

to hands, so that the main issues may be obscured, and the *Times* punished for libel on this point." To those who have read the history of the case, and the debates on the subject in the Imperial Parliament, the biased nature of such a version is at once evident, and smacks of rank Toryism. It is untrue in so far as Mr. Parnell and his fellow-members did not persistently refuse in the face of friends and foes to take steps to clear their "tarnished honours." Instead of that, they took immediate steps. But somehow they omitted to make known to the *Times*, to the Tory Government, or to London correspondents the steps they were quietly but determinedly taking to demonstrate to the world the absolute truth of these letters being forgeries of a terribly vindictive and unscrupulous nature. At the time they, as prudent men knowing the nature of their task, contented themselves with a plain and emphatic denial from their places in Parliament. They knew well the money power that was behind the *Times* to buy for the witness-box any amount of false swearers. They knew well that it would take longer than a day or a week to get to the bottom of this vast conspiracy, aimed at a nation through its representatives, in order to alienate the sympathy which a great English democracy was giving to Ireland in its struggle for constitutional rights. When we consider the power of their opponents—the *Times* and Tory Government—fifteen months were not ill spent in laying the train which was to burst up the conspiracy and bring the gloating "Thunderer" to his knees.

Your correspondent says:—"Mr. Parnell and his friends did not bring their action till an enquiry became inevitable before the Parnell Commission." This opinion may satisfy the prejudice of your correspondent, but it does not satisfy truth and justice. Let us hear what Mr. Parnell says in the debate on the Commission Bill in the House of Commons on July 23:—"It is well I should direct the attention of the House to the history of this question. I originally asked for a select committee to enquire into the statements affecting Members of this House, and into the genuineness and authenticity of the letters in which those statements were made." Let us remember that it was these letters which gave rise to the charges, that it was on their genuineness the *Times*' case depended. The substance of these letters, therefore, became the main charge. But the Government, in this Commission Bill, wishing to shirk raising definite issues, Mr. Parnell goes on to say: "Now I will show you that this Bill proposes to enquire not into my conduct, and not into the conduct of any of my Parliamentary friends, but into the whole agitation of the Land League in America, Ireland, and Great Britain. If you want an enquiry into the Land League, say so. Bring in a Bill for the purpose; we shall know what to say to it. It is very odd that although the Land League came into existence close on ten years ago, it never occurred to the right hon. gentleman to move for a commission of enquiry into its proceedings until these forgeries, these infamous forgeries came to light." Mr. Parnell then goes on to tell the House that this Commission Bill was not introduced for the purpose of allowing him to clear his character, so much as for the purpose of casting discredit on a great Irish movement, and of allowing the *Times* to escape from the break down of the charges, which he says the Government and the Attorney-General know full well will break down. Hence Parnell, not to be balked by such tactics, brings his action for libel before the High Court of Scotland. Your correspondent most ludicrously complains that Mr. Parnell limits his action to the forged letters which are the main charges. He wants it, like the Commission Bill, to suit the *Times*. Of this Commission Bill, the Irish leader says:—"The inquiry is to be into every conceivable thing, an inquiry which I say we cannot see the limits of within less than two years. I am to be put to the expense of finding counsel to attend the proceedings of this inquiry in this country, in Ireland, in America, in France, wherever the judges think it necessary to send commissioners, for the purpose of clearing myself from forgeries which, if the enquiry went to the point, I know I could demonstrate to conviction within a week; and this is the fairness of the right hon. gentleman" (the leader of the Government in the House).

Sir Charles Russell, one of the foremost English lawyers, says on the same subject: "For his own part, he would infinitely prefer an action for libel before the most bigoted and partisan jury in London to a tribunal constituted upon the unfair and disadvantageous terms proposed by the Government. There was no precedent for what was proposed, and he wanted to know whether the enquiry was to be conducted according to the rules of legal evidence or whether the charges which the *Times* made against the Member for Cork were to be supported by mere gossip."

Sir William Harcourt is rather more emphatic on the point. He says: "This Bill seems to be framed in the same spirit, to endeavour to confuse the issues—to endeavour, as counsel for the *Times* had done, to bring before the Court matters which were not the matters to be tried—to endeavour, by a sideward, to damage the character of men in a matter in which they have no defence. What we have asked is that the charges should be defined. They may be defined by the Member for Cork. He stating the charges which he considered to be brought against him and which he desired to refute, or they may be stated by the *Times* as being the charges they are prepared to allege and to prove." "What we protest against is that any man, even an Irish Member, should be called upon to plead to a sort of a hotch-potch of miscellaneous slander. As I say the very essence of justice is to make it clear to the accused, and to everybody, what the accused is to be charged with. What is the use of saying you are unprecedently generous when you offer men who have been personally libelled a form of enquiry which gives them no personal redress. It is quite plain that now the main charges are put in the background. The Commission is not instituted for the purpose of inquiring into what is understood as 'Parnellism and Crime,' but its main and primary object is to wage war upon the National League. It is conceived in the spirit of a general political prosecution."

Now, sir, this is by high authorities a description of this Commission of three judges—some of them known to be men of strong anti Irish views—which Mr. Parnell has been dissatisfied with, from which he has turned in seeming despair to the High Court of Justice in Scotland, hoping that on neutral ground he will meet an impartial

judge and jury. So you see by a closer knowledge of the affair we can learn that instead of Parnell and his "lieutenants" wishing to obscure the issues, that it is the *Times* and the Government that want to fight shy of the main issues. Knowing so much, sir, we cannot but look upon the remaining portion of your correspondent's letter as being unworthy of respectable journalism. His reference to Captain O'Shea and his wife are contemptible, in the absence of clear proof to bear out such gossip. His allusion to the Galway election presents that affair in a distorted shape. If Mr. Parnell had shown a preference for Captain O'Shea at that time, it was because the latter was largely instrumental in arranging what is called the "Kilmainham Treaty," by which the Irish leader was released from prison. But admitting, for the sake of argument, that the *Times* proves all in respect to Parnell's gallantry to which your correspondent hints, that will not save the *Times* from the consequence of its libel nor take from the merit of Mr. Parnell as a great political leader; for allow me, an Irishman, to tell your correspondent that, though much we prize Charles Stewart Parnell as a politician and an Irish patriot, yet the Irish people are sufficiently discriminating, and not so childish, that they need make a microscopic examination of any public man's inner life for the purpose of discovering a model by which to mould their private virtues. If we will not take our politics from Rome, neither will we take our religion from our politicians. They may be of any religion, or of none. One would imagine, by the way your correspondent has written, that every great English statesman's private character was spotless and immaculate. His reference to the Irish priesthood and peasantry are worthy of the worst days of Exeter Hall.—I am, etc., JUSTICE.

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After General Election	Converted—	For	Against	Home Rule	For
392	278	Liberal Gains:—	—	—	—
	Mr. Hingley		Burnley		
	Sir T. F. Grove		Northwich		
	Sir H. Vivian		West Edinburgh		
	Mr. Winterbotham		Coventry	-7	47
Tory Gain—			Spalding		
Doncaster	+1	-1	Ayr		
			Southampton		
			Present tota's	382	288
			Majority		94
			Deduct Sir E. Watkin		1
					93