

LETTERS OF A
PROTESTANT ON
REPEAL



By Thomas Davis

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LETTER I.

To The Editor of "The Nation."

SIR – I like your title – there is resolve in it. I like your motto – for it proves to me that you know the wants of the country. “To create and to foster public opinion in Ireland and to make it racy of the soil,” is to lay the foundations of nationality. A nationality thus founded in the hearts and intelligence of the people would bid defiance to the arms of the foeman and the guile of the traitor; and though time should destroy it, still time would reproduce it again – in our island, if it existed; in other lands, if Ireland – the pile of rock and clay – should have perished; for, as Edmund Burke said, “a nation is a spiritual essence.” While a people feel and understand its national existence, it is imperishable. A country must be corrupted, before it can be enslaved.

Rightly to conceive, and passionately to pursue self-government are the real wants of Ireland. We want an educated and purpose-full public opinion – educated, for knowledge is power, the power to be free. It must be full of one purpose, too, and that purpose not a vague philanthropy, which reiterates intentions and shuns actions – not merely a wide wish to do something or everything, for unless desires and designs are concentrated and limited they are sterile – not changeful, for Reuben’s doom is that of all who fluctuate, “unstable as water, thou shalt not excel.”

We want a public opinion “racy of the soil.” The mind of the people must be developed, so as to give the most encouragement to the tendencies of their race and organisation. The eagle will not plough, though he is strong, nor the poet be sagacious in ledgers, nor the Irishman prosper after the manner of English or American prosperity.

Again, all that our climate and soil suggest to us, we should do, and so doing, should grow to be different from men of other climes and soils.

And again, we have a history. “The sea,” said Sheil, “reminds us of many things.” The ocean of history suggests still more. It tells us

that foes have always come from England, from Strongbow to Ebrington – and friends have come from France, from St. Patrick to St. Ruth (our two greatest saints, as your contributor, Mr. O’Callaghan, calls them). It tells us that valour was never wanting, since the time when Dathy died victorious at the foot of the Alps, to the time when Sarsfield signed the treaty of Limerick; but that misplaced trust in the promises of invaders, and a too generous neglect of precaution, occasioned our disasters. It tells us that all the races and creeds in the country have at different times acted nobly for Ireland, and generously towards each other; and, therefore, that *all* have much to be proud and grateful for in the conduct of the other races and sects. It tells us that all these same races and sects have done injustice and vengeance (more or less) to each other, and, therefore, that they owe mutual forgiveness, and the repentance which shall prove its reality, by love and by succour for virtuous and common ends.

A public opinion “racy of the soil,” should be full of these things as a healthy tree is full of sap. The fibres make the skeleton of the tree, but the sap is its life. Lands and population make the frame of a nation; a thoughtful, proud, valorous, pious mind, deriving its nature from the peculiar nature and history of the country, is its life.

Pardon this attempt to develop part of the meaning of your motto. There is a large and noble class among the Irish Protestants who would do and dare every thing, even to taking the field for national government, if they were made to see what is meant by it. At present they regard the cry for Repeal of the Union as meaning a desire on the part of the Roman Catholic majority to gain an ascendancy. They think that an Irish Government now would be in the hands of men of loose principles – men either bigots themselves, or panders to the bigotry of others; and they foresee that such a government would, before twenty years, lead to a civil war, and either to the ruin of the Protestants, or the re-conquest of the country.

I believe them wrong – I am sure they are honest. Some among the Protestants – aye, and some among the Roman Catholics, too, sir – I say it inoffensively – are interested in our subordination to England, with all the misery and meanness which follow therefrom; but the real interest of the vast majority of the Irish Protestants is

(like that of the vast majority of the Irish Roman Catholics), to have Ireland governed *by* and *for* its inhabitants, and by and for them alone. If I am not mistaken in this, it is the obvious duty of those desiring nationality to try and convey this truth to the minds of the Protestants. Every thing which goes in the least degree to identify them with their country, and to show them that they would have an ample share of the gain and fame, the prosperity and honour of independence, is a step towards nationality. Every thing which offends even the prejudices of the Protestants – every thing which identifies Repeal and Roman Catholicity as meaning two parts of the same thing, must disguise their true interest from the Protestants, and must excite their feelings against the restoration of a native government. If you would liberate Ireland, and keep it free, you must have Protestant help – if you would win the Protestants, you must address their reason, their interest, their hopes, and their pride. I, for one, a Protestant by ancestry, creed, and all the relations of life, and therefore intimately knowing them, think it possible to effect this object. For Protestants I write now, and for them I shall write again, if you or any other paper will give me the occasional use of a column or two.

LETTER II.

“Oh, Union, how social – oh, Union, how rare! –
In which all religions may equally share;
Which unites in one cause both the rich and the poor –
Makes the fate of our tyrants decided and sure.” - *Old Song*.

The few objections which are urged against Irish independence look like a legion, from the different array in which they are again and again brought to the fight.

These objections may be brought into four divisions:

1st. That Ireland is not strong enough to be a nation.

2nd. That Irishmen are not wise nor good enough to govern themselves; and, therefore, that our political quarrels, or an attempt at Roman Catholic ascendancy, would produce civil war and a reconquest.

3rd. That we have no means of getting a national government.

4th. And the most rarely urged is, that nationality would not benefit us.

Some of these objections have enough of plausibility in them to deserve long and quiet investigation; others, especially the last, are the result, sometimes of base feelings, but oftener of ignorance, and require refutation only.

In future letters I shall treat these matters. In the present I have a less agreeable task; it is to admit that Irishmen have not, at any period, save from 1779 to 1795, shown a hearty desire for union amongst themselves. Feuds of various kinds were ruining us; yet with the above exception, the different parties never rose superior to clan and sect. It will, for an obvious reason, be well to run over some of the facts. The disasters of past disunion may instruct us to avoid it in future. If not, we are a lost people.

In our early struggles with the Dane and English, clanship kept us asunder. The men of Dublin made peace, and left assertion so false and perilous, as that union was not *essential* to prosperous and permanent nationality, having been made, I have gone somewhat out of my road to impress it on you and your readers. Public opinion is at

present right on this subject – all honest men should exert themselves to keep it so. Alas for the day when it shall be corrupted!

Of the Irish population of eight millions, in 1834 one million and a half were Protestants, and the proportions have not changed since. Their religious differences never kept them seriously asunder in *Ireland*, and are now less likely to do so than ever.

This Protestant population consists of a fair share of every class. It contains a peasantry, sturdy and intelligent from a century and a half of comparative prosperity in a suffering land – an artisan and mercantile class, the most wealthy and enterprising we have – and lastly, by far the largest portion of the landed and professional aristocracy. Such a peasantry, backed by such resources, and headed (as in a serious struggle it would be) by such an aristocracy, seems as powerful a garrison as ever ruined a country. The statistics and history of Ireland, and of all countries, and indeed common observation, prove that such a power, if driven to aid the stranger, would ensure his victory.

However as an Irishman I regret the part taken by the Protestants in the seventeenth century, and once or twice since, I am well pleased at their present strength, not as a sectarian, but as an Irishman. If they were few and weak, it might not be easy to reply to their fear of Roman Catholic ascendancy. *Now* they are and will be right well able to take care of themselves. There are numbers, wealth, valour and leaders among them, if united, as they would be, high and low, heart and hand, in case of oppression, to guard their rights. Moreover, Protestant Scotland and England would give them aid in case of even a threat of oppression, not only from religious sympathy, but from a hope on England's part of regaining her supremacy. In fact, the difficulty all heads of parties would have, would be to take away even a pretence for such interference.

I have thus long dwelt on the strength of the Protestants and on the history of Irish dissension, not only because I wished to check the thought that they could be safely quarrelled with, but to show that, even supposing there were no toleration in the Roman Catholic clergy, nor any resolve in the Roman Catholic laymen not to allow intolerance, were their clergy inclined to it, still the Protestants

would, in an independent government, be safe from the danger by their strength, and from attack by the knowledge of it.

There seems but one way in which Protestants *could* be endangered, and that is by the Roman Catholics succeeding in establishing a national government without their approval, through the great English parties. Cut off from England, and weakened and divided by an unprosperous strife, Roman Catholic justice would remain their chief security. My Protestant friends who grew pale in 1829 will perhaps rate this danger too high, and others, including myself, as much too low.

I shall, in my next letter, begin to treat, in their order, the reasons alluded to in the opening of this, for and against the attempt to regain our independence.

LETTER III.

“The Irish are a weak, cowardly, ignorant and brutal people.” – *English writers, passim.*

I have endeavoured in my former letters to treat the question of Nationality, in relation to the Protestants, as a religious sect, forming the *minority* of the population, and, *therefore*, justly jealous to secure themselves against any attempt which the *majority*, or its leaders, might make on their religious liberty.

If I have induced a single brother-Protestant to regard the question of Irish independence as deserving to be canvassed on its own merits, irrespective of sectarianism, I am well rewarded. But the subject is too important to be passed from even thus. I shall soon return to it.

Suffer me now to ask my co-religionists to weigh the value of the objections to our making a struggle for independence.

The first and most common objection is, that we are not strong enough for a nation.

This objection takes many forms, and must be met in various ways. With one man it appears in such loose statistics as “little island,” “few people.” Another offers some much military dogma as that “if England had not us, some other country would.” Another dwells on England’s overbearing and insatiate power; and another on the duration of our slavery, as a proof that hard destiny is against us for ever and for ever.

Well, then, are we strong enough to keep the place of a nation, if we got into it? I rarely meet men who sit down gravely to canvass this who do not end by admitting it, and throwing the whole difficulty upon – “how are we to become a nation?” I shall try and answer that, too, some other time; but now, suppose Ireland independent. Fancy her to have a Senate of Irishmen, the choice of their native districts, sitting in our Capital, occupied day after day in discussing and deciding upon Irish measures. The conditions of the peasants, the demands of the manufacturers, and the projects of the merchants of Ireland, would occupy them. They would have no distant colonies to

distract their attention, consume their genius, and school them into the habits of oppression. They would not be inclined nor obliged to forego the consideration of Irish agriculture, in order to canvass the Canadian boundary – nor leave Irish manufactures to sink or swim, as our rich neighbours wished, while they scuffled for the plunder of China. The harbours of Munster – the roads of Leinster – the trade of Ulster – the fisheries of Connaught – the shipping of Derry, and Cork, and Galway – the looms of Belfast and Dublin – the tillage of Armagh and Wexford – the colleges, the schools, the literature, the fine arts of every province – the land and sea – the wealth, the virtue, and the honour of Ireland – would engross their labours, while a spark of goodness remained in any sect or class of us.

This would not make Ireland an Elysium. We should still have our faults and sorrows. But the question *now* is, not what would be the extent of service from a national government, but could it exist? Could such a government as I have mentioned, guarded and beloved by a people made happy by their legislation, and united by the example of their charity – with a National Militia trained and ready to rally round their standard – with an Irish navy encircling our coasts – with arts, and arms, and literature, and all that ennoble and mark out a nation – with such internal statesmanship as a land containing men of all the great races and creeds of Europe could supply – and such alliances as that statesmanship, aided by inoffensive industry, could win – tell me, oh! Tell me, *could* not we then guard our independence?

There are few hearts in Irish Protestant bosoms that will not as freely and proudly answer, “Yes,” as any Roman Catholic’s in the land.

But heads, not hearts, must decide. He who would select his course upon the subject of Irish independence should sit down and weigh well whether we have means and might to sustain that independence; and if he sees no obstacle to it, save the disunion of Irishmen, he should, instead of resisting the effort for freedom, or sitting down in despair, or, what is quite as pestilent, railing against every man who holds back from agitation, he should apply his whole powers – tongue, purse, and pen – to spreading the conviction that disunion is the sole obstacle to independence – he should strive till his

energies cracked, to pull Irishmen together, and unite them in mutual love and a common freedom.

Ireland (whether a nation or not) must endure such storms as blow over every land, fanning the vigorous into strength, tumbling the decayed, bending the cautious, and persevering and trying all things. Provincialism cannot free her from the hazards to which nationality would expose her. There is no sanctity in slavery. The dungeon is less safe than the hill-side.

Therefore, in estimating the capacity of Ireland to maintain a Native Government, let no man torture his ingenuity to frame such a conjunction of disasters as would ensure her overthrow. Tried by such a test, the largest nation as is unfit for independence as the smallest. Russia, or England, or France, would be condemned on such a trial. Decay is the destiny of the hugest empires, nor does their size insure their continuance. Athens had as lasting a foundation as Rome – Tyre and Carthage lived more years than the Parthian or Macedonian states – Venice had a longer pedigree than kingly France – and the freedom of Switzerland has witnessed the rise and fall of many an empire.

Still there is an amount of strength necessary to render the continuance of independence probable; and if a country does not possess that strength, it may deserve consideration whether it should not league with small neighbouring states subject to a like danger, yet not large enough to inflict the like mischief.

Thus, if Norway or Scotland were too weak to stand alone, they might form some federal or still closer union.

To test the time-worthiness of Irish independence, it behoves a man, in the first place, to examine well into the strength and resources of the country.

I shall go into some details of these resources and that strength in my next letter; but such details can only be well judged by unprejudiced men. On which side then does the prejudice lie in this country? *Against Ireland*, as it seems to me.

Would that each man who flings around him doubts and sneers on the power of Ireland would pause. Not merely to blush for the feeling that could lead him to treat his country's weakness (if 'twere weak) with irreverence and contempt, instead of silence and sorrow,

or silence and exertions to serve it, should he pause – no, but to track up to their kennel these feelings and opinions, and see whether they are just.

The reasons which prejudice all Irishmen, of *all* parties against the belief in Ireland's power of maintaining her freedom, arise from false views of the past and the present. England has had possession of our capital, with very few and short intervals, since 1171. During this long time, too, she has maintained a continual struggle to extend her dominion, or her religion, or her language, ways, and manners, over this country, with indifferent success. The strength she spent, the disasters she suffered, and, still more, the crimes she committed, embittered her spirit against Ireland. She calumniated the intellect, the language, the music and literature, the laws, the morals, the valours, the skill – nay, the very climate of this kingdom. All enemies, even the most transient and fair, do judge and speak ill of one another; but as *her* enmity was more enduring and her aggressions more varied and incessant, so her wrath and evil speaking were more black and unscrupulous than those of any other foe on record. If any one doubts the fact, let him look over the English books on Irish history and Ireland – let him begin with the graphic blunders of Cambrensis, and plod his way, as I have done, through the uncivil chroniclers, from thence till he reaches the masterly cruelty of act and word under Queens Mary and Elizabeth (and the one treated Ireland as badly as the other, so far as she had power) – let him go lightly over the hard speeches of Bacon, and Sir John Davies, and Stafford. By this time he will be somewhat seasoned, and it is well for him to be so. If he entered on the times of the English republicans unprepared, he would fling down their writings as the most infamous aggregation of peculating and malicious falsehood that ever was put together. I defy any man to deny the fact, that in the whole range of Republican and Whig pamphlets, printed for England from 1639 to 1693, there is not *one* of them which does not contain wilful or retailed falsehoods, and which does not overflow with the most brutal language towards the Irish. Nor was this always flung at the anti-English party here. The Royalists, who ruined Ireland under Lord Ormond, were hardly less assailed than the “mere Irish;” and John Milton, having blotted his

page with enormous calumnies against the Irish Roman Catholics, retained vigour enough to blackguard the Ulster Presbyterians in a style unsurpassed for eloquence and insolence since scolding began. Throughout the last century the English historians copied into their books the rubbish of the London pamphleteers, while those pamphleteers were succeeded by a race only a little less unjust; and thus the pedigree of insolence has been transferred to the present time, and to the English books and journals of the day. You will find a similar strain of falsehood and incivility running through the proclamations of the English Government. The English acts of parliament, too, condescended to abuse the Irish through preamble and clause, and with all the solemnity in the world enacted against us coarse epithets, as well as bloody laws.

Nor was this entirely the result of anger – policy entered largely into it. It was comfortable for themselves to use and hear ill names of the race they robbed and slaughtered; it confirmed the doubting and disinterested portions of both the English and Anglo-Irish communities into allowing or aiding the system of spoliation; and, lastly, it was made use of to deter foreign nations from interfering in the cause, or listening to the applications of the victimized Irish.

For all these reasons, and because falsehoods, once alive, may take ages to die, English conversation, literature, and public documents, convey an unjust and falsely disparaging account of the resources, military achievements, character, and abilities of the Irish. Moreover, we have not Irish statutes (they were burnt), Irish traditional conversation (it was punished as treason), nor Irish literature (it was scanty, and in the Irish language), to neutralize the effects of these untruths. We take England's account of Ireland, written, not calmly not disinterestedly, but in the excitement of war, of bigotry, and of oppression.

An Irishman of this day, no matter what his party, must be prejudiced against Ireland, and, just as you rise in society that prejudice must be the stronger, for English opinions have more influence.

Men, studying the strength of Ireland, should try to be more open to proof of it than to insinuations against it, inasmuch as the very

language they use is redolent of injustice and misrepresentation against Ireland.

Another reason why men are prone to undertake Ireland's strength, is her actual history, even when stripped of English misrepresentation. They forget that Ireland is in many respects stronger than she was, and that her past failure is no more proof of her unfitness of future success, than an infant's inability to scale a mountain is of the future incapacity of the man to do so. Besides, strength is relative; and it is in relation to the countries likely to quarrel with or to aid her in a struggle that her power is now to be measured.

The mere fact, too, of Ireland's actual provincialism demands some effort of the mind to calculate or conceive her position and power as a nation.

But the last and commonest prejudice is from men estimating the force which Ireland would possess under a permanent National Government by what it has now. It is with her *present* power she must win her way to freedom, and therein she labours under all the disadvantages of an impoverished, divided, disallied, and disarmed people; but, once she is free – once she is a nation, most of these ills would vanish. Soil and sea, head, heart, and hand, wielded by native rulers, would render her as unlike what she is now, as the starved and chained eagle is from the haughty and victorious bird which breaks the mist from the mountain top, and soars from sea to sky unrivalled and resistless.

If, then, any man who denies or doubts the power of Ireland to maintain her nationality, wishes to form a sound and wise opinion on it, he must constantly guard himself against the prejudices which we, as being accustomed to the books and traditions of the English, must feel against Ireland. He should strive to neutralize these prejudices by reading Irish patriotic accounts of Ireland; he should dwell long and fondly, and till he begins to sympathize with those brief periods of freedom she has in later ages enjoyed; and he should learn to judge her true position by a frequent study of her resources, and a comparison of these with the resources, civil and military, of other states which have enjoyed, still preserve, or are (like Hungary) in the act of

acquiring, independence. Thus, and thus alone, can any man – English, Continental, or Irish – judge Ireland’s power to be free.

LETTER IV.

“Let Ireland be subject to her own legislation only, and one might venture to say she is free for ever. Her situation and size fit her for that moderate degree of strength and power which is most likely to be permanent.” – *Pollock’s Letters, under the signature of “Owen Roe O’Nial.”* 1779.

In my last letter I tried to prove that even the most patriotic Irishman would be inclined to underrate the strength of this country.

Among the reasons given were, that we have been for many centuries the victims of dissension and the sport of invaders, and are still provincials. From being accustomed to contemplate the country in this state of feebleness, feud, and slavery, it is an easy transition to conclude that Ireland has not strength of hand, or head, or heart, to become and remain free.

“What has been will be,” is a common proverb – one of those lies wherewith a vulgar analogy imposes on us. We look in past, in present, and we see Ireland couched in her cell, or beating against its bears. Ireland chainless, abroad, fearless, and proud, does not then occur to us.

The chameleon was said to grow to the colour of what it fed on; the mind of man falls into prophesying what it sees: and thus every one too lazy or too dull to imagine aught but what he has witnessed, proclaims the future a reflection of the past, and thinks himself a sage. Another of my strongest reasons for warning Irishmen that they are prejudiced against Ireland was, that they read their own history in the literature of their tyrants. For ten of us who have read M’Geoghagan, a hundred have read Leland; and for one who has looked into the *Rerum Hibernicarum Scriptores*, a thousand have studied Hume. Thus we judged our fathers by the calumnies of their foes. Like true slaves we gathered up the fragments of insult let fall from the table of our masters, and made them our own. Nor was this confined to history. The exaggeration of England’s strength and glory, in which English rulers and writers indulge – the deprecation of the force and morals of England’s foes (Ireland being in the front), was not strange nor very hateful in an Englishman; but, alas for our fate, we, too, accepted these

falsehoods, and a sacred dread of our gaoler, and distrust of ourselves, unfitted us to resist him.

Doubtless there is some compensation for this. Indignation and grief sometimes do the work of pride and joy. 'Twas a sweet a noble thought of the poet's to describe Ireland as

"More dear in her sorrow, her gloom, and her showers,
Than the rest of the world in its sunniest hours;"

But he spoke of enthusiast moments, or he spoke of mighty hearts – souls not many, which gather strength from adversity, as the oak from the tempest.

I repeat, then that 'tis but a just demand that every Irishman who comes to discuss our power of independence should feel that his education, and studies, and conversation, all prejudice him to lean unjustly against the belief of Ireland's strength; and therefore it is his bounden duty, as an honest judge, to discard all Anglicism – all the peculiarly English notions of England, of Ireland, and of other lands, as they are, and as they were.

He should recollect that he has not been accustomed to hear the sacred names of Ireland solemnly spoken of in the family circle, or the pulpit, or the forum. Those who sealed their service to Ireland with their life blood are unnamed or calumniated.

Our streets boast many a monument to our oppressors; few, few to our patriots. Where in our avenue rises the fane of Brian? What effigies of the O'Neills frown upon our submission? Where does the image of Sarsfield watch over our poor immunities, or the hand of Tone stretch out as if prompting us to liberty?

We look on our fields – the peasant is hungry in his chill hovel. We look on our towns – and the artisan scares us with his gaunt visage and tottering limbs. We look on our capital – its Custom-house is a museum for miscellaneous trifles, its Exchange a lonely vault, its Castle the eyrie of the invader, its Senate House a den of money-changers! Alas for Ireland! – poor widow, so forlorn, so fair. Alas for Irishmen! – trained up amid all that could remind them of their country's ruin – amid all that could suggest despair. From the cradle to the grave have generations of them walked without any of those

sights or sounds which train men up to be good and valiant citizens – even as the daily incidents of home, from the meal in the morning to the cheery circle at night, train us to be true and joyous as children, as husbands, and as parents. ‘Tis enough to make one weep to see eight millions and a-half of people wandering about the country of their birth without the realities or the ensigns of nationality, justly abhorring the Government that rules them, yet unable to create a Government of their own. Oh! for some spirit to move over the void! Oh! for some potent voice to speak country to the wayward, and hope to the sad, and to say with faith: “Let there be a nation!”

Let none of your readers, whom I have left unconvinced that he has got an alien’s training in his native land, read further. I write not for such a man – he either needs no persuasion, or he is beyond my power. He either is striving to free us, or nothing, but the sight of Ireland reposing safe after victory, will convince him of her power to triumph.

If liberty were the product of material forces, Ireland would be an independent nation. If square miles and population were sure passwords, we would not be shivering or battling at the door of our own dwelling – a vast people on a rich soil uncombined by nationality.

Reckoning Norway and Hungary as free states (and they are almost so), there are but seven states in Europe superior to Ireland in population, and twenty-one inferior; and of those seven there are but three – France, Russia, and England – governed by central powers.

Prussia has eight Provincial Parliaments, beside Neufchatel. Every Austrian province has its National Assembly. Spain is still, and long may it remain, the Castiles and Aragon, Andulasia, Biscay, and Catalonia. Turkey is broken up into principalities, over most of which the Porte has little control.

I do not mean to assert that the province of Prussia, Austria, and Turkey are *well* governed, but they have still the *forms* of nationality. They have what in time will effect the liberation of them all.

We are accustomed to talk of Austrian tyranny and British freedom, yet even Austrian Italy has a Representative Assembly. The power of that Assembly is small, its mode of election servile, and its decrees are subject to be overruled by a despot. Even this is denied us.

We are not allowed a national *voice*. The simplest convention, which could authoritatively speak the People's wishes, is forbidden. But some of the Austrian states, such as the Tyrol and Transylvania, possess large powers, and exercise them freely; while Hungary has almost emancipated herself from Austria's yoke. The next European war will perfect her independence, and her neighbours will grow like unto her.

In actual production and revenue, but six states are superior to Ireland, and twenty-two inferior; and in surface twelve are superior, and sixteen inferior.

Many of these inferior states have played great parts in European history.

Placed in the midst of quarrels, and exposed to force (from which our mere position would except us), they held their own by their intrinsic might. Prussia, when it had not a fourth of our population, encountered *all* the great Continental Powers successfully.

Holland bore up against the greatest empire, save Napoleon's, in modern times.

Sweden carried her arms from the Rhine to the Moskwa, and was the acknowledged protector of Germany.

Portugal disputed the colonial empire with England, and lost it from corruption.

Greece, one of the smallest of all, cut its way to independence in our own time; and Switzerland is illustrious with five centuries of victory and independence.

The following table is a *prima facie* proof of our right to be independent; and he who reads it and denies that right, must do so (if he profess to be a reasoner) by pleading that we are fools, fanatics, and cowards, as a counter-weight to our population, revenue and territory. Where's the slave that will do so?

	Population.	Revenue in Pounds Sterling.	Surface in Geographical English Sq. Miles of 69.15 to a Degree.
Russian Empire	55,000,000	14,636,000	7,715,000
France... ..	33,540,910	40,500,000	203,736
Austrian Empire*	36,670,996	14,200,000	257,368
Hungary	10,500,000	2,000,000	80,000
Transylvania	2,000,000	250,000	15,000
The Tyrol	830,000	100,000	11,000
Lombard—Venice	4,600,000	2,000,000	18,000
England	13,800,000	41,266,461	50,387
Wales	900,000		7,425
Scotland and the Isles	2,500,000	4,701,271	29,600
Great Britain... ..	17,200,000	45,967,732	87,412
Prussia†	14,157,753	8,500,000	107,937
Rhenish Prussia	2,433,000		10,327
Polish Prussia	900,000		11,374
Spain‡	13,200,000	9,000,000	182,758
Ireland	8,750,000	4,700,000	32,100
Turkey in Europe§	8,000,000	4,000,000	120,000
Two Sicilies	8,000,000	4,400,000	42,000
Kingdom of Sardinia	4,650,000	2,750,000	29,100
Bavaria	4,315,000	2,700,000	29,600
Poland (present kingdom of)	4,300,000	1,200,000	51,000
Belgium	3,850,000	3,800,000	11,000
Portugal	3,550,000	2,000,000	36,500
Sweden	3,109,000	900,000	170,700
Holland	3,000,000	4,900,000	13,500
Papedom	2,730,000	1,300,000	17,218
Switzerland	2,190,000	500,000	15,234
Denmark	2,035,000	1,654,000	22,000
Hanover	1,690,000	2,160,000	14,276
Saxony	1,652,000	850,000	5,759
Wurtemberg	1,650,000	800,000	7,840
Tuscany	1,457,000	810,000	8,381
Baden	1,267,000	1,100,000	4,400
Norway	1,250,000	460,000	121,725
Cassel	800,000	930,000	4,430
Darmstadt	784,000	590,000	3,240
Greece... ..	700,000	580,000	18,000

* Hungary, Transylvania, The Tyrol, and Lombard—Venice are here included. They cannot be depended on by Austria.

† Including Rhenish and Polish Prussia, and other doubtful Provinces.

‡ Many ill-united Kingdoms and Republics are included.

§ This omits Wallachia, Servia, and Moldavia, now almost independent.

Italy, Spain, and Greece, and Great Britain, alone (in Europe) have a greater amount of coast than Ireland. France, England, and the United States alone, exceed us in steam navy, which points our road to power significantly enough. There is no attempt at minute accuracy, as the table is meant only for comparison. The revenue is deceptive; for, as the national debt of a country increases, more of the revenue is paid back to the people, and the real revenue is less. Thus France has really a larger revenue than England.

Carrying our view beyond Europe, we find in North America but one nation (the United States) exceeding us in revenue and population. In South America, with its young Titan Republics, no state approaches

Ireland in population or revenue. The same is true of the great continent of Africa. Asia, to be sure, bends under three huge empires, China, Russia, and British India; yet scattered through and between those slave empires are crowds of independent tribes and nations, none exceeding, few approaching us in the resources of our treasury, or the number of our fighting men.

Our slavery is due to far different causes than want of mere material power.

LETTER V.

“Be valiant still, be valiant still,
Be stout, and be bold, and be valiant still;
There’s right in the cause, and might in the will
Of the bonny, bonny lad that is valiant still.” – *Scotch Ballad*.

In my last letter I tried to prove, from the latest statistics, that “if liberty were the product of material forces, Ireland would be an independent nation.” Throughout America, Asia, and Africa, there are but four independent nations exceeding us in revenue and fighting men, though these continents contain many hundreds of free – perfectly free nations.

“Reckoning Norway and Hungary as free states (and they are almost so), there are but seven states in Europe superior to Ireland in population, and twenty-one inferior; and of those seven there are but three – France, Russia, and England – governed by central powers.

In actual production and revenue, but six states are superior to Ireland, and twenty-two inferior; and in surface twelve are superior, and sixteen inferior.

Many of these inferior states have played great parts in European history.”

Thus the world has but ten states superior in revenue, and eleven superior in fighting men, to Ireland.

Suffer me to follow on this comparison of the chief statistics of Ireland, and of other states living or dead.

The great majority of states in all ages have been inferior to Ireland in dimensions and numbers. Each of the clans and tribes, wherein the ruder nations lived, rarely equalled the population of our smallest county; and the coolest of all political philosophers – a statesman who had outlived revolutions, who had ordered a young nation, and prepared constitutions under which millions live and die – Thomas Jefferson – came to the conclusion that village or clan government was the noblest and happy of any. I may differ from him, but his words demand respect; nor does he speak alone.

Take the next stage, and you find that the republics of Phoenicia, Etruria, Asia Minor, and Greece, created the arts which have most strengthened the hand of man – the sciences which have crowned his

intellect – the poetry which has spiritualized his habits – the philosophy that judges his virtue – the history which subjects the past to his uses – and the examples which trouble the depths of his soul as with the hand of heaven.

Yet the largest of these was not a tenth of the size of Ireland. Most of them had not more territory than the liberties of one of our large towns.

Nor are the old empires of Upper Asia, nor the conquering republics of Carthage and Rome, examples entirely to the contrary. Their greatest triumphs were won when the Assyrians, Medes, and Persians, were little clans – when Carthage was a seaport with a few colonial dependencies, and when Rome found room in Italy.

So marked is the power of small states, resulting from their unity and energy – from their “great living and high thinking,” that Taylor says,

“If it were not that general intelligence, and a better knowledge of the science of government, and more skill in war, ordinarily come in with extended empire to supply the place of personal enthusiasm, the history of nations would present, in a perpetual series, what, in fact, it has often presented – the destruction or subjugation of the larger social bodies by the smaller.”

Recall, too, the thousand states which have covered Europe since cruel Rome fell. Take up the histories of the Imperial and Spanish free towns – look at the canvass and marble, the perishable matter moulded by the immortal mind of Italy and Flanders – gaze upon the hardy and intelligent commerce of Venice, Wisby, Hamburgh, Marseilles, and Leghorn – gaze upon it till you see the flaxen-haired Scandinavian crossing the desert with his caravan, and the sun-dried ships of the south sailing in triumph into Archangel – gaze till you see the gallies of Venice and of the Hanse Towns girdle Europe, from the icebergs of the Poles to the sands of Palestine – gaze till the Genoese seaman comes out from his privateer, and says there is another continent, and finds it too.

Where but in the civic republics of Europe – from Bruges to Milan, from Dantzie to Frankfort, and from Cologne to Barcelona – where else do you find the cradles of commerce, the preservers of literature, the restorers of art and science? And where but in these free

towns, and in the little republics of Switzerland, Saxony, and Biscay, was liberty sheltered and saved?

The numberless nations called duchies, kingdoms, lordships, and counties – from Ireland to Bohemia, and from Benevento to Normandy – were almost all republican in constitution. How long and nobly they bore up against the crushing and combining influence of great kings and emperors! How much we owe them of principles of patriotism and examples of just courage, and how little to their monopolizing assailants!

The deaths of Padilla and Wallace, the triumphs of Tell and Pelagio, and the endless struggles of Witikind, Hereward, and O'Brien, teach us, not less than the fates of Aristomenes and Washington, the duties of a patriot and the divinity of a hero; and the deeds of the city republics – grouped along the shores of the Mediterranean and Baltic, or clustered in Lombardy and the Netherlands – are unsurpassed, save by Greece alone.

Of the force of small states we have three striking instances before us at this present hour. After Russia had swept from her path the powers of Poland, Turkey, Persia, and a hundred more, she met her match – nay, praise be to God! Her conqueror, in the scanty tribes of Circassia. France, the vast, the warlike, the renowned, after that she had overran Europe four times, and been ultimately beaten only by a world in combination – France, when since that dark day could traverse Spain in a summer, has been baffled by the heroic clans of northern Africa. And England, having put a hundred millions of Hindoos beneath her feet, and while dictating terms with a handful of men to three hundred and odd million Chinese, retreats with loss and difficulty from the shepherds of Afghanistan.

Ireland, then has the bulk of a nation and the physical power of independence; but the higher power – knowledge, and the highest power – resolve, she hath not. She has them not, or she would be free. Body hath she, but where – where is the soul?

What wants she to be a nation? Heavens! Why is it that the commonplace chatter of these twenty years back is forgotten, or its first consequences overlooked? Men have talked, till the ear grew dull, of her harbours – they are a hundred – of her land – here so rich, there

so stern, in all so goodly – of her climate – so varied, genial, and instructive – and of her position – out to sea, and fossed round by the deep guardian ocean. These things she has had always, and her people, 'tis added, are eight millions. Eight millions or more – they are owners of no mean heritage from nature. With riches at their feet, and beauty around them, and glory behind, before, and above them, the fame of illustrious ancestors, the inspiration of great endowments, the hope of a splendid future – why are they slaves? Slaves they are, for they do not govern themselves, speak for themselves, act, toil, fight, live, hope for themselves. They are taxed by the English, legislated for by England. Englishmen execute their laws, they are taught the language, history, policy, and prejudices of England; they live for England, die for England, are owned by England. Is not this slavery? What matter that with delusive laws she talks sometimes of Irish rights? What matter that she tolerates the existence of Irish Helots, and suffers their noise till her nerves get fretted, and she is forced to smite them into silence? They live impoverished, dishonoured, and obedient. They are slaves, they are things. Ireland has a body, but no soul.

Eight millions, good sooth! When Ulster had not 200,000 people, it maintained its independence for four centuries against the splendid Plantagenet and the fiery Tudor. In the 17th century, when Ireland had but a million and a quarter of disunited people, she supported a National Government, and carried on two great wars against England, one of twelve years' duration, from 1641 to 1653; and the other of four years, from 1688 to 1692. Yet, then, the Roman Catholics alone represented Ireland, and harassed by the Protestants of the North, and divided amongst themselves, they, that handful of Roman Catholics, held their own against England. They were not talking of numbers only; they computed the force of duty, and the greatness of resolve.

Again, in 1782, look at the Protestants, who then represented Ireland. After a struggle of twenty years, holding the fetters of the Catholic with one hand, and with the other grappling with England, they wrung their independence with the terror of arms. Let no man hasten to condemn them for not emancipating the Roman Catholics.

Their ancestors, brutalized by the temptations of wealth and the pangs of bigotry, had enslaved the Roman Catholics; but fifty years gave the sons of the tyrants a *habit* of domination which nothing but the stormy virtue of a revolution could destroy, and had corrupted and debased the slave. Or if they be condemned, condemn Leonidas, Brutus, and Washington – freemen, yet served by Helots – by Helots despised, because degraded – “wretches and cowards, because slaves.”

But, be that as it may, heart and soul, knowledge and purpose, a well-selected opportunity, and a bold policy which did not shrink from the battle-field, enabled the million of Protestants, gazed on by three and a-half millions of Roman Catholics, to triumph in '82.

In '93 the partial union of four millions of Irishmen, led by Tone, Keogh, and such men, who hastened to avail themselves of French victories, extorted fresh liberties from England.

Again, in 1828, when the Roman Catholics once more represented Ireland, was it mere numbers effected Catholic Emancipation? No; opposed by England, Scotland, and the North, five million Roman Catholics did the deed, by union, firmness, and devotion. They resolved to succeed – they accepted and sought out the help of America, France, and of parts of England, without asking whether the one held slaves, the other was orthodox in theology, or the third had a rag of private morals left. They sacrificed ease, time, and money. They were notoriously ready to sacrifice life, too. Their foes grew pale, and Emancipation was carried. Their numbers was almost as many for years before – they have been much greater for many years since; yet what was done save in that hour of stern and intelligent purpose?

‘Tis needless for me to draw conclusions from this survey of past and present.

But, you will tell me, Ireland has now resumed her energy, and is resolved to be free, at any cost. If so she will soon be independent. If so, she has *all* the elements of nationality, - size, place, strength and purpose; she need only “pronounce her will” – “its very breath will rend her chains.”

“For a nation to be free,” says the French declaration, “’tis sufficient that it wills it.” The expressed will *is* enough, if the country

has the soul as well as the body of a nation. A hundred millions of Hindoos *will* to be free, but they have no national soul, and they sob in vain.

I, too, believe Ireland is rapidly acquiring the high spirit, the political sagacity, and the steadfast purpose of a nation. That she may soon perfectly learn all the virtues which give and guard independence, is the sincere prayer of AN IRISH PROTESTANT.