

ALL-FOR-IRELAND LEAGUE MANIFESTO.

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We stand very much in like, but somewhat worse, position to-day. Thirty years is a long term in the history of mankind. During these thirty years, other nations have sprung, by leaps and bounds, along the path of progress. In America the population has doubled itself; and all along the prairies to the farthest verge of the Pacific new cities have been founded, new States erected, until the limits of the mighty Republic have become conterminous with Nature's boundaries. England has grown in wealth and population and Imperial power. Her colonies have expanded into Republics, utilizing their own resources and finances for ever-new measures of public utility. Germany has grown into a Colossus; and a semi-barbarous nation has leaped to the front, not only as a military power, but even as a civilizing influence over half the East. We are comparing small things with great a little island in the North Atlantic with mighty empires. But is it so small? Is not that little island the cradle of the world-wide race? But alas! Whilst her children are building up the fabrics of kingdoms and republics over half the world, she remains in a condition of torpor and stagnation, her life-blood welling out in the open sore of emigration, her towns decaying, her population diminishing at the rate of a million a decade, her vast resources undeveloped, her faculties paralyzed, and her outlook as gloomy and melancholy as at any most disastrous period in her chequered history. We are such mendicants and paupers that we are effusively grateful for small mercies; but whatever we have gained during those thirty years would now seem about to be filched from us in the shape of extra taxation imposed on us by the votes of Irish representatives. There have been energy and suffering enough wasted in Ireland during the last quarter of a century to have built up

the Roman Empire; and the question now is whether, after all this, we are to be content with finding nothing but a heap of Dead Sea Ashes in our hands. Let us consider a little.

The sum total of our political profits in thirty years is—if we except the few crumbs of Land Bills that were flung by Dives to the Lazarus at his gates, and one abortive Home Rule Bill—a Labourers Act, paid mostly from Irish rates, a National University, which appears to be hectic from its birth, and one solid Act, which has turned 200,000 tenant-farmers of Ireland into peasant proprietors. What have these cost; and where have they been fought for? They have cost thirty years of tumult and agitation; an expenditure of probably a million of money in subsidies from Ireland and America, untold suffering by eviction, imprisonment, exile, and death. But, where and by whom have even these measures been fought for, and wrested from an unwilling and hostile government? On the Irish hill side, in the prison, in the workhouse; but not by any means by the torrential eloquence that poured in a flood across the floor of the House of Commons; nor in the tournaments of painted laths, which we know were so amusing to the English House of Commons as to afford materials for cartoons for the English comic journals to this day. Parnell foresaw all this, and declared more than once that Irish liberties and Irish rights were to be fought for and won, not in Westminster, but in Ireland. Even the mighty engine he commanded—the solid phalanx of 80 Irish votes, that were to be flung into the scales when the two English parties equalised, with a *Vae Victis* to the party that would not concede the last fraction of Irish claims—has been a melancholy failure. Only once was that omnipotent weapon put into requisition. Whatever has been won, has been won by the sacrifice of the Irish people at home; by their terrible and stern determination to end, once and for all, the appalling condition of things that obtained; and the largest and most bountiful measure of all was won by the exchange of a few words over a green baize table in Dublin between Irishmen who had at last begun to perceive that Ireland's problems could only be solved by herself, and that Ireland's salvation could only be worked out by Irish hands.

From a purely utilitarian standpoint, therefore, it is clear that our work is only commencing; that much remains to be done that has not been done; that a great deal that has been ill done remains to be well done; and that, above all, the grand objective of Irish National aspirations, Home Rule, which, under the stress of Parliamentary eloquence, has become a mere phantom, dragging the Irish race through quagmire after quagmire of political trouble, and which now has almost thinned away to vanishing point, must be brought back and reduced, under the concentrated action of the people, to a concrete and tangible reality. A heavy task for the generation that is just now passing through.

But this is not all. The rising generation of Irishmen has only been saved from the dreary fate of absolute scepticism by that marvellous instinct of emotional patriotism that has protected our race for 600 years. Everything they see around them when they emerge from the schools, which, under our unhappy systems of education, tend to stifle and destroy every germ of patriotism in the youthful mind, would seem to teach that patriotism is now reduced to a practical system, in which self-interest has displaced that higher ideal of sacrificing everything for the common weal; and the still higher ideal of labouring and suffering for the motherland. The great Irishmen of the past, in whom, as they stood in the dock, Isaac Butt, a Protestant, and in one sense an alien, discerned the most perfect disinterestedness, the keenest sense of honour, the spirit of self-immolation, and the most absolute love of truth; those patriots of the past, whose motives were sublime, even if their methods were impracticable, are now scorned as 'hill-siders' and 'tinpikers'; and that generous policy that haunted the imagination of Wolfe Tone a hundred years ago; that was accepted 80 years ago by O'Connell as an indispensable factor in his efforts to repeal the Union; which, sixty years ago, Thomas Davis preached with his own marvellous eloquence and sincerity; and which, thirty years ago, Parnell accepted in his famous truism, 'Ireland needs the services of every one of her children,' is now derided as a fancy only fit for the distorted imaginations of Bedlamites. Every principle of Nationality is now subverted; all the teachings of the nineteenth century, and of its golden periods—'98,

'48, and '67—are voluntarily discarded; political expediency has taken the place of political morality; and men shrug their shoulders to-day at events and words and works and toils, that at one time evoked the enthusiasm of the entire nation. No wonder that the young men of our generation look on in blank amazement; no wonder they ask for some guidance some voice that will tell them whither we are tending; some new and powerful influence that will keep the flame of patriotism from dying down into dead ashes in their hearts. It is well known to the writer of these lines that such is the case. Dazed and bewildered in the tempestuous politics of to-day, looking in vain to blind leaders of the blind, they have to turn away in a kind of despair, and ask themselves, 'Where is the truth, if truth exists at all?' And who is going to sift the true from the evident falsehoods that are current everywhere? The echoes of great words and greater deeds are in their ears; the vision of triumphant Nationality is before their eyes. But din and confusion of contemporary politics dull the one and blind the other, and leave them helpless and bewildered and sceptical. There never was a generation of Irishmen so sorely tried. It is the worst and darkest period of the nation's occultation.

Clearly then we must hark backward, and learn once more again the principles of a Free Nationality—the first axioms and original data on which the politics of a nation should be built. We have to get rid of that stupendous frivolity that leaves a people without faith and without aims; and that scepticism that impoverishes the soul and makes it barren; and that superficiality that has filled the land with critics instead of thinkers; punsters instead of poets; scoffers instead of strong, serious, and determined seekers after what is best for individual growth and national progress. And this can now be done only through the Press. The world is growing tired of oratory. Speech falls to-day like the seed upon the stony ground. It is the sheet, the feuilleton, that flutters above the toast and eggs of the aristocrat or the mechanic, or that penetrates the mountain cabin or the village forge, and is read on Sunday by the light of the peat fire, that sways the hearts and moves the convictions of the people. But, if the power of the Press is great, so, too, is its responsibility; and it is nothing short of a crime against the nation and humanity for any great writer to lead

the people astray, or seek to debauch their minds and obstruct their advancement by misdirection under the baleful influence of party spirit. And, unfortunately for us Irishmen, there is a traditional difficulty in viewing great political issues dispassionately; and in acknowledging that there is hardly a greater vice than consistency, when it means fidelity to the interests of a party, whilst flouting the dictates of conscience, and the principles of political morality. For it should ever be remembered that morality cannot be separated from politics, nor from anything else; and the man who believes that everything may be sacrificed to political expediency is as immoral as the man who cheats the public on the grounds of commercial necessity.

One naturally seeks a motto, or rather a guide word, marking the aims and methods of a new journal like this. It is not far to seek. There are not many incidents in our history so dramatic as that which took place in Green Street Courthouse on that day when the Crown Prosecutor arraigned the proprietors of the *Nation* on a charge of treason-felony and seditious publication, and read out an article and a poem as treasonable, adding, The writer of these lines was afraid to give his name. At that moment, a lady, dressed and veiled in black, stood up in the gallery overhead, and, lifting her veil, said simply, 'It was I who wrote the lines over the name of 'Speranza'! That lady was the wife of Sir William Wilde, leading oculist in Dublin, and chief of Irish antiquarians; the poem was 'The Year of Revolutions'; the lines in that poem which we suggest for selection are:—

'God, Liberty, Truth! How they burn heart and brain!
Those words, shall they burn, shall they waken in vain?'

These words may be taken to symbolize and even limit the aspirations of a new Irish journal. Religion—to be protected and defended within these four seas of Ireland from all outer contamination; and especially from that Socialistic wave that just now is sweeping over Europe, and threatening to submerge England; Liberty—of speech and thought and action, subject to the laws of the Church and State; Truth—to be upheld at any cost, in its integrity; to be spread abroad, at any cost, in all its naked majesty! That is a fair programme. Let us dwell on one or two points.

If there be one thing more than another which has escaped the solvent and destructive influences of this cynical age, it is the principle that individual liberty is the highest natural prerogative that God has given to man—a privilege that ought to be defended even at the cost of life. It was for this that martyrs shed their blood; it was for this that confessors went to prison, chanting the eternal theme, that liberty is indestructible so long as the spirit survives. Stone walls cannot stifle it, nor chains control it, nor iron bars limit its greatness, even if they obstruct its operations. Now, it is not too much to say that our fellow-countrymen have voluntarily abdicated and dethroned that individual freedom for thirty years or more. Under a subtle plea they have been induced to place their social and political freedom in pledge to an individual, a clique, or a party. In the beginning in order to cement the forces that were fighting behind Mr. Parnell, such abandonment of human liberty might have been defensible, although even then many minds revolted at the idea of an autocracy, irresponsible and more or less despotic. In many hearts the old Roman spirit survived; and many brave men growled between their teeth even then:

‘O, you and I have heard our fathers say,
There was a Brutus once that would have brooked
The eternal devil to keep state in Rome,
As easily as a King.’

But the multitude shouted, unconscious of their self-degradation, and laid down their liberties, never caring to think when that priceless privilege could be picked up again. Since that time, under one pretext or another, this whole nation of ours has been compelled to pass under the Caudine Forks. It has disfranchised itself, with the inevitable consequence that from the very lack of exercise of its political rights, it has sunk into a condition of mental atrophy, where it is unable not only to discriminate between the claims of individuals and parties to its confidence, but even to detect what subtle and dangerous consequences may lie hidden under fair-seeming words. We are told that discipline is necessary to advance the cause of the nation towards finality. So it is. But not the discipline of absolute disfranchisement; not the discipline of the muzzled mouth and the chained hand.

There is much talk about unity. Unity by all means. But not the unity of the chained gangs of galley slaves, clubbed or whipped to their bunks at night, but the unity that springs from spontaneous action of a free people, recognizing their own sovereignty, and demanding cohesion under principle, but not under coercion. And this is now the question of the hour. All other questions—Budgets, Land Purchase, Education, even Home Rule—sink into insignificance before this. Are we free men, or are we slaves in our own land? Has every Irishman who has come to mature age the right of forming his opinion about political questions, or has he not? We are told in the plainest language by the new masters, ‘That faction (that is, Liberty) must be crushed out with a strong and merciless hand; that it must be trampled until not an iota of freedom is left us.’ What is the tyranny of England compared with this? Are we Irishmen no better than the negroes of South Carolina, or the umbrella-bearers of King Bomba? There was a time, and not so long ago, in Ireland, when this would not be brooked an instant. What would the men of ‘67 have said to such insolence? They would have met the challenge with a clap of thunder that would have echoed from end to end of the land. For they knew well that a nation that would tolerate such an insult is past redemption. It would be madness to entrust it with self-government, for it is only races of the lowest mentality that engender slaves or tolerate tyrants. The people of Ireland, and the democracy of Ireland, are not so tame as to sit dumb under such a taunt as this. They know that when the hound crouches the whip descends.

But who are the people, and who are embraced under that word that now bears such momentous significance—the democracy of Ireland? Certainly, it does not mean a section of the people. The very word excludes such a meaning. Certainly it does not mean the predominance of any one class or form of religious belief. No section of population has a right to say any more than the French King, ‘The State? It is I!’ For, whilst it is morally impossible that there should not be political parties and divided interests in every commonwealth, there should be no barriers against such a combination of forces for the common welfare as our wisest and greatest thinkers have hoped for, and which has been too long deferred. Patriotism is not the

maintenance of the pride and privileges of one class; it is the desire for the common weal, and the readiness to sacrifice personal comforts or prerogatives where the welfare of the community is concerned. And if, as Mr. Parnell so frequently reminded the Irish people, the battles for Irish freedom must be fought on Irish soil, and the outposts at Westminster are practically powerless unless they are sustained from the centre, it is clear there must be a combination of all classes and creeds, first to agree upon, then to formulate, claims that no English statesman would dare to flout when they come from a united people. 'I am not one of those,' said Mr. Parnell, in a certain remarkable utterance, 'who believe in the permanence of an Irish party in the English Parliament. I feel convinced that, sooner or later, the influence which every English Government has at its command—the powerful and demoralizing influence—sooner or later will sap the best party you can return to the House of Commons. I don't think we ought to rely too much on the permanent independence of an Irish party sitting at a distance from their constituencies of Ireland, while we are making a short, sharp, and, I trust, decisive struggle for the restoration of our legislative independence.'

We have moved forward a pace since then, so far as power is concerned, but not, alas! in prudence and in the supreme talent of seizing opportunities. We are wastrels and spendthrifts; and like all wastrels and spendthrifts, we take infinite pains to secure what we then fling away as worthless. We were offered the Gladstone University Act, and we rejected it. We obtained the Ashbourne Act, and just as it was about to emancipate the Irish peasant forever, we flung it aside for the phantom of land nationalisation. We took the Wyndham Act, tried it, and just as we found it a measure of supreme utility to our people, we killed it. We were offered Lord MacDonnell's Act—Home Rule, without the gilt letters, and we contumeliously rejected it; or rather, it was rejected for us by our Directorate. And to cap the climax, Mr. Wyndham, Chief Secretary, seeing the phenomenal issue of the Land Conferences of 1902, made the generous offer, with just a spice of irony, which made the offer more sincere, 'We don't understand you, Irishmen. You are the Green Sphinx. Your riddle is unsolvable by us, or by the Universe. But perhaps you can

solve it yourselves. Sit ye down, you, Nationalists, and you, Unionists. And whatever measure you can agree upon between yourselves—be it Land Measures, Local Government Measures, Education, or even Home Rule, I, George Wyndham, promise, with the aid of my Conservative Government, and with the House of Lords at my back, to pass it into an Act of Parliament.’ Was the offer accepted? Of course not. We wanted a little more fighting, a little more speech-making, a little more hunting after will-o-the-wisps, a little more blind trusting in the promise, To-morrow, and to-morrow, and to-morrow! A little more blundering and plundering. ‘Short, sharp, and decisive!’ said Mr. Parnell twenty-five years ago. Alas! And we are further than ever from national independence to-day. Verily, there is much truth in the old Roman saying:

‘Non answer vult velli;
Sed populus vult decipi;
Et—decipiatur!

A goose does not like to be plucked.
But the people like to be deceived.
And let them be deceived!’

Lastly, we have said that truth may be, must be, incorporated in that guide-word that shall determine the working of this paper. Let us commence at once, here on the first page, no matter how unpalatable the truth may be. This Irish nature of ours is a constant subject for amazement. It is the Sphinx-riddle of the world. It is a puzzle even to ourselves. We are a high-spirited people; and yet we have placed our necks under the yoke of a dictator, or a secret camarilla in Dublin for over twenty years. We are an honourable people, who can brook dishonour. We are a clever people; but we have given to the world at large and to empire-building elsewhere, the genius that should be utilized at home. We are a generous people; and yet we are told we must keep up sectarian bitterness to the end; and that Protestant ascendancy has been broken down, only to build Catholic ascendancy on its ruins. Are we in earnest about our country at all or are we seeking to perpetuate our wretchedness and backwardness by refusing the honest aid of Irishmen? Why should we throw into the arms of

England those children of Ireland who would be our most faithful allies, if we did not seek to disinherit them? A weaker brother disinherited by a stronger will naturally be his enemy, not his ally. Do we suppose for a moment that any English electorate, Whig or Tory, Radical, Socialist, or Conservative, will grant autonomy to Ireland, until it is assured that the rights of the minority shall be safeguarded and respected? Do we think that protestations of toleration on our part will be accepted, if the minority keep aloof, and maintain a suspicious silence? Do we hope that that minority will ever again speak, until it is generously invited into the nation's councils? And see what we are losing. It is from the Protestant minority that every great Irish leader for 150 years, except O'Connell, has sprung. It is that minority which has given us our greatest orators, our greatest statesmen, our leading merchants, our greatest archaeologists, our first linguists, many of our greatest poets. It is the same minority that has given the Empire its greatest statesmen, its most illustrious warriors, its leading colonists.

Think what Ireland would be to-day, if all that intellectual energy had been confined and exercised within the limits of Ireland. Think what Ireland would be to-day, if that stream of genius that has come forth from her schools and universities for the last hundred years had been diverted towards the needs and wants of Ireland, instead of being utilised by other and even hostile nations. But is the stream dried up, and the fountain sealed? No. Not by any means. There never was such intellectual power in Ireland as there is at this moment. It is everywhere. For Ireland's sake let us give it a fair chance! It is not true that our Protestant brethren are hopelessly alienated from Ireland. It is not true that they are any longer an English garrison. No power on earth can persuade us that a class which has given us such prodigies of genius as the first half of the nineteenth century did—genius, too, always devoted to the cause of Ireland, has been smitten with sudden barrenness. There must be in Ireland to-day many silent, yet worthy, successors of the Lord Plunket, who declared in the peroration of his great speech against the passing of the Act of Union, 'I shall resist it to the last gasp of my breath, and the shedding of the last drop of my blood; and when the hour of my dissolution is at hand, I shall take my

son, as Hannibal of old, and make him swear on the altar of God, that he too, to the last drop of his life-blood, shall resist the invaders of his country's liberties.'

For our country's sake let us not despise or alienate such generous help as is now offered. It is absurd to suppose that a nation which excludes from all political fellowship one-third of its population, representing half its wealth and intelligence, can make any progress towards independence or prosperity. Thirty years failure of such policy ought to have convinced the nation by this time that Home Rule is absolutely unattainable without the consent of our Protestant fellow-countrymen; and it needs no great forethought to understand how unworkable a Parliament would be without their cooperation. We have already advanced a decade into the twentieth century; and whilst all the young nations of the earth are singing their songs of hope and victory, here we are wailing out our desolation in the ears of a tortured world, rattling our alms-box, and exhibiting our Lazarus sores to the nations. Once, and for all, let us stand on our feet like men. Let us call in and embody all the forces at our disposal. Let us no longer alienate the sympathies of our fellow-countrymen, and fling them into the arms of England. Let us no longer expatriate many brave young hearts that would gladly give their lives for Ireland. Ireland needs the services of all her children; and it will be a crime against the motherland and humanity if just at this auspicious moment we decide to prolong the bitterness and disunion of centuries, rather than accept with fraternal cordiality the generous offer of wealth, and talent and power, moral and intellectual, such as probably no other race can produce, and entrain into the service of Ireland energies hitherto dissipated in fratricidal strife or lent to other nations who would gladly make Ireland the footstool of their feet forever.

England owes her world-wide power, her Imperial supremacy, to her supreme talent of attracting and assimilating even the most hostile elements in her subject races. Hindu and Malay, Canadian and Australian, Celt and Saxon, Norman and Dane, all are harnessed to her triumphal car. Ireland, alas! has had the talent of estranging and expelling her own children, and turning them, like disinherited and dishonoured heirs, into her deadliest enemies. It is time that all this

should cease, if we still retain the ambition of creating a nation; and if we prefer our national independence to the rancour and bitterness of sectarian strife, and the material advancement of our country to the dismal futility of nursing those passions and prejudices that have hitherto thrown back one generation after another of Irishmen into political methods that were reactionary; and social schisms and cleavages that make life one long sorrow to every patriotic and disinterested man.