

IS NATIONALITY SELFISH?

By Thomas Devin Reilly.

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“I disdain the attainment of selfish Irish nationality at the sacrifice or abandonment, even for a moment, of the sublime principle of universal liberty, religious and civil, to every created man.” – *Mr. Steele, in Conciliation Hall.*

The speech of which the above is a part will be found elsewhere. Mr. STEELE is one of the many men from whose opinions we would never express a difference. His errors are not nocent, and innocence is its own protection. But the above extract enunciates a principle which we cannot pass over – no matter where, or by whom, by what authority, delivered.

Under no circumstances, under no possible contingency, is Irish Nationality selfish. In devoting our lives, labours, fortunes, to its attainment, we perform an act of sublimest charity. Charity is not selfish.

Surely nine millions of Irishmen are sufficient for the exercise of any man’s philanthropy – surely to raise Ireland is labour sufficient for our present strength – surely, before all earth, she has the first and strongest claim upon her sons.

Mr. STEELE says, No! Irishmen and American slaves are the same to him. It is *selfish* to love our country above the world.

Were Mr. STEELE sole Irish legislator, we would say this to him:

Is a father selfish in loving his children and family above the children and families of other men? If his children starve and struggle with the world, is he selfish in giving his all to them alone, regardless of others? Your philanthropist answers, Yes!

Were Mr. STEELE a mere Irishman, we would say this:

Is it selfish to love our parents? – to love the mother who travailed for, and suckled us? – to love the brothers and sisters who gladdened our childhood? – to love the spot we call home? To love these more than other beings and other places – is this selfishness? He who terms Irish Nationality selfish says, Yes.

“Perish the British Empire,” said GRATAN – “live Ireland!” Is this selfishness? “Perish Europe and America, too, if needs be,” say we – “live Ireland!” Is this selfishness?

No! men of Ireland, by the soul of GRATAN, no! Irish Nationality is not selfish. If it be, ye have deeply sinned. Ye have sworn the attainment of this “selfish Irish Nationality” is your first duty – shall be your undeviating aim. Ye have *sworn* this. Ye have stretched your hands to GOD from Tara, from Mullaghmast, from every green hill of holy Ireland, and called Him to witness.

Enough. Such philanthropy as Mr. STEELE professes is a species of nationalist polygamy. Your true Cosmopolite is a moral Grand Vizier, a platonic Turk, a lover on too large a scale to love at all. He loves every country, and none truly. Nationality is a pearl – the richest, too, in charity’s casket. Philanthropy enlarged is the pearl dissolved. The solution contains all that was once valuable, now valueless. Men of Ireland! remember that ye have a country. She is enough for the present. *First* make her a Nation.

We mean no offence to Mr. STEELE – in fact, we have not been writing for his benefit. We abhor the principle of slavery as sincerely as he or any other man possibly can. We have said so again and again; and we think all we say, though sometimes prudence prevents us from saying all we think.