

LETTER TO COLONEL ROBERTS AND JOHN SAVAGE

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Gentlemen, - The tender you have made to me of the presidency of the reunited Fenian Brotherhood, though it has embarrassed me, could not fail to be gratifying on two accounts – first, that it proves confidence in me personally, and next, that it marks the moment of reconciliation between two bodies of patriotic Irishmen having the same object in view. On this reconciliation, brought about mainly by your own efforts, gentlemen, allow me to congratulate you. But, after sufficient time taken for consideration – after reading the ‘constitution,’ and holding some conversation with leading members of both organisations, I must beg leave respectfully to decline the honour tendered, and the responsibility which they would pay me the compliment of imposing upon me. And I have the less regret in coming to this conclusion as it cannot be said to throw any obstacle in the way of a reunion of our countrymen. That reunion is already effected, with a provision for electing a president in case of my refusal. It is useless to enter here into any account of the various reasons (some of a public, some of a private nature) which compel me to decline. My countrymen know very well that I have the fullest sympathy with the object of Fenianism – that is, the destruction of British dominion in Ireland; and therefore I expect that they will give me credit for valid reasons, without me entering into detail. With thanks for your courtesy, gentlemen, in the execution of your mission, and assurances of respect for you personally,

I have the honour to be your obedient servant,
JOHN MITCHEL.