

# THE PIGOTT FORGERIES.

By Richard Pigott.

In March and April 1887, *The Times* published a series of articles entitled 'Parnellism and Crime' which accused the leader of the Irish Parliamentary Party, Charles Stewart Parnell and his movement of being complicit in murders and outrages that took place during the Land War. In one infamous article, published on April 18<sup>th</sup>, 1887, a letter purported to be from Charles Stewart Parnell was presented in which he appeared to not only privately praise but to have a hand in the Phoenix Park Murders of 1882, the killings of Chief Secretary for Ireland Lord Frederick Cavendish and the Permanent Under-Secretary for Ireland T. H. Burke by a radical offshoot of the Irish Republican Brotherhood known as the Irish National Invincibles.

On the very day the letter was published, Parnell described the letter as a 'villainous and barefaced forgery' in the House of Commons. Initially believing William O'Shea, the estranged husband of his lover Katherine O'Shea to be the culprit, Parnell later began to suspect the involvement of Richard Pigott, once editor of the *Irishman*, a nationalist newspaper strongly sympathetic to Fenianism.

Following a special commission being established to determine the author of the forged letters, Richard Pigott admitted under cross-examination to having forged the letters and *The Times* was forced to pay a considerable sum in compensation for libel (equivalent to £810,000 in today's money). Pigott would flee to Madrid where he would commit suicide by shooting himself in his hotel room.

15/5/82

Dear Sir,

I am not surprised at your friend's anger but he and you should know that to denounce the murders was the only course open to us. To do that promptly was plainly ~~the only~~ our best policy.

But you can tell him and all others concerned that though I regret the accident of Lord J Cavendish's death I cannot refuse to admit that Burke got no more than his deserts

You are at liberty to show <sup>this</sup> him, and others whom you can trust also, but let not my address be known. He can write to House of Commons

Unknown Date (written in Kilmainham Jail).

DEAR SIR,

Tell B. to write me direct. Have not received the papers.

Yours very truly,  
CHAS. S. PARNELL.

DEAR SIR,

Send full particulars. What amount does he want? Other letter to hand.

Yours very truly,  
CHAS. S. PARNELL.

DEAR SIR,

I see no objection to your giving the amount asked for. There is not the least likelihood of what you are apprehensive of happening.

Yours truly,  
CHAS. S. PARNELL.

Unknown Date (addressed to Pigott)

Dear Sir,

I am leaving for Cork to-morrow morning, but should be glad to see you some time to-day if you will fix an hour convenient to yourself to call. Just at this moment and for an hour or two I shall be engaged on matters of pressing importance.

Yours truly,  
CHAS. S. PARNELL.

Unknown Date.

Dear Friend,

I need hardly say I am with you in all you wrote, but your fears are groundless. The 'Blackthorn argument' of the 'ould times' is played out. Allowance must be made for Irishmen in Parliament who are obliged to pose as loyal subjects when we know them to be honest. I yield to no man in my *Nationalist Faith*, but I never hesitate to lay it aside when I consider it prudent. When your friends have time for reflection they will admit that what was done could not have been left undone.

I am yours,  
M. DAVITT.

Unknown Date.

Dear Egan,

I have no patience with these fellows. Do they want us to bolt into the lion's mouth? I maintain that we have been right in what we have done, and it is but poor requital for the sacrifices I have made and the years I have freely and ungrudgingly given to have my motives misrepresented.

However, whatever feeling of bitterness is in my mind is against men, not against ideas, for these are immutable so far as I am concerned, though I maintain my right to fit them, according to my judgment, to the circumstances of the times. I am not alone in thinking a new policy requisite at home, because all the conditions under which we spoke and thought two years ago have changed. This is a fact which it would be folly to ignore. It is humiliating but it is true, still the end is the same, and take my word for it it will soon come in sight.

Very truly yours,  
JAMES O'KELLY.

8<sup>th</sup> October, 1880.

Dear Sir,

I hereby undertake on the conditions stated in your note of this date, to pay F. the sum of Two Hundred Pounds sterling on his undertaking henceforward to withdraw opposition to the Land League and the Land agitation.

I remain, Dear Sir,  
Yours very faithfully,  
PATRICK EGAN.

24<sup>th</sup> February, 1881.

My dear friend,

Write under cover to Madame J. Rayner 99, Avenue de Villiers. Mr. Parnell is here, and will remain for about a week. I have spoken to him about further advance for the A fund. He has no objection, and you may count upon it, all goes well. We have met Mr. O'L— and other

friends who are here, and all are agreed that prompt and decisive action is called for.

Yours very faithfully,  
P. EGAN.

10<sup>th</sup> June, 1881 (from Paris).

Dear Sir,

I am in receipt of your note of the 8<sup>th</sup> instant, and am writing Mr. Pfulby on the matter. He will doubtless communicate with you himself.

Yours very truly,  
P. EGAN.

18<sup>th</sup> June, 1881.

Dear Sir,

Your two letters of 12<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> inst. are duly to hand, and I am also in receipt of communications from Mr. Parnell, informing me that he has acted on my suggestion, and accepted the offer made by B. You had better at once proceed to Dundalk, so that there may be no time lost.

Yours very faithfully,  
P. EGAN.

25<sup>th</sup> October, 1881 (addressed to James Carey).

Dear Sir,

I have by this post sent 'M' two hundred pounds. He will give you what you want. When will you undertake to get to work and give us value for our money.

I am, Dear Sir,  
Faithfully yours,  
PATRICK EGAN.

9<sup>th</sup> January, 1882.

Dear E,—

What are these fellows waiting for This inaction is inexcusable. Our best men are in prison and nothing is being done. Let there be an end of this hesitancy. Prompt action is called for. You undertook to make it hot for old Forster and Co. Let us have some evidence of your power to do so. My health is good—thanks.

Yours very truly,  
CHAS. S. PARNELL.

8<sup>th</sup> March, 1882.

Dear Sir,

Your presence in the West is urgently asked for. The thing must be done promptly. Send reply to address already given you.

Yours truly,  
PATRICK EGAN.

11<sup>th</sup> March, 1882.

Dear Sir,

As I understand by your letter which reached me to-day you cannot act as directed, unless I forward you money by Monday next. Well, here is 50*l.*; more if required. Under existing circumstances what you suggest would not be entertained.

I remain, Dear Sir,  
Yours truly,  
PATRICK EGAN.

15<sup>th</sup> April, 1882.

Dear Sir,

I am not surprised at your friend's anger, but he and you should know that to denounce the murders was the only course open to us. To do that promptly was plainly our best policy.

But you can tell him and all others concerned, that, though I regret the accident of Lord F. Cavendish's death, I cannot refuse to admit that Burke got no more than his deserts.

You are at liberty to show him this, and others whom you can trust also, but let not my address be known. He can write to House of Commons.

Yours very truly,  
CHAS. S. PARNELL.

16<sup>th</sup> June, 1882.

DEAR SIR,

I am sure you will feel that I could not appear in Parliament in the face of this thing unless I condemned it. Our position there is always difficult to maintain; it would be untenable but for the course we took. That is the truth. I can say no more.

Yours very truly,  
CHAS. S. PARNELL.

DEAR SIR,

I shall always be anxious to have the good will of your friends, but why do they impugn my motives, I could not consent to the conditions they would impose, but I accept the entire responsibility for what we have done.

Yours very truly,  
CHAS. S. PARNELL.