



COLLECTED WRITINGS  
AND SPEECHES OF  
THEOBALD  
WOLFE TONE

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SPEECHES OF THEOBALD  
WOLFE TONE



Featuring a preface by Pádraig Pearse

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# THE SEPARATIST IDEA

By Pádraig Pearse

## I.

In stating a little while ago the Irish definition of freedom, I said that it would be well worth while to examine that definition in its breadth and depth, in its connotations as well as in its denotations, contenting myself for the moment with making clear its essential idea of Independence, Separation, a distinct and unfettered national existence. And I said that I proposed to do this in a sequel. Such a sequel is necessary, for, while the statement that national freedom means a distinct and unfettered national existence is a true and complete statement of the nature of national freedom, it is not a sufficient revelation of the minds that have developed the conception of freedom among us Irish, not sufficiently quick with their thought nor sufficiently passionate with their desire. Freedom is so splendid a thing that one cannot worthily state it in the terms of a definition; one has to write it in some flaming symbol or to sing it in music riotous with the uproar of heaven. A Danton and a Mitchel can speak more adequately of freedom than a Voltaire and a Burke, for they have drunk more deeply of that wine with which God inebriates the votaries of vision. But even the sublimest things, the Trinity and the Incarnation, can be stated in terms of philosophy, and it is needful to do this now and then, though such a statement in no wise affects the spiritual fact which one either feels or does not feel. So, it is sometimes necessary to state what nationality is, what freedom, though one's statement may not reveal the awful beauty of his nation's soul to a single man or move a single village to put up its barricade.

The purpose, then, of such statements? At least they define the truth, and enable men to see who holds the truth and who

hugs the falsehood. For there is an absolute truth in such matters, and the truth is ascertainable. The truth is old, and it has been handed down to us by our fathers. It is not a new thing, devised to meet the exigencies of a situation. That is the definition of an expedient.

Now, the truth as to what a nation's nationality is, what a nation's freedom, is not to be found in the statute-book of the nation's enemy. It is to be found in the books of the nation's fathers.

## II

I have named Tone and Davis and Lalor and Mitchel as the four among us moderns who have chiefly developed the conception of an Irish nation. Others, I have said, have for the most part only interpreted and illustrated what has been taught by these; these are the Fathers and the rest are just their commentarists. And I need not repeat here my reasons for naming no other with these unless the other be Parnell, whom I name tentatively as the man who saw most deeply and who spoke most splendidly for the Irish nation since the great seers and speakers. I go on to examine what these have taught of Irish freedom. And first as to Tone. He stands first in point of time, and first in point of greatness. Indeed, he is, as I believe, the greatest man of our nation; the greatest-hearted and the greatest-minded.

We have to consider here Tone the thinker rather than Tone the man of action. The greatest of our men of action since Hugh O'Neill, he is the greatest of all our political thinkers. His greatness, both as a man and as a thinker, consists in his sheer reality. There is no froth of rhetoric, no dilution of sentimentality in Tone; he has none even of the noble oratoric quality of a Mitchel. A man of extraordinarily deep emotion, he nevertheless thought with relentless logic, and his expression in exposition or argument is always the due and inevitable garb of his thought.

He was a great visionary; but, like all the great visionaries, he had a firm grip upon realities, he was fundamentally sane.

It is necessary at times to insist on Tone's intellectual austerity, because the man's humanity was so gracious that his human side constantly overshadows, for us as for his contemporaries, his grave intellectual side. Most men of his greatness are loved at best by a few, feared or disliked or mistrusted by the many. Tone was one of the extremely rare great men whose greatness is crowned by those gifts of humility and sweetness that compel affection. Some men are misunderstood because they are disliked; a few men are in danger of being misunderstood because they are loved. If the greatest thing in Tone was his heroic soul, the soul that was gay in death and defeat, the second greatest thing was his austere and piercing intellect. That intellect has dominated Irish political thought for over a century. It has given us our political definitions and values. Constantly we refer doctrines and leaders and policies to its standards, measuring them by the mind of Tone as an American measures men and policies by the minds that shaped the Declaration of Independence. Tone's mind was in a very true sense a revolutionary mind. The spokesmen of the French Revolution itself did not base things more fundamentally on essential right and justice than Tone did, did not pierce through outer strata to a firmer bedrock than he found. And it was an original mind. Influenced no doubt by contemporary minds, and responsive to every thought-wave that vibrated in either hemisphere, Tone for the most part worked out his own political system in his own way. He did not inherit or merely accept his principles; he thought himself into them.

Tone's first political utterance was a pamphlet in defence of the Whig Club, entitled 'A Review of the last Session of Parliament' (1790). Of this pamphlet he writes in his autobiography:

... Though I was very far from entirely approving the system of the Whig Club, and much less their principles and motives, yet, seeing them at the time the best constituted political body which the country afforded, and agreeing with most of their positions, though my own private opinions went infinitely farther, I thought I could venture on their defence without violating my consistency.

The pamphlet contains no definitely Separatist teaching. Before the end of the year, however, Tone had found his voice. It is a Separatist that speaks in 'The Spanish War' (1790), but a cautious Separatist, one who is feeling his way. Tone himself describes the expansion of his views which had taken place between the publication of his first and his second pamphlets:

A closer examination into the history of my native country had very considerably extended my views, and, as I was sincerely and honestly attached to her interests, I soon found reason not to regret that the Whigs had not thought me an object worthy of their cultivation. I made speedily what was to me a great discovery, though I might have found it in Swift and Molyneux, that the influence of England was the radical vice of our Government, and consequently that Ireland would never be either free, prosperous, or happy until she was independent, and that independence was unattainable whilst the connection with England existed.

Accordingly:

On the appearance of a rupture with Spain, I wrote a pamphlet to prove that Ireland was not bound by the declaration of war, but might, and ought, as an independent nation, to stipulate for a neutrality. In examining this question, I advanced the question of separation, with scarcely any reserve, much less disguise; but the public mind was by no means so far advanced as I was, and my pamphlet made not the slightest impression.

The pamphlet, in fact, tended to prove the impossibility of Grattan's constitution, i.e., of the co-existence of a British connection with a sovereign Irish Parliament. It did not propound this in so many words, but the logical conclusion from its extraordinarily able and subtle argument is that no 'halfway house' is possible as a permanent solution of the issue between

Ireland and England. There were and are only two alternatives: an enslaved Ireland and a free Ireland. A 'dual monarchy' is, in the nature of things, only a temporary expedient.

In 1790 Tone met Thomas Russell. Theirs was the most memorable of Irish friendships. It was in conversations and correspondence with Russell that Tone's political ideas reached their maturity. When he next speaks it is with plenary meaning and clear definition. Towards the end of 1790 he made his first attempt in political organisation. He founded a club of seven or eight members 'eminent for their talents and patriotism and who had already more or less distinguished themselves by their literary productions.' It was a failure, and the failure satisfied Tone that 'men of genius, to be of use, must not be collected in numbers.' In 1791 Russell went to Belfast. An attempt of Russell's to induce the Belfast Volunteers to adopt a declaration in favour of Catholic emancipation, which Tone had prepared at his request, was unsuccessful. Russell wrote to Tone an account of the discussion, and, says Tone:

It immediately set me thinking more seriously than I had yet done upon the state of Ireland. I soon formed my theory, and on that theory I have invariably acted ever since.

To subvert the tyranny of our execrable Government, to break the connection with England, the never-failing source of all our political evils, and to assert the independence of my country — these were my objects. To unite the whole people of Ireland, to abolish the memory of all past dissensions, and to substitute the common name of Irishman in place of the denominations of Protestant, Catholic, and Dissenter — these were my means.

I have said that I hold all Irish nationalism to be implicit in these words. Davis was to make explicit certain things here implicit, Lalor certain other things. But the Credo is here: 'I believe in One Irish Nation and that Free.' Tone had convinced himself as to the end and the means. And now for work:

I sat down accordingly, and wrote a pamphlet addressed to the Dissenters, and which I entitled 'An Argument on behalf of the Catholics



of Ireland', the object of which was to convince them that they and the Catholics had but one common interest and one common enemy; that the depression and slavery of Ireland was produced and perpetuated by the divisions existing between them, and that, consequently, to assert the independence of their country, and their own individual liberties, it was necessary to forget all former feuds, to consolidate the entire strength of the whole nation, and to form for the future but one people.

This pamphlet, signed 'A Northern Whig', gave Tone his place in Irish politics. The Catholic leaders approached him and commenced the connection which led ultimately to his selection as their agent; the Volunteers of Belfast elected him an honorary member of their corps. He was soon afterwards invited to Belfast, where he founded, with Russell, Neilson, the Simmses, Sinclair, and MacCabe, the first club of United Irishmen. Tone wrote for the United Irishmen the following declaration:

In the present great era of reform when unjust governments are falling in every quarter of Europe; when religious persecution is compelled to abjure her tyranny over conscience; when the Rights of Man are ascertained in Theory and that Theory substantiated by Practice; when antiquity can no longer defend absurd and oppressive forms against the common sense and common interests of mankind; when all government is acknowledged to originate from the people, and to be so far only obligatory as it protects their rights and promotes their welfare; we think it our duty as Irishmen to come forward and state what we feel to be our heavy grievance, and what we know to be its effectual remedy.

We have no National Government; we are ruled by Englishmen and the servants of Englishmen, whose object is the interest of another country; whose instrument is corruption; whose strength is the weakness of Ireland; and these men have the whole of the power and patronage of the country as means to seduce and subdue the honesty and the spirit of her representatives in the legislature. Such an extrinsic power, acting with uniform force in a direction too frequently opposite to the true line of our obvious interests, can be resisted with effect solely by unanimity, decision, and spirit in the people, qualities which may be exerted most legally, constitutionally, and efficaciously by that great measure essential to the prosperity and freedom of Ireland – an equal Representation of all the People in Parliament ...

The declaration was not openly Separatist. Tone, however, avows that, while not yet definitely a republican, his ultimate goal even as early as 1791 was Separation: the union of Irishmen was to be but a means to an end. Commenting on the foundation (9 November 1791) of the Dublin Club of United Irishmen, in which the republican Tandy co-operated with him, Tone writes:

For my own part, I think it right to mention that, at this time the establishment of a Republic was not the immediate object of my speculations. My object was to secure the independence of my country under any form of government, to which I was led by a hatred of England so deeply rooted in my nature that it was rather an instinct than a principle. I left to others, better qualified for the inquiry, the investigation and merits of the different forms of government, and I contented myself with labouring on my own system, which was luckily in perfect coincidence as to its operation with that of those men who viewed the question on a broader and juster scale than I did at the time I mention.

Thus, Tone in November 1791 had not yet settled his views on abstract theories of government, but on the practical business of separating Ireland from England his resolve was fixed and unshakable.

In June 1791 there had been issued a secret Manifesto to the Friends of Freedom in Ireland which is attributed to Tone in collaboration with Neilson and others. Tone himself makes no reference to this document in his autobiography. If it is really his it is the nearest approach to a formulation of the theory of freedom which we have from the mind of this essentially practical statesman. Whether it be Tone's or another's, it is one of the noblest utterances of the age and it is a document of primary importance in the history of Ireland. It may be described as the first manifesto of modern Irish democracy. It bases the Irish claim to freedom on the bedrock foundation of human rights:

This society is likely to be a means the most powerful for the promotion of a great end. What end? *The Rights of Man in Ireland*. The greatest happiness of the greatest numbers in this island, the inherent and

indefeasible claims of every free nation to rest in this nation — the will and the power to be happy, to pursue the common weal as an individual pursues his private welfare, and to stand in insulated independence, an imperial people.

The greatest happiness of the Greatest Number. — On the rock of this principle let this society rest; by this let it judge and determine every political question, and whatever is necessary for this end let it not be accounted hazardous, but rather our interest, our duty, our glory, and our common religion: The Rights of Man are the Rights of God, and to vindicate the one is to maintain the other. We must be free in order to serve Him whose service is perfect freedom ...

‘Dieu et mon Droit’ (God and my right) is the motto of kings. ‘Dieu et la liberte’ (God and liberty), exclaimed Voltaire when he beheld Franklin, his fellow-citizen of the world. ‘Dieu et nos Droits’ (God and our rights) — let every Irishman cry aloud to each other the cry of mercy, of justice, and of victory.

*The Rights of Man in Ireland* is almost an adequate definition of Irish freedom. And the historic claim of Ireland has never been more worthily stated than in these words: ‘*The inherent and indefeasible claims of every free nation to rest in this nation — the will and the power to be happy, to pursue the common weal as an individual pursues his private welfare, and to stand in insulated independence, an imperial people.*’

The deep and radical nature of Tone’s revolutionary work, the subtlety and power of the man himself, cannot be grasped unless it is clearly remembered that *this* is the secret manifesto of the movement of which the carefully constitutional declaration of the United Irishmen is the public manifesto. Tone himself, in a letter to Russell at the beginning of 1792, admits his ulterior designs while at the same time laying stress on the necessity of caution in public utterances. Referring to the declaration of the United Irishmen, he says:

The foregoing contains my true and sincere opinion of the state of this country, *so far as in the present juncture it may be advisable to publish it.* They certainly fall short of the truth, but truth itself must sometimes condescend to temporise. My unalterable opinion is that the bane of Irish

prosperity is in the influence of England: I believe that influence will ever be extended while the connection between the countries continues; nevertheless, as I know that opinion is, *for the present*, too hardy, though a very little time may establish it universally, I have not made it a part of the resolutions, I have only proposed to set up a reformed parliament, as a barrier against that mischief which every honest man that will open his eyes must see in every instance overbears the interest of Ireland: I have not said one word that looks like a wish for separation, though I give it to you and your friends as my most decided opinion that such an event would be a regeneration to this country.

In 1792 Tone became agent to the General Committee of the Catholics. Before the end of the year his dream of a union between the Catholics and the Dissenters was an accomplished fact. In December the Catholic Convention met. Catching Tone's spirit, it demanded complete emancipation. The Government proposed a compromise to the leaders. Tone was against any compromise, but the Catholic leaders yielded. 'Merchants, I see, make bad revolutionists,' commented Tone. The Act of 1793, admitting Catholics to the Parliamentary franchise, marks the end of Tone's 'constitutional' period. He pressed on towards Separation, adopting revolutionary methods. The United Irishmen were reorganised as a secret association, with 'a Republican Government and Separation from England' as its aims. In 1795 Tone, compromised by his relations with Jackson, left Ireland for America. It was out of settled policy that at this stage he chose exile rather than a contest with the Government. He had already conceived the idea of appealing for help to the French Republic. Shortly before he left Dublin he went out with Russell to Rathfarnham, to see Thomas Addis Emmet.

As we walked together into town I opened my plan to them both. I told them that I considered my compromise with Government to extend no further than the banks of the Delaware, and that the moment I landed I was free to follow any plan which might suggest itself to me, for the emancipation of my country ... I then proceeded to tell them that my intention was, immediately on my arrival in Philadelphia, to wait on the French Minister, to detail to him, fully, the situation of affairs in Ireland,

to endeavour to obtain a recommendation to the French Government, and, if I succeeded so far, to leave my family in America, and to set off instantly for Paris, and apply, in the name of my country, for the assistance of France to enable us to assert our independence.

To the fulfilment of this purpose Tone devoted the three years of life that remained to him. He landed in France in 1796. The notes in his Journal of his conferences with the representatives of the French Government and the two masterly memorials which he submitted to the Executive Directory remain the fullest and most practical statement, not only of the necessity of Separation, but of the means by which Separation is to be attained, that has been made by any Irishman. In the concluding passage of his second memorial Tone sums up as follows:

I submit to the wisdom of the French Government that England is the implacable, inveterate, irreconcilable enemy of the Republic, which never can be in perfect security while that nation retains the dominion of the sea; that, in consequence, every possible effort should be made to humble her pride and to reduce her power; that it is in Ireland, *and in Ireland only*, that she is vulnerable – a fact of the truth of which the French Government cannot be too strongly impressed; that by establishing a free Republic in Ireland they attach to France a grateful ally whose cordial assistance, in peace and war, she might command, and who, from situation and produce, could most essentially serve her: that at the same time they cut off from England her most firm support, in losing which she is laid under insuperable difficulties in recruiting her army, and especially in equipping, victualling, and manning her navy, which, unless for the resources she drew from Ireland, she would be absolutely unable to do; that by these means – and, suffer me to add, *by these means only* – her arrogance can be effectually humbled, and her enormous and increasing power at sea reduced within due bounds – an object essential, not only to France, but to all Europe; that it is at least possible, by the measures mentioned, that not only her future resources, as to her navy, may be intercepted and cut off at the fountain head, but that a part of her fleet may be actually transferred to the Republic of Ireland; that the Irish people are united and prepared, and want but the means to begin: that, not to speak of the policy or the pleasure of revenge in humbling a

haughty and implacable rival, it is in itself a great and splendid act of generosity, worthy of the Republic, to rescue a whole nation from a slavery under which they have groaned for six hundred years; that it is for the glory of France, after emancipating Holland and receiving Belgium into her bosom, to establish one more free Republic in Europe; that it is for her interest to cut off for ever, as she now may do, one-half of the resources of England, and lay her under extreme difficulties in the employment of the other. For all these reasons, in the name of justice, of humanity, of freedom, of my own country, and of France herself, I supplicate the Directory to take into consideration the state of Ireland; and by granting her the powerful aid and protection of the Republic, to enable her at once to vindicate her liberty, to humble her tyrant, and to assume that independent station among the nations of the earth for which her soil, her productions and her position, her population and her spirit have designed her.

Finally – after Bantry Bay, the Texel, and Lough Swilly – Tone before his judges thus testified to his faith as a Separatist:

I mean not to give you the trouble of bringing judicial proof to convict me, legally, of having acted in hostility to the Government of his Britannic Majesty in Ireland. I admit the fact. From my earliest youth I have regarded the connection between Ireland and Great Britain as the curse of the Irish nation, and felt convinced that, whilst it lasted, this country could never be free nor happy. My mind has been confirmed in this opinion by the experience of every succeeding year, and the conclusions which I have drawn from every fact before my eyes. In consequence, I determined to apply all the powers which my individual efforts could move in order to separate the two countries.

That Ireland was not able, of herself, to throw off the yoke, I knew. I therefore sought for aid wherever it was to be found. In honourable poverty I rejected offers which, to a man in my circumstances, might be considered highly advantageous. I remained faithful to what I thought the cause of my country, and sought in the French Republic an ally to rescue three millions of my countrymen from ...

Here the prisoner was interrupted by the President of the Court Martial.

### III

In order to complete this brief study of Tone's teaching it is necessary to consider him as a democrat. And Tone, the greatest of modern Irish Separatists, is the first and greatest of modern Irish democrats. It was Tone that said:

Our independence must be had at all hazards. If the men of property will not support us, they must fall: we can support ourselves by the aid of that numerous and respectable class of the community — *the men of no property*.

In this glorious appeal to Caesar modern Irish democracy has its origin.

I have already quoted the secret Manifesto to the Friends of Freedom, attributed to Tone, in which the right to national freedom is made to rest on its true basis, the right to individual freedom. The abstract theory of freedom was not further developed by Tone, who devoted his life to the pursuit of a practical object rather than to the working out of a philosophy. When, however, any question arose which involved the relations of a democracy and an aristocracy, of the people and the gentry ('as they affect to call themselves'), of the 'men of no property' and the 'men of property', Tone's decision was instant and unerring. The people must rule; if the aristocracy make common cause with the people, so much the better; if not, woe to the aristocracy. One passage from his Journal, under date April 27<sup>th</sup>, 1798, says all that need be said as to the practical question of dealing with a hostile aristocracy in a national revolution:

What miserable slaves are the gentry of Ireland! The only accusation brought against the United Irishmen by their enemies, is that they wish to break the connection with England, or, in other words, to establish the independence of their country — an object in which surely the men of property are most interested. Yet the very sound of independence seems to have terrified them out of all sense, spirit, or honesty. If they had one drop of Irish blood in their veins, one grain of true courage or genuine patriotism in their hearts, they should have been the first to support this

great object; the People would have supported them; the English government would never have dared to attempt the measures they have since triumphantly pursued, and continue to pursue; our Revolution would have been accomplished without a shock, or perhaps one drop of blood spilled; which now can succeed, if it does succeed, only by all the calamities of a most furious and sanguinary contest: for the war in Ireland, whenever it does take place, will not be an ordinary one. The armies will regard each other not as soldiers, but as deadly enemies. Who, then, are to blame for this? The United Irishmen, who set the question afloat, or the English government and their partisans, the Irish gentry, who resist it? If independence be good for a country as liberty for an individual, the question will be soon decided. Why does England so pertinaciously resist our independence? Is it for love of us — is it because *she* thinks *we* are better as we are? That single argument, if it stood alone, should determine every honest Irishman.

But, it will be said, the United Irishmen extend their views farther; they go now to a distribution of property, and an agrarian law. I know not whether they do or no. I am sure in June 1795 when I was forced to leave the country, they entertained no such ideas. If they have since taken root among them, the Irish gentry may accuse themselves. Even then they made themselves parties to the business: not content with disdaining to hold communications with the United Irishmen, they were among the foremost of their persecutors: even those who were pleased to denominate themselves patriots were more eager to vilify, and, if they could, to degrade them, than the most devoted and submissive slaves of the English Government. What wonder if the leaders of the United Irishmen, finding themselves not only deserted, but attacked by those who, for every reason, should have been their supporters and fellow labourers, felt themselves no longer called upon to observe any measures with men only distinguished by the superior virulence of their persecuting spirit? If such men, in the issue, lose their property, they are themselves alone to blame, by deserting the first and most sacred of duties — the duty to their country. They have incurred a wilful forfeiture by disdaining to occupy the station they might have held among the People, and which the People would have been glad to see them fill; they left a vacancy to be seized by those who had more courage, more sense, and more honesty; and not only so, but by this base and interested desertion they furnished their enemies with every argument of justice, policy, and interest, to enforce the system of confiscation.



The best that can be said in palliation of the conduct of the English party, is that they are content to sacrifice the liberty and independence of their country to the pleasure of revenge, and their own personal security. They see Ireland only in their rent rolls, their places, their patronage, and their pensions. There is not a man among them who, in the bottom of his soul, does not feel that he is a degraded being in comparison of those whom he brands with the names of incendiaries and traitors. It is this stinging reflection which, among other powerful motives, is one of the most active in spurring them on to revenge. Their dearest interests, their warmest passions, are equally engaged. Who can forgive the man that forces him to confess that he is a voluntary slave, and that he has sold for money everything that should be most precious to an honourable heart? that he has trafficked in the liberties of his children and his own, and that he is hired and paid to commit a daily parricide on his country? Yet these are the charges which not a man of that infamous caste can deny to himself before the sacred tribunal of his own conscience. At least the United Irishmen, as I have already said, have a grand, a sublime object in view. Their enemies have not as yet ventured, in the long catalogue of their accusations, to insert the charge of interested motives. Whilst that is the case they may be feared and abhorred, but they can never be despised; and I believe there are few men who do not look upon contempt as the most insufferable of all human evils. Can the English faction say as much? In vain do they crowd together, and think by their numbers to disguise or lessen their infamy. The public sentiment, the secret voice of their own corrupt hearts, has already condemned them. They see their destruction rapidly approaching, and they have the consciousness that when they fall no honest man will pity them. *They shall perish like their own dung; those who have seen them shall say, Where are they?*

Tone did not propose any general confiscation of private property other than the property of Englishmen in Ireland, and this only after proclamation to the English people, as distinct from the English Government, stating the grounds of the action of the Irish nation and declaring their earnest desire to avoid the effusion of blood; if, after such proclamation, the English people supported the English Government in war upon Ireland, Tone held that the confiscation of English property ‘would then be an act of strict justice, as the English people would have made themselves parties to the war’. Emmet’s proposals in 1803 are a

fuller and more detailed expression of the mind of revolutionary Ireland on the subject of property. The first decree drafted by Emmet for his Provisional Government was that ‘tithes are forever abolished, and church lands are the property of the nation’; the second laid down that ‘from this date all transfers of landed property are prohibited, each person paying his rent until the National Government is established, the national will be declared, and the courts of justice be organised’; the third made a like provision with regard to the transfer of bonds and securities; and the fifth decreed the confiscation of the property of Irishmen in the Militia, Yeomanry, or Volunteer corps who, after fourteen days, should be found in arms against the Republic. When we speak of men like Tone and Emmet as ‘visionaries’ and ‘idealists’ we regard only one side of their minds. Both were extraordinarily able men of affairs, masters of all the details of the national, social, and economic positions in their day; and both would have been ruthless in revolution, shedding exactly as much blood as would have been necessary to their purpose. Both, however, were Nationalists first, and revolutionists only in so far as revolution was essential to the establishment of the nation. ‘We war not against property,’ said Emmet in his proclamation, ‘we war against no religious sect, we war not against past opinions or prejudices – we war against English dominion.’

One is now in a position to sum up Tone’s teaching in a series of propositions:

1. The Irish Nation is One.
2. The Irish Nation, like all Nations, has an indefeasible right to Freedom.
3. Freedom denotes Separation and Sovereignty.
4. The right to National Freedom rests upon the right to Personal Freedom, and true National Freedom guarantees true Personal Freedom.
5. The object of Freedom is the pursuit of the happiness of the Nation and of the individuals that compose the Nation.

6. Freedom is necessary to the happiness and prosperity of the Nation. In the particular case of Ireland, Separation from England is necessary not only to the happiness and prosperity but almost to the continued existence of Ireland, inasmuch as the interests of Ireland and England are fundamentally at variance, and while the two nations are connected England must necessarily predominate.
7. The National Sovereignty implied in National Freedom holds good both externally and internally, *i.e.* the sovereign rights of the Nation are good as against all other nations and good as against all parts of the Nation. Hence —
8. The Nation has jurisdiction over lives and property within the Nation.
9. The People are the Nation.

All this Tone taught, not in the dull pages of a treatise, but in the living phrases that dropped from him in his conversation, in his correspondence, in his diaries, in his impassioned pleas for his nation to the Executive Directory of France. Some of the greatest teachers have been literary men only incidentally; but their teaching has none the less the splendour of great literary utterance. The masters of literature do not always label themselves. When a great soul utters a great truth have we not always great literature? That is why the true gospels of the world are always true literature. Those who have preached the divine worth of faith and justice and charity and freedom have done so in glorious and imperishable words: and the reason is that God speaks through them.

That God spoke to Ireland through Tone and through those who, after Tone, have taken up his testimony, that Tone's teaching and theirs is true and great and that no other teaching as to Ireland has any truth or worthiness at all, is a thing upon which I stake all my mortal and all my immortal hopes. And I ask the men and women of my generation to stake their mortal and immortal hopes with me.

# ON THE ENGLISH CONNECTION

*To every Landlord, Merchant and Manufacturer of Ireland:*

I purpose to inquire into a question of the highest import to your honour and your interest. There is not a man of you but is concerned, and therefore, I demand your most serious attention, praying, only that what I shall lay before you be read with the same zeal and spirit with which it is written.

“Are we bound to support Great Britain in the impending war?”

I do expect that to some it may appear an extraordinary thing to doubt, on a proposition so long received as evident. Perhaps it at first appeared so to myself, but the more I have looked into the question, the more I am satisfied that neither by law, honour, nor interest, are we bound to engage in the present war.

The situation of England and Ireland, considered with regard to each other, has been, since the year 1782, a phenomenon defying all hypothesis and calculation: an empire, as it is called, of two parts, co-equal and co-ordinate, with such a confusion of attributes as nothing less than a revolution can separate and determine. Before I proceed to state my reasons for being so satisfied, it may be advisable to take a very short glance at the present state of this country, which appears to me such as in no age or history can be paralleled. A mighty kingdom, governed by two or three obscure individuals of another country on maxims, and with views totally foreign to her interest, and kept in this subjection by no other medium, that I can discover, than the mere force of opinion and acquiescence of custom. I confess I behold with amazement a phenomenon which mocks all calculation, to the extreme degree that nothing short of the evidence of my senses could convince me of its existence.

Antecedent to this date (1782) the power of Great Britain in Ireland was so well established by laws of her own enacting, fleets of her own building, armies of her own raising, that it was of very little moment what were the opinions of Irishmen on any public question. Our woollen manufacture was demolished by a single vote of the English Commons, the appellate jurisdiction torn from us by a resolution of the English Lords, and, in a word, insult was heaped on injury and wrong for so long a series of years, that we were sunk to the subordination of an English County, without the profits of English commerce, or the protection of English liberty. We had ceased to remember that we were a nation, or that we had a name, till the genius of American liberty burst asunder a sleep that seemed the slumber of death; the nation started forth and shivered the manacles which British ambition had hoped were forged with eternity. Our constitution, our commerce were enlarged from a dreary captivity, and the name of Ireland became once more respected, her independence was admitted when it could no longer be withheld, and her imperial crown restored from the felonious custody of arbitrary and jealous domination.

If Ireland, therefore, acquiesced, without a murmur, in all wars antecedent to this period, no argument can be drawn from her acquiescence which will not justify burning the almost inspired volume of Molyneux by the hands of an English hangman. She submitted, because she could not resist, not because she did not see that her interest was sacrificed, even by her own hand. Precedent cannot weigh in an inquiry like the present. The precedent of tyrant and slave will not bind free, equal and equal. We were, before 1782, bound to support the wars of Great Britain, and we were also bound to submit to her capricious and interested misrule; we were bound by a legion of laws, not enacted by our own legislature, or shadow of legislature; and what bound us? Hard necessity, the arrogance of saucy wealth, and the wantonness of intoxicated power, dealing out buffets and stripes, to abject submission and slavish

fear. Be ye not then the dupes of precedent, nor think that long prescription can sanctify what the voice of God and nature cries aloud in your bosoms is unholy and unjust. If ye admit such an argument, then were the struggles of every man of you, guided as they were by the prime spirits of the land, rebellious innovations on justice and on law; the charter of your liberties is paper; and England, when she has crushed, with your aid, her present foes, is warranted, by your own admission, to turn her fleets and her armies loose against the nation, and reseize the rights which, in the moment of her temporary weakness, you take a base advantage to exert.

I trust you will not admit an argument for your interference, so obviously pregnant with consequences fatal to your freedom. The precedent of Ireland subjugated, with crippled force, and broken spirit, poor and divided, must not be held up as the rule of conduct to Ireland restored to her rights, glowing with the ardency of youth, and the vigour of renovated constitution, and of infinitely greater extent and internal resources than Denmark or Sweden, or Portugal or Sardinia, or Naples — all sovereign states.

You all remember the day of your slavery and oppression and insignificance. Have you considered what you are now? Does your present situation ever occur, even to your dreams? An existing miracle which gives the lie to all political experience.

A rising and powerful kingdom, rich in all the gifts of nature; a soil fertile, a sky temperate, intersected by many great rivers, pregnant with mines of every useful metal and mineral; indented by the noblest harbours; inhabited by four millions of an ingenious, a bold and gallant people, yet unheard of and unknown in Europe, and by no means of such consequence as the single county of York in England. Is this statement exaggerated? Is it equal to the truth? If these things be so, does it ever occur to you what it is that degrades you, that keeps you without a court, without ambassadors, without a navy, without an army? If it has not, I will tell you, and I will show you wherein

you differ from England. There the Monarchy resides: there, whatever party prevail, the administration is English, and their sole, or, at least, their principal view is the good of the nation, so that the interest of the Minister and the country are forwarded by the same means. With us it is not so. Our Government is formed of some insignificant English nobleman, who presides; some obsequious tool of the British Minister who proposes, and a rabble of the most profligate of our countrymen, who execute his mandates. The interest of the Government and of the nation drag different ways, and with the purse of the nation, and the patronage of the Crown appended to one scale, it is easy to foresee which will preponderate. Hence flow the various grievances of Ireland; corruption in every form, wanton expense, unbounded speculation, sale of honours, judicial oppression, and last, though not least, the plunging of her into all the horrors of a war, in a quarrel where she is no more interested, in the eye of reason, than if the difference arose in the moon.

I believe in the history of man there is not to be found an instance, wherein of two nations, equal in all natural advantages, equal in intelligence, in spirit, in courage, one has yet been for centuries content to remain in a state of subordination, unknown and unregarded, drawing her Government, and the maxims of her Government from the other, though demonstratively injurious to her pride, her interest, her commerce, and her Constitution, and receiving no one advantage in return for such a complete surrender of her imperial and independent rights. When I consider the situation of Ireland at this day, I confess I am utterly at a loss to account for her submission to such degrading inferiority. Old prejudices will do much, but can they do all this? Or has the wisdom of the Almighty framed some kingdoms as He has some animals, only for the convenience and service of others?

I have been compelled, by the nature of this address, to touch on the present state of the connection between the countries. I have likewise examined the question of war on the

ground of precedent, and I hope proved that, on that ground, we are under no tie. In my next, I shall try it by the touchstone of strict legal right, and I request my reader may keep this, and the few subsequent papers of which I intend to occupy a part, that they may have the whole of the evidence, and examine it together.



# ESSAY ON THE STATE OF IRELAND IN 1720

It is a favourite cant, under which many conceal their idleness, and many their corruption, to cry that there is, in the genius of the people of this country, and particularly among the lower ranks, a spirit of pride, laziness, and dishonesty, which stifles all tendency to improvement, and will for ever keep us a subordinate nation of hewers of wood, and of drawers of water. It may be worth while a little to consider this opinion, because, if it be well founded, to know it so, may save me, and other well wishers to Ireland, the hopeless labour of endeavouring to excite a nation of idle thieves to honesty and industry; and if it be not, it is an error, the removal of which will not only wipe away an old stigma, but, in a great degree, facilitate the way to future improvement. If we can find any cause, different from an inherent depravity in the people, and abundantly sufficient to account for the backwardness of this country, compared with England, I hope no man will volunteer national disgrace so far as to prefer that hypothesis which, by degrading his country, degrades himself.

Idleness is a ready accusation in the mouth of him whose corruption denies to the poor the means of labour: "Ye are idle," said Pharoah to the Israelites, when he demanded bricks of them, and withheld the straw.

In enquiring into the subject of this essay, I shall take a short view of the state of this country at the time of her greatest abasement; I mean about the time when she was supposed to be fettered for ever by the famous act of the 6<sup>th</sup> of George I, and I shall draw my facts from the most indisputable authority, that of Swift. Yet, surely, misrule and ignorance and oppression, in the Government, are means sufficient to plunge and to keep any nation in ignorance and poverty, without blaspheming Providence by imputing innate and immovable depravity to

millions of God's creatures. It is, at least, a hypothesis more honourable to human nature; let us try if it be not more consonant to the reality of things. Let us see the state of Ireland in different periods, and let us refer those periods to the maxims and practice of her then Government.

To begin with the first grand criterion of the prosperity of a nation. In 1724, the population of Ireland was 1,500,000, and in 1672, 1,100,000, so that in fifty two-years it was increased but one-third, after a civil war. The rental of the whole kingdom was computed at £2,000,000 annually, of which, by absentees, about £700,000, went to England. The revenue was £400,000 per annum; the current cash was £500,000, which, in 1727, was reduced to less than £200,000; and the balance of trade with England, the only nation to which we could trade, was in our disfavour about £1,000,000 annually. Such were the resources of Ireland in 1724.

Commerce we had none, or what was worse than none, an exportation of raw minerals for half their value; an importation of the same materials wrought up at an immense profit to the English manufacturer; the indispensable necessaries of life bartered for luxuries for our men, and fopperies for our women; not only the wine, and coffee, and silk, and cotton, but the very corn we consumed was imported from England.

Our benches were filled with English lawyers; our Bishopries with English divines; our custom-house with English commissioners; all offices of stated filled, three deep, with Englishmen in possession. Englishmen in reversion, and Englishmen in expectancy. The majority of these not only aliens, but absentees, and not only absentees, but busily and actively employed against that country on whose vitals, and in whose blood they were rioting in ease and luxury. Every proposal, for the advantage of Ireland, was held a direct attack on the interests of England. Swift's pamphlet, on the expediency of wearing our own manufactures, exposed the printer to a prosecution, in which the jury was sent back by the Chief Justice nine times, till

they were brow-beaten, and bullied, and wearied into a special verdict, leaving the printer to the mercy of the judge.

The famous project of Wood is known to every one; it is unnecessary to go into the objections against it; but it is curious to see the mode in which that ruinous plan was endeavoured to be forced down our throats. Immediately on its promulgation, the two Houses of Parliament, the Privy Council, the merchants, the traders, the manufacturers, the grand juries of the whole kingdom, by votes, resolutions, and addresses testified their dread and abhorrence of the plan. What was the conduct of the English Minister? He calls a committee of the *English* council together; he examines Mr. Wood on one side, and two or three prepared, obscure, and interested witnesses on the other, he non-suits the whole Irish nation; thus committed with Mr Wm. Wood, he puts forth a proclamation, commanding all persons to receive his half-pence in payment, and calls the votes of the House of Lords and Commons, and the resolutions of the Privy Council of Ireland, a clamour. But Swift had by this time raised a spirit, not to be laid by the anathema of the British minister; the project was riven as far as the verge of civil war; there it was stopped, and this was the first signal triumph of the virtue of the people in Ireland.

In one of his inimitable letters on the subject of Wood's half-pence, Swift, with a daring and a generous indignation, worthy of a better age and country, had touched on the imaginary dependence of Ireland on England. The bare mention of a doubt on the subject, had an instantaneous effect on the nerves of the English Government here. A proclamation was issued, offering £300 for the author; the printer was thrown into jail, the Grand Jury were tampered with to present the letter, and, on their refusing to do so, were dissolved in a rage by the Chief Justice, a step without a precedent, save one, which happened in the times of James II and was followed by an immediate censure of the House of Commons of England. Yet all that Swift had said, was that:

“...under God, he could be content to depend only on the King, his Sovereign, and the laws of his own country; that the Parliament of England had sometimes enacted laws, binding Ireland, but that obedience to them was but the result of necessity, inasmuch as eleven men well armed, well certainly subdue one man in his shirt, be his cause ever so righteous, and that, by the laws of God, of nature, and of nations, Irishmen were, and ought to be, as free as their brethren in England.”

We, who live at this day, see nothing like sedition, privy conspiracy, or rebellion. In all this; and we may bless God for it; but in 1724, the case was very different. The printer was prosecuted and died in jail; Swift escaped, because it was impossible to bring it home to him, and so little were the minds of men prepared for such opinions, that, in a paper addressed to the Grand Jury, who were to sit on the bills of indictment, Swift is obliged to take shelter under past services, and admit that the words which were taken up by Government, as offensive, were the result of inadvertency and unwariness.

The famous act of the 6<sup>th</sup> of George I, Swift, with all his intrepidity, does no more than obscurely hint at; a crying testimony to the miserable depression of spirit in this country, when the last rivet, driven into her fetters, and clenched, as England hoped, forever, could not excite more than an indistinct and half-suppressed murmur.

From this brief sketch, it appears, that no prospect could be more hopeless than the star of liberty should again arise in Ireland. If, notwithstanding the impenetrable cloud in which she seemed buried for ever, she has yet broke forth with renovated splendour, and again kindled the spirit of the people, surely it is a grand *fact*, overbearing, at once, the efforts of thousands of corrupt cavaliers, who cry out that this is not a nation capable of political virtue or steady exertion.

# ESSAY ON THE STATE OF IRELAND IN 1790

In my last essay, I took a short review of the state of Ireland, miserable, impoverished, enslaved, and contemned, as she was, 70 years ago. In that stupor of wretchedness she remained without exertion, and almost without sensation, for nearly 60 years. It is within the memory of the youngest of us, when the cup of her sorrows, filled as it was by the profuse hand of unmitigated and rancorous oppression, at length overflowed. On the instant the spell was broken, the genius of the land aroused himself, and again turned his eagle eye on the sun of liberty; he looked down on his manacles and his fetters, and they melted beneath his glance; he walked forth, glorying in his might; in his right hand he grasped the sword of resistance, in his left he held the charter of his freedom; on his head appeared the sacred helmet of the Constitution, and tyranny was appalled, and oppression withered before him.

It was in the year 1778, when the lust of power and the pride of England had engaged her in a visionary scheme of subduing the spirit of America, (a scheme which met with the fate such arrogant presumption deserved,) that the germ of the Irish revolution budded forth. It rose and spread in a grand and growing climax, from a non-importation agreement, whose object was trade, to associations of armed men, whose object was liberty. Ireland, in its need, felt only the oppression of its Government, but found no protection from it, for corruption had exhausted the funds, and tyranny had drained the force of the nation. Our armies were slaughtering their brethren in America, whilst our ports were insulted by petty and piratical incursions. The wretched rulers of the land, competent to harass, to plunder, and to insult, were unable to defend the people. We were left, fortunately left, to defend ourselves. An army of 50,000 men at once burst into existence, self-appointed, self-arrayed, self-

disciplined – an army, whose principle was patriotism, whose object was their country; whose ardour was tempered by wisdom, whose valour was fortified by reflection, who were led on by the high spirit of freedom, and supported by the steady consciousness of dignified virtue. Such an army encompassed the Island as with a wall of fire. The enemy, dazzled by its brightness, or daunted by its consuming heat, ventured not to approach it; and, whilst England trembled to her centre behind the shield of her boasted navy, then flying before the fleets of France and of Spain, Ireland rested on her arms, dauntless and unterrified, with the calm confidence of unshaken valour, expecting, but not dreading the impending foe.

But it was not the invasion of a foreign enemy alone that Ireland had to fear. She saw herself robbed of her constitution, and cheated of her commerce, by England; she saw that every prosperous event in the war, was instantly followed by some direct or covert attack on her interest or her honour. The triumphs of the British, in America, few as they were, were as a necessary sequel attended by victories over Ireland in her own Senate. *“The mutiny bills were passed, and Charlestown taken.”* But the people had now felt their own strength; relying on the arms in their hands, the justice of their cause, and the goodness of their God, they demanded their trade, they demanded their constitution, from the proud and bullying English Minister, who had seized, and the corrupt and cowardly Irish Senate, who had surrendered them. The voice of the people in such a cause, is the voice of God. At a word, the power of England, in this country, was annihilated; the lofty superstructure of her tyranny, that had stood for ages, tumbled into ruins, when the sacred ark of our freedom was brought forth, and the trumpets of liberty sounded before it.

In 1782, this great and unparalleled revolution was accomplished by a complete, explicit, and final surrender on the part of Great Britain, of all right or pretension to legislate for Ireland, externally or internally. Poyning’s act was modified, the

appellate jurisdiction was restored, the habeas corpus law enacted, the Judges were made independent of the Crown, the mutiny bill was limited; in a word, every offensive statute was repealed, and Ireland restored to her ancient imperial hereditary rights. It was said at that time, perhaps incautiously, that no question could hereafter arise between the two countries. We have seen that assertion contradicted by experience, more than once already, and, from appearances, it is not unlikely that we may see it contradicted again.

We have now beheld Ireland in two situations not a century removed from each other; we have seen her in the most abject slavery; we see her in almost perfect freedom. What have been the causes and the means of her emancipation? Those very circumstances which the cold and the corrupt, the venal and the spiritless, deny her – public virtue, wisdom, and spirit. It is in her *people*, I would be understood to mean, that those qualities are to be found. *They* have done *their* part, and, if Ireland is not yet completely free, they have not themselves to accuse. The very Senate to whom they gave rank and consequence; the Government to which they gave dignity, deserted and reviled, but they could not degrade them; their virtue stands, and will forever stand, a great and luminous object on the page of history. It is to ages yet unborn that the deeds of our fathers and our own will appear in their due grandeur and elevation. The object is too vast for us; we stand as pygmies at the base of the pyramids, too near to comprehend them.

But though we are not enough to duly prize the virtue, the wisdom, and the spirit of the Irish people, we yet can compare this revolution in our country with some that we have read of, and others that we have seen, and see what is the result. Was ever so great and important a change, carried nearly into completion, at least as far as the people, deserted by their Governors, could advance it, without shedding one drop of blood? Did ever, in any age or country, so many virtuous citizens concur to liberate their native land, where no individual had a

view beyond the public good? Was one man enriched by the emancipation of Ireland? Was one man aggrandized, unless by the unanimous voice of his grateful and applauding countrymen? It was not a revolution of wild experiment, where all order was subverted; it was not a revolution of fanaticism, intolerance, and bigotry. It was a great and glorious exertion of steady and temperate valour, founded on the principles of strict justice, conducted by intuitive and daring wisdom, and animated by that disinterested and ardent spirit that sought no object but the common good, the common freedom, and the common glory. Such a revolution could not but succeed; to doubt its success, we should doubt the beneficence of our Creator, and the wisdom of his Providence.

After the testimony of our senses to this grand proof of the wise, the gallant, and the uncorrupted patriotism of Irishmen, let us not listen to the idle and wicked babble of those who tell us that the spirit of the nation is incapable of active and disinterested exertion for the common good. Let those who feel their own hollow incapacity, impotently endeavour to attach the vices of the individual to the character of the nation, and elude the justice of public opinion, by arraiging the tribunal before whom they must appear, but let those who feel in their own bosoms no latent sparks of corruption and dishonour, be not disheartened by such vile and degrading sentiments. Let them remember that Ireland can never hereafter have to do so much as she has already gloriously accomplished; and let the pride of well earned fame incite them, if not to future exertion for their country's complete emancipation, at least to preserve inviolate and sacred that freedom and those benefits, which have been but just acquired by the virtue of their fathers and of themselves.

AN IRISHMAN.



# ON THE NECESSITY FOR DOMESTIC UNION

It is the singular fate of this country, in which she differs from all the rest of Europe, that in writing or speaking of her Government, it is necessary to set out by proving certain principles, which are everywhere else received as axioms. This is the more vexatious, because, in fact, there is nothing so difficult to be proved as that kind of truth which explains itself. In every language there must be certain terms; in every science, certain principles, which are the most simple and uncompounded, and to explain these, use must be made of others less obvious and determinate. If, therefore, I should not be fortunate enough to be very clear in elucidating the subject of this essay, I beg it may be remembered, that the principles I am to develop would everywhere but in Ireland, be looked upon as so clear, that elucidation would be impossible, or, at least, unnecessary.

Having premised this much, I shall venture, however it may shock the prejudices of many of my countrymen, to lay down my thesis, which is simply this: "That union amongst the people, is better for any nation than hatred and animosity." I beg I may not be supported to assert a paradox merely to show my ingenuity, for I am seriously convinced of the truth of the above position.

Before I proceed to prove it, I shall take the liberty to borrow from mathematics one maxim, which is, by the practice of Ireland, utterly rejected, and yet is, notwithstanding, very true. I mean this: "The whole is greater than a part." I know that my antagonists may object the authority of Hesiod, who says that a part is more than the whole.<sup>1</sup> But I answer that Hesiod was but a poet, in the first place, and in the next, we know nothing of

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<sup>1</sup> *Opera et dies*, line 40.

his public principles, so that for aught that appears, he may have been a Tory. This being merely an abstract point, I believe I need not be very particular in proving it. It may be sufficient to say, that as the continent must be greater than the thing contained, the whole, containing all the parts, must be greater than any one of them; and if any man is inclined to cavil or doubt my argument, let him make the experiment of a long walk with a shoe too short for his foot, and I apprehend he will feel sensibly that I am right, and become a convert to truth and reason.

My thesis, that union is better than discord, might, I should apprehend, be thought as clear and obvious as the aforesaid maxim, did not I see the conduct of the whole of one party in this nation, and a great majority of the other, regulated by maxims diametrically opposite to it. Certainly they must see some lurking fallacy at the bottom of it, which escapes the duller organs of many ardent and true well wishers to Ireland, who, with all the ingenuity, sincerity, and diligence, they can exert, have not yet been able to discover it, and of which number, I confess myself one; for I cannot suppose that they would admit the truth of the principle, and yet square their conduct by rules flatly contradictory to it, or that God has given them reason to discover it, only that they may avoid it.

There is no man in Ireland, who, if the question were put to him in general terms, would not at once admit the affirmative; I therefore shall assume that, on the abstract merits of the case, union is better than discord, and that it is in a moral, religious, and political light, a more interesting and delightful spectacle, to see men embracing in amity and love, than cutting each other's throats, or roasting each other at a stake.

I have now got through, or perhaps I should say, got over my two heads; it remains to reduce them to practice, and apply them to the situation of Ireland at this day; I therefore say, first: Our whole people consists of Catholics, Protestants, and Presbyterians, and is, therefore, greater than any one of these sects, and equal to them altogether. This being matter of fact, will

probably be conceded to me; but my thesis, when referred to Ireland, being matter of opinion, and, moreover, perplexed, complicated, and thwarted by all manner of interests, prejudices, passions, and every obstacle that can impede truth in its progress, will require somewhat of time, attention, and patience, to examine and ascertain it.

To prepare the way for this enquiry, the most momentous which ever came under the consideration of Ireland, it will be necessary to take a short glance at her situation, with reference to England; because I believe it will appear, that, independent of those general arguments, which apply to all countries, and which I find myself grow too serious to repeat in a ludicrous manner, there are some peculiar to herself, and those of the strongest, weightiest, most cogent, most just, and most powerful, which can influence human decision.

Ireland is a small country, connected by a mysterious bond of union with a larger, a poor country with a richer; her people are not one half so numerous, her capital in trade probably not one tenth as great, her skill and dexterity in mechanic arts, far below that of Great Britain. These would be great disadvantages, even if she were blest by an independent, and, therefore, an honest administration. But this is not, nor in the nature of things can it be, the case. She is governed by men sent from England, to do the business of England, and who hold the honours, the emoluments, the sword, and the purse of Ireland. From the situation, natural protections, and habits of the two kingdoms, there is and must be a perpetual rivalry in trade between them. Trade is regulated by laws, laws are made by Parliament, Parliament is uniformly and irresistibly swayed by Government, and the Government is English. It is easy, therefore, to see what will be the event, when the question of trade arises between Ireland and England. I believe no man will be impudent enough to deny this to be a fair state of the case; but if there be any of so hardy a forehead, I would refer him to a very recent transaction. The session before the last, our House of Commons voted

£200,000 to enforce the claims of the British merchants to trade to Nootka Sound, "because the interests of both countries were the same." In the last session, an attempt was made to enquire whether, by any possibility, we could ever obtain a share of that trade, to secure which, we were so flippant with our blood and money. But we were then taught that it was extremely possible "that the interests of both countries might differ materially;" for the argument which stifled this unseasonable enquiry, was, "that it would interfere with the English East India Company;" and with this answer, the Parliament and people were satisfied, as I suppose, for they yet acquiesce under it.

Considering this, therefore, merely as a question concerning the commercial interests of Ireland, there can be no doubt but that an internal union of all her people, in a grand, previous, and indispensable requisite to secure and extend the trade we have so lately extorted. England has 8,000,000 of united people, and they are free; Ireland has 4,000,000, of whom much above one half are degraded, and ought to be discontented slaves. Instead of watching the insidious arts of our Government here, we are watching each other; one party looking for advantages, contemptible if they could be obtained, and power unjust, if it could be exerted, the others so long cowed and rebuked, that they appear to have lost their spirit; the generous energies of their nature are stifled, and it is only by their figure, which the hand of foolish and wicked tyranny has been unable to deface, that they appear to be men.

The English Government here was founded, has been supported, and now exists but in the disunion of Irishmen. God forbid I should wish to see it subverted, but surely it is no bad pledge for the good conduct of rulers, that they should have a wholesome fear of the spirit of a people united in interest and sentiment. This I am sure of; that a good Government would have nothing to apprehend from such an event, as the general conciliation of the people of Ireland; and, for any other, the more

general, the more determined, and the more active opposition they met with, the better for the country.

Ireland is paralytic; she is worse; she is not merely dead of one side, whilst the other is unaffected, but both are in a continual and painful and destructive struggle, consuming to waste and to destroy each other.

# THE SPANISH WAR

My Lords and Gentlemen: The Minister of England has formally announced the probability of a rupture with Spain; and the British nation is arming with all possible energy and despatch; and, from Land's End to the Orkneys, nothing is to be heard but dreadful note of preparation; ships are equipped, press warrants are granted, beating orders issued, and a million raised; all parties unite in one great principle - the support of the national honour, and pulling down Spanish pride; and hope and glowing expectation kindle the native valour of England; the British lion has lashed himself into a fury, and woe the unlucky Spaniard whom he may seize in his gripe.

But this is not all; the Minister of England, in the overflowing of his benevolence to this happy isle, has been graciously pleased to allow us an opportunity of following the noble beast in the course of glory and profit; so that we may, from hi leavings, glean up sufficient of honour and wealth to emblazon and enrich us till time shall be no more. Press warrants are granted, and beating orders issued here, too, and the youth of Hibernia have no more to do but to take the King's money first, as earnest, and the riches of Spain follow of course.

I know the ardent valour of my countrymen, ever impatient of peace and prompt for battle, heightened and inflamed as it now is by the eloquence of the sergeant and the music of his drum, will strongly impel them, more majorum, to brandish the cudgel first, and discuss the merits after; a very common process among them. But you, my lords and gentlemen, will, I trust, look a little deeper into things; with all the spirit of our rustics, you will show that you are just and prudent, as well as valiant.

Now is the instant for consideration, before the Rubicon be passed; and the example which Caesar showed, the bravest of you need not blush to follow. It is universally expected that, at your meeting, the Secretary will come forward to acquaint you

that his majesty is preparing for war with Spain, and hopes for your concurrence to carry it on, so as to procure the blessings of an honourable peace. This message he will endeavour to have answered by an address, offering, very frankly, our lives and fortunes to the disposal of the British Minister in the approaching contest; and, that will be followed by up by a vote of credit for three hundred thousand pounds as our quota of the expense; a sum of a magnitude very alarming to the finances of this country.

But it is not the magnitude of the grant which is the great object; it is the consequence of it, involving a question between the two countries of no less importance than this: *'WHETHER IRELAND BE, OF RIGHT, BOUND TO SUPPORT A WAR, DECLARED BY THE KING OF GREAT BRITAIN, ON MOTIVES AND INTERESTS ENTIRELY BRITISH?'*

If it appear that she is, it is our duty to submit to the necessity, however inconvenient; if it appear that she is not so bound, but may grant or withhold her assistance to England, then it will be for your wisdoms to consider whether war be for her interest or not. If it be, you will doubtless take the necessary steps to carry it on with spirit and effect; if it be not, you will make arrangements to obtain and secure a safe and honourable neutrality.

The present is a question of too much importance to both countries to be left unsettled; but though it be of great weight and moment indeed, I do not apprehend it to be of great difficulty. The matter of right lies in a nut-shell, turning on two principles which no man will, I hope, pretend to deny: First, that the Crown of Ireland is an imperial crown, and her legislature separate and independent; and, secondly, that the prerogative of the Crown, and the constitution and powers of parliament, are the same here as in Great Britain.

It is, undoubtedly, the King's royal prerogative to declare war against any power it may please him to quarrel with; and when proclamation is made here to that effect, I admit, we are

then engaged, just as the people of England are, in similar circumstances. But as we have here a free and independent parliament, it is as undoubtedly their privilege to grant, or withhold, the supplies; and if they peremptorily refuse them, and the Mutiny Act, I know not how an army is to be paid, or governed, without proceeding to means not to be thought on.

It follows, therefore, that the parliament of Ireland have a kind of negative voice, in the question of war and peace, exactly similar to that of the English parliament. If, then, they have this deliberative power, they are no further bound to support a war than the English parliament is, which may, undoubtedly, compel peace at any time by postponing the money and mutiny bills. They are, therefore, not bound to support any war until they have previously approved and adopted it.

The king of Ireland may declare the war, but it is the parliament only that can carry it on. If this be so, it follows, very clearly, that we are not, more than England, ipso facto, committed, merely by the declaration of war of our own king; and, a fortiori, much less are we committed by his declaration, as king of Great Britain, when our interest is endamaged, and the quarrel and the profit are merely and purely English. If the parliament of England address his majesty for war and, in consequence, war be proclaimed; if we are at once, without our consent, perhaps against our will and our interest, engaged, and our parliament bound to support that war, in pursuance of that address; then, I say, the independence of Ireland is sacrificed, we are bound by the act of the British parliament, and the charter of our liberties is waste paper.

**To talk of the independence of a country, and yet deny her a negative voice in a question of less import to her well-being than that of peace and war, is imprudent nonsense.**

But, I hope and trust, no man at this day will be so hardy as to advance such an assertion, or to deny that our parliament is co-ordinate with that of England, and equally competent to the regulation of all our domestic concerns and foreign interests,



with similar powers of assent and refusal, and if so, with equal right to receive or reject a war. From the question of right, which will not be denied you, suffer me to call your attention to the question of expediency. You may, at your will, draw the sword, or hold out the olive.

It remains, therefore, to examine which line of conduct is likely to be most beneficial to your country. Before you commit ourselves, decidedly, to war or peace, it behoves you well to consider the consequences of both to Ireland; see what she can gain, see what she must lose, try how far her interest or her honour is concerned: reflect that on your first vote depend the properties, the liberties, the lives of thousands of your countrymen; and, above all, remember you are about to make a precedent for future ages, in the great question of the obligation on Ireland to follow Great Britain to war; as a necessary appendage.

What, in the first place, are the grounds of the quarrel as to Ireland? And what are the profits she has to look to from the contest between Spain and England? It will not be pretended that we have immediately, from our own concerns, any ground for interfering in the approaching war; on the contrary, peace with all the world, but peace with Spain particularly, is our object and our interest. The quarrel is merely and purely English. A few individuals in China, members of a company which is possessed of a monopoly of the commerce to the East, to the utter exclusion of this country, fitted out certain ships to trade to the North Western coast of America, for furs, which they expected would prove a lucrative article of traffic.

The Spaniards, actuated by pride or jealousy, or both, have, it seems, seized these vessels, to the disgrace of (not the Irish, but) the British flag, and to enforce satisfaction, an armament is preparing. In this transaction the probability is that Spain is in the wrong, and England is acting with no more than a becoming spirit; but the question with us is, not who is wrong, or who is right? Ours are discussions of a different nature; to

foster and cherish a growing trade, to cultivate and civilize a yet unpolished people, to obliterate the impression of ancient religious feuds, to watch, with incessant and anxious care, the cradle of an infant constitution; these are our duties, and these are indispensable.

Removed a hemisphere from the scene of action, unconnected with the interest in question, debarred from the gains of the commerce, what has Ireland to demand her interference, more than if the debate arose between the Emperor of Japan and the King of Korea? Will she profit if England secure the trade? No. Will she lose if England cannot obtain one otter skin? No. Shall we eat, drink or sleep one jot the worse whether the Mandarins of Pekin line their doublets with furs purchased from a Spanish or an English merchant? No.

Decidedly, then, the quarrel is English, the profit will be to England, and Ireland will be left to console herself for her treasure spent, and her gallant sons fallen, by the reflection that valour, like virtue, is its own reward, and that she has given Great Britain one more opportunity to be ungrateful. So much for the ground of quarrel, and the profit we are to expect from the war!

Let me now humbly submit to your consideration the actual certainty we are required to sacrifice to these brilliant expectations, and I will do it from your own authentic documents. Subjoined, in an Appendix, is a view of the whole of our commerce with Spain or the year 1789, from which I shall extract the most important articles here. In doing this, it is my wish to be as correct as possible, but the value of most of the articles I am obliged to appreciate by conjecture and inquiry.

There is a book in the possession of administration, called the National Stock Book, wherein the value of all the exports and imports is inserted; but this is industriously kept back from you, so that, in the documents submitted to you, containing, in most articles, only the quantum, you must content yourselves with doing what I have done, and make the best inquiries you can. It

appears that the following are the principal articles of your exports:

Linen	£26,779
Wheat	£17,056
Pork	£17,190
Butter	£37,539
Bacon	£4,260
Beef	£3,207
Flour	£3,718
Barley	£3,794
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>£113,543</b>

Which, with other articles mentioned in the Appendix, makes the gross amount of your exports £117,428 3s 2d.

On this trade, I shall only remark that your staple manufacture, your agriculture and tillage, are most materially concerned. The following, from the same authority, is the account of your imports from Spain in the same year, but I confess myself less competent to ascertain their value. I shall, therefore, unless in one or two of the most material articles, set down only the quantum imported:

Drugs: £2,000 value.  
Argal: 6 cwt.  
Cochineal: 1,223 lb.  
Indigo: 5,995 lb.  
Logwood: 790 cwt.  
Madder: 50 cwt.  
Sumach: 382 cwt.  
Salt: 23,226 bushels.  
Brandy: 17,847 gals.  
Wine: 977 tons.  
Canes: 55,600  
Beaver: 150 lb.  
Cotton: 123 cwt. 21lb.

Spanish: 13 cwt.  
Pot ashes, 52,378 cwt. At 25s. per cwt. £65,972

Of these, it is to be observed that the dye stuffs, salt, canes, wool and pot ash constitute the materials and implements of future manufactures, the most beneficial species of importation.<sup>23</sup> For the loss of this trade, the only compensation ward holds out to you is the provision trade for the army and navy; of all others the least advantageous, as is universally known, to the interests of this kingdom.

Such is the present state of your commerce with Spain, the whole of which is, at one blow, cut up; your commerce with other nationals loaded with a heavy insurance; your manufactures nipped in the bud, and, in a word, every branch of trade suspended, except the slaughtering of bullocks and men. And for what is all this? We have no quarrel with Spain, no infraction of good faith, no national insult to complain of. No, but we have the resentments of a rapacious English East Indian monopolist to gratify who, at the distance of half the globe, kindles the torch of war amidst the eternal snows of Nootka Sound, and hurls it into the bosom of our commerce.

The rising prosperity of Ireland is immolated on the altar of British pride and avarice; we are forced to combat without resentment in the quarrel of an alien, where victory is unprofitable and defeat is infamous. Having examined the question on the ground of profit and loss to Ireland, I presume it appears clearly that we shall make an immense sacrifice of blood, treasure, and trade, to establish a right in which, when it is obtained, we are never to participate. If, therefore, we embark in this war, it is not in support of our immediate particular interest; on the contrary, it is evident we shall be very considerable losers by the most prosperous issue.

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<sup>2</sup> Worth about £2,600

<sup>3</sup> The price of the pot ash I have taken from Anderson, vol. 6. p. 707.

The principle of expediency, therefore, must be given up, and it follows that we engage, if at all, on the principle of moral obligation: the arguments on this ground are reduceable to three – the good of the empire, the honour of the British flag, and the protection which England affords us. I confess I am, in the outset, much staggered by a phrase so very specious, and of such general acceptation as this of ‘the good of the empire’. Yet, after all, what does it mean? Or: **What is the empire?**

I believe it is understood to mean the kingdoms of Great Britain and Ireland with independent legislatures, united under one head. But this union of the executive does by no means, to my apprehension, imply so complete a union of power or of interest, that an injury or a benefit to one, is an injury or a benefit to the other; on the contrary, the present emergency shows that occasions may arise wherein the direct opposite is the fact. It is not two kingdoms being united under one head that involves, as a necessary consequence, a unity of resentment. His majesty’s electoral dominions (i.e. Hanover) are not concerned in this Spanish quarrel, and I would ask how are we more concerned, unless it be that we speak the English language?

The king of Hungary is also Grand Duke of Tuscany, yet no man thinks that the Tuscans are bound to sacrifice their trade or their men in his German quarrels, and, in the midst of a bloody and destructive war.

It is convenient, doubtless, for England, for her instruments in this country, to cry up the ‘good of the empire’ because it lays the power of Ireland at her disposal; But if the empire consists of two parts, one of which is to reap the whole profit of a contest, and the other to share only the difficulties and the danger, I know not why we should be so misled by sounds as to sacrifice solid advantages to the whistling of the name of ‘empire’. The good of the whole empire consists of the good of all the parts; but in our case the good of one part is renounced to establish the good of the other. Let us, for God’s sake, call things by their proper names; let us analyse this unmeaning and fallacious

mixed mode 'empire' into its components, England and Ireland, and then see how the matter stands.

England has a quarrel with Spain, in a matter concerning her own interest exclusively, and wherein she is to reap the whole profit. Ireland has no quarrel, but, on the contrary, a very beneficial intercourse with Spain, which she is required to renounce to her infinite present detriment; she is called on, likewise, to squander her wealth and shed her blood in this English East Indian quarrel, and then she is told, to console her, that she has been advancing 'the good of the empire'! Let us substitute 'England' for 'the empire' and see if it be not nearer the fact and truth.

Certainly, if there be such a thing as this 'empire', and if the general good of this 'empire' be forwarded by the particular loss and suffering of Ireland, I maybe allowed to say, it would be better for her there were none. Suppose, in this great era of revolution, the French were to acknowledge the title of his majesty, set forth on his guineas, to the throne of their kingdom; that he were, in gratitude, to move his royal residence to Paris, and govern England by a French viceroy, and on French views and principles: suppose the merchants of Marseilles were to quarrel with the Turks in the Levant, and find it expedient to go to war; suppose the merchants of London to have a very gainful trade to the Levant, and to find those same Turks fair and honest dealers - what answer would the intelligent and virtuous parliament of England give to the viceroy, who should come forward and demand them to renounce this trade and its profits, to sink the value of their lands, and fetter and cramp their commerce with a load of additional taxes, to send forth the bravest of their youth to battle and slaughter; and then tell them it was all for the good of the common empire of France and England?

The viceroy would act like a good Frenchman in making the requisition, but he would find the English nation too determined and too wise to listen to such idle babble, as that of

forwarding the common good of two independent nations by the certain loss and detriment and damage of one of them. Now, setting aside our prejudice against the idea of a French viceroy at St James's, will any man deny that the actual case of Ireland at this day is exactly parallel with that of England which I have supposed? With this difference, however, that when the war was over, France and England might renew their trade with Turkey, but the trade which is at present in dispute between England and Spain, Ireland can, by no possible contingency, ever attain a share in.

The argument than stands thus: The quantum of consolidated power in the 'empire' maybe increased by a successful war, but it is distributed entirely to one of the components, while the other is at a certain loss. Suppose the joint strength before the war to be as twelve, England being as eight, and Ireland as four, and after the war to be as fourteen, England being as eleven, with one third gained, and Ireland as three, with one fourth lost; it is very obvious that there would be an increase of power in one of the parts.

And this is no exaggerated supposition, when we consider the mode in which each country must necessarily carry on the war. During the contest, to Ireland nothing is certain but a heavy loss of trade, men, and money. Our privateers, from the discouragement to Irish navigation, are few, and navy we have none; whereas England may not only support the contest, but be absolutely enriched by a Spanish war, even during its continuance. Her powerful navy, her infinite number of corsairs, bring in wealthy prizes from every point of the compass.

Where then, is the equality of empire? Or what are our temptations to war? I have shown, as I presume, that in the use of the word 'empire' we are the dupes of a sound; if, as I contend, the good of the empire turns out, when examined, to signify no more than the good of England, purchased, and dearly purchased, at a heavy loss to Ireland, I know not what quixotic

spirit of national generosity misguided, or gratitude misplaced, shall pretend to exact such a sacrifice from us.

I hasten, therefore, to the next grand argument for our interference, the honour of the British flag; an argument on the face of it, degrading to your country and dishonourable to our spirit; an argument, the mention of which should make every Irishman bang his head in sorrow and abasement.

## WHERE IS THE NATIONAL FLAG OF IRELAND?

I know there are those who, covering their apathy or their corruption with the specious garb of wise and prudent caution, may raise their hands in astonishment at this, as an idle exclamation; but I say that such a badge of inferiority between the two kingdoms is a serious grievance. Is the bold pride of patriotism nothing? If the flag of England be, as it is, dearer to every brave Englishman than his life, is the wish for a similar badge of honour to Ireland to be scouted as a chimera? Can the same sentiment be great and glorious on one side the channel, and wild and absurd on the other?

It is a mortifying truth, but not the less true for its severity, that the honour of the British is the degradation of the Irish flag. We are compelled to skulk under the protection of England, by a necessity of our own creation; or, if we have not created, we have submitted to it. We are contented to be the subaltern instrument in the hands of our artful and ambitious and politic sister, without one ray of generous national pride beaming forth to light us on to our honour and our interest. We raise the lofty temple of her glory but we cannot, or we dare not, inscribe our name on the entablature.

Do we not, in the system of her naval arrangements, see the narrow jealousy and interested caution of England betray itself in every feature? Where are the docks, the arsenals of Ireland? How many of the British navy have been built in our harbours?



Where are the encouragements held out to Irish navigation? What is the fair and liberal and equitable construction laid by Englishmen on the navigation act? We are not to be trusted! **We are to kept in pupillage, without a navy, or the rudiments of a navy, that we may be retained in subjection and dependence on England, and so be compelled to purchase her protection, whenever her interest or her pride may think proper to plunge us into war.**

And this leads me to the last argument for our supporting Great Britain, gratitude for the protection which she affords us. As this is an argument addressed to a very warm and honourable sentiment and, therefore, likely to have some weight with Irishmen who feel much better than they reason, I shall take the liberty to examine it with some attention. I lay it down, then, as a principle, that no man has a right to lay another, perforce, under an obligation; I mean, to put him in that state that the obligation becomes unavoidable. No man has a right to run me into difficulties, that he may extricate me from them.

The original necessity, superinduced by him, leaves him little if any claim to gratitude for the subsequent service; but his claim will be infinitely weakened if, in superinducing this necessity, he does me an actual, violent injury. If a man hire a banditti to attack the house of another, and then volunteer the defence of it, I believe it will not be said that the owner is much indebted to him, though his defence should prove successful; but if, in the attack, the house should be burned and the owner robbed of his goods, and sorely wounded into the bargain, I humbly conceive that the subsequent defence, however sincere, makes but a poor atonement for the original attack, and that if any feeling be excited, it should be a very strong and natural resentment.

Now, let us see what is the boasted protection of England. When has she ever held it forth that she did not first make it necessary? For her own interest and honour she embarks in war, and drags in this unoffending and unoffended country as a

necessary sequel, exposes us to a thousand dangers and difficulties in a cause where we have no hope of profit, or advantage, for who has heard of the glory of Ireland, merged as it is in that of Great Britain?

And then she defends us, or perhaps does not defend us, from the resentment of her, not our enemy, and so the mighty debt of gratitude accrues; and we are bound to ruin our commerce and lavish our treasure, and spill our best blood in her quarrel, and still remain her debtor for protection in a war which she has wantonly and unnecessarily, as to this country, plunged us into. If this be the protection of England, I, for one, could be well content that we were left to our own wisdom to avoid, or our own spirit to support a contest.

But what becomes of this famous argument of protection, if it appears, by the infallible testimony of facts, that no such thing exists? What have been the wars that England has embarked on in for Irish interests? Her most determined supporters cannot allege one. But perhaps, they may draw on futurity for the deficiency of experience, and tell us that if we wanted her aid, she would be prompt and willing to afford it. Have we, then, forgot the memorable protection of the last war, when one or two paltry American privateers harassed and plundered our trade with impunity, even in our very ports, and the people of Belfast were told, 'You have a troop of horse and a company of invalids, and, if that will not do, you may protect yourselves.'

An answer not easily to be forgiven or forgot, and which, perhaps, England herself would now, were it possible, wish unsaid. What were the armaments equipped to compel Portugal to do us justice, but a very few years since? Did the navy of England appear in the Tagus to demand satisfaction for our woollens seized and detained? No: we were left at last, and not without a long and strenuous opposition from the British Minister in Ireland, to extort justice as we might for ourselves, by a heavy duty on the wines of Portugal.

After this, let us not be told of the protection of England. I have examined the question in three great views: as a question of strict right, as a question of expediency, and as a question of moral obligation; and, to my apprehension, in every one of the three, war is peremptorily evil for Ireland. If the Spaniards fall by our hands in an unjust war, their deaths are murder; if we seize their property, it is robbery. Let me now submit to your consideration the probable consequences of your refusing your countenance and support to this war, with respect to the two countries, Spain and England.

It maybe said that Spain will not consider you as a neutral, though you may call yourselves so. But I saw, if you were to address his majesty, praying him to direct his ministers to acquaint the Spanish Court with your absolute neutrality, do you think her so unwise a nation as to choose you rather for her enemy than her customer, and so to fling you into the scale of England, already more than a match for her? Do you think that the communication between Spain and Ireland, when the ports of England were closed against her, would not be a source of opulence yet unknown in this country?

Would you not have, circuitously, the Spanish trade of England pass through your hands? Would not Spain pay every attention and respect to your flag? Or, if she did not, then you would have a lawful and fair ground for quarrel, and might, and would, soon teach her that you were not a nation to be insulted with impunity. That England would exclaim, is what we might expect. We know with what reluctance she has ever renounced any badge of her domination over this country, and it cannot be supposed she would give up this last without a pang.

But, surely, where the right is clearly established, your first duty is to your native land. I renounce the idea of national generosity. What was the language of the wisest of your senators on a great occasion? 'Individuals maybe generous, but nations never.' I deny the tie of national gratitude; we owe no gratitude where we have received no favour. If we did, in 1782, extort our

rights from England at the very muzzle of the cannon, whom have we to thank but ourselves? Interested individuals may hold forth the nonsensical cant of the generosity of England; let us, on this important occasion, speak the language of truth and common sense.

It is the spirit of Ireland, not the generosity of England, to which we owe our rights and liberties; and the same spirit that obtained, will continue to defend them. What can England do to us? With what countenance, what colour of justice, can she upbraid us for following her own process? **What should Irish policy be, by British example? First of all, take care of ourselves.**

We invade none of her rights; we but secure our own. Why then should we fear her resentment? But the timid will say, she may withdraw the protection of her flag from us, and I answer, let her do so; every thing is beneficial to Ireland that throws us on our own strength. We should then look to our internal resources, and scorn to sue for protection to any foreign state; we should spurn the idea of moving a humble satellite round any power, however great, and claim at once, and enforce, our rank among the primary nations of the earth. Then should we have what under the present system we never shall see, a national flag and spirit to maintain it.

If we then fought and bled we should not feel the wound, when we turned our eyes to the harp waving proudly over the ocean. But now, what are the victories of Britain to us? Hers is the quarrel, hers the glory, hers the profit, and to us nothing but the certainty of danger and of death; the action is over, and the name of Ireland is never heard; for England, not our country, we fight and die. Yet, even under these forbidding circumstances, such as the restless valour of Irishmen that we rush to action as eagerly, and maintain it as firmly, as if our interests or our honour were at stake.

We plant the laurel and water it with our best blood, and Britain reposes under the shade, I have now done, and with you,

my lords and gentlemen, it rests to estimate the weight of what I have advanced. The parliament ye constitute is a young parliament. Your innocence is yet, I trust, untainted by the rank leaven of corruption. Ye have no interests to bias your judgement but the interest of Ireland. Your first opportunity for exertion is a great one - no less than fixing the rank of your country among the nations of the earth.

May the gracious wisdom of providence enlighten your minds, expand your hearts, and direct your councils to the advantage of your own honour, and the establishment of the welfare and glory and independence of Ireland, for ever and ever.

**HIBERNICUS.**

# MANIFESTO TO THE FRIENDS OF FREEDOM IN IRELAND

The exact authorship of this manifesto is unclear. However, both Pádraig Pearse and James Connolly in their works “The Separatist Idea” and “Labour In Irish History” assume Tone to be its author, hence its inclusion in this PDF.

## IDEM SENTIRE, DICERE, AGERE.

It is proposed, that at this conjecture a Society shall be instituted in this city, having much of the secrecy, and somewhat of the ceremonial attached to Freemasonry; with so much secrecy as may communicate curiosity, uncertainty, and expectation, to the minds of surrounding men; with so much impressive and affecting ceremony in all its internal economy, as without impending real business, may strike the soul through the senses, and addressing the *whole* Man, may animate his philosophy by the energy of his passions.

Secrecy is expedient and necessary; it will make the bond of union more cohesive, and the spirit of this union more ardent and more condensed; it will envelope this dense flame with a cloud of gloomy ambiguity, that will not only facilitate its own agency, but will at the same time confound and terrify its enemies by their ignorance of the design, the extent, the direction, or the consequences. It will throw a veil over those individuals whose professional prudence might make them wish to lie concealed, until a manifestation of themselves became absolutely necessary. And lastly, secrecy is necessary, because it is by no means certain that a country so great a stranger to itself as Ireland, where the North and the South, and the East and the West, meet to wonder at each other, is yet prepared for the adoption of one profession of Political Faith, while there may be individuals from each of these quarters ready to adopt such a

profession, and to propagate it with the best abilities, when necessary – with their Blood.

Our Provinces are perfectly ignorant of each other; – our Island is connected; we ourselves are insulated; and the distinctions of rank, of property, of religious persuasion, have hitherto been not merely lines of difference, but brazen walls of separation. We are separate nations met and fettered together, not mingled, but *convened*; an incoherent mass of dissimilar materials, uncemented, unconsolidated, like the image which Nebuchadnezzar saw with a head of fine gold, legs of iron, and feet of clay; parts that do not cleave to one another.

In the midst of an island, where Manhood has met and continues to meet with such severe humiliation, where selfish men, or classes of men, have formed such malignant conspiracy against Public Good, let one benevolent, beneficent conspiracy arise, one Plot of Patriots pledged by solemn adjuration to each other in the service of the People – the PEOPLE, in the largest sense of that momentous word. Let the cement of this Constitutional Compact be a principle of such strong attraction, as completely to overpower all accidental and temporary repulsions that take place between real Irishmen, and thus to consolidate the scattered and shifting land of Society into an adhesive and immovable Caisson, sunk beneath the dark and troubled waters. It is by wandering from the few plain and simple principles of Political Faith that our Politics, like our Religion, has become Preaching, not Practice, Words, not Works.

A Society, such as this, will disclaim those party appellations which seem to pale the human heart into petty compartments and parcel out into Sects and Sections, Common Sense, Common Honesty, and Common Weal. As little will it affect any speculative, unimpassioned, quiescent benevolence. It will not call itself a Whig Club, or a Revolution Society. It will not ground itself on a name indicative of a party, or an event well enough in the circumstances and in the season. It will not be an Aristocracy affecting the language of Patriotism, the rival of

Despotism, for its own sake, nor its irreconcilable enemy, for the sake of *us all*.

It will not, by views merely retrospective, stop the march of mankind, or force them back into the lanes and alleys of their ancestors. It will have an eye provident and prospective, a reach and amplitude of conception commensurate to the progressive diffusion of knowledge, and at the same time a promptitude in execution requisite in a life like this, so short and so fragile, in a nation like this, so passive and so procrastinating. Let its name be the IRISH BROTHERHOOD. Let its general aim be to make the light of philanthropy, a pale and ineffectual light, *converge*, and by converging kindle into ardent, energetic, enthusiastic love for Ireland; that genuine unadulterated enthusiasm which descends from a luminous head to a burning heart, and impels the spirit of man to exertions greatly good, or unequivocally great. For this Society is not to rest satisfied in drawing speculative plans of reform and improvement, but to be practically busied about the *means* of accomplishment. Were the hand of Locke to hold from Heaven a scheme of government most perfectly adapted to the nature and capabilities of the Irish nation, it would drop to the ground a mere founding scroll, were there no other means of giving it effect than its intrinsic excellence. All true Irishmen agree in *what* ought to be done, but how to get it done is the question. This Society is likely to be a means the most powerful for the promotion of a great end – what END?

THE RIGHTS OF MAN IN IRELAND, the greatest happiness of the greatest number in this island, the inherent and indefeasible claims of every free nation, to rest in this nation – the *will* and the *power* to be happy – to pursue the Common Weal as an individual pursues his private welfare, and to stand in insulated independence, an imperial People. To gain a knowledge of the real state of this heterogenous country, to form a summary of the national will and pleasure in points most interesting to national happiness, and when such a summary is



formed, to put this Doctrine as speedily as may be into *Practice*, will be the purpose of this central society, or lodge, from which other lodges in the different towns will radiate.

THE GREATEST HAPPINESS OF THE GREATEST NUMBER – On the rock of this principle let this society rest; by this let it judge and determine every political question, and whatever is necessary for this end, let it not be accounted hazardous, but rather our interest, our duty, our glory, and our common religion. The rights of Men are the rights of God, and to vindicate the one is to maintain the other. We must be free in order to serve him whose service is perfect freedom.

Let every Member wear, day and night, an Amulet round his neck, containing the great principle which unites the Brotherhood, in letters of gold, on a ribbon, striped with all the original colours, and enclosed in a sheath of white silk, to represent the pure union of the mingled rays, and the abolition of all superficial distinctions, all colours and shades of difference, for the sake of one illustrious end. Let this Amulet of Union, faith and honour, depend from the neck, and be bound about the body next to the skin and close to the heart.

This is enthusiasm – It is so; and who that has a spark of Hibernicism in his nature, would not feel it kindle into a flame of generous enthusiasm? Who, that has a drop of sympathy in his heart, when he looks around him, and sees how happiness is heaped up in mounds, and how misery is diffused and divided among the million, does not exclaim, Alas! for the suffering, and Oh! for the power to redress it? And who is there that has enthusiasm sufficient to make an exclamation, would not combine with others as honest as himself to make the will live in the act, and to swear, WE WILL REDRESS IT – Who is there? Who?

The first business of the Brotherhood will be to form a transcript, or digest, of the doctrine which they mean to subscribe, to uphold, to propagate, and reduce to practice. It is time for Ireland to look her fortune in the face, not with turbulent

ostentation, but with fixed resolution to live and die Freeman. Let then those questions be agitated and answered fully and fairly which have been wilfully concealed from us by interested persons and parties, and which appear terrible only by being kept in the dark. Always armed with this principle, that it is the duty of the people to establish their rights, this Society will carry it along with them in their course, as the Sybil did the branch of gold, to avert or to disperse every vain fear and every unreal terror.

What are the *means* of procuring such a reform in the constitution as may secure to the people their rights most effectually and most speedily?

What is the plan of reform most suited to this country?

Can the renovation in the continuation, which we all deem necessary, be accomplished by the *ways* of the constitution? "The evil," says Junius, "lies too deep to be cured by any remedy, less than some great convulsion which may bring back the constitution to its original principles, or utterly destroy it." Is this opinion still truer when applied to *this* country? Or is it false?

Who are the People?

Can the right of changing the constitution rest any where but in the original constitutive power – the People?

Can the will of the People be known but by full and fair convention, to be constituted on the plan which will come recommended on the most popular authority?

What are the rights of Roman Catholics, and what are the immediate duties of Protestants respecting these rights?

Are the Roman Catholics generally or partially *capaces Libertatis*? And if not, What are the speediest means of making them so?

Is the independence of Ireland nominal or real, a barren right or a fact regulative of national conduct and influencing national character?

Has it had any other effect than raising the value of a house, and making it more self-sufficient, at the expense of the People?

Is there any middle state between the extremes of union with Britain and total separation, in which the rights of the People can be fully established and rest in security?

What is the form of government that will secure to us our rights with the least expense and the greatest benefit?

By the BROTHERHOOD are these questions, and such as these, to be determined. On this determination are they to form the chart of their constitution, which with honour and good faith they are to subscribe, and which is to regulate their course – Let the Society at large meet four times in the year, and an acting Committee once a month, to which all Members shall be invited. Let these meetings be *convivial*, but not the transitory patriotism of deep potation; *confidential*, the heart open and the door locked; *conversational*; not a debating society. There is too much haranguing in this country already; a very great redundance of sound. Would that we spoke a little more laconically, and acted a little more emphatically, and we shall do so, when our aim is at something nobler and fairer than even the sublime and beautiful of Mr. Burke: – the sublimity of Common-Sense – the beauty of Common-Weal.

Our Society should at first be very chaste and cautious in the selection of Members, shunning equally the giddiness of the boy, and that sullen indifference about the public good which comes on with decline of years, looking around for those that are competent, and with respect to themselves content, yet zealous and persevering, not venal, not voracious, not confined in their manners and their morality to the pale of a profession, not idle philanthropists, who figet around the globe with their favourite adage; not those who are bound down by obedience to that wizard word *Empire*, to the sovereignty of two founding syllables; but honest, honourable *Irishmen*, of whatever rank, of whatever religion, who know Liberty, who love it, who wish to have it, and who will have it. – Members should be admitted only by a unanimous ballot, and perhaps once a year there should be a general re-election.

The *external* business of the Society will be, 1<sup>st</sup>, Publication, in order to propagate their principles and effectuate their ends. All papers for this purpose to be sanctioned by the Committee, and published with no other designation of character than – ONE OF THE BROTHERHOOD. Secondly, Communication with the different towns to be assiduously kept up, and every exertion used to accomplish a *National Convention* of the People of Ireland, who may profit by past errors, and by many unexpected circumstances which have happened since the last meeting. Thirdly, Communication with similar Societies abroad, as the Jacobin Club in Paris, the Revolution Society in England, the Committee for Reform in Scotland. Let the nations go abreast. Let the interchange of sentiment among mankind concerning the rights of man be as immediate as possible. A correspondence with distinguished men in Britain, or on the Continent, will be necessary to enlighten us, and ought to be cherished. Eulogies on such men as have deserved well of their country *until death*, should be from time to time delivered by one of the Brotherhood, their works should live in a Library to be formed by this Society, and dedicated to Liberty, and the Portraits of such men should adorn it. Let the shades of the mighty dead look down and consecrate our meetings. The Athenians were accustomed to fasten their edicts to the statues of their ancestors. Let our Laws and Liberties have a similar attachment, taking heed always to remember what has been always too forgotten – That *We* are to be ancestors ourselves; and as our bodies moulder down after sepulchre, merely to pass into new forms of live, let our spirits preserve a principle of animation to posterity, and germinate from the very grave.

What is the time most applicable for the establishment of this Institution? Even NOW. “Le grand art est dans l’apropos.” Why is Administration so imperious? Because the nation does not act. The Whig Club is not a transfusion from the People. We do not thoroughly *understand* that Club, and they do not feel for us. When the Aristocracy come forward, the People fall

backward; when the People come forward, the Aristocracy, fearful of being left behind, insinuate themselves into our ranks, and rise into timid leaders, or treacherous auxiliaries. They mean to make us our instruments. Let us rather make them *our* instruments. One of the two must happen. The People must serve the purposes of Party, or the party must emerge in the mightiness of the People, and Hercules will then lean upon his club.

On the 14<sup>th</sup> of July, the day which shall ever commemorate the French Revolution, let this Society pour out their first libation to European Liberty, eventually the Liberty of the World, and with their hands joined in each other, and their eyes raised to Heaven, in his presence who breathed into them an ever-living soul, let them swear to maintain their rights and prerogatives of their nature as men, and the right and prerogative of Ireland as an Independent People - "Dieu et *mon* Droit!" is the motto of kings. "Dieu et la Liberte!" exclaimed Voltaire, when he first beheld Franklin in his Fellow-Citizen of the World. "Dieu et *nos* Droits!" - Let Irishmen cry aloud to each other the cry of Mercy - of Justice - and of Victory.

# AN ARGUMENT ON BEHALF OF THE CATHOLICS OF IRELAND

A Northern Whig, August 1, 1791.

The proximate cause of our disgrace is our evil Government, the remote one is our own intestine division, which, if once removed, the former will be instantaneously reformed. It is necessary for the physician to know the disorder, and it is folly to conceal it from the patient himself. If he has the spirit of a man he will hear the worst with intrepidity, and bear it with fortitude: death is very terrible but there are things more terrible than death.

The misfortune of Ireland is, that we have no *National Government*, in which we differ from England, and from all Europe. In England the King is resident, and his presence begets infinite advantages; the Government is English, with English views and interests only; the people are very powerful, though they have not their due power; whoever is, or would be Minister, can secure or arrive at office only by studying and following their will, their passions, and their very prejudices: hence the interests of king, ministers, and people, move forward in one and the same direction, advanced or retarded by the same means, and cannot even in idea be separated. But is it so in Ireland?

What is our Government? It is a phenomenon in politics, contravening all received and established opinions: it is a Government derived from another country, whose interest, so far from being the same with that of the people, directly crosses it at right angles: does any man think that our rulers here recommend themselves to their creators in England, by promoting the interest of Ireland, when it can in the most remote degree interfere with the commerce of Great Britain?

If this be doubted, let the proceedings of last session with regard to the Arigna Iron Works and the Double Loom be remembered, to each of which the smallest parliamentary aid was refused. Why? Because they might interfere with English interest; though the former would have kept £250,000 annually, the greater part of which goes to England; and the latter would at once have doubled the weaving power of the kingdom in the linen, silk and calico branches. But above all, let the memorable debate on the East India Trade be recalled, when Administration boldly threw off the mask, and told Ireland she should have no such trade, because it might interfere with the interest of England?

But how is this foreign Government maintained? Look to your court calendar, to your pension list, to your concordatum, and you will find the answer written in *letters of gold*: this unnatural influence must be supported by profligate means, and hence corruption is the only medium of Government in Ireland.

The people are utterly disregarded and defied: divided and distracted as they are, and distrustful of each other, they fall an easy prey to English rulers, or their Irish subalterns: the fear of danger is removed from Administration by our internal weakness, and the sense of shame speedily follows it: hence it is, that we see speculation protected, venality avowed, the peerage prostituted, the commons corrupted. We see all this at the very hour, when every where but in Ireland reform is going forward, and levelling ancient abuses in the dust.

Why are these things so? Because Ireland is struck with a political paralysis that has withered her strength, and crushed her spirit: she is not half alive, one side is scarce animated, the other is dead; she has by her own law, as it were, amputated her right hand; she has outrun the gospel precept, and cast her right eye into the fire, even before it has offended here: religious intolerance and political bigotry, like the tyranny Mezentius bind the living Protestant to the dead and half corrupted Catholic, and beneath the putrid mess even the embryo of effort

is stifled. When the nation is thus circumstanced it is not to be wondered at, if even an Administration of boobies and blockheads presume to insult, and pillage, and contemn and defy her.

Under such an Administration, if God Almighty could, in his wrath, suffer such an one long to exist, the virtue and the talents of the land would be blasted in the bud. No Irishman of rank could become a member or supporter of Government, without at once renouncing all pretensions to common decency, honesty or honour: all great endowments of the mind, all lofty sentiments of the soul, would be necessarily and eternally excluded; and the Government, when once in such hands, must remain so; political vice, like the principle of fermentation, would propagate itself, and contaminate every succeeding particle, until the fury of an enraged people, or the just anger of offended heaven, should at length, by one blow destroy or annihilate the whole polluted mass!

But to quit hypothetic speculation, and descend to facts: I have said that we have no *National Government*. Before the year 1782 it was no pretended that we had, and it is at least a curious, if not an useful speculation, to examine how we stand in that regard now.

And I have a little dread of being confuted, when I assert, that all we got by what we are pleased to dignify with the name of *Revolution*, was simply, *the means of doing good according to law, without recurring to the great rule of nature, which is above all positive statutes*.

Whether we have done good or not, and if not, why we have omitted to do good, is a serious question. The pride of the nation, the vanity of individuals concerned, the moderation of some honest men, the corruption of knaves, I know may be alarmed, when I assert, that the Revolution of 1782, was the most bungling, imperfect business, that ever threw ridicule on a lofty epithet, by assuming it unworthily: it is not pleasant to any Irishman to make such a confession, but it cannot be helped if



truth will have it so: it is much better that we should know and feel our real state, then delude ourselves, or be gulled by our enemies with praises, which we do not deserve, or imaginary blessings which we do not enjoy.

I leave to the admirers of that era to vent flowing declamations on its theoretical advantages, and its visionary glories; it is a fine subject, and peculiarly flattering to my countrymen; many of whom were actors, and almost all spectators of it. Be mine the unpleasing task to strip it of its plumage and its tinsel, and shew the naked figure. The operation will be severe; but if properly attended to, may give us a strong and striking lesson of caution and of wisdom.

The Revolution of 1782 was a Revolution which enabled Irishmen to sell, at a much higher price, their honour, their integrity, and the interests of their country; it was a Revolution, which, while at one stroke it doubled the value of every boroughmonger in the kingdom, left three-fourths of our countrymen slaves as it found them, and the Government of Ireland in the base and wicked and contemptible hands who had spent their lives in degrading and plundering her; nay, some of whom had given their last vote decidedly, though hopelessly, against this our famous Revolution.

Who of the veteran enemies of the country lost his place or his pension? Who was called forth to station or office from the ranks of Opposition? Not one! The power remained in the hands of our enemies, again to be exerted for our ruin, with this difference that formerly we had our distresses, our injuries, and our insults gratis, at the hands of England, but now we pay very dearly to receive the same with aggravation, through the hands of Irishmen; yet this we boast of, and call a Revolution.

See how much the strength of *the people* has been augmented by the arrangement of 1782! Not to deprecate them below their value, for I honour and I love the spirit that then animated you. I am sure a great majority of those who then conducted you, were actuated by a sincere regard to your

interest and your freedom; I am sure that some of your leaders were men of high integrity, and some of consummate wisdom; I do not believe that as much, or very nearly as much, as could then be done, was done; and though I regret; yet I do not accuse the caution that induced those who acted for you, to stop short in their honourable career.

The minds of men were not at that time, perhaps, ripe for exertions, which a thousand circumstances that have since happened, cry aloud for. We are now, I hope, wiser, bolder, and more liberal, and we have the great mistress, dear-bought experience, to warn us from past errors, and guide us on to future good.

I hope it appears, from what I have said, that the Revolution of 1782, in such as no Irishman of an independent spirit, and who feels for the honour and interest of his country, can acquiesce in as *final*. Much remains to be done, and it is fortunate that the end proposed is so moderate and just, the means so fair, simple and constitutional, as to leave no ground for accusation with the most profligate of our enemies, or apprehension with the most timid of our friends.

My argument is simply this: That Ireland, as deriving her Government from another country, requires a strength in the people which may enable them, if necessary, to counteract the influence of that Government, should it ever be, as it indisputably has been, exerted to thwart her prosperity: that this strength may be most constitutionally acquired and safely and peaceably exerted through the medium of a Parliamentary reform: and finally that no reform is honourable, practicable, efficacious, or just, which does not include, as a fundamental principle, the extension of elective franchise to the Roman Catholics, under modifications hereafter to be mentioned.

I beg I may not be misunderstood or misrepresented in my first position. When I talk of English influence being predominant in this country. I do not mean to derogate from the due exertion of his Majesty's prerogative: I owe him allegiance,

and if occasion should require it, I would be ready, cheerfully, to spill my blood in his service; but the influence I mean, is not as between the King and his subjects, in matter of prerogative, but as between the Government and people of England, and the Government and people of Ireland, in matter of trade and commerce.

I trust in God, we owe the English nation no allegiance; nor is it yet treason to assert, as I do, that she has acquired, and maintains, an unjustifiable and dangerous weight and influence over the councils of Ireland, whose interest, wherever it clashes, or appears to clash with hers, must immediately give way.

Surely, this is no question of loyalty. The King of England is also King also of Ireland; he is, in theory, and, I trust, in practice, equally interested in the welfare of both countries; he cannot be offended that each of his Kingdoms should, by all honourable and just means, increase their own ability, to render him the service due to him; he cannot rejoice, when he hears that his faithful Commons of Ireland, by their own law, exclude themselves from a commerce with half the known world, in complaisance to a monopolizing English company, though he may, as the common father of both his realms, rejoice, when they vote 200,000l to secure the very commerce in which they can never bear a part.

Is it therefore, I repeat it, no question of loyalty. If the King can be interested in the question, it must be on the side of justice and of Ireland, because his happiness and his pride be most gratified by the rising prosperity of his people, to which title we have as much claim as the people of England; we love him as well; we are as faithful subjects; and if we render him not as essential services, let our means be considered, and the blighting influence, which perpetually visits the harvest of our hopes, and I believe it will be found, that our zeal in his service is only circumscribed by our inability.

It is therefore extremely possible for the most truly loyal subject in this kingdom, deeply to regret, and conscientiously to

oppose the domineering of English influence, without trenching, in the smallest degree, on the rational loyalty, so long and so justly the boast of Ireland. His loyalty is to the King of Ireland, not to the honourable United Company of Merchants, trading, where he must never trade, to the East Indies: nor is it to the clothiers in Yorkshire, nor the weavers of Manchester, nor yet to the constitutional reforming blacksmiths of Birmingham, that he owes allegiance. His first duty is to his country, his second to his King, and both are now, and by God's blessing will, I hope, remain united and inseparable.

In England we find a reform in Parliament is always popular, though it is but as a barrier against possible, not actual, grievance. The people suffer in theory by the unequal distribution of the elective franchise; but practically, it is, perhaps, visionary to expect a Government that shall more carefully or steadily follow their real interests. No man can there be a Minister on any other terms. But reform in Ireland is not speculate remedy for possible evils.

The Minister and the Government here hold their offices by a tenure very different from that of pursuing the public good. The people here are despised or defied; their will does not weigh a feather in the balance, when English influence, or the interest of their rulers, is thrown into the opposite scale. We have all the reasons, all the justice, that English reformists can advance, and we have a thousand others, that in England never could exist.

We have, in common with England, the royal influence, and the ambition of Ministers to encounter; but we have also the jealous interference of that country to meet in every branch of trade, every department of commerce, and what barriers have we to oppose in our present state of representation? None. Of *four* millions of people, three are actually and confessedly unrepresented; of the remaining fourth, the electors do not exceed 60,000, and the numbers whom they return, supposing them all, what I wish with truth we could, men of integrity, must

remain for ever a minority, for their number amounts but to eighty-two.

I fear I am wasting time in proving an axiom. Need more be said, than that a nation governed by herself will pursue her interests more steadily than if she were governed by another, whose interest might clash with hers? Is not this more applicable, if the governing nation has a means of perpetrating the mischief without much odium, by making the governed sacrifice her interests with her own hand? And can we deny that this is the case with Ireland?

I may be told that we are not governed by England, and some proud and hot-brained Irishman will again throw across me the Revolution of 1782, wherein we 'gloriously asserted our claim to legislate externally, as well as internally, for ourselves:' And I will admit, that we did assert our claim, but I deny that we have availed ourselves of the exertion of the right. We are free in theory, we are slaves in fact: When high prerogative was tumbled to the ground, gentle influence succeeded, and with infinitely less noise and bustle, retains us in our bonds.

Before 1782, England bound us by her edict; it was an odious and not a very safe exertion of power; but it cost us nothing. Since 1782. we are bound by English influence, acting through our own Parliament; we cannot in justice accuse her, for she is only to be traced by the mischief she silently and secretly distributes; but our suffering is aggravated by this galling circumstance, that we purchase restriction of trade, and invasion of constitution, at a very dear rate.

Englishmen, under the old constitution, would ruin Ireland without fee or reward; their motive was to serve their own country; but Irishmen, under the new constitution, will not prefer the interest of England to that of Ireland, without weighty considerations; they expect, and indeed not without some colour of justice, to be paid extravagantly for the daily parricide they commit against the land which gave them birth: and to complete this dishonourable traffic, the purchase of their votes comes, not

from the pocket of England, who is to benefit, but of Ireland, who is ruined by the sale.

The volunteers and people of Ireland were very soon after their imaginary Revolution, made, by grievous experience, sensible of the truth of what I have now asserted; they saw the extent of this alarming disease, and they as soon discovered the cause and the remedy. They saw they had, literally, no weight in the Government, and they clamored for what, even on the limited plan then proposed, would at least have mitigated the disorder — a *Parliamentary Reform*.

But they built on too narrow a foundation, and the superstructure naturally overset, when it was scarcely raised above the ground. They set out with sacrificing the eternal dictates of justice, to temporizing and peddling expediency; they failed, because they did not deserve to succeed. Grasping at too much, they lost all; and the fatal morning, when the Convention broke up at the Rotunda, in one moment demolished the glory, which five years of virtuous success had flattered them would be immortal.

I had the misfortune to see them on the day of their disgrace, when the great bubble burst, and carried rout and confusion, and dismay, among their ranks; when three hundred of the first gentlemen of Ireland, girt with swords, the representatives of the armed force of the kingdom, who, by giving independence, had given to their Parliament the means of being virtuous, fled like deer to their counties, to return no more, after making a foolish profession of their pacific intentions; foolish, because it was evident that their anxiety was how they should reach their homes, without attachments and incarceration.

I saw, with sorrow, their great leader obliged to descend to the farce of intreating them to form no rash resolution against that Government, which had, in effect, scourged them home in a state of ridiculous distress and obloquy; and I wondered then, like a young man, why such men, so circumstanced, with the

eyes of Europe upon them, should submit, quietly, to treatment, which a few years experience has shown was inevitable; they were disgraced, because they were illiberal, and degraded, because they were unjust; through them the honour of their country was wounded, her name sunk, her glories forgotten, and from the last day of the Convention, there has been no people in Ireland.

From their failure we are taught this salutary truth, that no reform can ever be obtained which shall not comprehensively embrace Irishmen of all denominations. The exclusion of the Catholics lost the question under circumstances that must have otherwise carried it against all opposition; the people were then strong and confident, they had arms in their hands, and were in habits of succeeding; the same circumstances cannot easily be supposed again to combine in their favour; but if they did, they must again fail.

The almighty source of wisdom and of goodness, has inseparably connected liberty and justice: we must adopt or reject them together; to be completely free, we must deserve to be so. It could not be consistent with his impartial love to all his creatures, that a monopolizing Aristocracy should succeed in wresting their unalienable rights from their oppressors, at the moment they were acting the oppressors themselves to millions of their fellow subjects.

The question now resolves itself into this: Shall we be content to remain in our present oppressed and inglorious state, unknown and unheard-of in Europe, the prey of England, the laughing-stock of the knaves, who plunder us? Or shall we temperately and constitutionally exert our power to procure a complete and radical emancipation to our country, by a reform in the representation of the people?

If we choose the former, then are Irishmen formed of materials whose nature I cannot, and do not wish to understand. It is hopeless attempting to work on such spirits; but if they be of human feeling, if they partake of the common nature of man,

if injustice and oppression have not extinguished every sentiment which raises us above the beasts that perish, and makes us feel that our existence is an emanation from the Divinity, then will I believe that my countrymen are not yet lost and buried in hopeless desperation; that, to rouse them to exertion, it is but necessary to point out their duty, to excite them to justice, to shew them what is just.

Let us, for God's sake, shake off the old woman, the tales of our nurses, the terrors of our grandams, from our hearts; let us put away childish fears, look our situation in the face like men; let us speak to this ghastly spectre of our distempered imagination, the genius of Irish Catholicity! We shall find it vanish away like other phantoms of the brain, distempered by fear: 'Hence, horrible shadow; unreal mock'ry, hence!'

The apprehensions of most well meaning and candid Protestants, for of the bigots in that religion, as in every other, I make no account, when they seriously resolve them into their principles, I believe generally terminate in two. First, the danger to the church establishment; and, secondly, which they much more seriously apprehend, the resumption of Catholic forfeitures; and, of course, setting the property of the kingdom afloat.

To both these apprehensions I answer, that the liberation of the Catholics will be a work of compact, and, like all other compacts, subject to stipulations. It will be for the wisdom and moderation of both parties to concede somewhat; allowance must be made on the one hand for the difficult sacrifice of parting with power, obtained in injustice, and long held by force; on the other hand, there may be something to be pardoned in men condemned to ignorance by the law of the land, and whose minds have for a century been irritated by injuries, and inflamed by open insults, or still more offensive connivance and toleration.

But here a good old Protestant lady will tell, me that all compacts between us are in vain, for no faith, nor even oaths, are



to be kept with heretics; and I know she will have many to coincide in opinion with her. But, if she be right, I marvel that the oath of an Irish Papist should ever be taken in a court of justice; yet I have myself seen it done, before a Protestant Judge and Jury, who decided as if the witness were actually credible, and without inquiry into the articles of his faith.

What becomes of the wisdom of the Legislature, that has been able to devise no better means for the exclusion of Catholics from the professions and Parliament, than oaths, which, as not being in their conscience binding, might be taken and broken without offence? Yet, we find, and to our infinite loss, that these oaths are to Catholics so formidable, so serious, and so obligatory, that they are content to renounce profit, honour, freedom, and even their country, rather than take them.

Surely, if faith is not to be kept with heretics, there is not a Catholic in the kingdom but might be in Parliament to-morrow, had he no obstacle but the oaths to encounter. If, therefore, three millions of people have, for near a century, chosen to remain in absolute slavery, rather than take certain oaths which they thought militated with their consciences, I trust, and believe there is an end of the argument, that oaths to heretics are not binding; an assertion the most artful and wicked that ever was devised, because it perpetually recurs on the unfortunate Catholic, who in vain may protest and swear that it is false, and that he abjures and utterly denies it; still may the good Protestant withhold his belief, for 'faith is not to be kept with heretics.'

I wonder it never occurred to the inventors and supporters of this abominable slander, which at once cuts up by the roots all confidence between man and man, that they might at last convert and convince the Catholics of its truth, or at least drive them to the fallacious principle of not being suspected for nothing; a principle which, if they were once to adopt, where is the Protestant interest of Ireland?

But, to drop this argument, which, indeed, scarcely deserves consideration, let us see the actual state of property, and of the Catholics in Ireland at this day.

The old families, the original proprietors of the soil, who were dispossessed and ruined by forfeitures, have long since fallen into decay; the representatives of a very great majority of them are, and have been, in penury and ignorance at the spade and the plough, without deeds or muniments of their estates, for a century back. I do not say that this is universally the case; but I am sure it is with an infinite majority.

In the mean time, while the estates have been in Protestant hands, the Catholics who have made money by trade, the only road to wealth that was not blocked up against them by law, had no way to lay it out but in mortgages, many of them on those very lands.

Since the relaxation of the penal laws, many Catholics hold profitable leases under those tenures; many have purchased under the faith of those various acts of attainder and settlement, the repeal of which is assumed as the instant and necessary consequence of admitting Catholics to the rights of citizens. Is it to be thought that the wealthy and respectable part of the Catholics would promote or permit the unspeakable confusion in property, that would result from such a measure as is imputed to them; and this from no motive, but an abstract love of mere justice, operating against their own obvious interest, and against a known law of the land, which says, that sixty years' possession, however acquired, is a good foundation of property against all mankind?

I hope it will not be asserted, that it would be the wish of the Catholics utterly to subvert all law; and, in the very worst event, if they were mad and wicked enough to frame the wish, they could not have the power. The wealthy and moderate party of their own persuasion, with the whole Protestant interest, would form a barrier against invasion of property, strong and solid enough to satisfy and remove the doubts of the wise, the

apprehensions of the cautious, the fears of the cowardly, every thing hut the intolerance of the Protestant bigot, and the affected terror and real corruption of the English partisan, who would see in the cordial union, and consolidated strength of Ireland, the downfall of his hopes, and the ruin of the profligate market of his vote and his interest.

But it will be said that the Catholics are ignorant, and, therefore, incapable of liberty; and I have heard men, of more imagination than judgment, make a flourishing declamation on the danger of blinding them, by suddenly pouring a flood of light on their eyes, which, for a century, have been buried in darkness. To the poetry of this I make no objection, but what is the common sense or justice of the argument? We plunge them by law, and continue them by statute, in gross ignorance, and then we make the incapacity we have created an argument for their exclusion from the common rights of man!

We plead our crime in justification of itself. If ignorance be their condemnation, what has made them ignorant? Not the hand of Nature: for I presume they are born with capacities pretty much like other men. It is the iniquitous and cruel injustice of Protestant bigotry, that has made them ignorant; they are excluded by law from the possibility of education; for I will not call the liberal connivance of the heads of our University, who suffer, perhaps by a strain on their strict duty, a few to smuggle a little of that learning, which is contraband to an Irish Papist, I will not, I say, allow that to be such an education as every Irishman has a right to demand.

They cannot obtain degrees; those are paled in from them by oaths, those oaths of which they are so regardless, and, therefore, we find they do not enter our University. If Irish Catholics be bigots to their religion; if that bigotry which makes them dangerous, results from ignorance, surely it is the duty of a conscientious Legislature to labour, by every means, to remove the cause, and the effect will, of itself, cease.

But it is not the policy of their oppressors to part with an argument, of which they make so excellent use; and, therefore it is, that the Irish Catholic clergy are driven into foreign countries, to pick up as they may, a wretched, rambling kind of institution, that deserves not the name of education. Can it be wondered, if the flock be not well taught by such pastors? What can they learn, when thus exiled from their native country, but foreign habits and foreign prejudices? What love can they feel for that constitution, what respect can they preach for those laws, which have driven them forth as vagabonds over Europe? Will any Catholic gentleman submit to this? No!

And what follows? That which daily experience shows to be one of the heavy misfortunes of Ireland, the consciences, the morals, and the religion of the bulk of the nation, are in the hands of men of low birth, low feelings, low habits, and no education. But, surely, the wretched Priest, and his still more miserable flock, are not to be punished for the crime of ignorance, with which, as a pestilence, they have been visited by the unmitigable rage of Protestant persecution. Give them education, open their eyes, shew them what is law, in some other form than that of a penal statute; give them franchise, as you have already, in a certain degree, given them property; let them be citizens, let them be *men*.

But, they are not prepared for liberty! What do we mean by prepared for liberty? Was the Polish nation prepared for liberty, when it was planted in one day? Were the French prepared for liberty? Yes, I shall be told, the gentry were; and, I answer, so are the Catholic gentlemen of Ireland. The peasantry of all countries are alike, with an exception in favour of England, and that exception springing from liberty; they will follow their leaders: but I say, the Catholic gentlemen of Ireland have had advantages of information far beyond either the Poles or the French, because they have lived in its neighbourhood, and seen that in practice, which the others knew but in speculation.

Had Mirabeau waited to prepare his countrymen, he and they would have been slaves to this hour, and the Bastille had still hung over the ill-fated city of Paris. Is liberty a disease, for which we are to be prepared as for inoculation? If so, and if fasting and abstinence and long suffering be preparation, there are no men under Heaven better prepared than the Catholics of Ireland.

But can we believe that our wise and benevolent Creator would constitute us so, that it would require a long institution to *prepare* us for that blessing, without which existence is but *a* burthen?

Do we prepare our sons to view the light of Heaven, to breathe the air, to tread the earth?

Liberty is the vital principle of man: he that is prepared to live is prepared for freedom.

Whatever is essential to the happy existence of his creatures, God has not willed should be difficult, or complex, or doubtful in its preparation. Plant, then, with a righteous confidence in His goodness, the vigorous shoot of liberty in the land, and doubt not but it shall strike root, and flourish and spread, until the whole people shall repose beneath its shade in peace and happiness and glory.

But it is objected that certain tenets expressive of unconstitutional submission to their Holy Father, the Pope, in temporal as well as spiritual matters, are sufficient ground for excluding the Roman Catholics from their rights. 'If this were so, it were a grievous fault,' and, I may add, 'grievously has Ireland answered it.' But whatever truth there might have been in such an accusation in the dark ages of superstition, when, by the bye, Ireland did but share the blame with England and all Europe; yet now, in the days of illumination, at the close of the eighteenth century, such an opinion is too monstrous to obtain a moment's serious belief, unless with such as were determined to believe every thing which squared with their interested views.

The best answer to such a calumny, if indeed it deserves any, is the conduct of the Catholics of England at this day, and their solemn declaration, signed by their Gentry, their Clergy, and their Peers, sanctified besides by the unanimous decisions of seven of the first Catholic Universities in Europe, including those of Salamanca, of Valladolid, of Doway, and the Sorbonne; wherein they concur in asserting that neither the Pope and Cardinals nor even a General Council, have the smallest pretension to interfere between prince and subject, as to allegiance or temporal matters. And I hope, as these opinions are solemnly given from Catholics to Catholics, they may have the fortune to escape the old and wicked censure, that 'faith is not to be kept with heretics.'

It is not six months since the Pope was publicly burned in effigy at Paris, the capital of that Monarch who is styled the eldest son of the Church. Yet the time has been when Philip of France thought he had a good title to the Crown of England, from the donation of the Holy Father: the fallacy lies in supposing that what was once true in politics, is always true. I do believe the Pope has now more power in Ireland than in some Catholic countries, or than he perhaps ought to have.

But I confess I look on his power with little apprehension, because I cannot see to what evil purpose it could be exerted; and with the less apprehension, as every liberal extension of property or franchise to Catholics will tend to diminish it. Persecution will keep alive the foolish bigotry and superstition of any sect, as the experience of five thousand years has demonstrated. Persecution bound the Irish Papist to his Priest, and the Priest to the Pope; the bond of union is drawn tighter by oppression; relaxation will undo it. The emancipated and liberal Irishman, like the emancipated and liberal Frenchman, may go to mass, may tell his beads, or sprinkle his mistress with holy water; but neither the one nor the other will attend to the rusty and extinguished thunderbolts of the Vatican, or the idle

anathemas, which, indeed his Holiness is now-a-days too prudent and cautious to issue.

I come now to an old and hackneyed argument against Irish Catholics, that they are Jacobites, and wish to bring in the Pretender. To this I have an hundred answers, but with fair reasoners, it is probable that the first may be sufficient. I say the man is dead; there is no Pretender: his brother, who survives him, is, in religion, a Cardinal, a Popish Clergyman: and what is some additional ground to think he may not have lawful, or indeed any issue, is, that he is above sixty years of age.

If, however, any strenuous Protestant is dissatisfied with this answer, as inconclusive, let him state his objections, and I shall, perhaps in the tenth edition of my book, set myself to remove them. In the mean time let him consider that, since the accession of the House of Brunswick, there have been two bloody rebellions on behalf of the Stuart family in England, but not one sword or trigger drawn in the cause in Ireland.

Another argument that has been often successfully used is this: If the Catholics are admitted to franchise, they will get the upper hand, and attach themselves to France, *for Ireland is unable to exist as an independent State!* But France is a Popish country, and ruled by an absolute Monarch, whose will is the law; therefore, it is better to remain in a state of qualified freedom, though it be not complete, under the protection of England, than sink into a province to France; *for to one or the other you must be content to be subject.*

There is no one position, moral, physical, or political, that I hear with such extreme exacerbation of mind, as this which denies to my country the possibility of independent existence: It is not, however, my plan here to examine that question. I trust, whenever the necessity does arise, as at some time it infallibly must, it will be found that we are as competent to our own Government, regulation, *and defence*, as any state in Europe.

Till the emergency docs occur, it will but exasperate and inflame the minds of men, to investigate and demonstrate the

infinite resources and provocations to independence, which every hour brings forth in Ireland. I shall, therefore, here content myself with protesting, on behalf of my country, against the position, as an infamous falsehood, insulting to her pride, and derogatory to her honour; and I little doubt, if occasion should arise, but that I shall be able to prove it so.

To the argument founded on this spiritless and pitiful position, time has given an answer, by bringing forth that stupendous event, the Revolution in France, an event which I do but name, for who is he that can praise it as it merits? Where is the dread now of absolute power, or the arbitrary nod of the monarch in France? Where is the intolerance of Popish bigotry? The rights of man are at least as well understood there as here, and somewhat better practised. Their wise and venerable National Assembly, representatives, not of their constituents merely, but of man, whose nature they have exalted beyond the limits that even Providence seemed to have bounded it by, have with that disinterested attention to the true welfare of their species, which has marked and dignified all their proceedings, renounced the idea of conquest, and engraved that renunciation on the altar, in the temple of their liberty: In that Assembly, Protestants sit indiscriminately with Catholics. But I lose time in dwelling on circumstances, the mention of which at once supersedes the necessity of argument.

I come now to a very serious argument. If you admit Catholics to vote, you must admit them to the House, and then you will have a Catholic Parliament. To this there are many answers: In the first place, it is incumbent on their opponents to show the mischief resulting from even a Catholic Parliament. There has been so bold a spirit, so guarded a wisdom, so pure a patriotism, exerted by a Parliament of Catholics in this kingdom, as the experience of modern Protestant Parliaments can give us no conception of. Have we ever read, or have we forgotten the manifesto of the Catholic Parliament held at Trim, in 1642? Let it



be compared with our own declarations in 1782, and Catholics may well, with a generous confidence, stand the comparison.

But, it will be said, that the last Catholic Parliament which we saw, set itself from the post, to resume the forfeited lands, and repeal the act of settlement. That Parliament was summoned by King James II at a time when his Protestant subjects had expelled him from his throne and kingdom. The Irish Catholics, with a generous though misplaced loyalty, and with that ardent zeal which has, on a thousand occasions, outrun their judgment, regarded their Protestant brethren, not merely as sectaries and schismatics, but as rebels to their lawful prince, whom it was their duty, as well as, perhaps, their inclination, to punish by rigid confiscation.

The forfeitures and transfer of property were then recent, most of them within forty years. Many of the individuals who had been actually dispossessed, must have been living; the sons of many more; besides, it was a sudden and un hoped for restoration of power to men, whom it had been the policy of Protestant ascendancy for 150 years to depress, and this restoration accomplished, not merely without the assistance, but absolutely against the consent of the Protestants of Ireland.

Is it to be wondered at, under such circumstances, if the first exertions of that power were guided rather by resentment and passion, than reason? Is Catholicity to blame, or human nature? But see how different every thing is at this day! Most of the ancient Irish families are extinct. In the minds of the few remaining, one hundred and ten years of peace have cooled all resentment; to the possessions of their ancestors, the law has barred their title; and it was law before the Revolution. Their civil rights will be not extorted, but restored: not wrung by fortuitous violence, but imparted with benevolent justice. Their restoration to the rank of man will be a work of peaceful contract, not of implacable war with their Protestant brethren.

But if all barriers between the two religions were beaten down, so far as civil matters are concerned, if the odious

distinction of Protestant and Presbyterian and Catholic were abolished, and the three great sects blended together, under the common and sacred title of Irishman, what interest could a Catholic member of Parliament have, distinct from his Protestant brother sitting on the same bench, exercising the same function, bound by the same ties? Would liberty be less dear to him, justice less sacred, property less valuable, infamy less dreadful?

If the House of Commons were to be even wholly Catholic, still the other estates of the realm, the Peers and the King, would sufficiently preserve the balance. I have supposed in this argument, what I peremptorily refuse to admit, that the whole House of Commons must be Catholic, and that they would of necessity follow such measures as would be prejudicial to the Protestant interest.

But the fact is, that when we consider the great disproportion of property, or, in other words, power, in favour of the Protestants, added to the weight and influence of Government, there can be little fear of a majority of Catholic members existing in Parliament; and we know, by historical experience, that when the House was open to both religions indifferently, no such majority existed, though in times when Catholicity flourished, and the Protestant interest was feeble, comparatively, to what we see at this day.

If, however, there be serious grounds for dreading a majority of Catholics, they may be removed by a very obvious; mode extend the elective franchise to such Catholics only as have a freehold of 10l. by the year; and, on the other hand, strike off that disgrace to our Constitution and our country, the wretched tribe of forty shilling freeholders, whom we see driven to their octennial market, by their landlords, as much their property as the sheep or the bullocks which they brand with their names.

Thus will you at one stroke purge yourselves of the gross and feculent mass which contaminates the Protestant interest,

and restore their natural and just weight to the sound and respectable part of the Catholic community, without throwing into their hands so much power as might enable them to dictate the law; but I again and again protest, that I conceive there is not a shadow of ground for such apprehension; but other men may be more cautious than I, and I would wish to obviate and satisfy the apprehensions of the most timid.

For my own part, I see Protestantism is no guard against corruption; I see the most profligate venality, the most shameless and avowed prostitution of principle go forward, year after year, in assemblies, where no Catholic can by law appear: I see the people plundered and despised, powerless and ridiculous, held in contempt and defiance, and with such a prospect before my eyes, I for one, feel little dread at the thoughts of change, where no change can easily be for the worse. Religion has, at this day, little influence on politics; and when I contrast the national assembly of Frenchmen and Catholics, with other great bodies which I could name, I confess, I feel little propensity to boast that I have the honour to be an Irishman and a Protestant.

I have now examined such arguments as are most generally used to gloss over that monstrous injustice which has held for a century three millions of my countrymen in ignorance and bondage. I have endeavoured to give them such answers, as a very plain understanding could furnish; and I have a confidence that my attempt is but a precursor of many efforts, more worthy of the merits of the cause. The dark cloud which has so long enveloped the Irish Catholic with hopeless misery, at length begins to break, and the sun of liberty may once more illuminate his mind, and elevate his heart.

I have hitherto considered the case of the Catholics in the view of expediency, and as with reference to Protestants, I have done so, because I confess I was afraid of the lengths to which reason would inevitably lead me, if I were to take it up as a question of mere right, and with reference to the feelings of the Catholics themselves. They have remained now for above a

century in slavery; they may have lost the wish for freedom; and, at any rate, I am not very sure that the man is their friend, who points out to them their misery and their degradation, at a time when it is not physically certain that their complete emancipation shall immediately follow. Perhaps even this feeble attempt on their behalf may prejudice the cause which it is meant to defend. If it should be so, I may lament; but I shall never wish to recall it.

What answer could we make to the Catholics of Ireland, if they were to rise, and, with one voice, demand their rights as citizens and as men? What reply justifiable to God and to our conscience? None. We prate and babble, and write books, and publish them, filled with sentiments of freedom, and abhorrence of tyranny, and lofty praises of *the Rights of Man!* Yet we are content to hold three millions of our fellow creatures and fellow subjects, in degradation and infamy and contempt, or, to sum up all in one word in *slavery!*

On what chapter of the *Rights of Man* do we ground our title to liberty in the moment that we are riveting the fetters of the wretched Roman Catholics of Ireland? Shall they not say to us 'Are we not men, as ye are, stamped with the image of our Maker, walking erect, beholding the same light, breathing the same air as Protestants. Hath not a Catholic hands; hath not a Catholic eyes, dimensions, organs, passions? Fed with the same food, hurt by the same weapons, healed by the same means, warmed and cooled by the same summer and winter, as a Protestant is? If ye prick us, do we not bleed? If ye tickle us, do we not laugh? If ye poison us, do we not die? And if ye injure us, *shall we not revenge?*

Hath a Catholic the mark of the beast in his forehead, that he should wander over his native soil like the accursed Cain, with his hand against every man, and every man's hand against him? God Almighty, in his just anger, visits the sins of the fathers, upon the children, not beyond the third or fourth generation, even of those that hate him; and will nothing short

of our eternal slavery satisfy the immitigable rage of Protestant oppression? How have *we* offended? The offence of our ancestors, was their property and their power; we have neither; they are long since sacrificed, and you are in undisputed possession of the spoil.

Do not then grudge us existence, or that for which alone man should exist—liberty. Say not that we are unprepared; liberty prepares herself: Say not that we are ignorant, lest ye judge yourselves. Why are we so? Enough has been done and suffered by us, to satisfy not only justice and law, but cowardice, malice, and revenge; it is time our persecution should cease. The nations of Europe are vindicating themselves into freedom; ye talk about it yourselves and do ye think that we will be left behind?

If you will join us, we are ready to embrace you; if you will not, shame and discomfiture await you. For us, whether supported or not, we are prepared for either event. If freedom comes, we will clasp her to our hearts, and surrender her but with our last breath; if slavery is still to be our portion, we have learned, by bitter experience, to endure; and to that righteous and just God, who has created and preserves us, we commit our cause, nothing doubting, but in the fullness of his good time, that he will manifest his glorious mercies, even unto us; though for wise purposes, he may think fit to continue us a little longer under the rod of our oppressors, the ministers of his wrath.'

If such an appeal were made, *what should we answer?* Let him that can, devise a reply; I know of none.

The argument now stands thus: To oppose the unconstitutional weight of Government, subject as that Government is to the still more unconstitutional and unjust bias of English influence, it is absolutely necessary that the weight of the people's scale should be increased. This object can only be attained by a reform in Parliament, and no reform is practicable, that shall not include the Catholics. These three steps are inseparably connected, and let not any man deceive, himself by

supposing the first attainable without the second, or either without the third. Is the present Government of Ireland such a one as ought to be opposed? Every good Irishman will answer, Yes!

Have we not sufficient experience, how fruitless all opposition is on the present system? The people are divided; each party afraid and jealous of the other; they have only the justice of their cause to support them, and that plea grievously weakened by the acknowledged exclusion of three fourths of the nation from their rights as men. Government, *a foreign Government*, is a small, but a disciplined and compact body, with the sword, the purse, and the honors of Ireland at their disposal. It is easy to see the event of such an opposition to such an Administration. It follows, that to oppose it with success, the people must change their plan.

Do we not see the conduct of Government at this hour, and shall we not learn wisdom, even from our enemies? They know that the Catholics hold the balance between them and that fraction of the nation, which we choose to dignify with the name of the People, and therefore, they court the Catholics. If they secure them, I should be glad to know what they have to fear with the immense power and influence attached to office, with the command of the treasury, and with the whole Catholic party, three-fourths of the kingdom, attached by gratitude to them, and alienated by repeated suspicion, and unremitting ill usage from their enemies.

In a word, the alternative is, on the one hand, reform and the Catholics, justice and liberty; on the other, an unconditional submission to the present, and every future Administration, who may think proper to follow their steps, and who may indulge with ease and safety their propensity to peculation and spoil and insult, while the people remain timid and divided. Between these you must choose, and choose immediately, and that choice may be final.

If the whole body of the people unite with cordial sincerity, and demand a general reform in Parliament, which shall include restitution of the elective franchise to the Catholics, we shall then, and not otherwise, have an honest and independent representation of the people; we shall have a barrier of strength sufficient to defy the utmost efforts of the most profligate and powerful English Administration; we shall be enabled to avail ourselves of the infinite advantages with which Providence has endowed our country; corruption shall be annihilated, Government shall become honest per force, and thereby recover at least some of that respectability which a long course of political depravity has exhausted. In a word, we shall recover our rank, and become a nation in something beside the name.

If, on the other hand, we think reform too dear, when purchased by justice; if we are still illiberal and blind bigots, who deny that civil liberty can exist out of the pale of Protestantism, if we withhold the sacred cup of *Liberty* from our Catholic brother, and repel him from the communion of our natural rights, let us at least be consistent, and cease to murmur at the oppression of the Government which grinds us; let us bear, if we can, without wincing, the whips and goads of our own tyrants, with the consoling reflection, that we can act the tyrant in our turn, and gall the wretched slaves below us; let Administration proceed to play upon the terrors of the Protestants, the hopes of the Catholics, and balancing the one party by the other, plunder and laugh at, and defy both; let English influence meet and check our rising commerce at every turn; let us remain obscure and wretched, and unknown in Europe; let the bulk of the people continue barbarians, in hopeless and incurable ignorance, and wretchedness and want All is well, so long as we can prevent the Catholics from rising to a rank in society with ourselves; we will, in the spirit of the envious man in the fable, bear to lose one of our eyes, so that our neighbour may lose both, and grope about in utter darkness.

But I will hope better things. The example of America, of Poland, and, above all, of France, cannot, on the minds of liberal men, but force conviction. In France 200,000 Catholics deputed a Protestant, St. Etienne, to the National Assembly, as their representative, with orders to procure, what has since been accomplished, an abolition of all civil distinctions, which were founded merely on religious opinions. In America, the Catholic and Protestant sit equally in Congress, without any contention arising, other than who shall serve his country best: So may it be in Ireland! So will it be, if men are sincere in their wishes for her prosperity and future elevation. Let them but consider what union has done in small states, what discord in great ones. Let them look to their Government; let them look to their fellow slaves, who, by coalition with them, may rise to be their fellow-citizens, and form a new order in their society, a new era in their history. Let them once cry *Reform and the Catholics*, and Ireland is free, independent and happy.



# REASONS WHY THE QUESTION OF PARLIAMENTARY REFORM HAS FAILED

A Fragment, Left Unfinished

I presume no man in Ireland, under the degree of a Commissioner of his Majesty's revenue, will deny that a reform in the representation of the people is necessary. The principle has been recognised by the House of Commons in the sessions of 1793, at a period of terror which superseded all dissimulation. The supineness of the nation relieved them from their panic, and they have dexterously evaded the measure by differing as to mode and degree. The gentleman, who, in an unguarded moment of patriotism, pledged himself to bring it forward, has made the experiment, and discharged his conscience; the people have looked on with an apathy to be expected in those who had no interest in the event; and the question of Parliamentary reform, heretofore of some import, has been consigned to oblivion, with as little noise as if it were a common turnpike bill. As the nation assembled in arms in 1783, to procure a similar measure, and failed; as they assembled again in a civil congress, in 1785, and failed; and, finally, as opposition, without the nation, have now failed, it may be worth while to examine the cause of these repeated failures, and to see whether it lies in the nature of the measure itself, or in the principles on which, in those various attempts, it has been undertaken. If it be in the first, the sooner the truth is ascertained, the sooner sedition will lose its pretext, and the public mind be tranquilized; if in the latter, the experience of past errors may lead to a more consistent plan of future exertion.

The volunteers of Ireland, in the year 1782, had emancipated their country from a foreign yoke, and given to

their Parliament the means of being independent. Every friend to what is now called rational liberty, must lament that the efforts of the democrats of that day, some of whom, indeed, seem well disposed by their present conduct to atone for their past indiscretions, were not circumscribed by those wise and salutary laws, which I mention with honour, the Gunpowder and Convention Acts. So it was, however; the people then could meet and discuss public affairs, and had arms in their hands to resist all unconstitutional attacks on their liberties. Their voice, therefore, was attended to in this country and in England, and the Revolution of 1782, was accomplished without bloodshed. They saw, however, instantaneously, the imperfection of their own measure, unless accompanied by a reform in Parliament. They could not be always in arms, and they had no hopes of operating, save by fear, on a body, in whose election they had no voice. England had, it is true, been forced by their virtue and spirit, to renounce her usurped right of binding them by the act of her Legislature; a mode, at all times odious, and now become unsafe; but she had an easier and more plausible method to effectuate her purpose. An English Secretary had the command of the Irish Treasury, to purchase Irish liberty and Irish commerce, from an Irish Parliament. Ancient villainies were acted under new names. The mischief which had been done, gratuitously, by England, was now perpetuated by venal majorities, paid with the money of Ireland, whose interests were sacrificed. By a kind of circular process of destruction, the nation was loaded with taxes, for the purpose, not of maintaining, but abridging, her natural rights. The burden was, itself, a grievance, but the purposes for which it was imposed, was a much greater grievance. The very spirit of taxation was reversed in Ireland. Money was profusely voted, not to cherish the commerce we had, and to open new branches, but to purchase restrictions and limitations in the one case, and to lay an eternal bar in our way in the other. Ireland appeared to sell her commerce and constitution to England, and to pay herself for the sacrifice with

her own money; she taxed the portion she had obtained to reimburse herself for that which she renounced, and the trade of Parliament was that, of all others, which experienced the most immediate and rapid improvement from the Revolution of 1782. Gentlemen could not take it on their conscience to support Administration on the terms of the old agreement; they had now got something to sell; borough stock rose like that of the South Sea; a seat which would, the year before, fetch, in the market, a bare £1,500, was now worth £2,000; and, on an emergency, perhaps, £3,000. The Minister, on his part, scorned to haggle; he saw that, if gentlemen were obliged to pay such high prices on the one hand, it was but reasonable they should be reimbursed on the other, and his liberality was not fettered by any consideration how his grants should be made good, for he well knew that neither his country nor himself would ever be called on for a shilling. To a man, so situated, it was easy to be liberal. The arrangement was soon made, the parties perfectly understood each other, and the affairs of the nation throve accordingly.

This intercourse, however, so pleasing to him that was to give, and those who are to receive, was not equally grateful to the people, who were to make good the stipulation. They did not wish the boroughmongers of Ireland, of whose merits they were little conscious, to reap the principal benefits of a system accomplished by their labours, and at their risqué; a system, too, which those very boroughmongers had, to the last moment, opposed. The volunteers of the four Provinces met, by their delegates, in Dublin, on the 10<sup>th</sup> November, 1783, and, after solemn deliberation, agreed on a plan of reform, the great features of which were, 1<sup>st</sup>. To make residence of six months previous to the test of the writ, an indispensable qualification in all voters, whether for county, city, or borough. 2<sup>d</sup>. To open the boroughs, by increasing the number of electors in each, to two hundred in Ulster, one hundred in Munster and Connaught, and seventy in Leinster, at the least; such increase to be made by

admitting all PROTESTANTS, having freeholds of forty shillings value by the year, within the precincts of the borough, or leaseholds for thirty-one years, fifteen whereof to be unexpired, of ten pounds yearly value; and, by annulling all by-laws made in limitation of franchise. 3d. To increase the number of voters in counties, by admitting, as electors, all PROTESTANTS, having leasehold interests for sixty-one years, twenty whereof to be unexpired, and of the yearly value of ten pounds. 4<sup>th</sup>. To limit the duration of Parliament to three years. 5<sup>th</sup>. To disqualify all persons holding pensions, other than for life or twenty-one years, from being elected into Parliament, and to vacate the seats of such as, being members, should accept of place or pension, other than as above, but with a capacity of being re-elected. Such is the edition of the plan of the memorable Convention of 1783.

There is no man will deny, that this plan, imperfect as it is, would have been a great benefit to the country. The abolishing occasional voters by enforcing residence, would have destroyed, what has been called, the *itinerant interest* of Ireland. The opening the boroughs to the degree recited, would, for so much, have weakened the aristocracy, and, by demolishing close boroughs, have prevented much corruption; at least, if they continued venal, the people would have the privilege of selling themselves, and if they had the disgrace, they would have the benefits of prostitution. The infamous traffic of borough interest for peerages, would likewise be destroyed, and a great part of the system usurpation levelled with the ground. In the opening the right of franchise to termers for years, guarded and limited as it is, a glimmering of reason appears; whatever may be the sentiments of this day, it was then thought by many a prodigious stride, and occupied the attention of the assembly for nearly two days. Even the mighty mind of one of the greatest men this country ever saw, started at the boldness of his own attempt,<sup>4</sup> and, after apologizing for an act of justice by a plea of

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<sup>4</sup> Mr Flood's speech, Convention debates, page 87.

necessity, was glad to take shelter under an English precedent, drawn from the case of a rotten borough. So inveterate an evil is the prejudice of ancient custom! The shortening the duration of Parliament, and even the disqualification of placemen and pensioners, imperfect as it is laid down in the convention plan, would have been great constitutional advantages. It remains, now, to examine the defects of the plan, which will also demonstrate the necessity and inevitable causes of its failure.

Its first grand defect, which is equal to all the others, is, that it pays no respect whatsoever to the claims of the Catholics, an omission not accidental, but deliberate, which of itself was sufficient to destroy, and did eventually sink the plan. The inconsistency and injustice of one-fourth of the people complaining that they were not duly represented in Parliament, in the very moment when they were assisting to exclude three-fourths of their countrymen, who were not represented at all, the demanding more privileges for themselves who already enjoyed many, and, at the same time, refusing all participation to their brethren who possessed none, was so outrageous and violent, as no cause, how righteous soever otherwise, could sustain. What was the consequence? The Catholics having made a fruitless attempt to engage the justice and humanity of the Convention on their behalf, had no interest in the success or failure of their measures. Above three-fourths of the nation were alienated at one blow; the remaining fraction was divided; Government stood firm, and the Protestant volunteer convention of Ireland, representing at the least, forty thousand men, armed and disciplined, were chased with disgrace and derision from the capital – Why? Because they planned an edifice of freedom, on a foundation of monopoly; because they wished to be tyrants, while they complained that they were slaves; because, in advancing their own claims, they disregarded those of their neighbours; because they were selfish and interested, desirous to abolish abuse, so far as it affected themselves, but assisting to

perpetuate it on all beneath them. Such a cause could not succeed; it fell as a suicide by its own injustice.

The principle of exclusion which pervades the whole plan, applies, though not with equal severity, to a great portion of the Protestants, as well to the whole Catholic body. It is not easy to say why, in a borough, a freehold of forty shillings, depending on a single life of eighty years, should entitle the owner, *being a Protestant*, to a vote, while a leasehold of nine pounds ten shillings, for a thousand years, shall be excluded. So in counties, why is no termor, *being a Protestant*, to vote out of an interest of less than ten pounds value, or for a term less than sixty-one years? Because in feudal times tenures for years were less honourable than tenures for life! But are these feudal times? Such will ever be the contradiction and absurdity, when men desert the plain principles of natural justice to follow the beaten track of precedent; when the law continues, after the reason is gone.

The disqualification of placemen and pensioners, as laid down in the plan, if combined with a system of reform, is something; if separated, it is nothing. Send a placeman back to his constituents! And who are his constituents? Perhaps his menial servants, or men as much dependant as those. Doubtless their virtuous indignation will be roused; they will discard the unfaithful representative, whose bread they eat and whose livery they wear, and will look abroad for some more honest and able member to do their business in Parliament. But why except pensioners for life, or a term certain. Is it that a man having received a pension by way of bribe from a Minister, will then desert him, and return to his colours, because the wages of his iniquity cannot be withdrawn? No! Hell itself could not subsist without something like principle. The pension which cannot be recalled, becomes a debt of honour on him who receives it, and every man in society would look with more contempt on him, who having sold himself to the Minister, should afterwards oppose him, or talk of his duty to his country, with the purchase of his integrity jingling in his pocket, than on the thorough-

paced and never-failing drudge, who plods on through the filth and mire of every dirty job, without looking to the right or to the left, reckless of character and anxious only for his pay.

With such radical defects, it is, perhaps, not much to be regretted that the convention plan fell to the ground. From its fall we may derive a lesson which cannot be too deeply imprinted on our minds, *that no system, whose basis is monopoly, ever can succeed.* To ensure success, the nation must be unanimous; to procure unanimity, the interest of *all* must be consulted. If our minds be not expanded sufficiently to embrace an idea so simple, yet so grand, we must bend them to an acquiescence in the present system. There is no medium between complete justice and unqualified submission.

The Convention and their plan having vanished like a mist, the question of reform was now to be tried in another shape, but still on the same vicious principle of exclusion. The House of Commons had with great indignation rejected the measure, as coming from an armed body. Statesmen are never to be believed when the interest is concerned. They are indifferent as to the mode; it was the principle they feared, but the excuse was plausible and weighed with many. In consequence, the Reformers of that day shifted their ground. A new assembly was formed of delegates from all parts of the Kingdom, in a civil capacity, who, after various adjournments, and ineffectual calls on the people to co-operate with and support them, at length, in April 1785, published an address to the nation, and a plan, in substance the same as that of the Convention in 1783, on which, as containing similar excellencies and defects, it is unnecessary here to observe. So little interest did the people take in this measure, that I know not where any proceedings thereon were had in Parliament.

From this experiment in 1785, the question of reform lay, as in a trance, until the year 1791. In that year the unparalleled events, which were going on in France, roused the people from their lethargy. In the North of Ireland, a spirit of inquiry and

exertion broke out, and the town of Belfast, that great fountain of political knowledge and public spirit, took the lead on this, as on every former occasion, when the independence of their country or the liberties of mankind were engaged. Men set themselves seriously to consider the causes of their former defeats, and they had not far to seek; they found them in their own injustice. They saw the folly and the inconsistency of pretending to claim a restoration of their own rights, while they were themselves parties to the exclusion of their Catholic brethren. They altered their system fundamentally. They extended the base. Their plan was reduced to three simple principles, necessarily dependant on each other, and containing the disease, the remedy, and the mode of its attainment:

*First*, that the weight of English influence in the Government of Ireland, was so great as to require a cordial union among *all the people*, to maintain that balance which was essential to the preservation of their liberties, and the extension of their commerce. *Secondly*, That the sole constitutional mode by which that influence could be opposed, was by a complete and radical reform of the representation of the people in Parliament; *And, Thirdly*, That no reform was practicable, efficacious, or just, which should not equally include Irishmen of *every religious persuasion*. Fortunately, at the very moment when this great change was working in their minds, the petulance of Administration had, by multiplied and unnecessary insults, alienated the affections of the Catholic body, who also partook, in a great degree, of the spirit which the French revolution had kindled over Europe. The enlightened men in the two great sects which divide over the nation, cast their eyes instinctively on each other. It required little argument to show them the ruin of their former animosities, or the benefits resulting from union; that their interests, their enemies, their success, their destruction were inseparable. A new light broke forth on their minds. The prejudices of a century were subdued in six months. The Catholics, strong in the justice of their cause, and supported by



their new allies, assumed a bolder tone. To the astonishment of Government, of their friends, of almost of themselves, they dared to assert the great principles of liberty.

*“That no man is free who is taxed when he is not represented, or bound by laws, in the framing of which, he has no power to give, or withhold his assent.”*

Principles so just, compelled their own acknowledgement. Government here and in England were forced to yield to a spirit, of the extent of which they were able to form no calculation. The conjuncture was favourable, the people were resolute, and the Catholic bill of 1793, which restored so many important privileges, and, above all, the elective franchise to that long oppressed body, will remain a splendid monument, as it was the first fruit of the *union of Irishmen*.

By this qualified emancipation of the Catholics, one great impediment in the way of reform is, at least, considerably diminished. The accusation of inconsistency and injustice, can no longer be affixed on the advocates for the measure. In what may be called the new theory of Irish politics, the first step in the system is ascertained, the remaining ones will follow in their order, if not instantaneously, yet certainly. A great difficulty has been surmounted, which if not removed, must forever have sunk all further attempts, as it did all antecedent ones, and the success of the people in the measure which they have obtained, has given them an earnest and a security of a success, in those which they have yet to seek, if by their own folly and in discretion and premature exertion, they do not retard, and perhaps destroy, the noblest cause in which ever a nation was embarked. But of this hereafter. I proceed historically to the next plan of reform, which is also the last which has been submitted to inspection, on the authority of any body or individual, in a public capacity; I mean the bill of reform, presented and dismissed in the course of the last session.

# LETTER TO FAULKNER'S JOURNAL

EPIGRAPH. Chief Justice. To punish you by the heels, would amend the attention of your ears, and I care not if I do become your physician.

*Falstaff.* I am as poor as Job, my Lord, but not so patient. Your Lordship may minister the potion of imprisonment to me, in respect to my poverty, but how I should be your patient to follow your prescriptions, the wise may make some dram of a scruple of, or indeed, a scruple itself.

*Falstaff.* My Lord, I will not undergo this sneap without reply. You call honourable boldness, impudent sauciness. If a man will make courtesy, and say nothing, he is virtuous. No! my Lord. My humble duty remembered, I will not be your suitor.

SHAKESPEARE, *Henry IV.* Part 2.

SIR: I have seen a publication in your paper, of the 11<sup>th</sup> inst. in which, as I am told by my friends, and as I myself believe, I am particularly pointed out, and some extracts are given from a paper supposed to be written by me. This publication imports to be a speech delivered by a nobleman of high station in this country; but as such I am not at liberty to consider it. I will, therefore, presume it to be the work of some ingenious personage, who has assumed the situation, and mimicked, with some success, the sentiments and language of that illustrious character; and, in this view, I cannot deny the author considerable merit; there certainly is something in the *manner* extremely well hit off, and which at first imposed upon me completely; however, on looking more carefully, I discovered internal evidence which must, I think, satisfy any reasonable person, that it cannot possibly be the composition of the great personage, whose name you, sir, have ventured to prefix to it. As a man of veracity, he would scorn to advance, against any individual, a charge of the deepest die, utterly

unsupported by any thing like fact; as a statesman, he could not be so foolish as to publish to all Europe, friends and enemies, that a few desperadoes, such as he describes, have been sufficient to subtract the military force of Ireland from the scale of the empire, and to require an army of observation of no less than six and thirty thousand men, (for such is our present establishment,) to keep them in check; as a friend to the independence of his country, he would not talk such nonsense as to state that Irishmen could rebel against Great Britain; and above all, as a man of humanity, as a constitutional lawyer, and as the keeper of his Sovereign's conscience, he never could have uttered the following remarkable sentence, which you have put into his mouth:

*"It is the only misfortune of a free Government, that nothing but fool and legal proof can bring such dark conspirators to condign punishment."*

Whatever may be the opinion entertained by the anonymous writer of this speech as to my principles, I can assure him that I have a very great deference for even the forms of the Constitution. So much do I respect the seals, in whatever hands deposited, that I will treat even this representative of the Lord Chancellor with due decorum; and I will not carry the war into his territories, nor expose his sophistry, his evasions, or his falsehood, further than is absolutely necessary for my own defence. I wish but to clear myself, which, if I can do, I will leave him to God, his conscience, and the tongue of his countrymen. The charge against me is, that I am one of a faction, whose object is, in the words of the speech, "to rebel against the crown of Great Britain, by effectuating a separation between the sister countries." And the overt acts which are brought forward to establish the charge, are a letter, or confidential despatch, said to be written by me; the founding the society of United Irishmen; the establishing the General Committee of the Catholics, on a plan, procured from my friends and associates in France; and,

incidentally, by all these different acts of treason against Great Britain, endeavouring to prevent the crown from employing its troops in the restoration of peace, by facilitating the operations of the powers combined against France.

Before I enter into any justification of myself, I beg leave solemnly to protest against the principle laid down by the writer of this speech, whoever he be, that, as an Irishman, I owe any allegiance either to Great Britain or to the crown of Great Britain. My allegiance is due to the king of Ireland; and I would, to the last drop of my blood, resist the claim of any king, and much more of any nation, under any other title, who should presume to exact obedience of me. I confess this is one of the gross blunders, or worse, of the writer, which satisfied me of the forgery of the composition. For, whatever opposition the illustrious character whom he personates might have formerly given to the independence of his country; however strenuously he might have supported the usurpations of England; or whatever grief and anguish of mind he might feel at the reflection that all his virtuous efforts were unsuccessful, I am sure he is too wise to broach such doctrines now. Low as the state of public spirit is in Ireland, I think we would hardly tolerate the old system of British supremacy; and I cannot help here pointing out the gross inconsistency of introducing in a speech, whose object is to reprobate all idea of separation, expressions and sentiments of all others the most likely to create doubts and jealousies between the two countries, by reminding the one of what she has been forced to surrender, and alarming the other for what she had so recently extorted, and scarcely yet secured.

I am come now to the grand charge that I am an advocate for separation, and, on that head, I shall be as explicit as the delicacy of the subject and the circumstances of the times will admit me to be. I beg it may be remembered that I never publicly broached this doctrine at all. Whatever I said upon it was merely my own individual sentiments in a private letter to a friend, which was never intended to be made public, and much less

written with that degree of caution which I should have used had I expected it would ever have become, as I learn it did become, an object of enquiry before the Secret Committee of the Lords. Nevertheless, I am so clear as to the spirit with which it was written, that I would, at this moment, answer with my life for its contents; and, indeed, it is at least presumptive proof of nothing very objectionable being found in it, that I have not yet been "laid by the heels for it," as I was once threatened by a great man, who afterwards, however, changed his mind.

I likewise think it is necessary, in order to obviate a charge of confederacy, implied in the publication which I am answering, to mention that this letter was written in Spring 1791, and my being retained in the service of the Catholics did not take place till July, 1792. The date of the letter will likewise account for anything contained in it, favourable to the French Revolution.

I can well conceive such a connection between two countries as would be highly beneficial to both; so much, perhaps, as to double the resources and power which either would have if separate. But it must be a connection of perfect equality, equal law, equal commerce, equal liberty, equal justice. Such a connection, founded on the steady basis of common interest and mutual affection, would be immutable and eternal. No good citizen would have the wish, no turbulent partisan the power, to disturb it; every man in both countries would guard and defend it, as he would the muniments of his estate. But I can conceive a connection of a very different nature, where the only community is in the dangers, the risks, and the losses, and where the gains and glory are carefully secured to one party only; and I cannot so far divest myself of common sense as to judge of the two systems by the same rule, merely because they are called by the same name.

If Ireland had been a separate and independent nation to this hour, and if England were now, for the first time, to come forward, and say to her, "I think it would be better for us both to

be united under one head," with an offer of the connection as it stands, would it be accepted? Would we not answer, that we were as competent to our own government, regulation, and defence, as she was? But, suppose we agreed to accept the offer on certain conditions, such as, that "our common Sovereign should reside here, and she be governed by a Viceroy; that she should surrender her East Indian commerce to us; that our manufactures should be protected by law and hers not," and a few other such, what would England answer? And what is the reason that England should enjoy any one pre-eminence, privilege, or advantage over Ireland, seeing that neither God nor nature have set any mark of inferiority on our soil, climate, or people?

I will know, that change is not made, even from worse to better, without inconvenience; and I am sure no man in Ireland will ever think of the question of separation, unless gross corruption in the legislature of his country, and a continued sacrifice of her interests to England, shall compel him. It is false, to say the people are giddy, and prone to change; they are the reverse. If ever their minds are alienated from the connection with England, it will only result from extravagant misconduct in their own rulers, who, with a mistaken zeal to recommend themselves to their employer, persist in bending the Constitution and commerce of Ireland under the oppressive weight of British influence. If that shall ever happen, and if the palpable operation of this influence shall force the question upon men's minds, whether they will or not, the true, genuine, and efficient advocates for separation, are those who would ground their own elevation and security on the merit of sacrificing the commerce and independence of Ireland to the monopoly and ambition of Great Britain. These considerations, and the despair I felt of ever seeing the corruptions of this country removed, (all which I trace to the necessity of maintaining an influence ruinous to the interests of Ireland, and only to be supported by such vile means,) first compelled me to entertain, even in idea,

the question of separation; a question of weighty and serious import indeed; a question not to be agitated but upon great provocation, nor to be determined on but in the last extremity; for, on the result of that determination depends the fate of one, perhaps of both countries. Serious as it is, it must, however, and will, infallibly, arrive at some period, unless a speedy and effectual check be given to the continuance of existing abuses and corruption.

But perhaps the fact of British influence may be denied. I am happy to be able to select one instance, where it has been exerted *beneficially* to Ireland; which will establish the point. The Catholics of this country applied to their own Legislature, and their own Minister; they were spurred with unnecessary contempt. They applied again, and were again rejected. They then determined they would apply here no more. They assembled and framed a petition to the King, and they sent it by some of their own body to England. What was the consequence? The English Minister, a wise and temperate man, saw they were not to be trifled with. He did not exasperate them by foolish rhodomontades, nor threaten them with the lives and fortunes of all England. He conceded the point magnanimously, and recommended them, (*that is*, exerted his influence as Minister of England) to his friends here, in a manner so forcible, that, since the miraculous conversion of St. Paul, nothing has been seen on earth to equal it. The claims and merits of the Catholics were all at once discovered, as it were by a Divine interposition; the swords of their ancestors fell from the hands of the Corporation of Dublin; the grand juries were illuminated, and withdrew from the field with their lives and fortunes undamaged; and, even the grave and steady sage, the deep lawyer, and profound politician, whose opposition was most dreaded, and who was reported to have said, and indeed to have sworn, with equal wit and wisdom, that "*by the Eternal God,*" if those fellows ever came to the bar, it should be through the Dock; even he had an immediate revelation, and was, "*Pro pudor!*" converted with the

common herd. For the honour of the consistency of that great character, I must admit, he certainly made wry faces, and gulped hard; however, he did swallow the pill, as he has been obliged to swallow some others. Surely, after this, no man will doubt the fact of British influence.

But to return: My theory of politics, since I had one, was this: What is the evil of this country? British influence. What is the remedy? A reform in Parliament. How is that attainable? By a union of all the people. For those three positions, fire will not melt them out of me; I have always maintained them, and always shall. But of this creed, separation makes no part. If it were *res integra*, God forbid but I should prefer independence; but Ireland being connected as she is, I for one do not wish to break that connection, provided it can be, as I am sure it can, preserved consistently with the honour, the interests, and the happiness of Ireland. If I were, on the other hand, satisfied that it could not be so preserved, I would hold it a sacred duty to endeavour, by all possible means, to break it, even though for so doing, a great lawyer were to tell me "*that I was rebelling against Great Britain.*"

I am not one of those who think, that, by admitting that a measure may lead to separation, we are precluded from further argument. I think the mention of separation is neither treason nor blasphemy. I am sure, no wise Minister will ever let the possibility of that event out of his head. If he does, he will repent it. I can conceive circumstances more ruinous to this country, than even separation; and I will tell the anonymous author, who has assumed the character of a great statesman to vent his own folly, that he had done better in not stirring the question. Public opinion is an uncertain thing, and it is therefore possible, that the investigation may not, in the long run, serve his side of the argument. He has made what was matter to faith, subject to reason; what no man scarcely ventured to lift up his head and look steadily at, is submitted to general inspection and enquiry; and where is the security, that the people may judge in the



manner which the author of the speech thinks the right one. I cannot help thinking, therefore, that it would have been more wise, as well as more honourable, if the private correspondence of so obscure an individual as myself had been suffered to pass unobserved. For, when a new doctrine of any kind is broached, it is apt to make proselytes, even by its novelty, and there is no knowing where it may end. Of this I am sure, that, were I Minister of England, the question of separation is one of the last which I would wish to see brought forward to public discussion. Knowing, as I do, the possibility of preserving the connection between the countries, on the easy terms of equal justice to both, I confess I stand amazed at the shallow policy of those who can risk it for little temporary advantages to England and to themselves. Were it necessary to prove an axiom, it might be shown, that the more Ireland is benefitted, in all respects of commerce and constitution, the more strength does England acquire, and the more is the connection riveted; yet, obvious as it is, I fear, judging at least from appearances, that neither England nor her instruments in this country, are yet aware of the truth of this position.

I have now unwillingly touched upon a question, which I never would have introduced, had I not been forced, by the attack made on myself. I have gone, not as far as I could, but as far as I durst; for I am arguing with a man who has thirty legions. God knows, but in what I have said, I may have unintentionally rebelled against Great Britain; and, if it be so, from some late samples I have seen, I fear I shall meet with very little mercy. If, therefore, my argument be not as forcible as it might, let it be remembered that I am wrestling in fetters, and that my adversary, like Lord Peter, can call in a file of dragoons to support his thesis, and force me to swallow his "*damned brown crusts for mutton,*" whether I will or not.

I come now, Mr. Editor, to a confidential despatch from a gentleman "who wears a bar gown," meaning as I am told and believe, myself. When I was told some time ago, that some letter

of mine had arrived to the unexpected honour of being made a subject of enquiry, and that the original was said to be in the custody of the illustrious personage whose name you have taken upon yourself to prefix to the paper which you are pleased to call his speech, I became somewhat curious to know what that letter could be, and having learned that, I prosecuted my enquiries somewhat farther. I do recollect very well my writing a letter early in 1791, to a particular friend of mine, which letter enclosed the "*Declaration*" of the first society of United Irishmen in Belfast, of which I admit myself to be the author, and let what can be made of it. But through what channel it may have passed to the hands of the illustrious character in whose custody I am told it now is, I cannot answer, nor for what mutilations or interpolations it may have suffered on its way. I could wish for my own justification I had the letter; for when I wrote it, I thought it of so little importance, that I kept no copy, nor even made a memorandum of the date.

I am, therefore, obliged to take it on the dubious authority of the author of the speech, and admitting that, I see nothing in its principles which I am disposed to retract; but I would venture to assert, upon memory, for, as I said already, I have no copy, that in the first paragraph quoted, there is an error in the expressions. It is printed thus:

"We have not inserted it in our resolutions, and *we* have not said a word which looks like separation, although in the opinion of *our* friends, such an event would be the regeneration of Ireland."

This is evidently meant to convey something of the idea of a combination or conspiracy, which is utterly false. The declaration and the letter, as I wrote them, were solely my own act. When I had sketched the declaration, I showed it to some gentlemen, whose names I mentioned in the letter, and it met with their approbation. Their names, the author of the speech has not ventured to insert, because he was cunning enough to see that if they were made public, it would blow up his innuendo

of a conspiracy into the air; he calls them, therefore, "my associates, some physicians, a barrister, &c."

Whom he meant by the expression "our friends," is, I suppose, explained in the next sentence, which runs as follows:

"These are the sentiments of this father of the society of United Irishmen, who has been voted upwards of £10,000 sterling by the Catholic convention, and who struck out for them that plan of election which he received from his friends and associates in France."

Here are four heavy charges, in as many lines. Of each in their order, and first of the first.

1<sup>st</sup>. So far as writing the declaration of the first society of Belfast, the first indeed in the kingdom, and being a very early member of that of Dublin, I plead guilty, and I remain, in every syllable I have written, precisely of the opinion I was when I wrote it; I have not one word to offer in justification.

2<sup>nd</sup>. To the second, I have been voted upwards of £10,000 sterling by the Catholics. I am proud to own it; it is a connection wherein I glory. It is a reward spontaneously voted, for services fairly done, and sacrifices, I will say it, *disinterestedly* made. When I first wrote a little book on the Catholic question, I was not acquainted with one member of their body; that circumstance introduced me to their notice; they retained me in their service, and I served them faithfully. I have received from them an honourable discharge, and I am satisfied. I will further assure the writer of the speech, what he will perhaps find it difficult to conceive, that I think myself a richer, and a happier man with £10,000 sterling, earned as I have earned it, than I should if I were Lord Chancellor of Ireland, with ten times as much a year, and the conviction that I had purchased my wealth and honours, by betraying the liberties and independence of my country.

3<sup>rd</sup>. The next charge is that I struck out for the Catholics the plan for the election of their convention. This charge, I am heartily sorry, is not true, for were it so, I should have the

satisfaction to think I had rendered them a service, in some degree adequate to the benefits and the kindness which I have received at their hands; and I assure the author of the speech that I should not shrink from the honour of being the inventor of the plan, though I were convinced that I might thereby give mortal offence to the illustrious personage who is made, with such asperity, to censure me, a personage indeed about whose favour, I neither have been, nor am remarkably solicitous.

4<sup>th</sup>. The next charge is rather more serious. It is no less than I have received the plan, which I am just said to have myself struck out, from my friends and associates in France. There are some charges which admit but of one answer. As I presume that the author of the speech meant to convey an imputation of the deepest dye, I shall give him the only reply he deserves, by telling him his assertion is a gross and malignant falsehood.

And here, if I had any doubt before, I would be satisfied that this same speech could not possibly be the composition of the noble and illustrious personage whose name is so audaciously prefixed to it; for surely that noble and learned personage is infinitely too just to endeavour to affix on an innocent man, whose success in life must depend on his preserving a fair character, who could never by any possibility have injured him, who has not the honour, not even the wish, in the smallest degree, to know him, a charge of so heinous a nature, and, at the same time, so utterly unsupported by the smallest shadow of truth. God knows in those days of gunpowder acts, and alien acts, and treasonable correspondence acts, and convention acts, what may or may not be an act to bring a man's life in jeopardy. It may not be long the "only misfortune of a free Government, that nothing but full and legal proof can bring such dark conspirators to condign punishment." When all ordinary modes of investigation fail, perhaps we may see the rack come in for its turn, and force the unwilling culprit to furnish evidence against himself. There are minds, cruel and cowardly, to whom such a speculation may not be undelightful,

and I remember to have read in a book, called the history of England, how a certain Lord Chancellor, (I think his name was Wriothesly) tortured with his own hands, in the tower of London, a certain Anne Ayscue; (but that was indeed, and the author mentions it as such, rather a violent act.) Thank God we live in times when such things are not. To the "*misfortunes of a free Government,*" a culprit can be convicted as yet only upon full and legal proof, a restraint upon the sallies of a great mind, eager to arrest sedition in its progress, which I do not much wonder the fictitious author of the speech should think extremely hard and unreasonable.

I remember to have lately seen a state paper, in which, by the suppression of dates, by the juxtaposition of remote facts, and the separation of connected ones, something like a plausible narrative was made out, every syllable of which, separately taken, was true, yet, the whole together, as false as the Koran, a mode of composition which the author of the speech has initiated very successfully. For instance, he connect a letter supposed to be written by me in the spring of 1791, when I was not acquainted with a single Catholic, with the formation of the General Committee, which did not meet until Christmas, 1792; and then combining this with the Duke of Brunswick's immortal retreat the autumn of the same year, he infers, that we, the agitators, meaning the Catholics, my friends and associates in France, and myself, had formed, as he has no doubt, a serious design to rebel against Great Britain, and form a Republic connected with France. These are indeed the dreams of the wicked. "*The thief doth fear each bush an officer.*" But what follows on the heels of this alarming discovery, "*that roars so loud and thunders in the index?*" Truly, the cruel lenity of the laws, which again intervenes, and ties up the hands of this friend to rational liberty; unluckily, "he cannot convict in a court of justice the persons concerned in this design, for still, to the eternal disgrace, as well as misfortune of a free Government, "*nothing but full and*

*legal proof, can bring such dark conspirators to condign punishment."*  
Alas! Alas!

But, though this memorable conspiracy, like its brother, the famous insurrection in England, (which has now blazed with such inextinguishable fury for so many months, and no man can yet tell where,) has not been thoroughly defined, or digested, so as to be carried into effect; yet, the authors of it have not been idle. Until they can produce their army of Sansculottes, which is lying, like Mr. Bayes, disguised, in Donnybrook, they amuse themselves piddling with lesser game. They have, therefore, merely "pour passer le temps," totally demolished all credit, public or private, in the country. In the month of August last, says the ingenious and veracious author of this speech, public and private credit were at the highest, public securities above par, and, in November, they had fallen twenty per cent. Private credit fell so low that no man could obtain £100, though specie was never so plenty in Ireland. It appeared in evidence, upon oath, before the Privy Council, that the distress of the manufacturers was owing to the National Guard, and to the United Irishmen. Now all philosophers agree, that no more causes are to be admitted in any hypothesis that are true, and sufficient to explain the phenomenon. I agree with the author of the speech in the fact, but I differ, totally, in the mode of explaining it; and I will not so far imitate him as to give assertion for proof, and authority for argument, for I will support what I say by facts and dates, and, to do so, I must go a little farther back than August last.

The Catholics had, some time before that, begun the elections for their convention, from the beginning to the end of which neither riot, tumult, nor breach of the peace occurred, to the great contristation and disappointment of their enemies. The assizes which usually begin towards the latter end of July, gave an opportunity to some distinguished characters through the country to marshal their respective grand juries in battle array, and they did so to some purpose. From one end of Ireland to the

other, nothing was to be heard but the most outrageous and clamorous attacks upon the Catholics, and their truly respectable chairman. Some cried out the Papists were bringing in the French, and others that they were bringing in the Pretender; some that they would leave us in absolute submission to the Pope, and others that they would plunge us into the horrors of a wild democracy; but all agreed, with a noble disregard to property and existence, which I know not how sufficiently to admire, to stake their lives and fortunes in support of the King, the Constitution, and something which was then called the Protestant ascendancy, but is now become an absolute phrase. All this bustle, and confusion, and rout, and alarm, certainly did create a good deal of uneasiness in the public mind, and some apprehension lest tumults, at least, if not worse, might ensue, for the Catholics proceeded with the cool resolution of men who seemed to be in earnest, and the blustering braggadocios of the grand juries, were, by many, mistaken for the ebullitions of genuine courage, determined not to recede; and, indeed, these idle rhodomontades were countenanced by men who should have known better. I have heard of one illustrious personage who, overlooking the gross impropriety of such a measure, in a Judge, a Peer, and a Minister, attended the meeting of the freeholders of his county, and lent, as far as he could, the countenance of his office to a fulminating declaration against the Catholics, wherein lives and fortunes were lavishly tendered, and the most terrible predictions and menaces held forth, in case they, the Catholics, persisted in the demand of their just rights. All this being so, is it wonderful that moneyed men, being naturally timid and anxious, and seeing three millions of peremptory Catholics on one side drawn up, and, on the other, so many corporations and grand juries, every man with his life and fortune in his hand, and ready to squander both with the most profligate valour, headed too, by such greater and respectable characters, to whose robes and long wigs they had been accustomed to look with reverence – is it wonderful, I say,

if they began to be somewhat uneasy and unwilling to part with their money so fluently as formerly? As to the fall of public credit, therefore, I again agree with the writer of this suppositious speech, but I attribute that fall to the intemperate language and foolish bluster of the grand juries and their prompters, enemies to Catholic liberty, and, by no means, to the National Guards and to the society of United Irishmen. And as to the evidence, on oath, which the aforesaid writer alleges was laid before the Privy Council, I do not, in the least, regard it; because, in the first place, I have no great respect for men swearing to what is merely matter of opinion; and, in the next place, because I, or any man in the community, is as good a judge, in a case of this kind, as the persons so sworn, or the persons who procured them to swear.

But further, the National Guards, as they were called, did not appear until Christmas, (I mean the two or three individuals who did not appear at all.) The stoppage of public credit is stated by the author of this speech to have taken place in November. Now, though I think moneyed men may be very wise men, I do not take them to be absolute conjurers, and, consequently, I say it is much more reasonable to attribute the suspension of confidence to the furious and desperate valour held forth in the manifestos of the grand juries, (one of which, at least, I could from internal evidence, trace to its author,) and to the alarm which such foolish and violent measures created, than to the appearance of a corps not then in existence, and which was not even thought of till two months afterwards.

But, in God's name, what was the cause of the downfall of public credit in England, where the ruin and destruction has been ten times as extensive as here? I hope the National Guards did not send over a detachment to seize the Bank of England, nor have I yet heard that a committee of the United Irishmen was despatched to fraternize with the citizens of London, to send the Royal family to the Tower, and create a republic upon the model of France. Yet I declare I have seen such monstrous and



incredible lies swallowed without enquiry, that I should not be surprised if such reports were firmly believed. The cant of the day is here “the United Irishmen; in England, the Insurrection.” And I remember I saw in London, last January, with a mixed sensation of sorrow and contempt, the strange infatuation of the people there; that great city in an agony of fear and terror of they knew not what, until at last they were relieved from their anxiety by the provident care of the Minister, who sunk half a dozen rum puncheons to the bunghole opposite the Tower stairs, and ran a screen of silt deal along the parapet, behind which they were told the King and Constitution were quite safe from the attacks of the French, the Devil, and Tom Paine, and they believed it, and were satisfied.

With us it was not much better. Half a dozen men appeared last Christmas in green jackets. Immediately the alarm was given. The Gauls were in the capital. All parties ran to oppose the common enemy. Government and Opposition flew into each other’s arms; they swore an everlasting friendship, and the United Irishmen were immolated as the symbol of their union. The House of Commons presented a most delightful and edifying scene of harmony and affection. Business went on upon carpet ground, for when those gentlemen do agree, as Puff says, their unanimity is wonderful. The gunpowder bill was passed; the volunteers were disarmed; the people of Belfast were dragooned. What matters all this? It was all to punish the United Irishmen, a race of men who have been much more serviceable to their enemies than to their friends. Now we have a convention bill, still to vex the United Irishmen. Unluckily, however, these acts operate upon the nation at large, full as much as upon this obnoxious society; and, if the liberty of Ireland were crushed and lying at the mercy of an arbitrary Minister tomorrow, the United Irishmen would not be one jot more enslaved than any other men in the community.

See now what comes of all this. In England, the cry of Republicans and Levellers is set on foot by the Ministers, backed

with a most alarming insurrection. Where is it? Where is it? Do you ask, says one Minister, do you ask us to reveal the situation of the country to the enemy? If we were to mention *where*, it might have the most ruinous consequences. It is a secret. What, says another Minister, do you ask us to tell what all the world knows? Can any man shut his eyes upon it? It is, alas! but too notorious. There was no standing such authentic and consistent information. All England poured in with their lives and fortunes, and what have they got? A war, the first year of which, indeed the first six months, has produced seven hundred bankruptcies, and the probable end of which no man can foresee.

In Ireland, the cry is, "The United Irishmen," and the nation seems very wisely determined to surrender its liberties to spite that turbulent society. I confess, however, I, for one, cannot see the wisdom of such a procedure. If I were not a United Irishman, I think I would argue with myself, that though they were fools and madmen, that was no manner of reason why I should be a salve, and I would not give the least countenance to an arbitrary law restraining my own liberty, because it happened to affect theirs also. However, of that the nation is itself the best judge; and it has always been a principle of mine, that if a people choose a bad Government they ought to have it, for I acknowledge no foundation of empire, but their choice.

I cannot help delighting myself sometimes with the brilliant prospects which lie before my country at this hour. I anticipate the halcyon days of rational liberty, when no United Irishmen shall dare to show his face but through the bars of Newgate; when the peaceful slumbers of our statesmen shall no more be broken in upon by the rattling of volunteer drums; when the people shall not meet in tumultuous assemblies, or at all, under colour of petitioning; when the same delightful unanimity which has produced such glorious effects in this session, shall forever pervade our Senate; when no man shall learn the use of arms but the troops, appointed conservators of the liberty of Ireland; when the friends to the constitution,

liberty, and peace, having discharged their functions and brought back the public mind, are retired to their own place, and enjoy in silent satisfaction the consummation of their wise and patriotic labours; when no clamorous demagogue disturbs the land with obsolete notions of what he calls liberty; when the newspapers are silent, all, save that over which you, Mr. Editor, so worthily preside; when protected by a force of 36,000 men, every placeman and pensioner sits under his own vine and his own fig tree, and takes his Burgundy in peace. Happy days! These will, indeed, be *golden times* for those who will enjoy them. But, to be serious. I am very much afraid that that great statesman was right, who said, "we were a people easily roused and easily appeased." We are, indeed, appeased now with a vengeance. Whether we shall ever be roused again, God knows, but in the meantime, we are tied pretty fast with parchment bonds. I will not, however, be guilty of the abominable sin of despairing of my country. I will hope that the genius of the land will yet rouse, like the strong man, and snap asunder the fetters with which the Philistines have bound him in his sleep. For, let it be remembered, that though Sampson had his eyes put out in his day, and was also brought out of his prison into the House of Lords to make them sport, yet they had no great reason to triumph in the event; for he prayed to the Lord and bowed himself with all his might, and their house fell upon the Lords and slew them, with all that were therein, to the great loss and dismay of the aristocracy of those times.

I have now done, Mr. Editor. There is a great variety of matter in other parts of this composition which I might observe upon, had I not determined to make my reply purely defensive. I know not what may be the issue of even what I have said, but, whatever it be, I must, perforce, endure it, and certainly if any man in power has a wish to wreak his vengeance in security, now is his time, when the public spirit is in a state of the most abject and contemptible prostration, and when it is a crime of sufficient magnitude to warrant any degree of punishment that

the person accused is connected with the committee of the Catholics, or a friend to the citizens of Belfast, or, above all, a member of the Society of United Irishmen, three circumstances which I have the fortune to unite in my individual person.

THEOBALD WOLFE TONE.

# STATEMENTS ON BEHALF OF THE CATHOLICS

## I.

*Statement of the light in which the late act for the partial repeal of the penal laws, is considered by the Catholics of Ireland.*

In the statement I am about to make, I would be understood to give merely my opinion from appearances, as they strike me; I am not acquainted with any intentions of the Catholics, from authority; I speak only from conjecture as to their *future conduct*; as to their *present feelings*, I collect it from such communication as I occasionally hold with members of their body.

The Catholics consider the late advantages which they obtained, as so much extorted from the necessities of Government, under a lucky combination of circumstances; of course all gratitude is out of the question. Knowing, however, their own internal weakness, they are extremely anxious and irritable on the least appearance of attack; and certainly the line of conduct which has been uniformly followed, during and since the passing of their bill, does in nowise tend to lessen their jealousies and their fears.

The excluding them from the freedom of this city, is, in my humble judgement, a very unwise measure. The accession of strength to them, if they succeeded, would be nothing; but their pride is wounded, and, still more, their apprehensions are perpetuated, by the maintaining, in trifling objects, the principle of exclusion. They conclude that the animosity against them is as violent as ever, and only waits for a convenient opportunity to break out in perhaps a renewal of some of the old Popery laws. This circumstance, therefore, is one cause of the discontent which I know exists in their body.

But the late prosecutions have given them, as they consider, much more serious cause for alarm. They certainly, and, as I believe universally, consider them as part of a system, the ultimate object of which is to reduce them to their former condition, perhaps to a worse one. They look on them as fabrications of their enemies, who do not themselves believe a syllable of the evidence adduced to support them; and the terror produced by these prosecutions appears to me to be general.

What they say is this: In order to prepare the way here, and more especially in England, for reducing them to their former slavery, it is first necessary to destroy their characters as dutiful and loyal subjects. For this purpose, insurrections have been raised and fomented by their enemies, in various quarters. The army and the law are then let loose upon them, until repeated executions of the mere rabble have established the fact, and alarmed, in some degree, the property of the kingdom. It is then said the rabble could never act on a system if they were not regulated by men in a higher sphere. Discoveries are pretended to be made, and respectable individuals, especially those who have formerly been active in supporting the late General Committee, are seized and thrown into jail on the testimony of the vilest wretches. It is true, those attempts have failed, either from the blunders or the perjury of the inferior instruments; but, if they had succeeded, the next step would have been to strike at the principal Catholics of Dublin, and then it would have been held up here and in England as a regular chain of conspiracy; first, that the *mere instruments* had been punished; through them they had come at the *agents* in different parts of the country, and at last they had made out the *prime movers* of the plot in the capital. Such are the discourses I have lately a thousand times heard, and I am sure they have made a very deep and serious impression on the minds of the principal Catholics of Dublin, the men whose names carry the greatest weight with the body at large throughout the Kingdom.

What they conclude from all this is, that there is no safety for them but in running together for support; and I observe, the men among them who used to be the most timid on former occasions, perhaps from that very timidity, most forward on the present. They look on their late acquittal as a crisis in their affairs. If they use it with spirit, it will be a triumph to their cause; if not, it will be looked on merely as an escape, and it will be said that they were fully content with avoiding the gallows. For these reasons they seem determined to take some steps, and, probably, strong ones, immediately.

Such is the result of my observations on what is going forward here. I give no opinion of my own, but merely state what I hear among Catholics with whom I communicate, and in the foregoing sentiments I am sure that a great majority of them are sincere.

## II.

*Reasons for the discontent of the Catholics, on the late act for the partial repeal of the penal laws.*

It has been a matter of surprise that the degree of favour afforded to the Catholics of Ireland, by the Legislature, in the present session, on the gracious and paternal recommendation of his Majesty, has not produced a greater apparent degree of gratitude on their part; and still more, that any thing like tumult or disturbance should continue to exist in the country. A very brief and plain statement will at once explain the fact, and exonerate the Catholics from the charge of either levity or ingratitude.

To his Majesty, for his goodness and affection to his Catholic subjects, and more particularly for his last most gracious interposition in their behalf, they feel the most lively and animated sensations of grateful acknowledgment; at the same time, it is with the deepest regret that they cannot but see

his benign wishes to procure the cordial union of all his subjects in support of an excellent constitution, in a great degree frustrated, and his intended benevolence to his loyal subjects rendered void by the conduct of certain personages in power here, whose wish seems to be to perpetuate disunion among his people, and to destroy all sense of obligation in the very moment of conferring a favour.

The Catholics of Ireland were prepared and willing to allow for every degree of prejudice and opposition to their emancipation, previous to his Majesty's gracious recommendation of their state to the wisdom of his Parliament; but after that signal proof of the royal wisdom, clemency, and goodness, it was with the utmost degree of anxiety and alarm that they saw, early in the late session, a personage, who, from his elevated station, must be presumed to carry great weight and influence in Administration, rise in his place, and oppose the measure of intended relief with the utmost pertinacity and virulence, while other and inferior servants of Government, held language not inferior in violence and outrage. It was matter of little less terror and alarm to them, when a secret committee was instituted, and it was industriously hinted about that discoveries of great crimination were expected to be made against certain of the most active members of their body; and though those persons were so conscious of their innocence as to offer, to a great personage here, to be examined in the most public and solemn manner, touching any matter which could be alleged against them, yet, comparing the present measure with the general discourses and known views of those who set it on foot, they could not but consider it as levelled at their hopes of success. After some time, a report from that committee was published, wherein, by a continued series of misrepresentation and misstatement; by suppression of dates and signatures; by separation of concurring facts, and juxtaposition of remote ones, an impression was laboured to be made on the public mind of what was too grossly false to be directly asserted, that those



members of the Catholic body had been concerned in existing insurrections or tumults in certain parts of the country, and had actually sent money to the insurgents, commonly called "Defenders." And this report was accompanied with a promise of future discoveries, which have never since appeared, and which, it is presumed, were never made, but which were stated to be of a nature so gross, that, when revealed, they would appal the nation. This report and promise, the Catholics of Ireland did, and do, consider as an outrage upon truth, and a direct attack upon the honour of their body, made for the purpose of rendering them suspected by their Sovereign, and odious to their fellow subjects, thereby more securely and certainly to thwart their hopes of emancipation, and to render nugatory his Majesty's royal interposition in their behalf. And further, when at length the bill for their relief was in the very act of passing, it was accompanied with the most serious and violent invective from the same elevated character who had uniformly opposed its progress, and with the most positive declarations that no future degree of favour was ever to be hoped for, under any circumstances; a mode of conduct altogether opposite from any thing like conciliation or regard, and tending directly to frustrate his Majesty's gracious wish, expressed repeatedly from the throne, to unite all ranks and descriptions of his subjects in support of our excellent constitution.

When the bill had passed, the General Committee of the Catholics was called together; they expressed their gratitude in the warmest manner to their Sovereign and to Parliament; and then, having, in a great degree, accomplished the object of their delegation, to avoid the most remote appearance of disrespect to the Legislature, they dissolved their body. But this has not saved them; for, notwithstanding their delegates were honoured by a most gracious reception from Majesty itself, who, out of his paternal goodness, was pleased to admit them to his presence, yet a bill has since been introduced, and carried by the same influence which has ever been found so hostile to the Catholics,

reflecting, by direct inference, in the severest manner, on the said General Committee, as an unlawful and tumultuous assembly; and thereby, in a certain degree, censuring the conduct of our most excellent Sovereign himself. This bill, and the language uniformly held by the mover and supporters thereof during its progress, the Catholics also consider as a severe and unjust charge against their body, and as, in fact, an effort of posthumous malice against their late General Committee, after its dissolution; all which has and does only tend to lessen the value of any benefit conceded, by mingling suspicion and insult in the very moment of conferring an obligation.

The same influence of which the Catholics complain, has been, ever since the passing of the bill, exerted to prevent their reaping any benefit even from the privileges of which, by law, they are now capable. In the city of Dublin, where that influence is omnipotent, it has been exerted to prevent their obtaining their freedom, and, as if to mark the line of separation more strongly, in the very moment when their applications were rejected, the right which was withheld from them, was granted as a matter of favour, and with every circumstance of the most flattering compliment, to one of the most scurrilous and abusive of their calumniators – a circumstance of unnecessary insult, which has made a deep impression on their minds, and which, combined with others, they cannot but trace up to the same source.

In the University of Dublin, an attempt has lately been made, by the same personage, to throw difficulties in the way of Catholics obtaining degrees, which, though defeated by one or two learned members of that body, still confirms the existence of that principle of exclusion which would, if carried into effect, continue the Catholics of Ireland, what no good subject should wish to see them, a divided people, with a separate interest. In the appointment of magistrates, the same principle was taken up at first, but has since, in a certain degree, been foregone.

In the militia, a new and untried measure, which certainly demanded, in times like the present, the utmost degree of

delicacy and conciliation, the same principle has, and, as the Catholics cannot but think, under the same influence, to a very great degree, been adopted. Very few Catholic gentlemen, such as would naturally have an influence among their own people, have been admitted to the rank of officers, which is the more extraordinary, as their ranks are filled by their members; on the contrary, the fears of an ignorant populace being excited, when, in some counties, they broke out into a tumultuous resistance to the law, instead of explaining the nature thereof to the unhappy wretches, they were subjected to severe military execution; and, what is still more grievous, advantage has been taken of these disturbances, most untruly and maliciously to insinuate that the leading Catholics have been concerned in fomenting the same; whereas the truth and fact is, that the disturbances had no relation whatever to any Catholic question, but originated solely in the fears of the populace of being trepanned and sent for soldiers out of the kingdom, which fears were much aggravated from seeing scarcely any officers appointed in whom they had trust or confidence.

The Catholics, therefore, seeing the language held by men in high authority, in the very moment of concession; seeing the line studiously drawn between them and their Protestant brethren, wherever the influence of which they so much complain can at all operate; seeing themselves continually vilified and abused, by the most false and scandalous imputations, and knowing well that the first step to robbing them of their lately recovered privileges, will be to render them suspected by their gracious King, and odious to their fellow subjects of other persuasions, cannot but feel the most deep and anxious uneasiness at what appears, to their apprehension, the continuation of the old spirit of persecution, if indeed it be not the commencement of a regular system, formed to reduce them to their ancient state of depression and contempt.

Under these circumstances, they cannot be expected to be cordial in the support of a Government so much the object of

their fears, and which is controlled by an influence so inimical to them; and they regret it the more, because it fetters their zeal to testify their warm attachment to the best of Sovereigns, whom, above all his predecessors, they are bound by gratitude, as well as duty, to reverence and love. On the contrary, were this imperious persecuting spirit abandoned, the fears of the people would be removed, all disturbances tranquilized, his Majesty's Government meet with that cordial support from the Catholics which gratitude prompts them to, and nothing but the conduct they have of late experienced, and still more apprehend, could suspend; and, finally, Ireland, instead of requiring, as she does, an army of observation of thirty thousand men, deducted from the force of the empire in a perilous time, would be able and willing freely to concur and exert her whole strength in the common cause.

In a time of war, and especially of a war on the principles of the present, which alternative would be most for the glory of his Majesty and the honour and advantage of Great Britain, is submitted to those who are fully competent to judge.

*August 20, 1793.*

# AN ADDRESS TO THE PEOPLE OF IRELAND

At length the time is arrived when a friend to the Liberty and Independence of Ireland, may venture to speak the truth, and examine into the situation and interest of his country, without fear of being stopped short by that most unanswerable of all arguments, an information in the Court of King's Bench, at the suit of his Majesty's Attorney General.

It is long since every honest Irishman has mourned in secret over the misery and degradation of his native land, without daring to murmur a syllable in the way of complaint. Not even our groans were free! Six hundred years of oppression and slavery have passed in melancholy succession over our father's heads and our own, during which period we have been vilified by every evil, which tyranny could devise and cruelty execute; we have been scattered, like chaff, over the land, and our name has been forgotten among nations; we have been massacred and plundered, insulted and despised; we have been reduced to that lowest state of human degradation; we have almost ceased to respect ourselves; we have doubted whether the opinion of our oppressors was not just, and whether we were not in fact, framed for that submission, to which we have been bent by the pressure of so many centuries of hard, unremitting, unrelenting tyranny. But if the judgements of Providence be slow, they are certain. The villain must not hope to walk in credit to his grave, nor the tyranny to insult for ever, with impunity, the misery, he has caused. The pride and arrogance of England have at length called down upon her head the tardy and lingering justice, which her manifold crimes have so long provoked; the sufferings of Ireland, prostrate and humble as she has been, even to the dust, seem to have awakened the attention of him, who rules the destiny of nations; in his goodness and compassion he

has at length regarded us, and placed in our hands the means, if we have the courage to be free.

Without being too much of an enthusiastic visionary, I think I may say I see a new order of things commencing in Europe. The stupendous revolution, which has taken place in France; the unparalleled succession of events, which have, in defiance of the united efforts of all the despots of Europe, established that mighty republic on the broad and firm basis of equal rights, liberties, and laws; the abasement, contrary to all human probability, of her enemies, every one of whom has, in his turn, been forced to yield to her ascendant genius, with the exception thus far, of Austria, and especially England, whose fall has only been delayed, to make her degradation more terrible, and the triumph of her victorious rival the more complete; all this, I say, has satisfied my mind, that the ancient system of tyranny must fall. In many nations it is already extinct, in others, it has received its death wound, and though it may for some time trail a feeble and lingering existence, its duration is ascertained, and its days already numbered. I do not look upon the French revolution as a question subject to the ordinary calculation of politics; *it is a thing which is to be*; and as all human experience has verified that the new doctrine ever finally subverts the old; as the Mosaic law subverted idolatry, as Christianity subverted the Jewish dispensation, as the Reformation subverted Popery, so, I am firmly convinced, the doctrine of Republicanism will firmly subvert that of Monarchy, and establish a system of just and rational Liberty, on the ruins of the Thrones of the Despots of Europe.

But whether this opinion be well or ill founded, the question I mean to examine will not be affected by the result. Fortunately or unfortunately for Ireland, her cause is independent of the theory. The object for her immediate consideration, is not whether she shall adopt this or that form of Government, but whether she shall be independent under any. She has too many solid, substantial, heavy, existing grievances,

to require much ingenuity, or subtle argument, to convince her of her interest and her duty, and the question on which we must take an instant determination will, if I mistake not, be decided as soon as it is stated.

The alternative which is now submitted to your choice, with regard to England is, in one word, UNION OR SEPARATION! You must determine, and that instantly, between slavery and independence, there is no third way. I will not insult you, by doubting what will be your decision. I anticipate your immediate and unanimous declaration, which establishes for ever Liberty to yourselves, and Independence to your country.

To a magnanimous people it is unnecessary to prove that it is *base*, to an enlightened people it is unnecessary to prove that it is *ruinous*, to exist in dependence on the will of a foreign power, and that power an ambitious rival. To you this is not matter of mere speculation – you feel it in your government, in your laws, in your manners, in your principles, in your education; with all the great moral and physical advantages, of which you are possessed, you are unnoticed and unknown as a nation in Europe; your bodies and your minds are bent down by the incumbent pressure of your tyrant; she, to maintain whose avarice and ambition you are forced to spill your best blood, in whose cause you fight without glory, and without profit, where victory but rivets your chains the faster, and where defeat adds to slavery, mortification and disgrace. In vain are you placed in the most advantageous position for unlimited commerce, in vain are you blessed with a fruitful foil, with every requisite for trade and manufactures, with inexhaustible mines, with navigable rivers, and with the noblest harbours in Europe. All these advantages are blasted by the contagious presence of your imperious rival, before whose influence your strength is withered, your resources crushed, and the rising spirit of emulation strangled in the birth. It is England, who debauches and degrades your gentry; it is England, who starves your

manufacturers, to drive them into her fleets and armies; it is England, who keeps your wretched peasantry half-fed, half-clothed, miserable and despised, defrauded of their just rights, as human beings, and reduced, if the innate spirit of your country did not support them, as it were by a miracle, below the level of the beasts of the field; it is England who buys your legislators, to betray you, and pays them by money levied on yourselves; it is England, who forments and perpetuates, as far as in her lies, the spirit of religious dissension among you, and that labours to keep asunder Irishman from Irishman, because that in your cordial Union among yourselves, she sees clearly the downfall of her usurpation, and the establishment of your liberties; it is England, who supports that rotten, aristocratic faction among you, which, though not the tenth part of your population, has arrogated to itself five-sixths of the property, and the whole of the patronage and power of your nation; a faction which to maintain itself by the power of England, is ready to sacrifice, and does daily sacrifice your dearest rights to her insatiable lust of gold power.

Look to the origin of your connection with Britain, that proud and selfish nation, and see what is the foundation of the authority of your oppressors! Six hundred years ago, the Pope, an Englishman, thought proper to confer the crown of Ireland on Henry the 2d, King of England; and the King of England was pleased in return to guarantee to his countryman, the Pope, the payment of a certain tax *to be levied on the People of Ireland*; but were the People consulted, whose liberties and properties were thus bartered away between these two Englishmen? No such thing – their independence was sold by one foreigner to the other, without their privity or concurrence, and to consummate the injustice of this most infamous and audacious bargain – they were compelled themselves to raise the purchase money of their disgrace, *and to pay for being enslaved*. Such was the commencement of the British Monarchy in Ireland, and what have been its fruits? Six hundred years of continual intestine



wars, marked with every circumstance of horror and barbarity, with the desolation of whole provinces, with massacres and confiscation and plunder, with fire, famine and pestilence, with murder to that horrible extent, that at length it was decreed, even by your own Legislature, to be no crime in an Englishman to kill *a mere Irishman*. When by these multiplied abominations; your strength was exhausted, and your spirit broken; when your oppressors made it their boast that you were *brayed as it were in a mortar*, this execrable tyranny of the sword was succeeded by the still more execrable tyranny of laws, framed with a diabolical sagacity to impoverish and degrade and brutalize you; laws even yet but imperfectly removed, and for whole partial repeal, extorted from your reluctant oppressors, you are indebted to the recent union among yourselves, to your consequent spirit, and to the combination of events produced by the French Revolution. But to compensate you for the loss of your independent existence as a nation, for the destruction of your trade and manufactures, the plunder of your property, the interdiction of education, to three-fourths of your People, and their absolute exclusion from a state of political existence, you have been gravely told that you participated in what is called in the cant of your enemies, *the inestimable blessings of the British Constitution*.

I will not here enter into the merits or demerits of that Constitution. You have read the productions, which have appeared on that subject, and it is therefore unnecessary for me to repeat them; on him, who is not convinced by the arguments of Payne, of the absurdity of hereditary monarchs, and hereditary legislators, where no man would admit of hereditary cobblers, who wished to have his shoes well-mended, I despair of making any impression, I will therefore for the sake of argument suppose, though I will by no means admit, that this Constitution is really as excellent as it is represented to be by its warmest panegyrist, who, by the bye, will ever be found amongst those who exist by its daily destruction, and I answer, in the first place, that you may, if you choose, adopt that

Constitution as your own, when your independence is once recognized, and you come to organise your Government; but to quit this, which I look upon as a wild and idle supposition, I say in the second place, that you do not possess this excellent and happy Constitution! that, even in England, it is disfigured and distorted, but that in Ireland it is so smothered beneath a mass of corruption, as to be, in effect, no more the Constitution of England, as it exists in theory, than it is the Constitution of Constantinople or Japan.

In the first place what is your King? Your King is a foreigner, an Englishman, a native of a country, that holds you in utter contempt; whom you never see nor expect to see; who never condescends to visit Ireland, who, with all the ignorant prejudices and illiberal passions of his nation, distributes from his closet at St. James's, by the advice of the British Cabinet, the honours and rewards of your country, either among English sycophants, or more despicable Irish apostates, whose strongest recommendation to his royal favour, is that they are ready at all times, and without scruple, to sacrifice the interest and independence of their native land to the avarice or ambition of England. Is there a man of you, that is not convinced, and that has not felt, that even the meanest Englishman considers himself as your superior, and despises an Irishman in his heart? And have you not had a thousand occasions to know that the King of England holds as rank and vulgar prejudices on that score as the lowest and most ignorant of his vassals? That he regards you, not as a nation of valuable subjects, but as a rabble of mutinous slaves, and that your whole realm is not of as much importance in his eyes as any one manufacturing town of England. People of Ireland, this is your *absentee* Monarch! This is the idol, before whom you are to fall down, and to worship, like another Moloch, with the sacrifice of your blood; to pamper whose pride and folly and ambition, you are daily called upon to devote your treasures and your lives, your individual liberties, and the glory and independence of your native land; and this is the sentiment,

which is called loyalty by those, who wish to deceive and to mislead in order that they may plunder and oppress you.

But perhaps you find in the national spirit, in the patriotism and virtue of the other two estates of your Legislature, the Lords and the Commons, a protection from the ruinous effects of an Executive power, deposited in a foreign country, connected with you by no ties of interest or of glory, actuated solely by selfish motives, and illiberal prejudices, and who is represented by a fugacious personage, bound by no responsibility and amenable to no tribunal.

See then the redoubtable barrier against oppression, which you have in your House of Lords! In the very first instance one half of them are Englishmen, who never saw Ireland, who have not a foot of property there, who do not think it worth their while even to visit the country, from which they derive their titles, but who would of themselves be sufficient to stifle all opposition by their numbers, if those noble Lords, who are in the habit of attending Parliament were to be found, miraculously, in opposition to the mandate of the British Minister. The means, by which a peerage is obtained in Ireland, and the motives which determine the King of England, *the fountain of honour*, to raise his faithful subjects to that high rank, are of sufficient notoriety. It is well known, and has been asserted even in your Parliament, that the honours of the peerage are prostituted to the most infamous purpose of corruption; that they are bought and sold in open market, and at a stated price, or made a subject of a more ruinous, though less disgraceful commerce, in debauching the other branch of the Legislature; that sometimes a man is made a peer, because he can command two votes in the House of Commons, and sometimes because he can command five thousand pounds in money; sometimes because he has been obedient as a judge in trials, where the Crown has been concerned, and sometimes because he has been refractory in Parliament, and it is necessary to appease him. If there were any reason to expect a possibility of patriotism or public virtue from

a body thus constituted, there are six and twenty bishops, many of them Englishmen, and all of them expectants of the English Government for promotion or translation, ready to strangle it in the birth. Such are the hereditary counsellors of the Crown in Ireland, the judges in the last resort, the impartial and incorruptible guardians of the Constitution, against the encroachments of the people on the one side, and the King on the other; the people, with whom they have no common interest, and the King, who names the peerage and episcopacy, who distributes ribands and Stars, and mitres, and places and pensions, at his pleasure.

The Crown and the Lords being thus organized against you, and having confessedly their own distinct and separate interests to consult, at least it is hoped that the third estate, the Commons, your representatives, emanating from yourselves, deriving their existence from the choice of the people, of which they make a part, surely they at least will take care of your rights, your liberties, and your interest, which are their own; proud of the sacred deposit, which you have confided in their hands, they will magnanimously resist any attempt of the other two estates, should any such be made, to invade the inalienable privileges of their constituents; amenable to the tribunal of your opinion, they will dread the disgrace invariably attached to corruption in a Legislator, even more than death; should any courtly pander be found hardy enough to risqué the attempt to debauch their stern integrity, they will turn aside from his presence with horror and disgust, if indeed the first emotion of insulted virtue does not rather prompt them to seize the villain, to drag him from his den to public view, and denounce him to the nation as the most atrocious to all parricides, the assassin of his country.

I cannot continue this irony! the subject is too sorrowful to excite any other feeling than indignation. Who are these abominable slaves, so impudently called your representatives? How are they chosen? Who are their constituents? It is not so notorious as no longer to excite surprise, or scarcely resentment,

that the most inestimable of our privileges, from which all others depend, the right to choose your Legislators is made a daily subject of a base and villainous traffic? That a station the most honourable to which man can aspire, that of representing his fellow-citizens in the great council of the nation, is bought and sold, and that feats in Parliament are become a subject of dirty, commercial speculation; so that any fellow, even of the most infamous character, provided he can raise three thousand pounds, may in defiance of the public indignation and contempt, place himself triumphantly on the benches of your Legislature, and make laws to bind millions of men, any one of whom would scarcely trust himself alone in his company, or suffer him to enter his house, without previously locking up his spoons. The Temple of your liberties is filled with buyers and sellers, with money changers and thieves; with placemen and pensioners; those unclean and ominous harpies, gorged with the public spoil, and sucking still, like insatiable Vampires, the last drainings of the vital blood of their country; with fraudulent bankrupts, who take shelter in Parliament from the persecution of their creditors, and purchase with a part of their plunder, the privilege to retain the rest in security; with speculating lawyers, who, without principles and without practice, and destitute of talents to rise in their own profession, take up the more gainful trade of making in the Legislative those laws, which in the courts they are unable to expound, force on their way with inveterate perseverance, a servility that knows no scruple, and imprudence incapable of a blush, repel their abler and honest brethren, who can not bend to those vile means of advancement, and make a short cut through Parliament to the judgement-feat; with those miserable automations, the humble dependants of great men, who place them as their puppets in the House of Commons, and whose condition is, I know not whether more to be pitied or despised; with young coxcombs of fortune, who think *a feat in the House*, like their whores, their horses, and their hounds, a necessary appendage to their rank and dignity; even the

members for your counties, where, if at all, the public voice might be supposed to have some little influence, even in their election, a system of corruption universally prevails, less compendious than that, which exists in your boroughs, but more scandalous and destructive. I do not fear that any one man in Ireland, even on your Treasury bench will be found, with a forehead hard enough to deny one syllable of what I have here advanced, or even to assert that the picture is overcharged. Your Parliament has long lost all character, as it has lost all decency; every honest man despises it; the prostitutes, who compose it know this and tremble; in vain do they multiply laws for their protection, and persecute without remorse the slightest invasion of what they are pleased to vote to be their privileges; the sanction of character is wanting; the public opinion is pronounced against them, and nothing but the pressure of an incumbent force has prevented the indignant spirit of Ireland, from bursting forth long since, and levelling with the dust the edifice of her oppression.

From a Legislature, constituted as yours is, no good can flow. Those who compose it, have no common interest with the people – they feel that they are but a foreign colony, depending entirely for their existence on the connection with England, whose power alone secures them in possession of their usurpation. If they had the inclination (of which I am far from suspecting them) they have not the courage to be honest. The fact and truth is, that the great bulk of the aristocracy of Ireland, conscious that their estates were originally acquired by the most unjustifiable means, either by open robbery, sword in hand, or by the more infamous pillage of the laws, dare not oppose the will of the British Minister, from the apprehension lest he should withdraw his protection from their party, and leave them to the mercy of the majority of their countrymen. It is vain to argue with men under the influence of so extreme a fear. Those of them, who are more enlightened, and who, of course, do not dread a resumption of property, which the lapse of time, and a

change of circumstances, have rendered impossible, yet affect a terror they do not feel, to confirm the delusion of the rest, and profit of the panic, which in a great degree they have themselves caused, and diligently cultivated, to govern their party, and to perpetuate their monopoly in every department of the state. By these means they are enabled to make their bargain with the British Minister, and nothing can be imagined less difficult than the negotiation. Their language is simply this –

“Maintain us in our places, our pensions, and our power; suffer us to support our mistresses, our dependants, and ourselves, at the public expense; surrender to us, in a word, the entire patronage of the crown; in return we engage to surrender to you the commerce, the manufactures, the liberty and the independence of Ireland; we will support you in every measure, which you may devise, to impoverish, to divide, and to weaken our country; we will abet you in every mad and ruinous war, in which you may think proper to embark; we will squander the blood of Ireland, without limitation or reserve; *we will stand and fall with England*; suffer us only in return to appropriate to ourselves such portion of the public treasure as the sacrifices we may make to you may appear to deserve.”

To a proportion so just and reasonable in itself, it is not to be supposed the English Minister can be so captious as to raise the least objection. He purchases, in fact, for England every advantage she can possibly derive from the connection between the countries, without putting her to the expense of sixpence, for Ireland, who is sold, is also forced to raise the purchase money; and herein lies the essential difference between the political situation of England and Ireland. In the former undoubtedly the Constitution is depraved and degraded, and corruption carried on to an enormous extent; the liberty of the people is, beyond contradiction, sacrificed to the arbitrary will and pleasure of the King; but at the same time their essential interests are, in all other respects, consulted by the Government. The Minister there studies to advance their trade and manufactures, by all possible means, justifiable, and unjustifiable, upon the same principle that the farmer manures the soil he means to cultivate, and feeds

the beast he destines for labour. Under this point of view I have no hesitation to admit that England is essentially well and wisely governed, and a mere merchant or manufacturer, who looks no further than his warehouse or his shop, has no reason to wish for a change. But do you, my countrymen, lay your hands on your hearts, and ask yourselves, *is all this so with us?* I do not fear contradiction when I answer for you that the direct contrary is the fact, and that your legislators are *hired* and *paid* by the English Minister, (paid with your own money I beseech you to keep ever in memory) to destroy and smother your arts, manufactures and commerce in the cradle, lest they might by possibility interfere with the interest of England, who will be ever undoubtedly, better pleased to see you a colony of idlers, to consume her manufactures, and to recruit her fleets and armies, than to meet you in the markets of the world, an active, enterprising, and industrious rival. No English Minister would have the folly or the impudence to propose to the corrupt and profligate of his dependants a measure subversive of the interests of the nation, or if he were so utterly infatuated, which is indeed impossible, he would not be a Minister for four and twenty hours after. When a member of Parliament in England sells himself, it is always with a saving clause; there are things he will not do, and which he never will be asked to do; but a member of Parliament in Ireland who sells himself (as they all do, or wish to do) is, politically speaking, damned without reserve; the condition of his bargain is to surrender his country to the mercy of England. I do not here speak of your liberties, for in that respect the people of England are nearly as badly off as yourselves, but in the name of God, consider how this connection affects your interests, and see how absolutely and utterly different your condition is from theirs, in that respect. The commerce of England is protected and cherished and fostered by the Government; on a question of trade, all consideration of party vanishes, every man, whatever be his political delinquency, is alike eager to forward any measure



which promises to be beneficial, and even the most abject slaves in the English House of Commons, are honest upon that score. But how is it with prostitutes of the Irish House of Commons? The indispensable requisite, the fundamental principle of their bargain, I repeat it, is the sacrifice of their country to the avarice and ambition of England. I appeal with confidence to your own unvarying experience, to determine whether in Ireland there be any road to preferment, other than an implicit deference to the will of the English Minister. Is any man promoted, or will any man ever be promoted to power or station, at least while the connection holds, because he is, or is even suspected to be the friend of his country? Would not such a suspicion operate infallibly to his exclusion? And hence it is, that it is impossible under the present system, that you can ever have an honest Government, because the English Minister, who names your rulers, will be sure to exact from them such conditions and engagements as no honest Irishman can by possibility submit to, and consequently none but knaves and sycophants, who are ready without scruple to take this abominable covenant, can fill place or office; it is not so in England, because there, as I have already said, the essential interests of the nation are equally the object of all parties, and a man may accept a situation in the Government, without sacrificing his integrity or his reputation; but I defy any man to take a share in the measures of the Irish Government, without a total surrender of all principle and character, as an Irishman. Number, I beseech you, your tyrants; consider the most virulent of your oppressors, man by man; review the whole of their political career, and see what are the means whereby they have become your rulers. Have they any other merit than that of blind submission to the will of England, a profligate eagerness to sacrifice the very existence of Ireland to her arbitrary will and pleasure? Turn then to those, who call themselves your patriots, and see whether they are not essentially as much your enemies, and as ready to prostrate you and themselves at the feet of your tyrants, as the most impudent

and abandoned of her acknowledged hirelings. Do you not go to your Legislature, as to a comedy, to be amused by the talents of the actors, well knowing the part which each is to play, and what is to be the catastrophe of the piece? Can you not, on every question of importance, before hand with precision how every individual will vote, and upon what motives? Do you believe, on your honour and conscience, that you could find ten men in your entire Legislature, who act upon conviction or principle? Is not making your laws, as much a trade as making your shoes, and not the thousandth part so honest or so respectable? And if all this be so, what kind of Administration is that under which you groan, for a brave, a sagacious and an enlightened people with warm hearts, with quick feelings, and with strong resentments?

But I waste time in dwelling on grievances, and abuses, which you all know and feel. The difficulty in enumerating the sufferings of Ireland is not what to choose, but what to reject; so many abominations crowd at once on my mind, and every one more atrocious than the other. Let me turn from a subject so disgusting in all points of view, as your actual Government, and contemplate the brilliant prospect which lies before us, the promised land of liberty and happiness, to secure the possession of which, we have but to act with the spirit of men, and to profit of the great occasion, which Providence has at length afforded us. We have now the means, in the first place, to break that execrable slavery, by which, under the more plausible name of connection, we have been chained for six hundred years at the feet of England; we have in our hands independence for our country, the first blessing of nations, and liberty for ourselves, without which life is not worth preserving; we shall no longer be dragged perpetually from the line of our obvious interests, by the overbearing attraction of our tyrant, nor forced to run and prostrate ourselves at the feet of an English Minister, to obtain his permission to regulate the concerns of our country? The aristocracy of Ireland, which exists only by our slavery, and is

maintained in its pomp and splendour by the sale of our lives, liberties, and properties will tumble in the dust; the People will be no longer mocked with the vain appearance of a Parliament, over which they have neither influence or control. Instead of a King, representing himself, a House of Lords representing themselves, and a House of Commons representing themselves, we shall have a wise and honest Legislature, chosen by the People, whom they will indeed represent, and whose interest, even for their own sakes, they will most strenuously support. Our commerce will be free, our arts encouraged, our manufactures protected, for our enemies will no longer be our law-makers. The benches of our Legislature will no longer groan under the load of placemen and pensioners, the hirelings of a foreign power, and the betrayers of our country; we shall have upright Judges to administer the laws, for the road to the judgement-seat will no longer be through the mire of Parliamentary corruption; we shall have honest Juries to determine on our liberties, properties and lives, for the Crown will no longer nominate our Sheriffs, on the recommendation of this or that grandee; the host of useless offices, multiplied without end for the purposes of corruption, will be annihilated, and men will be made hereafter for places, and not places for men; the burdens of the people will be lightened, for it will be no longer the custom to buy majorities in Parliament; the taxes, which will be hereafter levied, will be honestly applied to the exigencies of the State, the regulation of commerce, the formation of a Navy, the making of roads, the cutting canals, the opening of mines, the deepening our harbours, and calling into activity the native energy of the land. Instead of the state of daily suicide wherein Ireland now exists, her resources will at length be actively employed for her interest and her glory. Admission to the Legislature will be no longer to be purchased with money, and the execrable system of jobbing, so long our disgrace and ruin, will be forever destroyed, the trade of Parliament will fail, and your borough-mongers become bankrupts. Your peasantry

will be no longer seen in rags and misery, their complaints will be examined, and their sufferings removed; instead of the barbarous policy which has so long kept them in want and ignorance, it will be the interest as well as duty of national Government to redress their grievances and enlighten their minds. The unnatural union between Church and State, which has degraded Religion into an engine of policy, will be dissolved, tithes the pest of agriculture will be abolished, the memory of religious dissensions will be lost when no sect shall have a right to govern their fellow-citizens, each sect will maintain their own Clergy, and no citizen shall be disenfranchised for worshipping God according to his conscience. To say all in one word, IRELAND SHALL BE INDEPENDENT. We shall be a Nation not a Province; Citizens not Slaves. Every man shall rank in the State according to his merit and talents. Our commerce shall extend into the four quarters of the globe, our flag shall be seen on the ocean, our name shall be known among the nations, and we shall at length assume that station, for which God and Nature have designed us.

I feel that I am proving an axiom. Can any honest man for a moment doubt that an independent nation will better regulate her own concerns than if she was subjugated to another country, whose interest it is to oppress her? I will therefore assume as a fact, that independence is an object of the highest possible advantage to Ireland, and I will briefly consider what are the weighty motives, for weighty indeed they must be, which have thus long induced her to forego so great a blessing and to remain in humble subjection to England.

The first and most striking, and in fact the true reason, is the dread of risking a contest with a power, which we are habituated to look upon as our superior. Every man agrees that independence is a good thing, if it could be had, but dreads to hazard the little he enjoys in surety for the speculation of a great

benefit, the acquisition of which is remote, and attended with uncertainty and danger.

Not to dwell upon the pusillanimity of this mode of reasoning, the first answer I have to give is conclusive. It is no longer a matter of choice; we must take our party on the instant and decidedly; we have now all we wanted; allies, arms, and ammunition, stores, artillery, disciplined troops, the best and bravest in Europe, besides the countless thousands of our brave and hardy peasantry, who will flock to the standard of their country. The sword is drawn, the Rubicon is passed, and we have no retreat; there remains now no alternative; if we were even inclined, we could not return to the state, in which we were three months ago. We must conquer England and her adherents, if any yet she has among ourselves, or they will conquer us, and then *vae victis!* To the brave and honest majority of my countrymen, who are ready to sacrifice their lives for the independence of Ireland, I do not now address myself; but to those timid and cautious speculators, who may hang back, and wait upon contingencies, and fluctuate and balance before they choose their party, to such men, and I hope at this glorious period, few such will be found, I appeal; and I desire them, even for their own sakes, to consider that in a war like that, wherein we are now engaged, there is no neutrality; we fight for our liberties, dearer far than life, and in such a contest he that is not with the people, is against them; him we do not find in our ranks, we must hold as an enemy, and an enemy in the highest degree, a deserter and a traitor, to his country. If any man dreads the issue of the contest, it is notwithstanding the interest as it is the duty, of even that man to come forward in the defence of the common cause, for it is only in the possibility of disunion among ourselves, that England can form the slightest hope of success in the contest.

If she sees all ranks and descriptions of Irishmen united and determined, she will balance, after the experience of America and France, before she will engage in a third crusade against the

liberties of an entire nation. The sure way to avert the calamities of war from our country is to show we are to a man resolved to face them with courage; or if war must be, the infallible means to insure its speedy and glorious termination, is to bring to bear on our enemy the consolidated force of the Irish nation. In the present crisis, it is therefore the interest even of the most cautious man to step forward in the cause of his country; unless he prefers to sacrifice his property, his honour, perhaps his existence to his fears, for I again repeat it, *In a war for our liberties, we can admit of no neutrality.*

A generous mind is not deterred from a glorious pursuit, because it is attended with danger. It is our duty to hazard every thing when the object is the independence of our native land, were our enemy more powerful than she has been described, or we have been used to conceive her. But let us approach this gigantic figure, by which we have been so long kept in awe and see whether our apprehension, as well as the artifice of our oppressors, have not magnified the object of our fears. The English fleet is very formidable, but we have little commerce, and during the short continuance of the war, we can dispense with it; a shot from a ship will not kill a man a quarter of a mile from the shore, and we have no occasion to go upon the seas to meet them. But either I am much deceived, or it will be found that so far from England being formidable by her fleet, it is there she will be found most vulnerable. Who are they, who man her vessels? TWO-THIRDS OF THEM ARE IRISHMEN; and will those brave and gallant fellows, thousands of whom have been pressed, and the rest driven by famine into her service, will they, I say, be ready to turn their arms against their native land, against their fathers, their brothers, their wives, their children and their friends? It is not to be supposed; besides that we have in our hands the means to secure their co-operation in the glorious contest wherein we are engaged, and in due season it will be seen that we want neither the skill nor the spirit to employ them.

What I have said of the navy applies, in a great degree, to the army of England; if she is determined to make war upon us, she will not venture to do it with the native troops, for there are too many Irish in the ranks; she must therefore do it with foreign mercenaries, if she can find the means to land them; but the mercenaries are not to be had without money, and I entreat you to consider what will be the effect of a war with Ireland upon her finances. Four hundred millions of debt is no slight burden, and the British Minister may not always find lenders. It is no secret that he is, at this moment, in considerable difficulty, and I take it for granted we shall not be so mad as to part with a shilling of English property, until our liberty is established; but supporting he can even find money, money will not do every thing, the gold of Carthage did not save her from the iron of Rome, and I doubt whether in the present contest, the Bank paper of England will be found more efficacious.

But granting she is formidable, so are we; if she is near us, we are near her; our people are brave, and hardy, and poor; we are not debauched by luxury and sloth; we are used to toil, and fatigue, and scanty living; our miseries, for which we have to thank England, have well prepared us to throw off the yoke. We can dispense with feather-beds, with roast-beef, and strong-beer; war, if it makes any change in the diet of our peasants, must change it for the better; they may in that case taste meat and bread, delicacies to them, and which a great majority of them seldom see; our soil and our climate we can well support; we can sleep in our bogs, where our enemies will rot, and subsist on the mountains, where they will starve. We might upon principle and for our liberties; they fight, because they are ordered to do so. We are at home; they are in an enemies' country. Under these circumstances, and especially with a just and righteous cause, he must be timid indeed, who could doubt of success.

England, with Ireland at her back, is undoubtedly formidable; England, with Ireland neuter, is still respectable, but England with Ireland in arms against her, I do not despair of

feeling humbled with the dust. Add to what I have said, the discontents which exist, even in her own bosom, and which every years continuance of the war will increase; remember the state of Scotland two years since, and judge whether she may not seize the present great occasion, and like ourselves assert her ancient independence; see the mighty French Republic, Spain, and Holland united against her and friendly to Ireland, and then decide which of us has most to dread from the other.

I leave this point, the discussion of which is only necessary for timid souls, and I come to another, addressed to those of a more generous stamp. It may be said we are indebted to England for protection from our enemies, and that we are of course bound in gratitude and honour, not to desert her in the hour of difficulty. If this argument were founded in fact, I should be ashamed to offer a syllable against it, for with nations, as with individuals, I esteem honour the first of all objects, and no consideration of convenience or interest should be suffered for an instant to stand against it. But, in God's name, who are the enemies, against whom we are protected by England? With what one nation on Earth have we a shadow of difference? Of what people existing have we reason to complain, except England herself? It is true, indeed, that by this baneful connection, which in a thousand shapes presents itself for the destruction of our interests, we have dragged, as reluctant parties into every war, wherein ambition or avarice induces her to embark; we are forced to forego, for the time, the modicum of commerce we possess, we are loaded with taxes, our people are pressed for seamen or lifted for soldiers to fight the battles of England, in the event of which we have no possible interests, unless indeed it be our interest to be defeated, for the prosperity of England has always been the depression of Ireland. In this very war, which she has in her pride and folly waged against the French Republic, we have supplied not less than two hundred thousand of our gallant countrymen to combat against our most essential interests; and this is the protection for which we are to be



grateful! If a man sets my house on fire first, even though he should afterwards succeed in extinguishing it, am I to be grateful to such a man! If a man drags me into a quarrel for his own interests, and wherein I have nothing to do, am I to thank him, even though by our joint exertion I escape with my life after receiving a sound beating, and losing a great part of my property? See then whether the protection of England differs in any respect from the cases I have just mentioned. The truth and fact is, it is we that protect England; it is our provisions that victual her navy, it is our seaman who man her fleets, and our soldiers, who fill her armies; this is solid, substantial protection, and now that we are at last about to separate from her, for ever, she will soon experimentally feel, to her irrecoverable loss, which of the two nations it is that has thus long protected the other.

Independent of the consideration that this argument is a cowardly one (for what Irishman, or Irishwoman, would, in the hour of danger, seek shelter under the arm of an Englishman!) it involves a gross fallacy, inasmuch as it presumes that without the protection of England we could not exist. It is true that at this hour we have not a navy, neither should we ever have one to the end of time, if the connection with England should so long continue; but the moment that our independence is established, and the resources of our country applied, not to debauch and corrupt our rulers to sacrifice our dearest interests, but to cherish and bring out the inborn energy of the land, we shall soon see an Irish navy on the ocean, we shall look for protection only to God, and our own courage. We have means far beyond those of half the independent states of Europe, of Denmark, of Sweden, of Portugal, of Naples, of Sardinia. Who at this hour protects America? Who protects Switzerland? The common interest of Europe protects the one, the valour of her people the other. We unite in our case both circumstances. When we have once broken the yoke of England, do not believe that the maritime powers will ever see us return to bondage; if even our own means were

insufficient for our protection (which I will never admit), we should speedily find allies; and I presume there is hardly to be found an Irishman, who so little respects his country, or himself, as to doubt that with her own resources, and the assistance of France, Spain, and Holland, Ireland is abundantly competent to her own protection.

There is only one argument more, which suggests itself to my mind, in support of our dependence upon England, and that is, that the condition of Ireland is, latterly, much improved, and therefore we should not desire a change.

I admit our condition is improved, and why? In 1779, when England was embarrassed by her frantic crusade against America, we extorted from her necessities the extension of our trade this was a great improvement, but is it the connection with England we are to thank for that? So far from it, that the first improvement in our condition was the step we then made towards independence. In 1782 we broke another, and a weighty link of the chain, which bound us to England, by establishing an exclusive right of Legislature for ourselves; this was also a great improvement in our condition, inasmuch as it placed us a step farther from England; we had then the means to be honest, if our Legislators had the inclination, and if we have not profited by the advantage, we then obtained, to its full extent, it is because we yet remained too near our enemy, and one end of our chain was still in the hands of the despot of England.

In 1793, when she was on the point of embarking in her second crusade against France, the union of the Dissenters and Catholics took place, and three millions of Irishmen were restored, in a great degree, to their rights; this was the last great improvement in our condition, and of the very highest importance, for by making us at length one people, it has enabled us, if it be not our own faults, to throw off the yoke for ever. Thus it appears that every step that we have made towards independence, has in the same degree bettered our condition; that we have become prosperous as we have become free; that

while we were bound close to England, we were poor and oppressed; that in proportion as we have receded from her baneful influence, we have risen nearer to our proper level. I am ready therefore to allow this argument of the increasing prosperity of Ireland its full force, but I drew therefrom a conclusion very different from those, who advance it as a reason for our remaining in subjection to England – for I say that if the imperfect shadow of independence, which we have enjoyed for the last seventeen years, has produced, as all parties will acknowledge it has, such beneficial effects, what may we not expect from a full and complete enjoyment of actual, national independence, when the pressure of our ancient tyrant is once removed, and we are left at liberty to regulate our own concerns, to study our own interests, to cultivate our means, to augment our resources, to profit of our natural advantages, in a word, to bring into play all the latent energy of our country, *“that noble and neglected island, for which God has done so much, and man so little!”*

Look, I beseech you, to America! See the improvement in her condition since she nobly asserted her independence, on a provocation which, when set beside your grievances, is not even worthy to be named. Before the struggle she too was flourishing in a degree far beyond what you have ever experienced; England too was then infinitely more formidable in every point of view than at this hour; but neither the fear of risking the enjoyments she actually possessed, nor the terror of the power of her oppressors, prevented America from putting all to the hazard, and despising every consideration of convenience or of danger, where her liberty was at stake; she humbled her tyrants at her feet, and see how she has been rewarded! Contemplate the situation of America before her independence, and see whether every motive, which actuated her in the contest, does not apply to you with tenfold force; compare her laws, compare her government with yours, if I must call that a government; which is indeed a subversion of all just principle, and a total destruction

of the ends, for which men submit to be controlled, and see whether it is not worth the struggle, to place yourselves in a situation, equally happy as hers for yourselves and your friends, and ten times more formidable for your enemies.

I have now done, my countrymen, and I do most earnestly beseech you, as Irishmen, as citizens, as husbands, as fathers, by everything most dear to you, to consider the sacred obligation that you are called upon to discharge, to emancipate your country from a foreign yoke, and to restore to liberty yourselves and your children; look to your own resources, look to those of your friends, look to those of your enemies; remember that you must instantly decide; remember that you have no alternative between liberty and independence, or slavery and submission; remember the wrongs you have sustained from England for six hundred years, and the implacable hatred, or still more insufferable contempt which, even at this moment, she feels for you; look at the nations of the earth emancipating themselves around you. If all this does not rouse you, then are you indeed what your enemies have long called you, A BESOTTED PEOPLE! You have now arms in your hands, turn them instantly on your tyrants; remember, if this great crisis escapes you, you are lost for ever, and Ireland will go down to posterity, branded with the infamy, of which the history of the world has hitherto, for the honour of human nature, furnished but *one instance*. The Cappadocians had once the offer of liberty, they rejected it, and returned to their chains! Irishmen! Shall it be said that you furnish the second, and more disgraceful instance? No, my countrymen, you will embrace your liberty with transport, and for your chains you will *break them on the heads of your oppressors*; you will show for the honour of Ireland, that you have sensibility to feel, and courage to resent, and means to revenge your wrongs; one short, one glorious effort, and your liberty is established. NOW OR NEVER; NOW, AND FOR EVER!

# SPEECH FROM THE DOCK

Dublin, November 10, 1798.

I mean not to give you the trouble of bringing judicial proof to convict me legally of having acted in hostility to the government of his Britannic majesty in Ireland. I admit the fact. From my earliest youth I have regarded the connection between Great Britain and Ireland as the curse of the Irish nation, and felt convinced that, while it lasted, this country could never be free nor happy. My mind has been confirmed in this opinion by the experience of every succeeding year, and the conclusions which I have drawn from every fact before my eyes. In consequence, I was determined to employ all the powers which my individual efforts could move, in order to separate the two countries. That Ireland was not able of herself to throw off the yoke, I knew; I therefore sought for aid wherever it was to be found. In honorable poverty I rejected offers which, to a man in my circumstances, might be considered highly advantageous. I remained faithful to what I thought the cause of my country, and sought in the French Republic an ally to rescue three millions of my countrymen.

Attached to no party in the French Republic—without interest, without money, without intrigue—the openness and integrity of my views raised me to a high and confidential rank in its armies. I obtained the confidence of the executive directory, the approbation of my generals, and I will venture to add, the esteem and affection of my brave comrades. When I review these circumstances, I feel a secret and internal consolation, which no reverse of fortune, no sentence in the power of this court to inflict, can deprive me of, or weaken in any degree. Under the flag of the French Republic I originally engaged with a view to save and liberate my own country. For that purpose I have encountered the chances of war among strangers; for that purpose I repeatedly braved the terrors of the ocean, covered, as

I knew it to be, with the triumphant fleets of that power which it was my glory and my duty to oppose. I have sacrificed all my views in life; I have courted poverty; I have left a beloved wife unprotected, and children whom I adored fatherless.

After such a sacrifice, in a cause which I have always considered – conscientiously considered – as the cause of justice and freedom, it is no great effort, at this day, to add the sacrifice of my life.

But I hear it is said that this unfortunate country has been a prey to all sorts of horrors. I sincerely lament it. I beg, however, that it may be remembered that I have been absent four years from Ireland. To me those sufferings can never be attributed. I designed by fair and open war to procure a separation of two countries. For open war I was prepared, but instead of that a system of private assassination has taken place. I repeat, while I deplore it, that it is not chargeable on me. Atrocities, it seems, have been committed on both sides. I do not less deplore them. I detest them from my heart; and to those who know my character and sentiments, I may safely appeal for the truth of this assertion: with them I need no justification. In a case like this success is everything. Success, in the eyes of the vulgar, fixes its merits. Washington succeeded, and Kosciusko failed.

After a combat nobly sustained – a combat which would have excited the respect and sympathy of a generous enemy – my fate has been to become a prisoner, to the eternal disgrace of those who gave the orders. I was brought here in irons like a felon. I mention this for the sake of others; for me, I am indifferent to it. I am aware of the fate which awaits me, and scorn equally the tone of complaint, and that of supplication. As to the connection between this country and Great Britain, I repeat it – all that has been imputed to me (words, writings, and actions), I here deliberately avow. I have spoken and acted with reflection, and on principle, and am ready to meet the consequences. Whatever be the sentence of the court, I am

prepared for it. Its members will surely discharge their duty – I shall take care not to be wanting in mine.

I wish to offer a few words relative to one single point – the mode of punishment. In France our *emigrees*, who stand nearly in the same situation in which I now stand before you, are condemned to be shot. I ask that the court adjudge me the death of a soldier, and let me be shot by a platoon of grenadiers. I request this indulgence rather in consideration of the uniform I wear – the uniform of a *chef de bridage* in the French army – than from any personal regard to myself. In order to evince my claim to this favour, I beg that the court may take the trouble to peruse my commission and letters of service in the French army. It will appear from these papers that I have not received them as a mask to cover me, but that I have been long and *bona fide* an officer in the French service.

I have laboured to create a people in Ireland by raising three millions of my countrymen to the rank of citizens. I have laboured to abolish the infernal spirit of religious persecution, by uniting the Catholics and Dissenters. To the former I owe more than ever can be repaid. The services I was so fortunate as to render them they rewarded munificently; but they did more: when the public cry was raised against me – when the friends of my youth swarmed off and let me alone – the Catholics did not desert me; they had the virtue even to sacrifice their own interests to a rigid principle of honour; they refused, though strongly urged, to disgrace a man who, whatever his conduct toward the government might have been, had faithfully and conscientiously discharged his duty toward them; and in so doing, though it was in my own case, I will say they showed an instance of public virtue of which I know not whether there exists another example.

# LETTER TO THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTORY OF THE FRENCH REPUBLIC

From Provost's Prison, Dublin  
20<sup>th</sup> Brumaire, 7<sup>th</sup> Year of the Republic  
(10<sup>th</sup> November, 1798.)

CITIZEN DIRECTORS, - The English government having determined not to respect my rights as a French citizen and officer, and summoned me before a court martial, I have been sentenced to death. In those circumstances I request you to accept my thanks for the confidence with which you have honoured me, and which, in a moment like this, I venture to say I well deserved. I have served the republic faithfully, and my death, as well as that of my brother, a victim like myself, and condemned in the same manner about a month ago, will sufficiently prove it. I hope the circumstances in which I stand will warrant me, citizen directors, in applying you to consider the fate of a virtuous wife and of three infant children, who had no other support, and, in losing me will be reduced to the extreme of misery. I venture, on such an occasion, to recall to your remembrance, that I was expelled from my own country in consequence of my attempts to serve the republic; that, on the invitation of the French government, I came to France; that ever since I had the honour to enter the French service, I have faithfully, and with the approbation of all my chiefs, performed my duty; finally, that I have sacrificed for the republic all that man holds dearest - my wife, my children, my liberty, my life. In these circumstances, I confidently call on your justice and humanity in favour of my family, assured that you will not abandon them. It is the greatest consolation which remains to me in dying.



Health and respect,  
T. W. TONE (called Smith)  
Adjutant-General

# FINAL LETTERS TO HIS WIFE

## FIRST LETTER.

PROVOST'S PRISON, DUBLIN BARRACKS  
Le 20 Brumaire, An 7, (10th Nov, 1798)

DEAREST LOVE - The hour is at last come when we must part. As no words can express what I feel for you and our children, I shall not attempt it; complaint, of any kind, would be beneath your courage and mine; be assured I will die as I have lived, and that you will have no cause to blush for me.

I have written on your behalf to the French government, to the minister of marine, to General Kilmaine, and to Mr Shee; with the latter I wish you especially to advise. In Ireland, I have written to your brother Harry, and to those of my friends who are about to go into exile, and who, I am sure, will not abandon you.

Adieu, my dearest love; I find it impossible to finish this letter. Give my love to Mary; and above all things, remember that you are now the only parent of our dearest children, and that the best proof you can give of your affection for me, will be to preserve yourself for their education. God almighty bless you all.

Yours ever,  
T. W. TONE

P.S - I think you have a friend in Wilson who will not desert you.

## SECOND LETTER.

11<sup>th</sup> November, 1798

DEAREST LOVE, - I write just one line to acquaint you that I have received assurances from your brother Edward of his determination to render every assistance and protection in his power; for which I have written to thank him most sincerely. Your sister has likewise sent me assurances of the same nature, and expressed a desire to see me, which I have refused; having determined to speak to no one of my friends, not even my father, from motives of humanity to them and myself. It is a very great consolation to me, that your family are determined to support you; as to the manner of that assistance, I leave it to their affection for you, and your own excellent good sense, to settle what manner will be most respectable for all parties.

Adieu, dearest love. Keep your courage as I have kept mine; my mind is as tranquil this moment as at any period of my life. Cherish my memory; and, especially, preserve your health and spirits for the sake of our dearest children.

Your ever affectionate,  
T. W. TONE.

# STONE'S GRAVE

By Thomas Davis

## I.

In Bodenstown Churchyard there is a green grave,  
And wildly along it the winter winds rave;  
Small shelter, I ween, are the ruined walls there,  
When the storm sweeps down on the plains of Kildare.

## II.

Once I lay on that sod — it lies over Wolfe Tone —  
And thought how he perished in prison alone,  
His friends unavenged, and his country unfreed —  
“Oh, bitter,” I said, “is the patriot's meed;

## III.

“For in him the heart of a woman combined  
With a heroic life and a governing mind —  
A martyr for Ireland — his grave has no stone —  
His name seldom named, and his virtues unknown.”

## IV.

I was woke from my dream by the voices and tread  
Of a band, who came into the home of the dead;  
They carried no corpse, and they carried no stone,  
And they stopped when they came to the grave of Wolfe Tone.

## V.

There were students and peasants, the wise and the brave,  
And an old man who knew him from cradle to grave,

And children who thought me hard-hearted; for they  
On that sanctified sod were forbidden to play.

## VI.

But the old man, who saw I was mourning there, said:  
“We come, sir, to weep where young Wolfe Tone is laid,  
And we’re going to raise him a monument, too –  
A plain one, yet fit for the simple and true.”

## VII.

My heart overflowed, and I clasped his old hand,  
And I blessed him, and blessed every one of his band:  
“Sweet! sweet! ’tis to find that such faith can remain  
To the cause, and the man so long vanquished and slain.”

## VIII.

In Bodenstown Churchyard there is a green grave,  
And freely around it let winter winds rave –  
Far better they suit him – the ruin and gloom –  
Till Ireland, a Nation, can build him a tomb.