

LETTER TO CECIL RHODES.

By Charles Stewart Parnell.

From *The Life of Charles Stewart Parnell*, 1910, Richard Barry O'Brien.

June 23, 1888.

DEAR SIR,—I am much obliged to you for your letter of the 19th inst., which confirms the very interesting account given me at Avondale last January by Mr. McNeill as to his interviews and conversations with you on the subject of Home Rule for Ireland. I may say at once, and frankly, that you have correctly judged the exclusion of the Irish members from Westminster to have been a defect in the Home Rule measure of 1886, and, further, that this proposed exclusion may have given some colour to the accusation so freely made against the Bill that it had a separatist tendency. I say this while strongly asserting and believing that the measure itself was accepted by the Irish people without any afterthought of the kind, and with as earnest desire to work it out with the same spirit with which it was offered—a spirit of cordial goodwill and trust, a desire to let bygones be bygones, and a determination to accept it as a final and satisfactory settlement of the long-standing dispute between Great Britain and Ireland.

I am very glad that you consider the measure of Home Rule to be granted to Ireland should be thoroughgoing, and should give her complete control over her own affairs without reservation, and I cordially agree with your opinion that there should be effective safeguards for the maintenance of Imperial unity. Your conclusion as to the only alternative for Home Rule is also entirely my own, for I have long felt that the continuance of the present semi-constitutional system is quite impracticable. But to return to the question of the retention of the Irish members at Westminster. My own views upon the points and probabilities of the future, and the bearing of this subject upon the question of Imperial federation—my own feeling upon the measure is that if Mr. Gladstone includes in his next Home Rule measure the provisions of such retention we should cheerfully

concur with him, and accept them with goodwill and good faith, with the intention of taking our share in the Imperial partnership. I believe also that in the event I state this will be the case, and that the Irish people will cheerfully accept the duties and responsibilities assigned to them, and will justly value the position given to them in the Imperial system. I am convinced that it would be the highest statesmanship on Mr. Gladstone's part to devise a feasible plan for the continued presence of the Irish members here, and from my observation of public events and opinions since 1885 I am sure that Mr. Gladstone is fully alive to the importance of the matter, and that there can be no doubt that the next measure of autonomy for Ireland will contain the provisions which you rightly deem of such moment.

It does not come so much within my province to express a full opinion upon the larger question of Imperial federation, but I agree with you that the continued Irish representation at Westminster immensely facilitates such a step, while the contrary provision in the Bill of 1886 would have been a bar. Undoubtedly this is a matter which should be dealt with in accordance largely with the opinion of the colonies themselves, and if they should desire to share in the cost of Imperial matters, as undoubtedly they now do in the responsibility, and should express a wish for representation at Westminster, I certainly think it should be accorded to them, and that public opinion in these islands would unanimously concur in the necessary constitutional modifications.

I am, dear sir, yours truly,
CHAS. STEWART PARNELL.