 6d a-piece. He did not know what he did with the money, unless it was all spent in drink. [*Finlen wasn't teetotal but nothing suggests he was ever a drinker*]

Mr. Knox - [*MP*; Four hundred sixpences are £10; that ought to have enabled a decent man to pay up his arrears of rent and to do something for his family. But if, as you say, the money has been spent on drink, that is a melancholy tale indeed.] He said the only advice he could give him was to go to a respectable broker and tell him the story, and for a shilling or two he would do what was necessary to enable him to get rid of his tenant. It had been stated that the place was filthy. If that was so there was danger during the present hot weather that a pestilence might be bred in the neighbourhood. Mr. Knox then requested the applicant to ask the inspector of nuisances to call and see him immediately, and he would have some conversation with him about the matter. Mr. Bacon said he would adopt the magistrate's suggestions.

**July 24 1868 Pall Mall Gazette** Law and Police

Dr. Conway Evans, officer of health for the Strand district, waited upon Mr. Knox, at the Marlborough-street police court, this morning, in reference to the children of James Finlen, of No. 9, Princes-row, Newport Market, in the consequence of a report which appeared in the morning papers of to-day. Dr. Evans said he had visited the room and found nothing but a bed in it. He found three boys in the room whose ages were between five and nine. They were apparently well nourished, but only half clad, and were greatly dependent upon the kindness of a lodger in the house. The place was clean as far as the walls and ceilings were concerned, but the floor was in a filthy state, which was due to the negligence of the occupant of the room and not to the landlord. He ascertained that Finlen was by trade a French polisher, but had done no work for some time, and was in the habit of going about to meetings and coming home at three o'clock in the morning. He also was informed that Finlen's wife was in a lunatic asylum, and that he did not provide any one to look after the children. Mr. Knox asked Dr. Evans whether there was anything in the room likely to generate disease. Dr. Evans said there was not. All he should call on the landlord to do was to thoroughly cleanse the room. Mr. Knox said after hearing Dr. Conway Evans all he could do would be to advise the landlord to take the usual steps through a broker to get rid of the parties, so that the place might be cleansed.

**25 July London Standard** Report as the previous but adds; Shortly after Dr. Evans had retired, James Finlen came into court, and begged permission to make a statement. Mr. Know would hear anything he had to say.

Finlen then stated that he had taken a room in Bacon's house, and had not been there more than six weeks when, finding that he had expressed sympathy for the Fenians, Bacon had dunned him for the rent, in order to get him to remove. He owed Bacon some rent. it was difficult to get lodgings, and he had been waiting for means that he might get his rooms decently furnished. His wife had been for some time in a lunatic asylum. He had put the children under the care of different persons, but as they were neglected he removed them and took them under his own care. He gave a flat and unequivocal denial to the statement that the children were in the condition of vermin and filth described by the landlord. There were relative conditions of filth. He would admit that the children might have such dirt about them as would be caused by three boys romping about the room for three days. While the children were under the care of a woman employed by him they were well looked after, but the female was taken ill on Saturday last; and he would ask the magistrate to say whether, in the short time she had been absent, the children could become overrun with vermin or in the filthy state asserted. As to the charge of getting home at three o'clock in the morning, he wished also to give that a denial. It was quite true that being a public man, as his worship no doubt well knew, and being on committee business, he was often engaged at late hours, but he was always home before the time mentioned. In reference to the charge of deserting his children he would admit he had been brought up a few weeks ago, at the instance of the parochial authorities of St. Pancras, for deserting his family. He then undertook to discharge the debt incurred, and he did so, but it was not true to say that there was any conviction against him. It had been stated that he was connected with the Reform League, but, for the sake of the League and himself, he wished to state that he had nothing to do with it, and that



for eighteen months past he had ceased to be a paid lecturer for any organised body. By trade he was a French polisher, and earned his bread by his labour. His employer was present, and would state that the assertion of his never being in work was as groundless as the rest of the statement. It was also asserted that £10 had been collected by the Fenians for him, and that his worship had been reported to have made some remarks as to the way the money was spent. Mr. Knox admitted having made some remarks on the subject.

Finlen continued. - Instead of £10, as Mr. Bacon had asserted, he had only received a part of that sum. A person was present to prove that he had given orders for clothing for his children, but until he could place them under proper care it had been deemed advisable not to let them wear the new clothes in such a rough neighbourhood. Mr. Knox said if it was the pleasure of the owner to put his tenant out of the house, he had a right to do so. He desired to inform Mr. Finlen that the medical officer had been to that court, and had told him that the landlord had done his best, but that the floor of the room was in a beastly condition. He further stated that, as a public officer, he did not consider it was his duty to interfere.

Mr. Finlen said superficially the room had an uncleanly appearance.

Mr. Chappell, living near the King's-road, Chelsea, said he had known Finlen for three years as a straightforward and trustworthy person. Seeing what had appeared in the papers, he had thought it was his duty to come forward. A person named Meldrum (our reporter understood) said, in consequence of proceedings having been taken against Mr. Finlen relative to his children, he had suggested a subscription on his behalf, out of which Mr. Finlen paid £4 18s. to the parish, and had further given an order for clothing for them, which clothing he had advised Mr. Finlen not to let the children have until they left the neighbourhood. He had reason to believe that Mr. Finlen was making a home for his children. Finlen and his companions here left the court. [All summed up in the *Bee-Hive* July 25th.]

It would seem that the matter did not end just there since Finlen couldn't find alternative accommodation and a month later the saga continued;

**August 20 Pall Mall Gazette** Mr. J. Bacon, plumber, &c., of No. 28, Church-street, Soho, and No. 16, Tower-street, St. Martin's-lane, appeared at Marlborough-street police-court this morning, and said:~“Your worship, I want to know what I am to do. You granted me a warrant, you may remember, to get rid of Finlen, and I want you to put it into execution. The broker has been into Finlen's place and has valued his furniture at 2s., there being nothing in the place but an old mattress, a cover, and a dish. When the doctor made his statement to you he said there was a bed in the place, but he made a mistake, as it's only an old mattress, and the broker says it's not worth taking away. Finlen told my missus that he would bring a hundred persons and take the place by storm, and my missus told him that if he did she would let them have a pail of water over them and that she was not afraid of them. Half a dozen men did come, and my missus told them that she was not afraid of them, and that if they were not off like a shot she would let them have what she had promised them, and they would have had it too, for when my missus promises a thing she means it. I went to bed that night, and on getting up at a very early hour, and going downstairs, I found my missus sitting in the passage with a pail of water by her side. I says, ‘Well, missus, what are you waiting for?’ ‘Oh!’ says she, ‘for Mr. Finlen and the Fenians.’ I then said, ‘What's that pail of water for?’ and she says, ‘For the Fenians.’ I told her to go to bed and not mind Mr. Finlen and his friends, and she did so. The policeman on going into Finlen's room found that one of the notices served on him had been torn to pieces.

All I want is to get rid of my lodger, who still holds possession.” Mr. Knox told the applicant that if he would come to the court to-morrow he should have the assistance he required.

**August 26 Pall Mall Gazette**

At Noon yesterday three children, from five to nine years of age, were found destitute in Prince's row, Newport Market. They gave their names as Frank, William and James Finlen. [They had been turned out of their miserable home] The children were taken to St. James Workhouse where they now are.

**27 August Pall Mall Gazette** LAW AND POLICE.

At Marlborough-street police-court this morning, Ross Kelly [Rosekelly], one of the warrant officers of the court, informed Mr. Knox that in accordance with the ejectment warrant placed in his hands, he went on Monday to No. 9, Princes-row, where he found Finlen and his three children lying on an old mattress, almost in a state of nudity. He left word that if Finlen did not get out by ten o'clock the next morning he should eject him. Accordingly, the next morning he went to the place and found Finlen, a man lodger, and the three children huddled up together on the mattress. One of the children had on a very old and ragged coat but no trousers; the second wore part of a pair of trousers; and the third had not a vestige of clothing on. He found in the room, besides the old mattress, a frying pan and dish [which had been converted chamber utensils - *Weekly Dispatch* 30<sup>th</sup>]. Finlen ordered the children to leave, and they did so and went to a neighbour's house; but not being taken in, they were subsequently taken to St. James's workhouse, and left there; but last night they were taken away by some person. [discharged to Mr. Thomas C. Compton by the wish of the father on 26<sup>th</sup>] Mr. Knox said that there was no actual desertion of the children, and he had no doubt the parochial authorities would not have given the children up to any person unless they were fully satisfied as to their right to do so. There was now an end of the matter.

**August 25<sup>th</sup> admission to St. James Workhouse - over**

1868	Ward.	Name.	Age.	Reason of Admission.	By whose Order Admitted.	Settlement.
August 21 <sup>st</sup>		Wife Simmons Mary <i>Deliv<sup>d</sup> of a Still Born Child same day</i>		In Labour	Mr Mackay	MB 49. 150
22		Lord Charles	55	Ill	Mr Parker	MB 49. 141 Y.R.
		Hendry Alexander	20	Wear on Leg	Mr Parker	MB 49. 143 Scotland
		Botten William	52	Paricose Wear of Leg	Mr Parker	MB 49. 151
		Marshall Amelia <i>Husband in U.S.</i>	64	Destitute	Mr Warren	MS 1 - 1 Ireland
23		Perry Margaret <i>Married</i> <i>Delivered of a Still born female Child same day</i>	23	In Labour	Mr Mackay	
24		Dorman Annie	45	Ill - Insane	Mr Warren	
		Cairns Emma	22		Mr Parker	MB 40. 259 B
		Clarke Robert	69	Rheumatism	Mr Parker	MB. 49. 149 Scotland
25 <sup>th</sup>		Hinton James William Mary	9 7 5	Brought by the Police Destitute	Mr Warren	
		Pickle Ann	46	Ill	Mr Parker	MB 49. 153 Bath.
		Sullivan Lawrence Wife Catherine <i>4 poor children</i>	59 54	Destitute	Mr Warren	MS 1 - 31 Ireland Ipswich
		James Catherine John Ellen	9 7 16 mos			

Before continuing to look at Finlen's political activities the following two newspaper clippings are relevant to our story at this juncture. The first comes from the only pro-Reform newspaper in London, which gives a more positive account of Finlen, and the second clipping, from an anti-Reform paper gives an account of Finlen's *own* justification of his life so far - which is then given below.

**August 2 *Reynolds's Newspaper* MR. FINLEN AND HIS CENSORS.**

Mr. Finlen is probably at present the best abused man in the country. In parliament, and in most of the Newspapers, his name has been mentioned with unmerited opprobrium. The press abuses Mr. Finlen because he is a democrat, and will not bow the knee before those trumpety and mischievous idols it worships — royalty and aristocracy. But this toadyism is not confined to the higher grades of journalists, for even the fleas, the bugs, the filthiest vermin of the press, endeavour to ape their betters. When lions roar, asses are apt to bray, and so it is with newspapers. Thus, for instance, we find that a low sporting paper, called the *Sportsman* - a journal which we understand, circulates principally amongst the very dregs of those dregs of society, the broken-down blacklegs, welchers, and other scoundrels that infest race-courses — has the supreme impudence and brazen effrontery to set itself up for a moralist, as regards both literature and domesticity! It calls Mr. Finlen a "social skunk:" but if there be such things as skunks in the newspaper press, the *Sportsman* is perhaps one of the most pestiferous amongst them. In the issue of Wednesday, now before us, we see several columns filled with those abominable and mischievous advertisements inviting persons, of all classes, to invest money, from a few shillings to hundreds of pounds, in horse-racing; advertisements that induce clerks to rob their masters, pot-boys to pilfer from the till, and that swell the business of the Middlesex and other sessions, by bringing thousands to grief through luring them into dishonesty. We have heard much of late concerning what is called the "juvenile highwayman's literature;" but we believe, where one boy goes to the bad through reading a romance, hundreds are lost for ever through perusing the class of advertisements that appear in the *Sportsman*, and other low-class racing journals. Mr. Finlen may, therefore, console himself with the knowledge that censure coming from such polluted source is in reality tantamount to praise.

**August 20 *Fifeshire Journal/Belfast Newsletter* -**

James Finlen's Appeal to the British Public - An essay on Fenianism by Finlen is one of the latest curiosities of literature which has been given to the public by a prolific press. It consists of a badly printed pamphlet of 16 pages, which as we learn, is sold about the streets of London by ragged fellows, who say they are the friends of Finlen, and very probably tell the truth. The title describes the production as "Mr. Finlen's defence of himself against the attacks made upon him by the Parliament and Press of England;" but the defence appears to admit every single fact alleged against its author. - *Belfast Newsletter*. [*The 'Defence' next*]

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MR. J. FINLEN'S DEFENCE OF HIMSELF

AGAINST THE

ATTACKS

MADE UPON HIM BY THE

PARLIAMENT AND PRESS

OF ENGLAND.

PRICE ONE PENNY.

1868

Messrs. VAIL & GALLAGHER, 314, CALEDONIAN RD,  
And sold by all Booksellers.

FINLEN, THE PARLIAMENT, AND THE PRESS.

Popularity may have some solace in it; that it is the source of many pains and penalties is placed beyond dispute. Always seeking to avoid what may in any way partake of egotism, I am, necessarily, slow to speak aught of myself at all calculated to point out my personal importance. Should I, under the peculiar circumstances in which I find myself placed, be egotistical, contrary to my wont, let the extravagance be attributed to the entire exigencies of the moment, and to nothing more.

For some twenty years I have been before my fellow-country people as a positive advocate of Democracy. In the year 1851 I was sent to the National Chartist Convention to represent the advanced Democracy of the City of London and the Borough of Finsbury. In that Convention it

was my honour to co-operate harmoniously with Mr. Fergus O'Connor, M. P. for Nottingham; Mr. G. W. M. Reynolds, Mr. G. J. Holyoak, Mr. J. Julian Harney, Mr. Ernest Jones, Mr. Robert Le Blond, Mr. Thornton Hunt (son of Leigh Hunt), the Rev. Mr. Robertson, and a great number of other thorough-going men, some of them since dead, but happily most of them still living to work, and perhaps to suffer, for liberty. Before that time I had for some few years worked hard locally for the advancement of the selfsame principles with which I am now, and have been ever since, identified.

Shortly after 1851, I, at the request of Mr. Ernest Jones, associated myself with that gentleman upon the Peoples' Paper, and also upon the Executive Committee of the National Charter Association. That connection imposed much work upon me, at once contributing Democratic literature and lecturing throughout England, Scotland, and Wales. Many conventions were held in behalf of Chartism—the best form of political faith ever expounded in England. Going beyond the ordinary phases of conventions, a great assembly called the Labour Parliament was convened and assembled in the Peoples' Institute, Heyrod-street, Manchester. Mr. Ernest Jones was the originator of that Parliament. I was one of four men representing London in that Parliament, the other three being Mr. Ernest Jones, Mr. James Bligh, and Mr. Jeffries.

The work of those assemblies had a most salutary effect upon the public mind, inasmuch as they not only indoctrinated the people with a profound love of the abstract principles of Democracy, but went far to prepare the people for the triumph of such social questions as must receive Parliamentary recognition before the peoples' homes can be made happy and independent. That such a consolidation of sympathy, of faith, and of hope, has tended greatly to the recent realization of a certain sort of political triumph, must be admitted upon all hands. More of that anon.

Shortly after completing much work imposed upon me by the Labour Parliament—work which took me throughout England, I was called upon by a very important section of the Radicals of North Britain to assume the editorship of a weekly newspaper, started in the interest of the most ultra political views. Notwithstanding my multifarious engagements, I obeyed their call, and did my duty. Almost simultaneously with the performance of such editorial work, I was, along with my friend Mr. J. B. Leno, an editor of a literary magazine, entitled the *Spirit of Freedom*. One of the most important contributors to the *Northern Star*, the paper started in the North, was my very excellent friend Mr. John Frost, a gentleman whose noble devotion to the Chartist cause culminated, in the year 1839, in his being, along with two others, sentenced, under the administration of a brutal and bloody aristocratic Government, to be hanged, drawn, and quartered.

Circumstances being of such a character as to render my return southward necessary, I took up my abode once more in London. I was always at work, either at the bench as a French polisher, upon the platform as a public orator, or in the press as one of the *literati* of Democracy. At length the organization of the people, which Mr. Ernest Jones and myself had cultivated, was utilized by the founders of a body of men now known as the Reform League. When that League grew into strength I was appointed, with three others—Messrs. Mantle, Odgers, and Cremer, as one of its lecturers and agents. In that capacity I betook myself to the north of England, and spent much time and exertion in Lancashire, Cheshire, and, Yorkshire, in the advocacy of manhood suffrage and vote by ballot. Returning from that tour simply to spend the Christmas of 1866 with my family—my time being thoroughly mortgaged by people in many quarters of the North, I found to my horror that my beloved wife was stricken, nay, paralysed by insanity, and my home, hitherto happy and compact, a perfect wreck. That calamity, upon which I cannot dwell just here, formed a turning point in my career.

Time rolled on; chequered and disagreeable certainly, or at times what some men would estimate as terrible, but never enough to deter me from the ardent prosecution of my efforts in favour of republicanism. Then, wandering from the mere beaten route of hackneyed agitators, I found occasions to busy myself in behalf of those noble, heroic, and most patriotic men, sympathetically designated the Manchester Martyrs. As a sample of such disinterested divergence, I

give here the report of an extraordinary meeting which I held in the Home Office in vindication of England's honour, and glorification of the martyrs Allen, Larkin, and Gould. The report is taken from the papers of the day. Here it is:—

#### EXTRAORDINARY SCENE AT THE HOME OFFICE.

On Monday afternoon, a deputation consisting of working men attended at the Home-office for the purpose of presenting a memorial, agreed to at a meeting held on Sunday, on Clerkenwell-green for the purpose of asking the Home Secretary to accept a memorial, having for its object a commutation of the sentence of the Fenians now under sentence of death at Manchester.

Lieutenant Colonel Dickson and five or six other persons arrived at the Home-office at two o'clock, and were informed that Mr. Hardy would not be able to receive them. They then left, but in the course of a quarter of an hour upwards of 100 men arrived—all work men in their working attire—and made their way up stairs into a room adjoining that in which Mr. Hardy was sitting. The attendant handed one of the deputation (Mr. Finlen) a letter, which he read. It was as follows:—

“Sir,—I am directed by Mr. Secretary Hardy to acknowledge the receipt of your letter, acquainting him that a deputation had been appointed, at a meeting held yesterday on Clerkenwell green, to wait upon him in reference to the Fenian convicts under sentence of death at Manchester, and expressing a hope that he would receive them this afternoon. Mr. Hardy desires me to inform you in reply that he has already declined to receive deputations on that subject—(cries of ‘Disgraceful!’)—and that he must equally do so on the present occasion, although he will be prepared to receive any memorial that may be sent to him for his consideration.’

Mr. Finlen—It is signed by—but I can't make out the name.

A Voice—That will be after the men's death. (Cries of "Shame.")

Mr. Finlen—That is Mr. Secretary Hardy's reply to our efforts to save the lives of these unfortunate men. Our efforts I hope, will be acknowledged to be associated with humane desires. We have no political motives whatever in this matter but we solemnly wish that England should not be disgraced by these poor fellows being handed over to the tender mercies of Calcraft next Saturday. For myself, I declare that I will use thew and sinew, and will move heaven and earth, to the end that this monstrous determination on the part of Mr. Secretary Hardy shall be defeated. We will go to Birmingham, we will go to Manchester, we will go to Liverpool, we will arouse the Irish spirit. That will be responded to in Ireland and in America, and this Government will bring blood upon its head if, after refusing us as it has done today, it dares to take away the lives of those men who are as good, as any members of the present Government. I would not have spoken this way if Mr. Hardy had granted us the interview we asked for. Mr. Hardy has committed a great blunder. Mr. Stuart Mill has stated that the Tories are the most stupid set of people in the world, and this is the most stupid blunder a Tory Government ever committed.

Mr. Glegg—This memorial I hold in my hand was prepared yesterday, and as Mr. Secretary Hardy will not receive it, I must take it back with me. I will not leave a stone unturned to carry out our object; and as Mr. Finlen has said, we will go to Birmingham, to Liverpool, to Manchester, and very likely to Glasgow, to ask for help. We are working, and we have lost a day's work. I hope you are humanitarians, and I am sorry our work of mercy has failed. (Cries of "No, no.")

Mr. Campbell thought that if they had been Eyre of Jamaica or somebody of title, the Home Secretary would have received them. But because they were only hard working men of Clerkenwell he would not. It was the profits of their labour that enabled the aristocracy to ride in their chariots. He loved his country (Ireland). Why should he not love her? He was glad that he had them to sympathise with her. (We do.) But if they would not listen to the appeal of Englishmen and Scotchmen, it was not likely that Government would listen to Irishmen. They must keep in the background. He was sorry that the Home Secretary was not there. (Voices: "He is here," and groans.)

Mr. Finlen exclaimed: I consider this a monstrous thing on the part of the Conservative Government.

Voice—I move a vote of censure on Mr. Secretary Hardy.

An attendant came forward, and said: I am requested by Mr. Secretary Hardy to desire that you will leave the office. (Loud groans.)

Mr. Finlen — This is a very outrageous proceeding on the part of Mr. Hardy. I am not to be intimidated by the officials of this place. Go away, sir. You are not a member of the deputation; you are only a servant. You are not a servant of Mr. Hardy, but a servant of the public. I say that, so far as this Government is concerned—and I say it publicly in this Home-office, under the roof of authority—that the Government is incurring a disgrace that will perhaps prove indelible by refusing to meet a body of working men, who cannot afford to lose another day's work (Long and continued cheers.) The men are to be executed next Saturday. (Cries of “No, no; they shall not be.”)

The attendant again came forward, and said: May I remind you Mr. Finlen, of the message I conveyed to you from the Home Secretary?

Mr. Finlen — We will use every effort, thew and muscle, that that these men's lives shall not be sacrificed. (Cheers.) I would turn all the Tory Governments into the sea rather than see these brave and plucky Fenians immolated in the way which is intended. Mr. Hardy is in that room, and he and his colleagues must know that it shall be proclaimed far and wide that if these men's lives were sacrificed their own lives would not be held sacred or their position as advisers of a good and Gracious Queen maintained in the face of such paltry, bloody, and miserable conduct.

The motion was carried.

Mr. Finlen — We must not be content with a meeting on Thursday night. We will have torchlight meetings every night this week.

While these proceedings were going on, Mr. Hardy who was in his private room adjoining, and must have heard all that passed, despatched a messenger to Sir Richard Mayne, at Scotland-yard requesting his immediate attendance with a body of police. In a few minutes Sir R' Mayne, Captain Harris, and about fifty of the A reserve constables arrived at the Home-office, Sir K. Mayne and Captain Harris entering to see Mr Hardy, while the men were drawn up outside the office. Fortunately the services of the police were not called into requisition, for while Sir R. Mayne was ascending the stairs the deputation were coming down.

In consequence of so much robust and nettlesome stuff being declared in such a place as the Home Office in behalf of such glorious men as those who are brave enough to be Fenians, the attention of the public at large was more than usually directed towards myself. Upon one side—that of the true and honest poor of England and Ireland, I was bravely applauded and vindicated. On another side—that of the slavish middle-class, and the slave-making upper ten thousand, I was vilified, howled at, and entirely reprobated beyond measure. I withstood all the vituperation of the rich ruffians of the land. I honoured and appreciated the generous sympathies of the glorious Democracy of Ireland and England. But the rich foes with which I have to contend have such an agency through the power they purchase from the Parliament and the press, that in resisting them a poor man like myself has to fight a fight requiring the employment of tremendous powers of energy. Although I had hitherto done many things as an advanced Liberal of the most Republican type, none of my previous acts either attracted so much attention, or provoked so much crude, so much uncouth antagonism, as did my signal action at the Home Office—an action in which I shall glory to the last moment of my existence, in honour of glorious Fenianism. Let it be known that Fenianism is Patriotism; that the men—and women too—called Fenians, are as brave in behalf of the speedy emancipation of Ireland, the Niobe of nations, as Tell and Emma were for Switzerland, Brutus and his Portia for Rome, as were the maids of Saragossa for the integrity of their peninsula; as Kosiusko was for Poland, as Count and Madam Bathyanie, Robert Blum, and Louis Kossuth were for the honour of Austria and the freedom of Hungary; as Garibaldi and Mazzini have been and are for the unadulterated emancipation of the Italian peninsula. As honour crowds upon the work and hopes of such heroes because they have sought in most instances to throw off the odious yoke of foreign rule, so should it gather around the efforts and aspirations of the men and women congregated in the Fenian Brotherhood with the determination to free Ireland from the degrading rule of the brutal and selfish aristocracy of England. I honour them for the bravery and grandeur of their enterprise. Such a declaration I have frequently made from the platforms of England whilst addressing immense audiences of Englishmen. I, therefore, can tell the Government, the Press, the Police, the Reform League, too, that they make a very great mistake when they imagine that my efforts in behalf of Fenianism have been so solitary as to be confined merely to what I said and did upon the occasion of my memorable visit to the Home Office. I tell them all that I have openly done much for that body, and, what is of paramount importance, that the working people of England look with pride and satisfaction upon that body's efforts.

Because I have been so avowed as an ultra and most uncompromising reformer, I have been brutally abused by the Parliament, the Press, the Aristocracy, and by some few political adventurers in the shape of electioneering agents connected with the Reform League. I shall, because I can, fight and defeat the whole mob of them.

Following up the Home Office affair, after my efforts in the cause of justice and humanity had been defeated by the rose-water humbugs of the period, I then did the next best thing I could to mark my detestation of the flagitious crime of executing Allen, Larkin, and Gould, and that was to congregate together an immense multitude to proceed in procession to Hyde Park, there to listen to funeral orations in their honour.

The venom I have had to be exposed to will be pretty well exemplified by the recent action of my organised antagonists. Upon Sunday, July 19, 1868, a great gathering of the people took place in Hyde Park, with the object of condemning the House of Lords in consequence of its hostility to Mr. Gladstone's measures, which are meant to remove from Ireland the State

establishment known as the Irish Protestant Church. On account of that meeting being not only a tremendous success, attended as it was by not less than 50,000 people, but through those comprising it endorsing sentiments of the most republican nature, the antagonism of the Press and the Parliament, the Police and the Reform League, was at once provoked. Having taken an active and prominent part, not simply at the meeting, but in organizing it, being in fact the promoter of it, I was set up as a target for the malignant shafts which have been so barbarously hurled against me.

Being, through my unpaid labours for the liberties of the people, as well as through my many domestic reverses, a very poor man, I was compelled to enter upon the occupancy of a room without having at my command the means of furnishing it. Speaking literally, I had nothing whatever to put into it. My worthy friend, Mr. Meldrum, was good enough to spare from his own home for my use a few articles of furniture, very scant certainly, but calculated to meet the absolute or immediate wants of one situated as I was. The man Bacon, a person of whom the reader will hear much more before long, as I have instituted an action against him in one of the Superior Courts, in consequence of his outrageous and slanderous utterances about me in the presence of Mr. Knox—did not, as my landlord, look upon me with much favour, because there was nothing much in the way of furniture upon which he could put his hands in the event of rent not being forthcoming. Added to that consideration he thought that he had found out that I was a Fenian—a thing of terror to his peculiar mind. The manner in which he made that startling discovery was very simple and very open. My children had taken out of the room I occupy a few copies of a bill announcing the publication of two works written by myself, one being entitled “Fenianism: its Causes traced, its Existence Justified,” the other being “The Wrongs of Ireland, and the rights of Irishmen.” He found a “mares-nest” in reality; but it was thought a fine thing for the police. Accordingly, Bacon sought their congenial association, and since he has thus precipitated himself into such companionship, holding in view the action pending against him, it is to be hoped the police will “save their Bacon.”

As some evidence of that fellow’s complicity with the myrmidons of Mayne, I mention here that he, Bacon, was venturesome enough to take into my room a certain sergeant of police. That gentleman, using the peculiar skill for which such worthies are noted, descended, upon his admission to my humble home, upon some fragments of documents which I had torn up and thrown in the grate. Upon the evidence of my children that officer of police was industrious, and, perhaps, dutiful enough, to put those fragments together, piece by piece. What did that mean? Was he of opinion that he could involve me in some direful conspiracy, such as the Fenian Brotherhood, or some other one nearly as formidable? Seeing that I had in my possession some copies of that popular newspaper the Irishman, it is most likely that it occurred to his judicial mind that little more was wanting to secure my arrest upon a charge of treason-felony. But the poor man broke down altogether in that respect, and then he fell upon the noble idea of concocting with Bacon that most libellous statement which was, so opportunely for my enemies, made to Mr. Knox. All the important points of that statement I flatly and indignantly deny the accuracy of. I must not argue them here, since their author will have to answer for them in a court of law; but I do state that the asseveration that the children were starved and filthy, was the employment of a flagitious misrepresentation. I have witnesses, apart from Dr. Conway Evans, who said the children were well nourished, who will prove that upon the forthcoming trial, and amongst those witnesses there will be the lady who so kindly attended to them up to the time she unfortunately fell ill, which was only four days before the statement was made. I do most emphatically declare that his assertion that I received four hundred sixpences from so many Fenians, that I spent that sum of ten pounds in drink, that the matters of hours and convictions are entirely and supremely untrue. I never received such a sum of money from any body whatever. Concerning drink, my employer, prompted by his knowledge of the falsity of the statement, attended before Mr. Knox, and to that gentleman affirmed that since he had known me he found me to be a “sober, trustworthy, steady, and efficient workman.” More of that on the trial.

I have said that the statement was opportunely made. Its apposite appearance in the papers on the morning of the day when Sir Charles Russell was to question Mr. G. Hardy concerning myself in the House of Commons, redounded much to the shrewdness of Scotland Yard. But Sir Richard has much more to learn before he can confidently hope to destroy me as a public man. I defy him and all his mercenary emissaries.

Now, a word or two concerning Sir Charles Russell's impertinent question to Mr. Hardy about my private character. Both Mr. Hardy and Mr. Gladstone treated him as cavalierly as his flippancy required. I tell Sir Charles at once that I did belong to the party he alluded to, and that I did so because the connection yielded me something wherewith to support a sick wife and a large family. But that gentleman and all others must understand that the cessation of my engagement with it was not occasioned in consequence of the cause which he in his questions foolishly implied. I was obliged to leave it because the police threatened Mr. Brooks, the proprietor, with their antagonism to him if he did not discharge me. Why they made that threat was on account of the part I took with the deputation at the Home Office. Such, at all events, was the reason assigned by Mr. Brooks when he had to discharge me. I could say much more upon this point, but I prefer letting a public and independent journalist speak for me. The following is from *Reynolds's Newspaper*, of July 25, 1868:—

WHO'S WHO?

Sir C. Russel, a member of the House of Commons, has asked a very irrelevant and impertinent question in reference to Mr. Finlen. The baronet wants to know whether Mr. Finlen is the same individual who appeared as a speaker at the Judge and Jury Society, Leicester-square, a place where, Sir Charles alleges, obscene performances are witnessed. If this be the case, we feel certain that every information on the subject could immediately have been obtained by Sir Charles Russell from his brother officers in the Guards. But if private character is thus to be dragged forth and ventilated for political purposes in parliament, we would suggest that some "noble lord" ask the Lord Chancellor whether the Marquis of Hastings, who was lately proclaimed a defaulter on the turf—that is to say, a person who bets without having the means of paying if he loses—is still a member of the House of Peers, also of several of the most select West-end clubs? Whether he is still a magistrate, or whether he is the same individual whose name has been mentioned in a discreditable manner as connected with the doings of certain race-horses called Lady Elizabeth and The Earl? Whether Lord Willowby d'Eresby, the individual whose name was disreputably associated with an action brought against him by his cast-off mistress, is still a member of that "honourable" house, and still Grand Chamberlain to the Queen? Whether it be true that the Prince of Wales, the Duke of Edinburgh, and other members of their lordship's house, have been frequent attendants at the St. James's Theatre, where performances by Mdlle. Schneidee a notorious French actress, have been given that several of the leading daily papers have pronounced unfit for decent persons to witness? When these question have been answered we have many more of a similar nature to that which Sir C. Russell has put to the House of Commons. So far, however, as Mr. Finlen is concerned, we presume that being out of work and short of cash, he applied his talents to a profitable purpose. Had Sir C. Russell been in the same predicament, we suspect he would not have obtained as many pence as Mr. Finlen probably did pounds.

In concluding what I have to say upon Sir Charles's legislative small-talk, I say that I challenge and defy anyone to prove that, during my connection with Mr. Brooks's party, I ever, in the performance of my business, did aught to offend or in anyway outrage the public ear.

The scribbling scamps of the newspaper press have founded upon the above atrocious misrepresentations leading articles equally atrocious. They howl at a man who has grown poor in the disinterested advocacy of a great cause. They make-my poverty a crime! Whereas, those who know me best, know it to be but a sad misfortune. I shall rise superior to it, despite the foul malignity of literary bipeds who put their slavish brains and soulless carcasses into the common market where venality is vended, and thenceforward dedicate their pens as hirelings to the interest of the richest ruffians they find prepared to reward them. I say to them in general, in the proud language of Coriolanus—

"Ye common cry of curs,  
Whose breath I hate as the reek of the rotten fen,  
Whose loves I prize as the dead carcasses of unburied men  
That do corrupt the air."



I scorn your foul and cowardly censure; I spit upon your mercenary prejudices; I say in particular to the elegant censor employed as moraliser by the *Telegraph*, whose recent lucubrations I have read with great interest—" Cease viper, for you bite against a file."

In conclusion, I repeat that I am not to be deterred from the prosecution of the work to which I have committed myself. I belong to no organization but one, and that is the Democratic League, which has for its motto Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity, and for its programme the attainment of Universal Suffrage, Vote by Ballot, Annual Parliaments, Equal Electoral Districts, and Payment of Members; with a determination to have full liberty procured for the people of Ireland. Towards the realisation of such objects I shall be found working in the future as I have been in the past.

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We have seen the impoverished conditions of Finlen's home and we can imagine what sort of person he now presented to the world, aged 39. There was no furniture in his home and one can assume that the only clothes Finlen had for everyday use were those he stood up in. These would be the same clothes he used for work and despite probably using an apron when French polishing, they would hardly be smart or clean. He was probably down at heel as far as his shoes went, his shirt unwashed and hair unkempt. In the street he could probably be mistaken for a tramp and yet he went in this attire to see Gladstone and also to harangue his fellow workers when acquainting them of the rights they deserved. He couldn't afford the train fare to Windsor when he went to see the Queen, he was penniless - justice and fairness had evaded him and in calling for it for others he had brought nothing but opprobrium upon himself. 154 years later we read that 27 Tory members of the House of Lords have each given over £100,000 to their party, in fact they have given almost £50 million in total, and the gap between the working poor and the rich is widening ever greater. Poverty, as in Finlen's day, is used as a means of controlling 'the masses' and keeping them down.

The Press of the present day is hardly less vile than that of Finlen's day. After besmirching Finlen they used his name to attack Gladstone by association and there follows a sample of the tone in which they wrote. By constantly repeated derogatory references they destroyed him, despite his attempting to carry on with his crusade, and Gladstone had to deny him in the manner of St. Peter.

July 25<sup>th</sup> 1868 *London Evening Standard* - OPINIONS OF THE WEEKLY PAPERS. -  
MR. GLADSTONE AND THE FINLEN DEPUTATION -

The *Saturday Review* says that Mr. Gladstone descends into the gutter. Is there such a moral and political remedy as a mud bath? If so, under what conditions of the temper and party exigencies is it expedient to resort to it? Mr. Gladstone has perhaps been pondering this question, and he has experimented on himself- *non incorpore vili*. He has gone into the kennel; like the hero of the *Dunciad* he has, and certainly not under medical advice, plunged into the filthiest depths of Fleet Ditch. To take secret counsel with Finlen, and to talk in his own house as a friend with the fellow who was too bad for the office of barrister in ordinary at the Judge and Jury Club in Leicester-square, and who is accused of systematically neglecting and starving, when he does not desert, his miserable children, is certainly a change for the late Chancellor of the Exchequer and member for the University of Oxford. Mr. Gladstone cannot have taken to this nasty regimen without a cause; and we are driven to conjecture as to the reasons for this companionship with Finlen. The mud-bath theory partly accounts for it. Mr. Gladstone during the session has secreted a good deal of ill-temper: his peccant humours, on homoeopathic principles, may be drawn out by their like; *simila similibus curantur*; a dose of Finlen was perhaps wanted in the Gladstonian economy to defecate the great statesman's own system. Our only fear is that Mr. Gladstone may have taken too strong a remedy this time. He has, to be sure, Mithridates-like, gone through a fair course of poisons: he has taken doses of Beales and Potter before now, but Finlen is certainly a violent exhibition of nastiness. The incident only shows that, with every sense, Mr. Gladstone lacks common sense; and where prudence is not, statesmanship is impossible. Every week's experience only shows Mr. Gladstone's deplorable incapacity for supreme power, and the leader who in the blind lust for adulation submits to the greasy hug of the panderer to obscenity and the accomplice of blasphemy, and the avowed advocate of Fenianism, which Finlen is, must not be surprised if he alienates the confidence of friends, and while exasperating the acrimony of enemies, repels the sympathies of the serious and reflecting. *etc. etc.*



### "Too Bad" from Judy August 5<sup>th</sup> 1868

Gladstone (left) is shovelling a dead cat bearing the name FINLEN into the mud cart

To go back to the end of July, where we left Finlen and his personal and family tribulations, we can read that he appeared at a meeting of the 'Democratic party' at Clerkenwell Green in Finsbury on July the 28<sup>th</sup>. He was there to support the candidacy of G. M. Reynolds as a candidate for the borough in Parliament. Reynolds, as editor of *Reynolds's Newspaper*, reciprocated by supporting Finlen and his causes (see above for his piece printed on August 2<sup>nd</sup> 1868). At another meeting on Clerkenwell Green on August 16<sup>th</sup> Finlen addressed the 'unemployed poor' and agreed with the chairman that 'these meetings did not advocate Socialism, but principles which were founded upon justice and right. He denounced the land system of this country, which consigned so many to the workhouse to have doled out to them so many ounces of food upon which to live or die.' The solution was to re-populate Ireland with those who had been forced to leave it plus the London unemployed. A resolution was passed 'That the appropriation of the lands of Great Britain and Ireland to aristocratic domination and money speculation is the primary and sustaining cause of the unemployment, pauperism, and general degradation of the millions and that the remedy for those evils lies in a reversal of that policy which has produced them, combined with such organisation as has for its object the general good of the whole people.'" "What they wanted was that every man out of employment should be able to go to an officer of the Government, state his case, and get work from him. The Government could give such remuneration as would keep body and soul together." Finlen thought that a parliament amenable to their aims should obtain absolute control of the land in the U.K. and that Trades Unions were 'the bulwarks of the social enjoyments the people were in possession of."

These events occurred before Finlen's troubles began on the 20<sup>th</sup>/27<sup>th</sup> August. After recovering his children and finding new lodgings, on Saturday the 29<sup>th</sup>, Finlen acted as chairman at a meeting of the 'Democratic League' at the "Middlesex Arms," Clerkenwell-green to accept Mr. W. P. Roberts [solicitor from Manchester] as candidate for the borough of Finsbury. A man, possibly Finlen, caused an uproar when on the 10<sup>th</sup> September, at a meeting in the Beaumont Institution to

hear the Conservative candidate for Tower Hamlets address some 1500 people, someone appearing to be Finlen upheld a poster bearing the legend "Beales for the Tower Hamlets." The following day Finlen tried to question the magistrate Alderman Hale at the Guildhall about remarks he had made concerning "the supposed Fenian Byrne, who, when searched, had a benefit card in his pocket signed by **John** Finlen" but he was escorted out. Reynolds's Newspaper stated:

Surely it was the duty of Alderman to hear Mr. Finlen's explanation; but we suppose the pudding-headed, pot-bellied magistracy of the City believes itself infallible. Mr. Finlen may be a political enthusiast, but we believe him to be as upright and honourable a man as Alderman Hale, and his word to be quite as good.

*They then included a copy of Finlen's letter to the Alderman, which he had previously sent to him.*

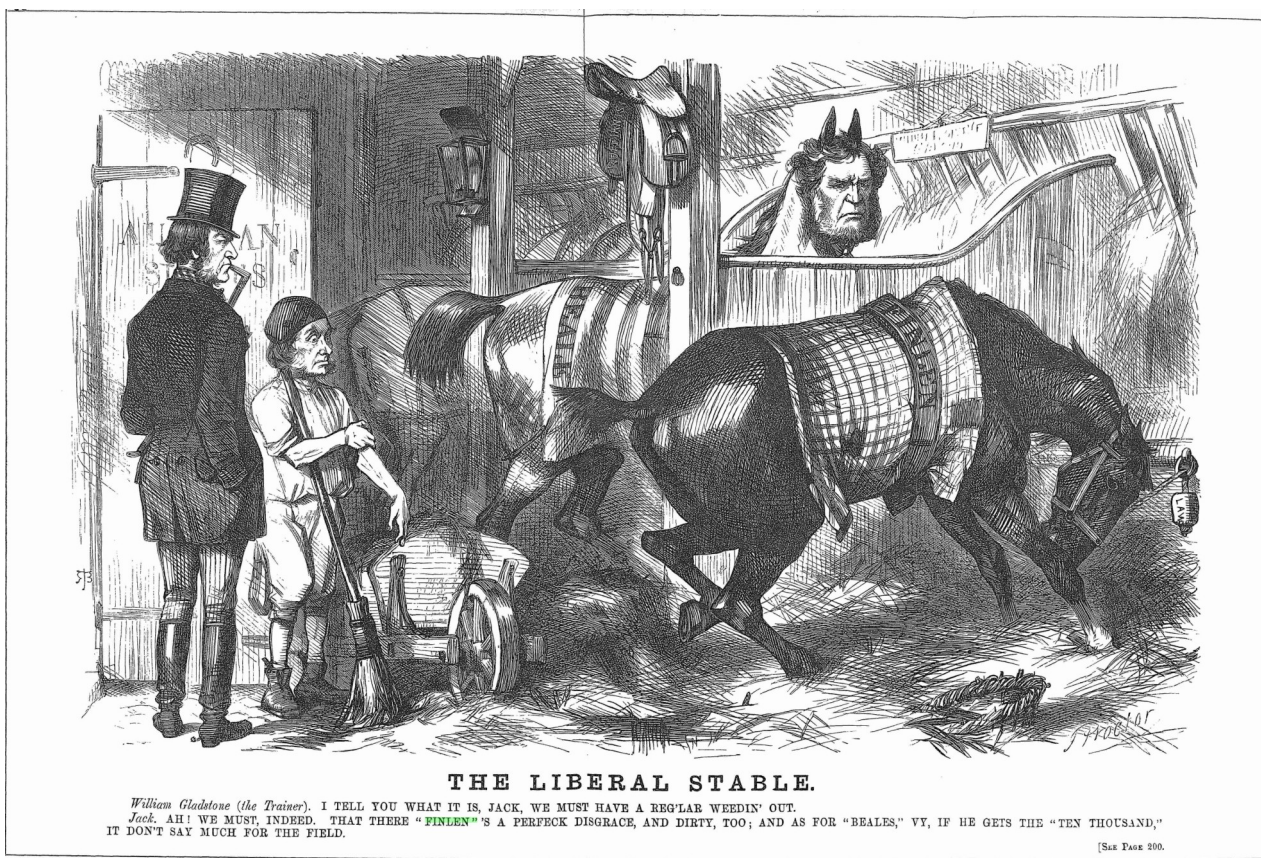
5, Verulam-street, Gray's-inn, September. 9, 1868

"Sir, —The London papers of this morning report a case heard in your court, before you, in which one Augustine Byrne figured as defendant. In the report is contained the following paragraph —" Alderman Hale (looking over the handbill): Oh, here is Mr Finlen, the man who has starved his children, chairmen of this meeting, and here are some other names. The prisoner: My name is not there. Alderman Hale; No; but you appear to have got into bad company,'

'As the allusion contained in these paragraphs is directed against me, I take the very earliest opportunity of telling you that, if you have been properly reported by the papers, you have been the cause of giving currency to a statement not founded in fact. More than that, I call upon you to gainsay what you have heedlessly said about me so publicly as you chose to say it.

"Rely upon it, I am not the man to sit down under an indignity so unprovoked and so gratuitous; upon the contrary—should you not publicly, from your seat in the Guildhall Police court, recall your inappropriate remarks, or else cause the reporters in your court to correct or nullify them through the press - I shall take proceedings of a more palpable and positive character. You will perceive that I have assigned no particular reasons why you should act as I point out. It is for you to justify your remarks, and, if you fail to do so, it will then be for me to prove that you ought to do so. That I can do. For me to know that you are wrong is ample reason for the demand I make upon you.

"Respectfully yours, James Finlen."



**'The Liberal Stable' from Judy September 9<sup>th</sup> 1868**

Finlen is the broken down black nag, right - Beales (with his portrait) the grey in the stall

On the 13th September a meeting of the Democratic League met on Clerkenwell Green and Finlen promoted the candidacy of Mr. W. P. Roberts, and he also added;

"that, however much he had been maligned and calumniated, he entertained a hope that, through the influence of his fellow-men, he would at no distant day occupy a place in the people's House of Commons. As a matter of course, he expatiated on the independent career he should mark out for himself, and the grand and sweeping measures he would initiate." At seven o'clock in the evening another meeting was held on the same spot (the Clerkenwell-green Fountain), and at half-past the proceedings of the day were wound up by an adjournment to an adjoining tavern, where the members of the Democratic League, with Mr. James Finlen as president, discussed the "topics of the week."

The Democratic League held another meeting on October 11th at Blackheath, attended by about 1000 dockyard and other labourers from Deptford, Greenwich and Woolwich, mostly Irish. The object was to establish a branch of the League at Greenwich. *The Hull Packet* reported:

The notorious James Finlen, accompanied by several of his democratic friends, arrived, and took up their position on a mound on which there is a clump of trees. Although the meeting was ostensibly for the establishment of a branch league, it partook almost entirely of an anti-Irish Church character, and the strong denunciations of the Establishment were loudly cheered.

The *South London Chronicle* reported some of his speech and one senses a rise in Finlen's more extreme measures being proposed in order to obtain his object;

(He) said that the Irish Church squatted like an uneasy hag upon the hopes of the Irish people. That Church must come down, and if the House of Lords would not let it, that House must fall before the Democracy of England and Ireland. (enthusiastic cheers) The English State Church was also doomed - (cheers) - that the Church which supported in ease and splendour a squad of sleek bishops who did no work. Besides all this the Democratic League demanded for Ireland that her old flag should float over her parliament house in College-green. (Tremendous cheering) As he knew detectives dodged him about at night, he said that language was dangerous; but Mr. Hardy or his ready tool, Sir Richard Mayne, would not be able to lay a hand upon him. When they could it would be when the barricades were made the altars of freedom and progress, and when the high priests of freedom officiated upon those rude altars (Loud cheers) There was no use now in using the wishy-washy language used since 1832. Aristocratic ruffianism must be put down, for it made as many slaves in England as in Ireland. (Great cheering) In conclusion, he exhorted the people of the district to return Mr. Gladstone whether he stood or not. (A Voice: "We will ask him afterwards.") (Cheers)

Finlen's mention of being harassed by detectives might suggest he was becoming paranoid and the 'wishy-washy language' of 36 years ago would no longer suffice - action was required. At a riotous political meeting at Myddleton Hall, Islington, Finlen 'was received with hisses and cries of "Take your children out of the workhouse," and he was not allowed to speak.' He 'was followed by a mob down the King's Road who kept reminding him of his antecedents as recorded in the newspapers, and it was only the presence of a woman who was with him that prevented his being very roughly handled.' The mention of a woman is interesting - his sister perhaps, or was he courting a replacement for his wife?

Finlen was instrumental in organising an anniversary meeting to be held on November 22<sup>nd</sup> at Hyde Park to honour the Manchester Martyrs and re-enact the funeral procession he had originally organised in 1867. Gatherings attended at Blackheath, Deptford etc. on the 11<sup>th</sup> November and a large meeting on the 10<sup>th</sup> at the Middlesex Arms, Clerkenwell-green, with Finlen in the chair. The police obstructed the procession from gathering and leaving Clerkenwell. The *London Evening Standard* reported the events thus;

#### FENIAN DEMONSTRATION IN HYDE PARK.

Some days since a bill was circulated throughout the metropolis, at the head of which was a cross, and underneath, the following words, printed in a green colour, "Ireland for ever! Anniversary of the martyrdom of Allen, Larkin, and O'Brien. A funeral procession, with a select band, will march, with all the ceremony due to the memory of our Irish martyrs at Manchester, Allen, Larkin and O'Brien, on Sunday, November 22, from Clerkenwell Green *en route* to the Reformer's Tree, Hyde Park, where orations in honour of the martyrs will be

delivered by James Finlen, James Doyle, Meldrum, Campbell, Wade, Healy, McSweeney, and other gentlemen who have promised to attend. *Requiescant in pace.*" The Irish newspapers addressed an appeal to Irishmen in London, urging them to take no part in the proceedings. The time of meeting was two o'clock and the rendezvous Clerkenwell Green. At eleven o'clock several hundreds appeared on the green, not to meet Mr. Finlen but a force of police constables, under the Superintendence of Mr. Superintendent Gernon, who made the strollers "move on." The police were determined to keep the peace, and the people were anything but enthusiastic in favour of Mr. Finlen and his friends, so they responded to the request without much grumbling. In double patrols of 120 constables kept the green from noon until three o'clock, and there was a very large body of policemen in reserve, ready to come forward if needed. At about half-past one Finlen made his appearance, and there was a faint cheer, but the police would not permit the formation of any procession. Among the crowd were many of the Reform League who were opposed to the tactics of Finlen, and these hustled the man so much that he was glad to take shelter in a friendly public house, where he was treated and *feted* by as many roughs as the bar could contain. By two o'clock the green was very full; some men and women wore green rosettes and ribbons, but the crowd was orderly. Mr. Osborne, of the Reform League, was there, but his mission was not to aid Finlen, but to warn the people against him, and to tell them that the League had nothing to do with this demonstration. Then there was a rumour that Finlen was going into the City, out of the jurisdiction of the Metropolitan police, and a communication was accordingly made to the City police, who were on the *qui vive*. The leaders of the "green party" were assured of a warm reception from the City police, and the word was then passed, "All hands to Hyde Park."

By three o'clock Clerkenwell Green was clear of the mob. Finlen jumped into a cab and drove to Hyde Park. Along the road were parties of roughs, many wearing the green ribbon, walking rapidly towards the "trysting tree" in the park. A Mr. Doyle was called upon to preside, and he introduced Finlen amidst cheers and hisses. Finlen, after having spoken some time, said: - Gentlemen, I told you that on this day twelve months I stood on this platform to deliver a funeral oration, which I did deliver in solemn silence to tens of thousands then assembled in honour of Allen, Larkin and O'Brien (cheers). The blood of these men was then hardly cold after being handed over to the hands of Calcraft by the Prime Minister of the Tory Government - a bloody government (cheers and hisses). I occupied that position then, because I admired the patriotism of Allen, Larkin and O'Brien (cheers), and because I loved the country (Ireland), which was the land of my parents (cheers); and it was for the cause of that country these men died (cheers). Up to the present moment I have entertained a bitter hostility against the bloody and odious aristocracy (cheers), and that bitter hostility finds a magnificent reception in this multitude of 10,000 people assembled to celebrate the anniversary of that butchery which under the orders of Gathorne Hardy, was carried out at Manchester twelve months ago - I mean that bloody butchery of Irishmen (cheers). You have all come here with a noble courage, and I hope from my heart and soul that I am addressing all Fenians (loud cheers and hisses). I want one more cheer for Englishmen and Scotchmen who favour the Fenian party (cheers and hisses). I suffer for the whole of them; the ignorant, brutal, myrmidons of Sir Richard Mayne this day sought to disable James Finlen by kicking and fighting him, so that he might not be able to come here amongst you to-day, and speak to you under this Reformer's tree, where he addressed you this day last year (cheers). But I am here despite the orders from Scotland-yard. I am here because the brave and glorious Irishmen wanted me, and I am here to confront any danger that may arise because of my presence (cheers). To-morrow I shall put out a proclamation signed with the initials "F.B." (cheers), calling upon you to do something else before long (a voice - "We will." Cheers, and "You'll get five years in the end") You are a large representative body. There are tens of thousands like you in the country, and you have London and its suburbs behind you, and this may truly be called a Fenian convention, held in the midst and surrounded by the mansions of the aristocracy (cheers). The newspapers report a Liberal triumph throughout the country, and in favour of the glorious and disinterested William Ewart Gladstone, the future Prime Minister of England ("three cheers for Gladstone" - A voice - "And three cheers for James Finlen"). Mr. Gladstone is in favour of the demolition of that great scandal, the Irish Church (cheers). Ireland will have justice if Mr. Gladstone has a large majority - which he will - to defeat that arch imposter, that political harlequin, Benjamin Disraeli, who, along with Gathorne Hardy and Calcraft, executed your brothers (cheers). England so far has done its duty, but I have often said that it does not become Irishmen to send representatives to an English parliament. You want a parliament in College-green (cheers). And we will have it. We want the green flag with a harp on it without a crown (cheers), waving over that parliament, and by all that is holy, standing as I do under the canopy of heaven, surrounded by persecutions, social, civil, and political, I tell you that I, James Finlen, will leave no stone unturned until that glorious Ireland - washed by the waters of the Atlantic, waters which by flowing convey from America the principles of that great republic - until your cause and my cause, until the country of my father and mother shall be redeemed from the bloody and odious rule of an English aristocracy."

After this oration Finlen was cheered and a rush was made towards the tree. Boys and youths had climbed into the adjacent trees, and the excitement was great. Other speakers followed, and as darkness began to set in the meeting dispersed, some shouting "Bravo Finlen," and others chanting "They'll hang up Finlen on a sour apple tree," and so the "great demonstration in Hyde Park" ended.

This somewhat negative report from a Tory supporting newspaper was mild compared with others, such as the bile poured on the meeting by the *Pall Mall Gazette* and other papers further afield from London. Each however, adds a little more to the picture of the event, such as the fact that it took place in pouring rain! With Finlen cut off from the Reform League, who had opposed the demonstration, we hear nothing more from him for the rest of the year in the newspapers. In December, Gladstone was elected and became Prime Minister and remained in power until 1874. One of his early acts was to disestablish the Irish Church, in 1869, active from 1<sup>st</sup> January 1871.

## 1869

Probably expecting some positive response from the new administration, at a meeting of the Holborn Branch of the Democratic League, held in the Exchange Club-room, Little Saffron-hill, Hatton-garden, Holborn, James Finlen moved "That this meeting is of opinion that it would be expedient to appeal to the present Liberal Administration for an unconditional pardon for all Fenian prisoners now in British dungeons. And it likewise pledges itself to promote the formation of an influential deputation to wait upon the Home Secretary, whose mission it shall be to urge the prisoners' liberation," and he was charged with forming that deputation.

It was also posited "That upon Sunday evening, Jan. 19 this branch shall discuss the following question:-- "Does not the policy of the Queen of England suggest that royalty, with all its costly paraphernalia and useless appanages, could be profitably dispensed with by the people of this country?" and Finlen would report on that evening his progress in forming the Fenian prisoner deputation. It isn't reported that that meeting took place. The vilification of Finlen continued in the Press generally, mostly as a way of denigrating the new Prime Minister, and often in verse. This spoof prose piece is from the *Monmouthshire Merlin* of January 16<sup>th</sup>;

### "SPOUTING" BETTER THAN WORK.

From a letter in *Will-o'-the-Wisp* for January 9, bearing the signature of a well-known stump orator, the following is an extract:—

Therefore, I despises the whole biling of them (the Reform Leaguers) from the bottom of my heart, I casts them off and I goes over to the Tories. Not as I'm going to turn respectable man, and work for my living; so don't think it. I know a trick worth two of that. What's the use of a man being a natural born orator if he don't employ his talents as Providence designed he should? I'm a natural born orator, I repeat, and Gladstone he's another. Gladstone, he's the only one of the lot as I respects, and I'll tell you for why. In the first place when I called at his house in the summer he made himself uncommon pleasant and agreeable. "What, Finlen," says he, a-shaking me by the hand, "it's you, is it, this is a unlooked for pleasure, we want's more such men as you," says he, "as knows how to value the privileges of liberty and freedom, and you've my goodwill," he says not a bit proud. So that's one reason why I respects him, and another is as I can draw a parallel betwixt him and me, easy. When I've run short of money, which has happened pretty frequent of late, what do I do? Why I agitates, I sets up a cry about tyranny, and despotism, and slavery, and that; goes on the stump; works among the feelings of the lower orders, works them into a fury like, and then—sends the hat round. And Gladstone, what does he do? Why just similar. When he wants office, and place, and power and that, he begins to agitate; he sets up a cry. summat he |thinks will take, any the Hirish Church, goes on the stump, works upon the feelings of the uneducated, and—sends the hat round for votes. And why votes and not money? Because votes is more use to him than money, or I should say is equivalent, and it won't do for a gentleman to ask for money. Therefore, I says, I can understand him, for his policy and mine is precisely similar.

And, let me tell you, this here spouting is a deal easier than follering a trade or profession, though the returns ain't so regular, may be; so, long as I've a tongue in my head, I'm a-going to get my living by wagging it. Why, last Saturday as was, on Clerkenwell Green, I sent the hat round after I'd gone on about the Perlice, and the Government, and the Queen, and the House of Lords, and the Fenians, and the Laud of Liberty, and all manner, and when it was handed in there was a matter of fifteen shillin' in it—there was, indeed—and there would have

been more if them blessed peelers hadn't hove in sight. Well, when I got home, my wife she says, "For goodness sake, James, now you've got a trifle of money, take and send for a bit of vittles for the children, and go and get you a decent coat to your back, and seek for regular employment somewhere." I laughed in her face. "A pretty thing," says I, "to have to feed a parcel of squalling brats. The first duty of a patriot," I says, "is to feed hisself, in order that he may have strength to perform the second duty, which is to keep everlastingly hollering and bellering on behalf of his native land, and his suffering feller creeters," and with that I left her and the

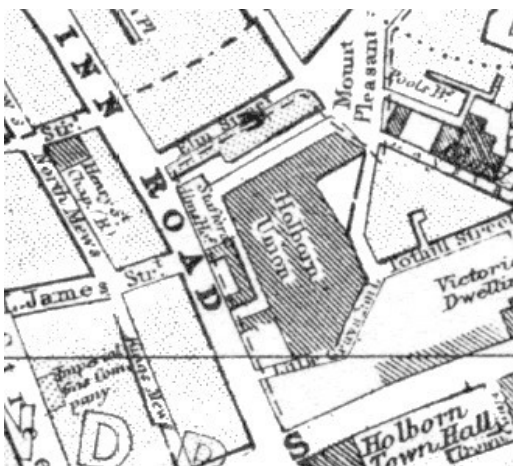
children to starve, and had a thorough good blow out on the best of vittles and drink, spent the whole of my money, and went home happy, as drunk as a lord."

On the 26<sup>th</sup> January 1869 his one-time partner, Ernest Jones, died in Ardwick, Manchester when almost certainly about to be returned as an MP [his son Llewellyn became a Liberal MP in 1885]. Finlen wrote an obituary, published in *Reynolds's Newspaper* of February 14<sup>th</sup> which tells of their relationship;

#### MR. FINLEN'S REMINISCENCES OF THE LATE E. JONES

Before a meeting of the Islington branch of the Democratic League, held at the Duke of Edinburgh, White Lion Street, Islington, Mr. Dorling in the chair, Mr. James Finlen delivered an address upon "The Life, Traits and Times of Mr. Ernest Jones." After summarising the principal events in the career of the deceased politician, Mr. Finlan went on to say: Now we come to a consideration of some of Mr. Jones's remarkable attributes. As a poet he was impressive through the vigour of his diction, the gorgeous symmetry of his tropes, and the penetrating ring of his fervid sincerity. As a politician, he was—up to the time that I ceased to be officially associated with him in politica—dauntless, thorough, and unswerving. His political faith was founded in old Chartism, than which a finer political formula has never been proposed to the English people. In advocating that, he commanded himself to the mass of his countrymen, and incurred at once the honours and horrors of an ephemeral martyrdom. As an orator, he stood unmatched. Not that he was greater than contemporary orators, but because his style, by being unique, was almost entirely peculiar to himself. Some of you, perhaps had the advantage of listening to him some two years since, when upon the 11<sup>th</sup> of February, 1867, he addressed that great reform meeting which was held in the Agricultural Hall, for the purpose of convincing our Aristocratic masters that the people were not indifferent to the question of reform; and, later still, when he addressed another meeting in the St. James's Hall—the last he ever addressed in London—upon the great question of "Labour and Capital." (Hear, hear.) Well, those of you who heard him upon either of these occasions listened only to a curtailed version of his former self, for he was evidently addressing other than those who were his immediate auditors — he was conciliating a higher stratum of society. But for all that, he spoke with fascinating eloquence, and propounded, with robust emphasis, sentiments which, if not new and startling, were, at all events, sufficiently generous for those to whom they were addressed. Still he was not the man then that he was in '48, when a brutal, aristocratic Whig Government prosecuted him for his chivalrous utterances and devoted patriotism. (Hear, hear.) No! nor had the old fire which he possessed even when he came out of the dungeons provided for him by the Palmerstons and Russells of the day. I heard him then—it was in 1850. Although he looked terribly emaciated through the barbarous rigour of his aristocratic gaolers, there was rare tough metal in his composition. A great meeting assembled in the Literary and Scientific Institution, John-street, Tottenham-court-road, to congratulate him upon his release. It was there that his rich young eloquence charmed his Chartist friends for the first time after it had broken from the ban put upon it by the infernal silent system, then, as now, practised in our prisons. Its effect was magical upon the immense audience. It was then that Mr. Jones seemed to have lived, and to hope to live, for the regeneration of the enslaved and impoverished working men of England. In that form he visited all the great towns, and moved the multitudes by whom he was greeted, by thundering his classical anathemas against the atrocious tyrannies of the rich, whether they were of the aristocratic or capitalist factions. Then his oratory was at once inspiring, bold, and unfettered. But such speaking cost him much, as it estranged—as it will always do—certain rich middle-class men, who please, for given purposes, to dub themselves Reformers. Unless men belie their lives and consciences, such reforming gentry securely fasten up their breeches pockets, and give no aid to popular movements. That our late friend discovered in a very significant manner as early as 1852. In that year he, for the second time, in vain sought to represent the borough of Halifax in the House of Commons. I was with him in '52. What he anticipated in reference to the non-electors was magnificently realized. On the day of nomination over 20,000 people assembled in the Piece Hall, and not less than the number mentioned held up their hands in favour of Mr. Jones; whilst his opponent, Sir Charles Wood, was most mercilessly hissed and pelted. That was a nomination day never to be forgotten. But then the polling day came with a very different revelation. It was not till 1860 that he struck his flag of "The Charter, and no Surrender." In that year he taught some of his followers to believe that manhood suffrage and the ballot would suffice for all purposes of parliamentary reform. In that conclusion I could not concur. I have, as you know, always insisted that, in addition to the points named, we must have annual parliaments, payment of members, and equal electoral districts, before we can possibly have a parliament that shall consist of anything more than mere men of money-bags on the one hand, and broad acres on the other. (Cheers.) This, you, as members of the Democratic League, have recognised. From the time that Ernest Jones thus trimmed his political faith up to the hour of his death he had been conciliating his former enemies. They took him by the hand, and coalesced with him in the recent general elections; and at the recent test ballot they permitted him to defeat one of their own friends and former nominees in the person of Milner Gibson. It was that object he had in view when he was addressing the two multitudes I have alluded to, and it was through that, that his addresses lacked much of the fine, the high-soaring, inspiring qualities which he used to exercise in former years. But, after all,

he was a great orator to the last. Feargus O'Connor was as great; his was the persuasive, parental, and unctuous style. James Bronterre O'Brien was as great; his was the very artillery of impetuous eloquence, the refinement, of anecdotal power. In shaping his course as indicated, Ernest Jones must have been prompted by many necessities. He was a brave man, undoubtedly; but there are domestic circumstances which he who is bravest in public life cannot, nay, dare not, meet. Our friend suffered much through poverty, and that tells best in honour of his memory. Let me give you just one instance of what he had to endure in that respect. We were wandering over Hampstead-heath together, one summer's evening, and upon reaching that part of the Heath where a grove of old fir-trees stands, he pointed to a certain wooden seat erected there, which he said had often been his bed of a night when circumstances had been so cruel as to forbid his appearance at home. As we were often there together, he often alluded to the circumstances; and as he showed no desire to conceal it in his life, now that he is dead, and as it bears testimony to his great sufferings for the people's cause, I mention it without apology. But that was only one of many instances which he brought under my notice. The others I will not recount. The 10<sup>th</sup> of April, 1848, was a great day in London; in fact, the Chartists had so frightened the Government of the day, that they placed the town under martial law. Mr. Feargus O'Connor at that time was the recognised leader of the people; but Mr. Jones was also very popular with them. A great demonstration, had to be made, and Kensington-common was decided upon as the place of meeting. As this decision would, as a matter of course, take the people over the bridges, and thus place the river between them and the House of Commons, to which their petition had to be presented the same evening, Mr. Jones objected to it. He was overruled; and upon that he said, that only for dividing their strength, Mr. O'Connor taking some of the people with him to Kennington and he keeping some in London, he would have marched the people down upon the parliament then sitting, and would there and then have assaulted it. He averred that other leaders were prepared to second him, and among others he mentioned Mr. Livesey, a veteran reformer, who at that time represented Preston in the National Convention. He said, "Finlen, by the Lord Harry! would have done it, only for our numbers being divided. Feargus was stronger than I was, and at the time I intuitively shrunk from what seemed to ensure almost useless slaughter; but many a time since I have condemned my fears and hesitation, for I now sincerely believe that the people will never have such a chance again. I quite believe he meant all he said, for he has often shown great gallantry under great difficulties. (Hear, hear.) Only upon two occasions have I known him to despond. The first, after his defeat at the Halifax election of '52, when he gave way to some wild and almost incoherent expressions of unmeasured regret and mortification; the second was in London, at a time when things in the political world wore a dead calm, and the newspapers had failed to notice one of his new poems, just then published by Routledge and Son. On this last occasion he said, as we were walking up Regent-street, "Finlen, I am prostrated nearly. I am weary of this state of things in England. I'll go over and shoot Louis Napoleon." "Nonsense," I rejoined. "You can hardly be called upon to enact such a business as that." "But," he answered, "I want to make for myself a place in history, and I fear that I cannot do it here." Such fits of despair were, as I have said, of unusual occurrence. Ernest Jones has made for himself a place in history, and a place, too, in the affections of the people. Had he lived longer—had he won more renown—had he heaped worldly material importance upon his name—his life and efforts, his sufferings and his sorrows would not have more commended him to his fellows than they do to-day. (Loud cheers.)



Finlen was obviously struggling financially and had moved downwards again, to Tash Street, in one of the Courts off the East side of Gray's Inn Lane. It was described by a reporter of what happened next as 'perhaps the most wretched street in that wretched locality.' On April 8<sup>th</sup> Mr. Birch, one of the relieving officers of the Holborn Union, reported to the Guardians that Finlen, with his four children, had been removed from a miserable underground dwelling (cellar) to the Workhouse in Little Grays-Inn-lane. "One of the guardians inquired what was the value of the furniture in the room. Mr. Birch replied that no broker would give 5s for it." Only one of the newspaper reporters bothered to mention that Finlen

had met with an accident, nearly breaking his leg but even he ended his report with "Finlen's life evidently carries its own moral." Other reporters prefaced their articles with "the late, Hyde-park, republican stump orator, has at last received the reward of his treasonable spoutings. His Fenian friends have deserted him." Interestingly four children are mentioned so, even though no record yet found for this event, one can assume that his daughter Mary had returned to the family for a while.



James Finlen had no means of raising himself or his family to any level above that of the working class and did not have the social contacts who could help him step up whereas Ernest Jones was a solicitor whose move to Manchester had led to a late but successful career and whose son could progress in the law to becoming an MP for 40 years. The Press made a similar observation when the *Brighton Gazette* of April 15<sup>th</sup> noted;

An old adage about forgetting the ladder by means of which he grew would almost appear to be the case with our prime minister. Finlen the mob orator worked hard for "The People's William" but Finlen and his four children have at length found a refuge in the Holborn Workhouse, while the Right Honourable William [Gladstone] sways the destinies of his country.

Finlen was rejected by many of his old associates and previous admirers - In August the Working Men's Reform group "resolved that this society does not recognise Mr. Finlen on account of his language and conduct to the members, which they consider abusive." How he managed to survive the coming months isn't known but being penniless and without a steady job it is likely that Mary went back to George Hoppey and his wife, his three boys being too young to be apprentices may have spent more time in the workhouse - a trawl of the Holborn Union Workhouse records may indicate something along these lines. Without money James' hope of emigrating to America was forlorn but he obviously saw that there might be a chance. On August 22<sup>nd</sup> *Reynolds's Newspaper* even gave out that he would leave for there in the second week of October, from Liverpool, and that a committee had been formed to hold a gathering at the New Hall of Science, Old-street, St. Lukes, on the 21<sup>st</sup> of September to collect funds for him. He still couldn't resist getting involved in political affairs and on Sunday August 29<sup>th</sup> he joined a demonstration of the London Irish at Gravesend in "commemoration of the siege of Limerick." Perhaps he saw a possibility in America of becoming part of the Irish exodus and even the Fenian Society? "The gathering numbered about six hundred, and the patriots left St. Paul's pier, London on board the river steamers *Falcon* and *Petrel* which arrived at the Rosherville pier by about one o'clock. Here, about 5 o'clock the greater part of the individuals forming the demonstration assembled. A good deal of spouting on the wrongs of Ireland and the Fenians followed, Messrs. Finlen, McDonald and White being among the orators."

AMERICA (or bust?) - the following advertisement appeared in the *Bee-Hive* of September 11<sup>th</sup>;

Arrangements have been made for a GREAT GATHERING OF THE FRIENDS OF FREEDOM, which will take place in the NEW HALL OF SCIENCE, 142, Old-street, St. Luke's, on the evening of Tuesday, September 21<sup>st</sup>, in order to bid a Public Adieu to Mr. Finlen, who has definitely (sic!) arranged to sail from Liverpool for the New World, on the 12<sup>th</sup> of October. As Mr. Finlen has been before the people of this country for more than 20 years as an advocate, both through the means of the Platform and the Press, of the most advanced as well as the most approved measures of Political and Social Reforms; as he has been unswerving in that advocacy, never deviating either under the exercise of proffered corruptions or practised intimidations; as, when acting with Feargus O'Connor, J. B. O'Brien. and Ernest Jones he was persistent and untiring in behalf of the Peoples' Charter, as, when an indefatigable Lecturer for the Reform League he traversed the country in furtherance of its aims, albeit to the injury of his own home and dearest interests (*my underlining*). His friends feel that they have more than enough to warrant them in their determination to make the Farewell Gathering to his honour at once a signal and graceful success, Mr. J. P. Mc Donnell will preside.

The amusements of the evening will consist of VOCAL AND INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC, ORATORY, AND ELOCUTION. Mr. JOHN LOWRY, Musical conductor, Miss R. JOHNSON pianist.

The following members of the Committee will act as Stewards:—Mons. Kiel, Mons. Peyzer, Messrs. R. Smith, C. Elliott, Mould, J. G. Thornton, Jas. Thornton, Wm. O'Dwyer, McNally, T. Prytbergeh, J. McGilchrist, Leary, M. Mahoney, John Walsh, Thos. Gillamy, J. Mullins, J. O'Donovan, M. Sheil, M. Lecahy, W. Donnelly, H. J. Cabham, J. Clark, Edgington, Henley, B. Lee, Walter Harrison, James Lawton, W. Johnson, J. Fagan, Edgerton, J. Thompson, J. O'Keefe, M. D. O'Halloran, John Cleane, Driscoll, Burke, Daly, Thos. Brown, Leary, Connelly, Cronin, E. F. Murphy, Thos. Provis, Chas. Murray, Jas. Murray, Nagle, C. Hobbs, Barrett, Gardner, D. Hallisy, Doyle, Herne, Byrne, E. Kelly, Baldock, Samuel Oliver, David Butler, Collins, J. Touhey, John Rogers, and John Johnson.

Prices of Admission, 2s 6d, 1s, 6d, and 3d. Chair taken at Eight o'clock.

Although the above Hall will hold 2,000 persons, to secure admittance, an early Application for Tickets is necessary, as large quantities are already issued. They can be had from the above Gentlemen, at the Hall, and on Clerkenwell-green on Sundays:

Committee Rooms, 5, Verulam-street, Gray's-inn-lane. By Order of the Committee,  
Joseph TOUHEY, Chairman, JOHN ROGERS, Treasurer. JOHN JOHNSON, Secretary

The *Holborn Journal* and *Bee-Hive* gave accounts of the entertainment - some details being;

Between three and four hundred persons of the poorer class, and apparently Irish, were present, at prices for admission ranging from 3d to 1s [*London Evening Standard* of 22<sup>nd</sup> states 700 - 800 attended, the *Bee-Hive* says 1000]. About two hours were occupied with songs, speeches, and recitations, the great part by Irishmen, and, of a patriot or party character. Two recitations, adapted from Macauley's and Campbell's odes, were in eulogy of the Fenians hanged at Manchester, and in aspiration for Irish Independence. Both were given by a young man, and were loudly applauded. Finlen then recited the "Poacher's Widow" [by Rev. C. Kingsley] and the "Jacobins of Paris," [by Mr. Smythe, *in which he displayed considerable dramatic power* according to the *Bee-Hive*]

He then made a farewell speech. He said that he should bid farewell to England without regret, because it was a country the capital of which was the home of the most infamous aristocratic mob that ever disgraced a nation. The men who had persecuted him were the base supporters of the House of Commons and the House of Lords, and that tyrannical gang - the most unscrupulous, the most malignant men on earth - he meant the writers for the press - anonymous libellers, treacherous cowards, and slanderers. These were the agents which had been at work to destroy the character of a good man. He proceeded to say that he was not allowed to live here; he could fight freedom's battle better in the land of the star-spangled banner.

All did not go well and *Reynolds' Newspaper* of October 31<sup>st</sup> reported, over two weeks after he should have departed;

Mr. J. Finlen's departure to America - Letter from the committee secretary stating that Finlen wasn't being sent to the American Fenians as a representative from England's Fenians, but to live on his own resources. - "a great number of payments and tickets being still held back, and as it is necessary, crippling the actions of the committee. It is requested that all ticket holders settle up forthwith."

We hear no more of, or from, Finlen from this date and there is no evidence that he had left for America, though many provincial newspapers thought he had. From the monies received he presumably paid off some of his debts but possibly the Americans indicated they didn't want him, or did he simply feel unable to go? He must have laid low but he still had friends and on November 7<sup>th</sup> *Reynolds's* published a letter from Edmund Beales which he had written from Liverpool which pointed out his virtues;

TO THE EDITOR OF REYNOLDS'S NEWSPAPER

Sir,—Allow me, through the columns of your most liberal and valued paper, to acknowledge the receipt of a remittance and letter from one of the most prominent and indefatigable champions of the late reform movement:- viz, Edmund Beales, Esq. The letter is dated from Birkenhead. (Copy)

Birkenhead, Sept. 29th, 1869.

"Dear Sir,—Your application with regard to Mr. Finlen has been forwarded to me here. I very cordially agree with the substance of the remarks made by your committee, and as the best proof of my thorough contempt for the persevering and malicious efforts made to injure the Reform League, and myself individually, through Mr. Finlen, for whose talents I have much respect, though I should have advised on some occasions a different line of conduct, I enclose a cheque for £1., regretting, I sincerely assure you, that my own sacrifices in public matters have so crippled my means that I cannot conveniently make the cheque larger. If, however, something further should be absolutely required to enable you to carry out your plans for Mr. F. and his family, and your application should not meet with a sufficient response in other quarters, I will endeavour to assist you further.

"Faithfully, yours, ‘

“Edmond Beales”

Edmond Beales, Esq., has also consented to become the treasurer, and pledge his word that the money subscribed be devoted to no other object—viz, than the sending of Mr. James Finlen and family to the United States of America. I am, Sir, yours most respectfully,

E. J. Burnham, Secretary, 2, Whitecross street, Cripplegate, EC.

## 1870

I think that Finlen remained in the UK during 1870 and avoided any further public notoriety or notice, possibly under an assumed name even. He would have hoped that the new government under Gladstone might have improved the lot of the working man but he was to be sorely disappointed - all Finlen's efforts and sacrifices seemed to have been for nothing. *Reynolds's* published on March 27<sup>th</sup> 1870;

## THE POLITICAL "FAUST."

The readers of Goethe's tragedy only find therein a graphic touch of nature. It illustrates the melancholy lesson taught by the history of every age, that the most virtuous may become the most vicious, and that valiant resolve may quail and yield under the potent spell of temptation. We are counselled by Holy Writ not to put faith in princes; while recent experience has taught us not to lean on the arm of prime ministers.

Just look at Mr. Gladstone in office, and out of office. What character could be fairer or purer to gaze upon than the philosopher and statesman before the wiles of Mephistopheles were exerted upon him? The Evil Spirit beguiled him from his noble studies and philosophical pursuits, by presenting before his admiring gaze the Genius of Power, replete with soft blandishments, and arrayed in tempting garb. In her presence he fell from his lofty height. His ambition was awakened, his pulses set a-throbbing, while the noble aspirations he so long had cherished became dissipated to the winds. At last, his new passion seizes hold of his being, and he barter his soul for the gaudy prize.

Mr. Gladstone was universally loved by the people. At home and abroad, wherever enlightened opinions prevailed, and political progress was coveted, he excited unfeigned admiration. Even his very name was honoured and respected. He was the persistent advocate of pressed nationalities. Right and justice were the principles displayed on his banner. One of his grandest ideas was to rectify the grievous and chronic wrongs of the sister country, which, for weary centuries, had cried to heaven for vengeance! Englishmen who, through the mere accidents of birth and station, had been deprived of their inalienable privileges, were to have the same restored to them. Caste was to have been abolished, and creeds were to be placed on an equality in the three kingdoms; 'while the Irish nation was to be speedily transformed from a howling wilderness into a very garden of paradise. The ideas propounded were glorious; the metamorphoses to be made, honourable. It seemed as if destiny had specially raised up and endowed a single man to wage war with foul wrongs, and accomplish such noble deeds as none other could attempt with the faintest prospect of success.

Gladstone was the hope of the people and by the people elevated to a commanding position in the State. The democratic idea was signalised by the democracy of Great Britain raising a commoner to the post of Prime Minister, and giving him precedence above peers. But the nation's hope was disappointed; and now we mourn that ever we knew a statesman so false and so deceiving. Step by step has he departed from the path which he had marked out for himself to tread. Little by little has he weaned his affections from those upon whom they had first hold. Colder and colder has he become, until, finally, he grows wholly estranged, and makes no secret of his new attachment. The political Faust has fallen—like so many great men have fallen before him—under the fierce influence of temptation. The baneful and baleful surroundings of a Court have been too much for even his stoical virtue. He ignobly succumbs under the potent charm, and leaves desolate and oppressed those who spontaneously loved him for his high principles and proffered deeds. The "peoples William" has become the lordling's pet. The expected saviour of the nation has become its scourge.

But what has Mr. Gladstone done since his accession to office and five thousand a-year? We set aside the batch of bishops he has made and "translated," the City knights and baronets he has created, and the praiseworthy interest which he has shown in taking care of some members of his own household. We ask what has he done? He has disestablished the Anglican Church in Ireland, taking care at the same time that its dignitaries and holders of livings should not go unprovided for; in other words, he has but half disestablished it. He has provided a long-looked-for land scheme for Ireland, which rather favours the landlord than the tenant, and is nothing more than a delusion and a snare. He has practised the retrenchment policy with a vengeance, taking good heed that the working man and the petty Government clerk will be the only sufferers. He has closed dockyards and dismissed thousands of labourers, while he grants pensions and compensation to privileged aristocrats. So far from "stooping in the gutter," as the *Saturday Review* alleged he had done when he gave audience to **Mr. Finlen**, he now rides the high horse, and flatly and coolly refuses to meet a deputation from the Land and Labour League, who desired to urge on his attention the claims of the unemployed poor, making the flimsy pretext of "pressure of business" to evade the respectful request made to him officially. He turned a deaf ear to the voice of the people when they prayed for an amnesty on behalf of the Fenian' prisoners. The more they petitioned, the more stolid he grew. He remained equally unmoved by entreaties, and even threatening demonstrations, all through the country. And when that martyr to freedom, O'Donovan Rossa, got his complaints published in a French journal, a paltry attempt is made by the Government, of which Mr. Gladstone is chief, to glaze over the statements therein made, and give them the semblance of untruths. Then, to crown the Premier's political perfidy, while his land scheme—scheme in a two-fold sense—is under discussion, he takes advantage of what is called a "Government night" to get his minion, the Secretary of State for Ireland, to bring in what is whimsically entitled a "Peace Preservation Bill," which he endeavours to drive through the house without delay. This Bill may fitly be termed the Anarchy Creating Bill. It saps the foundation of all liberty, and is destructive to the political life of the Irish nation. In fact, if this measure passes as no doubt it will, owing to the maudlin and truckling character of the representatives who now sit in the house, — the gauntlet is thrown down to the Irish people. Penal laws are once more to be put in active force. Ireland is once more to be ruled with a rod of iron. All hope is to be abandoned by the down-trodden people, and fell despair is to rankle in their

hearts. Mr. Gladstone has essayed to tranquilize Ireland; he has but succeeded in exasperating it. What condition of affairs his blind and treacherous policy may produce, we will not take upon us to predict. Whatever evils may ensue, on Mr. Gladstone's head will rest the responsibility. In any case his glory has departed; he ceases to be loved or trusted by the people, whom he has so daringly deceived and outraged by cool defiance. For our part, we shall not be sorry when the reins of power are in other and better hands. Mr. Gladstone has lost all hold upon the people. And when that grim and imperious tyrant, Death, shall smite him, in common with us all, no tears shall be shed save by his foolish flatterers and perverse parasites, while his name shall remain unhonoured and unsung.

1871

The next we hear of James Finlen is at the census of April 2<sup>nd</sup> but James is either using a pseudonym or the census enumerator made a mistake - I think it may well be the former and when looking at other records (i.e. Workhouse) it may be worthwhile looking under that surname.

[Page 41] 92

The undermentioned Houses are situate within the Boundaries of the										
Parish (or Township) of	City or Municipal Borough of	Municipal Ward of	Parliamentary Borough of	Town of	Village or Hamlet, &c., of	Local Board, or [Improvement Commissioners District] of	Ecclesiastical District of			
St. Clements	Finsbury	Lower Holloway & Barnsbury	Finsbury				St. Clements			
No. of House	ROAD, STREET, &c., and No. or NAME of HOUSE	HOUSES (In-cluded or Ex-cluded)	NAME and Surname of each Person	RELATION to Head of Family	CON-DITION	AGE of		Rank, Profession, or OCCUPATION	WHERE BORN	Whether 1. Suffering-Deaf 2. Blind 3. Imbecile or Idiot 4. Lunatic
						Male	Female			
37	4 York Place		James Miller	Wife	Mar		22		Camworth	
			James de	Son	Mar		9 months		Middlesex Islington	
38	do	1	William White	Head	Mar		52	Shoemaker	do do	
			Mary A. de	Wife	Mar		32		do do	
			Fredrick H. de	Son	Mar		11		do do	
			William R. de	Son	Mar		8		do do	
			Bertha M. de	Son	Mar		6		do do	
			John B. Flood	Son	Mar		8 months		do do	
39			John Nash	Head	Mar		55	Carman	Essex	
40			Mary Waley	Head	Mar		49	Laundress	Ireland Galway	
			Richard de	Son	Mar		23	Williamson	Middlesex Islington	
			James James	Head	Mar		44	French Polisher	do London	
			James de	Son	Mar		13	Errand Boy	Manchester	
			William de	Son	Mar		12	do do	Middlesex London	
			Frank de	Son	Mar		9	Scholar	do do	
41			Margaret Walsh	Head	Mar		47	Laundress	Ireland	
42			Ellen Bellrose	Son	Mar		25	Dress Maker	Middlesex Islington	
			Frank de	Son	Mar		13 months		do do	
43	2 do	1	John Langlois	Head	Mar		58	House Painter	do St. Pierre	
			Elizabeth de	Wife	Mar		39		Manchester	
			Mary A. de	Son	Mar		15		Middlesex Islington	
			James de	Son	Mar		14	Blacksmith	do do	
			Elizabeth de	Son	Mar		12		Leicestershire Grantham	
			Sarah de	Son	Mar		10		Middlesex Islington	
			William de	Son	Mar		8		do do	
Total of Houses..		2	Total of Males and Females..		14	11				

\* Draw the pen through such of the words as are inappropriate.

Eng - Sheet G

On the 1871 census, at 3, York Place, Islington St. Clements, Finsbury, James Finlen [called James James] aged 40, French Polisher born London, lives with just his three sons; James (aged 13, born Manchester) an errand boy, William (aged 12, born London) also an errand boy, and Frank (aged 9, born London), scholar. The same address is shared with four other families totalling 12 people. James Finlen's daughter Mary Caroline Finlen born 1863 was living with her 'adoptive' parents, French Polisher George Hoppey (aged 50 born Hampstead) and his wife Hannah (aged 46, born Canterbury) at 3, Crane Grove, Islington, where she is described as their 'daughter'. James' wife was still in the asylum and his sister Kate Finlen, giving her age as 26 (she was 36!) and still single, was an 'ironer', and lodging with the Underwood family at 89, Cloudesley Road, Islington. [see Appendix]

A sole contact with the Press was made in this year by Finlen - when he wrote letters in August trying to put the record straight;

The following appears in the *Evening Standard*:—  
 "Sir, — Permit me to state that when Mr. Gladstone, in referring to me during a debate in the House of Commons last Thursday, stated "that a deputation of working men had an interview with him, but he was not previously acquainted with their names, although afterwards it appeared that Finlen was one of them," uttered what was incorrect. I would briefly explain the facts connected with the interview alluded to. At the time the

deputation waited on Mr. Gladstone I was president of the Democratic League. The members of that league were desirous of aiding the movement then on foot for the disestablishment of the Irish Protestant Church, and to the end that Mr. Gladstone might be encouraged in prosecuting successfully the arduous enterprise to which he had committed himself, they determined to hold a monster meeting in Hyde Park. It was also resolved that a deputation should wait on the right hon. gentleman. I wrote to him asking him to name a time for receiving that deputation. He named the time, and the memorable interview about which so much has been said and written took place.

"Now, it is idle for the right hon. gentleman to profess ignorance of any previous knowledge of my name, seeing that I had held a 'previous' correspondence with him. I could designate it as something worse, remembering, as I do, that a few days after the interview he, in answer to Sir C. Russell, in the House of Commons, declared in effect that he knew me to be a public advocate of very advanced views.

Mr. Gladstone's forgetfulness I care nothing about, unless it be of that convenient kind which sometimes covers falsehood; then, of course, I would have a very blunt title for it. As the matter stands, I assert - and I can produce many witnesses to prove the accuracy of my assertion - that at the time Mr. Gladstone knew the name of the party he was dealing with; that he knew the deputation consisted of members of the Democratic League; and that he gave a ready and what appeared to be a generous, courteous reception to the views and policy outlined upon the occasion. Now that he is in office, and strongly garrisoned by a docile, if not slavish majority, he can, perhaps, afford to forget - or even ignore—the men whose labours have tended to elevate him; yet he, above all, should know that it is not because he can dominate Parliament that he has a privilege to pervert facts and obscure truths as he has done in the case of your obedient servant,

"London, August 19." "James Finlen."

### Post 1871

16489 Finlen, James	52 Liteham-street	dwelling house	52 Litcham-street
16490 Foale, Henry	106 Carlton-road	dwelling house	106 Carlton-road
16491 Foreman, George	14 Dale-road	dwelling house	14 Dale-road
		dwelling house	3 Hanover-street

Nothing has surfaced as to Finlen's whereabouts in **1872** but in **1873** the electoral register shows a James Finlen at 52, Litcham Street, Marylebone, St. Pancras Parish - Ward 1, p. 344.

A complete bank exists about what happened to James Finlen from this time, apart from one surprising entry which appeared in the *Barnsley Chronicle* of April 12<sup>th</sup> **1879**;

Mr. Finlen lectured in Barnsley Mechanics Hall on the militia. He commented warmly on the attempts of the Government to raise a militia from people who were unenfranchised. He advised them to adopt as their motto *No vote, no musket*. Soldiers were the hired butchers of mankind, and standing armaments had been the enemies of freedom wherever they existed. He cited as an illustration the conduct of the Praetorian Guards. The invasion of Gaul by the Franks, and of England by the Normans, he severely condemned. He advised his audience to endeavour to prevent soldiers from standing in defence of our "rotten institutions."

His own son, William Finlen, recorded his father on his marriage certificate of 1883 but on his second marriage certificate of 1885 stated that his father was 'Dead'. [*see p. 6*] He was either covering for him or had lost contact with him and assumed his demise.

However, there are clues as to where he went next. George Howell in his manuscript 'Autobiography of a Toiler', held at the Bishopsgate Institute, saw him in 1889. Courtesy of Andrew Whitehead who transcribed it, the text is given here;

'James Finlen, 1864 -73. James Finlen was of a type of a bygone generation when the Reform League was instituted. He also had been a chartist lecturer, but not of the first rank. Theatrical in his manner, and voluble in his language, he was able to impress an audience when at his best. But he, like others, had suffered, and perhaps had become a little reckless. Few men were more abused than Finlen, and few felt the abuse more. ... He seemed not to know the ordinary rules of business, and never knew the value of money until dire distress followed later on. On one matter the newspaper press did him a gross injustice. During his absence [on a Reform League lecturing tour] his wife lost her reason, thought her children were in want, and stole a joint of meat. The poor woman was found to be insane, but Finlen was accused of leaving her without money. That was not true. On the Saturday before the incident I took her some money myself at the husband's request, when she told me that I "needn't have troubled, for Jim had left her enough to go on with." But that incident closed Finlen's political career. He had arranged to migrate to America but failed to go. Subscriptions were got up, but he was ever in distress. The last time I saw him, in 1888, he walked eight miles to hear me speak, and to shake hands. He was hiding as it were [sic] in a strange town in Lancashire, under another name. He never could get

over the blow, he said mournfully. A few of us sent him a little help when he was ill in a Hospital at Warrington, in 1889.' [In Warrington was the Lovely Lane Workhouse - the 'Hospital', an isolation hospital wasn't built until 1893. No obvious James died in the Workhouse 1889 - 92 that I can find.- RCS]

Andrew Whitehead further communicated to me: "According to my notes on the Howell papers, there's nothing about Finlen in Howell's incoming letters for 1888 or 1889 and there are no outgoing letters after 1885. Howell's appointment diaries have two entries which might be of relevance:  
1888 Oct 21, at Northwich, Oct 22, at Runcorn, 1889 Aug 6<sup>th</sup> ... Wrote for addresses to Finlen + Glass Bottle Makers

I examined all the French polisher's on the 1881 and later censuses in Lancashire having the forename James and born circa 1829, but none fitted the bill to be James Finlen using a pseudonym. I also examined all the Warrington deaths of men with the forename James who died on or after 1889 but had to exclude them all on tracking them back - two likely James Burkes turned out to be both born in Ireland in 1829, one dying in Warrington in 1889 and the other in Manchester in 1913. Burke would have been a good *alias* for James Finlen, but both the above men could be traced back in Lancashire through the censuses, making them impossible to be our man! As yet there are no further clues to his name, date or place of death.

Another contemporary of Finlens indicates what most people who knew him thought of him and what many thought had probably happened to him.

"Memoirs of an old Parliamentarian." Vol. 1 By T. P. O'Connor, MP 1929

Pp. 13/14 Gladstone's Reform Bill, 1866.

There was an Irishman, of course: his name was Finlen, and for an hour he had played a notable part. When Gladstone was proposing a reduction of the franchise - denounced with fury especially by the followers of Disraeli, who were to pass a still more reduced franchise the very next year - a deputation was given admission to Gladstone at his house in Carlton House Terrace. Finlen was one of the chief spokesmen of this deputation. Unfortunately for him and for Gladstone, the papers a few days afterwards contained a report of the proceedings against this fiery agitator on the part of his wife, and of his being compelled to come to the relief of her and her children. At once there was an uproar, and a comic paper gave a picture in which Gladstone was represented as lifting from the dust-heap the form of Finlen. [p. 120] He was a small, rather good-looking man. I believe he had a case in his defence, and that an unsatisfactory wife bore at least a part of the responsibility for his wrecked home. Anyhow, he was a brilliant debater - indeed, the chief pillar of the debates - and he was a pleasant fellow. I remember still the effect it had on me when, seeing him looking unusually well and unusually steady, I asked him for the explanation. He then told me that he had got a job at his trade, which was that of French-polisher - his hand bore the mark of his work. He seemed quite happy. Ultimately he disappeared to America, and I never heard of him again.

