

## Henry Grattan Against the Union

May 26, 1800.

I ask whether the attempt to pack the Irish Parliament, as was notoriously practised in '89 and '90 by the then Minister of the Crown in Ireland, might not have sunk the credit of British government? I ask whether the profligate avowal of that profligate practice by a profligate Minister of the Crown might not have sunk the credit of British government? I ask not whether the introduction of the question of Parliamentary Reform could have sunk the credit of British government; but I do ask whether the introduction of the apostasy from that question might not have helped to sink the credit of British government? I ask whether the introduction of the Catholic question in Great Britain in '92; whether the opposition given to the Catholic franchise by the Irish Government in '92; whether the assent given to the petition for that franchise by the English Ministry in '93; whether the abuse and Billingsgate accompanying that assent, and uttered by the Irish Ministry at that time; whether the adoption of the pretensions of the Catholics by the English Ministry at the close of '94; whether the rejection of these pretensions and the recall of a Lord Lieutenant, because, with the Ministry's knowledge and acquiescence he honored those pretensions; whether the selection of persons for distinguished trust, who had distinguished themselves by a perpetual abuse of the Irish, and who were notoriously hostile, and who since have acknowledged their hostility by a conspiracy against the Parliamentary constitution of their country; I ask, I say, whether such conduct, so incoherent, so irritating, so violent, so temporising, so corrupt, might not have very much aided the efforts of France in sinking the character of British government? I ask those questions, and I do say, if ever the causes of the late rebellion shall be dispassionately discussed, the great, originating, and fundamental cause will be found in the aversion of his Majesty's Ministry to the independency of the Irish Parliament, and their efforts to subvert the same.

We follow the Minister. In defence of his plan of Union he tells us the number of Irish representatives in the British Parliament is of little consequence. This doctrine is new, namely, that between two nations the comparative influence is of no moment. According to this it would be of no moment what should be the number of the British Parliament. No, says the Minister; the alteration is to be limited to the Irish Parliament; the number and fabric of the British is to remain entire, unaltered, and unalterable. What now becomes of the argument of mutual and reciprocal change? Or what does the new argument avow, but what we maintained and the court denied, that the Union was, with respect to Ireland, a merger of her Parliament in the legislature of the other, without creating any material alteration therein, save as far as it advanced the influence of the Crown, direct or indirect.

This union of Parliaments, this proscription of people, he follows by a declaration, wherein he misrepresents their sentiments as he had before traduced their reputation. After a calm and mature consideration the people have pronounced their judgment in favor of a Union; of which assertion not a single syllable has any existence in fact, or in the appearance of fact, and I appeal to the petitions of twenty-one counties, publicly convened, and to the other petitions of the other counties, numerous signed, and to those of the great towns and cities. To affirm that the judgment of a nation is erroneous may mortify, but to affirm that her judgment *against* is *for*; to assert that she has said *ay* when she has pronounced *no*; to affect to refer a great question to the people; finding the sense of the people like that of the Parliament, against the question, to force the question; to affirm that the question is persisted in because the sense of the people is for it; to make the falsification of her sentiments the foundation of her ruin and the ground for the Union; to affirm that her Parliament, constitution, liberty, honor, property, are taken away by her own authority; there is, in such artifice, an effrontery, a hardihood, an insensibility, that can best be answered by sensations of astonishment and disgust, excited on this occasion by the British Minister, whether he speaks in gross and total ignorance of the truth, or in shameless and supreme contempt for it.

The Constitution may be for a time so lost; the character of the country cannot be lost. The Ministers of the Crown will, or may perhaps at length find that it is not so easy to put down for ever an ancient and respectable nation, by abilities, however great, and by power and by corruption, however irresistible; liberty may repair her golden beams, and with redoubled heat animate the country; the cry of loyalty will not long continue against the principles of liberty; loyalty is a noble, a judicious, and a capacious principle; but in these countries loyalty, distinct from liberty, is corruption, not loyalty.

The cry of the connection will not, in the end, avail against the principles of liberty. Connection is a wise and a profound policy; but connection without an Irish Parliament is connection without its own principle, without analogy of condition, without the pride of honor that should attend it; is innovation, is peril, is subjugation—not connection.

The cry of disaffection will not, in the end, avail against the principles of liberty.

Identification is a solid and imperial maxim, necessary for the preservation of freedom, necessary for that of empire; but, without union of hearts—with a separate government, and without a separate Parliament, identification is extinction, is dishonor, is conquest—not identification.

Yet I do not give up the country: I see her in a swoon; but she is not dead: though in her tomb she lies helpless and motionless, still there is on her lips a spirit of life, and on her cheek a glow of beauty.

"Thou art not conquered; beauty's ensign yet  
Is crimson in thy lips and in thy cheeks,  
And death's pale flag is not advanced there."

While a plank of the vessel sticks together, I will not leave her. Let the courtier present his flimsy sail, and carry the light barque of his faith with every new breath of wind: I will remain anchored here with fidelity to the fortunes of my country, faithful to her freedom, faithful to her fall.

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#### Ceann Duv Dilis

O Dear Dark Head, bowed low in death black sorrow,  
Let not thy heart be trammelled in despair;  
Lift, lift thine eyes unto the radiant morrow,  
And wait the light that surely shall break there.  
What, though the grave hath closed above thy dearest,  
All are not gone that love thee, nor all fled;  
And though thine own sweet tongue thou seldom hearest,  
Yet shall it ring again, O Dear Dark Head.

—WILLIAM ROONEY.

Lord Edward leaves his resting place,  
And Sarsfield's face is glad and fierce;  
See Emmet leap from troubled sleep  
To grasp the hand of Padraic Pearse.

There is no rope can strangle song,  
And not for long Death takes its toll;  
No prison bars can dim the stars,  
Nor quicklime eat the living soul.

Romantic Ireland is not old,  
For years untold her youth will shine;  
Her heart is fed on Heavenly bread,  
The blood of martyrs is her wine.

—JOYCE KILMER.

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