

# JACTA ALEA EST.

By Charles Gavan Duffy.

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The Irish nation has at length decided. England has done us good service at last. Her recent acts have taken away the last miserable pretext for passive submission. She has justified us before the world, and ennobled the timid, humble supplication of a degraded, insulted people, into the proud demand for independence, by a resolved, prepared, and fearless nation.

Now, indeed, were the men of Ireland *cowards* if this moment for retribution, combat, and victory, were to pass by unemployed. It finds them slaves, but it would leave them infamous.

Oh! for a hundred thousand muskets glittering brightly in the light of Heaven, and the monumental barricades stretching across each of our noble streets, made desolate by England – circulating round that doomed Castle, made infamous by England, where the foreign tyrant has held his council of treason and iniquity against our people and our country for 700 years.

Courage raised with danger, and heroism with resolve. Does not our breath come freer, each heart beat quicker in these rare and grand moments of human life, when all doubt, and wavering, and weakness, are cast to the winds, and the soul rises majestic over each petty obstacle – each mean, low, selfish consideration, and, flinging off the fetters of prejudice, bigotry, and egotism, bound forward into a higher, diviner life of heroism and patriotism – defiant as a conqueror, devoted as a martyr, omnipotent as a deity.

We appeal to the whole Irish nation – is there any man amongst us who wishes to take one further step on the base path of sufferance and slavery? Is there one man who thinks that Ireland has not been sufficiently degraded in her honour and her rights, to justify her now in fiercely turning upon her oppressor? No! a man so infamous cannot tread the earth; or if he does, the voice of the coward is stifled in the clear, wild, ringing shout that leaps from hill to hill, that echoes from

sea to sea, that peals from the lips of an uprisen nation – “We must be free!”

In the name then of your trampled, insulted, degraded country; in the name of all heroic virtues, of all that makes life illustrious or death divine; in the name of your starved, your exiled, your *dead*; by your martyrs in prison cells and felon chains; in the name of God and man; by the listening earth and the watching Heaven, I call on you to make this aspiration of your souls a *deed*. Even as you read these weak words of a heart that yet palpitates with an enthusiasm as heroic as your own, and your breast heaves and your eyes grow dim with tears as the memory of Ireland’s wrongs rushes upon your soul – even *now* lift up your right hand to Heaven and swear – swear by your undying soul, and by your hopes of immortality, never to lay down your arms, never to cease hostilities, till you regenerate and save this fallen land.

Gather round the standard of our chiefs. Who dares to say he will not follow, when O’Brien leads? Or who amongst you is so abject that he will grovel in the squalid misery of his hut, or be content to be flung from the ditch side into the living tomb of the poorhouse, rather than charge proudly, like brave men and free men, with that glorious young Meagher at their head, upon the hired mercenaries of their enemies? One bold, one decisive move. One instant to take breath, and then a rising; a rush, a charge from north, south, east and west, upon the English garrison, and – *the land is ours*. Do your eyes flash – do your hearts throb at the prospect of having a *country*? You have never felt the pride, the dignity, the majesty of independence. You could never lift up your head to heaven and glory in the name of Irishman, for all Europe read the brand of *slave* upon your brow.

Oh! that my words could burn like molten metal through your veins, and light up this ancient heroic daring which would make each one of you a Leonidas – each battle-field a Marathon – each pass a Thermopylae. Courage! Need I preach to Irishmen of courage? Is it so hard a thing, then, to die? – Alas! do we not all die daily of broken hearts and shattered hopes, and tortures of mind and body that make life a weariness, and of weariness worse than the tortures, for this life is not long, slow agony of death?

No! it cannot be death you fear; for you have braved the plague in the exile ship of the Atlantic, and plague in the exile's home beyond it; and famine and ruin, and a slave's life and a dog's death; and hundreds, thousands, a *million* of you have perished thus. Courage! You will not now belie those old traditions of humanity that tell of this divine God gift within us. I have read of a Roman wife who stabbed herself before her husband's eyes to teach him how to die. These million deaths teach us a grand lesson – To die for Ireland! Yes; have we not sworn it in a thousand passionate words by our poets and orators – in the grave resolves of councils, leagues, and confederations? Now is the moment to test whether you value most freedom or life. Now is the moment to strike, and by striking save, and the day after the victory it will be time enough to count our dead.

But we do not provoke this war. History will write of us – that Ireland endured wrongs unexampled by any despotism – sufferings unequalled by any people – her life-blood drained by a vampire host of foreign masters and officials – her honour insulted by a paid army of spies – her cries of despair stifled by the armed hand of legalised ruffianism – that her peasants starved while they reaped the corn for their foreign lords, because no man gave them bread – that her pallid artisans pined and wasted because no man gave them work – that her men of genius, the noblest and purest of her sons, were dragged to a felon's cell, lest the people might hear the voice of *truth*, and that in this horrible atrophy of all mental and physical powers, this stagnation of all existence, whoever dared to rise and demand whereof it was that Ireland, made so beautiful by God, was made the plague-spot of the universe by man – he was branded as a *felon* – imprisoned, robbed, tortured, chained, exiled, murdered. Thus history will write of us. And she will also write that Ireland did not start from this horrid trance of suffering and despair until 30,000 swords were at her heart, and even then she did not rise for vengeance, only *prepared to resist*. No, we are not the aggressors – we do not provoke this terrible war. Even with 6,000,000 hearts to aid us, and with all the chances of success in our favour, we still offer terms to England. If she capitulates even now at the eleventh hour, and grants the moderate, the just demands of Ireland, our arms shall not be raised to sever the golden link that

unites the two nations. And the chances of success are all with us. There is a god-like strength in a just cause – a desperate energy in men who are fighting in their own land for the possession of that land. A glowing enthusiasm that scorns all danger when from success they can look onward to a future of unutterable glory and happiness for their country. Opposed to us are only a hired soldiery and paid police, who, mere trained machines even as they are, yet must shudder (for they are men) at the horrible task of butchery under the blasphemed name of duty to which England summons them. Brothers, many of them are of this people they are called upon to murder – sons of the same soil – fellow-countrymen of those who are heroically struggling to elevate their common country. Surely whatever humanity is left in them will shrink from being made the sad instruments of despotism and tyranny – they will blush to receive the purchase-money of England which hires them for the accursed and fratricidal work. Would a Sicilian have been found in the ranks of Naples? Would a Milanese have been detected in the fierce hordes of Austria? No, for the Sicilians prize honour, and the stately Milanese would strike the arm to the earth that would dare to offer them Austrian gold in payment for the blood of their own countrymen. And Heaven forbid that in *Ireland* could be found a band of armed fratricides to fight against their own land for the flag of a foreign tyrant. But if, indeed, interest, or coercion should tempt them into so horrible and unnatural a position, pity, a thousand times pity, for those brave officers who vaunt themselves on their honour. Pity for that brave soldiery whose Irish valour has made England illustrious, that they must stain honour, and fame, and profession, and their brave swords, by lending them to so infamous a cause. Ah! we need not tremble for a nation filled with a pure and holy enthusiasm, and fighting for all that human nature holds dear; but the masters of those hired mercenaries may well tremble for their cause, for the consciousness of eternal infamy will unnerve every man that is raised to uphold it.

If the government, then, do not come forward with honests honourable, and liberal concession, let the war, active and passive, commence. *They* confide in the discipline of their troops – *we* in the righteousness of our cause. But not even a burning enthusiasm –

which they have not – added to their discipline, could make a garrison of 30,000 men hold their ground against 6,000,000. And one thing is certain – that if the people do not choose to fight the garrison, they may *starve* them. Adopt the Milan method – let no man sell to them. This passive warfare may be carried on in every village in Ireland, while more active hostilities are proceeding through all the large towns and cities. But to gain possession of the capital should be the grand object of all efforts. Let every line converge to this point. The Castle is the keystone of English power. Take it, destroy it, burn it – at any hazard become masters of it; and, on the same ground from whence proceeded all those acts of insult and infamy which aroused the just retribution of a people's vengeance, establish a government in whom the people of all classes can place confidence.

On this pedestal of fallen tyranny and corruption raise a structure of nobleness that will at once give security and the prestige of time-honoured and trusted names to our revolution. For a people who rise to overthrow a despotism will establish no modification of it in its place. If they fight it is for absolute independence; and as the first step in a revolution should be to prevent the possibility of anarchy, the men elected to form this government ought at once to take the entire progress and organisation of the revolution under their protection and authority. It will be their duty to watch that no crime be suffered to stain the pure flag of Irish liberty. We must show to the world that we are fitted to govern ourselves; that we are, indeed, worthy to be a free nation; that the words union, liberty, country, have as sacred a meaning in our hearts and actions as they are holy on our lips; that patriotism means not merely the wild irresistible force that crushes tyranny, but reconstruction, regeneration, heroism, sacrifice, sublimity; that we have not alone to break the fetters of Ireland, but to raise her to a glorious elevation – defend her, liberate her, ennoble her, sanctify her.

Nothing is wanting now to complete our regeneration, to ensure our success, but to cast out those vices which have disgraced our name among the nations. There are terrible traditions shadowing the word liberty in Ireland. Let it be our task, men of this generation, descendants of martyrs, and sufferers and heroes, to make it a glad

evangel of happiness – a reign of truth over fictions and symbols – of intellect over prejudice and conventionalism – of humanity over tyranny and oppression. Irishmen! this resurrection into a new life depends on you; for we have all lain dead. Hate, distrust, oppression, disunion, selfishness, bigotry – these things are death. We must crush all vices – annihilate all evil passions – trample on them as a triumphant Christ with his foot upon the serpent, and then the proud hallelujah of freedom will rise to Heaven from the lips of a pure, a virtuous, a regenerated, a God blessed people; and this fair land of ours, which now affrights the world with its misery, will be one grand temple, in which we shall all kneel as brothers – one holy, peaceful, loving fraternity – sons of one common country – children of one God – heirs together of those blessings purchased by our blood – a heritage of freedom, justice, independence, prosperity, and glory.