

## LOYALTY AND LIBERTY

### MR. RUSSELL ON THE BIGOTRY BOGEY

#### AN EXAMPLE OF TOLERATION FROM CORK

The Right Hon. T. W. Russell, Vice-president of the Department of Agriculture, was one of the speakers at the annual meeting of the Ulster Liberal Association held in Belfast during the last week in March. The chair was occupied by Sir Hugh Mack, and there was a large attendance, including Right Hon. T. Shillington, Sir William Baxter, and Mr. R. G. Glendinning. In the course of his address Mr. Russell dealt with the religious question and the braggadocio of the Unionist leaders in Ulster. He said:—

I know the city of Dublin well, having lived in it close upon fifty years. Few men know the South and West of Ireland better. In olden times, when on temperance work, I sojourned in the rectories and the manse all over the country, and my present work brings me into contact with all sections of the people. So far as I know, the Protestant population, outside the Orange Lodges of Dublin, they are not animated by the feelings represented by the Ulster Unionist members. They do not look upon Catholics as their 'hereditary foes.' They live amongst Catholics. They are in many places a very small minority of the population. All over the South and West they are very largely engaged in commerce and in agriculture, and in numberless cases they are the principal merchants and the largest farmers in their districts. These people, living under such conditions, have no fear of Irish self-government. They object to being represented as having that profound distrust of their fellow-countrymen so constantly attributed to them. They know they have nothing to fear, that no right and privilege which they possess would be impaired by self-government, and they resent the fatherly interest which the Orange leaders are good enough to take in them. Ulster Protestants may speak for themselves, and they have a perfect right to do so. They have no right to speak of their brethren in the South and West, as they call them, as if they were to be shut up in a beleaguered fortress and hemmed in by a hostile army.

#### There is No Trouble

in the South between Catholic and Protestant save where the embers of the old land system still smoulder. We southern Protestants can very well spare the attention of Captain Craig and his friends, and he does not serve the interests of any of his unwilling proteges by proclaiming his sympathy with their imaginary sufferings. There is another matter upon which I think I ought to say a word. At a juncture like this all sorts of theories are ventilated. But it behoves reasonable men in whatever part of Ireland their lot is cast to consider well what is proposed, and how, if it is to be opposed at all, it should be met. There is no use in attempting to blink the fact that under any system of self-government Irish Protestants must remain what they are now, a small, yet influential, minority of the population. No system of representation, proportional or otherwise, can alter the fact that they are a minority, and their influence in the future in any representative assembly in Ireland will depend, not upon the numerical strength, but upon the character of that minority, and upon the situation that the new system may create in the representation of Ireland. I for one do not believe that Irish parties under a Home Rule system will be the same as Irish parties are under Imperial rule. I do not expect to see simply Nationalists and Unionists in any Irish Parliament. I should rather think that the differences will resolve themselves between those who desire to go forward and those who desire to sit still, or, if they move, to move very slowly; and the cleavage here will certainly not be between Protestants and Catholics. And just as in the South African settlement, the Englishry came out much better at the polls than their numbers warranted, so I am sure the Protestants of Ireland will do much better at the polls than those timid Orangemen suppose at the present time to be possible. But there is one thing

Which Ought to be Frowned Down by Every Decent Man. Great allowances may be made, and ought to be made, for excitement; but men—and the higher their position the worse their offence—who go round the country proclaiming, or who write letters in the newspapers declaring their intention not to pay taxes, and to take up arms or otherwise resist an Irish Parliament, are committing a grave offence against society. In plain language, they are simply traitors to the King and rebels to the Crown. They may be Privy Councillors, they may be deputy-lieutenants, King's Counsel, justices of the peace, or anything else—they are assuming a responsibility and taking risks that would only be justified by successful rebellion, and they know perfectly well that success of this kind is impossible under any possible conditions. Here in Ulster you profess what I may venture to call a super-loyalty, while claiming the liberty to hiss the name of the representative of the Sovereign in a public meeting without protest from either Church dignitaries or anybody else. You profess unbounded devotion to the King's person. You are determined to be governed by the Imperial Parliament and by

no other authority; and yet in the event of Parliament sanctioning a measure of Irish self-government and the King giving his assent, you say you will take up arms; you will defy the Crown and resist the Imperial Parliament. Gentlemen, such people cannot have it both ways. They cannot be

#### Loyalists and Traitors at the Same Time,

and they will speedily have to elect which role they are going to assume. Indeed, as I read of clubs being formed for the purpose of armed defence, of the enrolment of 200,000 men, without saying where they were to come from, of carrying out evolutions in order to show the mobility of these forces, I cannot help reflecting that all this stuff—for stuff it is—is either wicked tomfoolery or it is something worse than merely playing at treason. Nobody really believes in this sort of blatherskite. Whilst entitled to fight this question out on constitutional lines, to spend her last shilling, as I once said, in resisting Home Rule, Ulster is not entitled to acclaim civil war in defence of her so-called rights. In my judgment, Ulster will obey the law if the law is made by competent authority. Ulster will be loyal to Ireland, to the United Kingdom, and to the Empire; and when she finds, as she will find, the country going forward with even increased prosperity, she will come to appreciate the worth of all those fulminations which cost so little and are only dangerous when they are misunderstood. I venture to say that the Ireland of the future will have no use for fustian of this description, and no use for the men who trade in it. Gentlemen, we are close to the time when this great issue will have to be fought out—when men will have to take sides in this fateful work. I am personally under no illusion in regard to Home Rule. I expect no millennium to follow the restoration of Ireland's rights. On the contrary, there will be at first a time of great difficulty, requiring the exercise of courage, forbearance, sound judgment, and of all those qualities which have not been prominent in Ireland in the past. Distrust engendered by sectarian differences, difficulties in finance, a refusal on the part of many to acquiesce in the new order—all these and other influences will be at work to arrest development and hinder progress. But such difficulties can and will be surmounted. Whether an Irish Government will be able to pay its own way—after 110 years of a union with Great Britain—entirely depends upon the financial settlement that is made. We either pay our own way now or we don't. If we do, the settlement is simple and easy. If we do not—if Ireland costs the Imperial Treasury £2,000,000 a year, then it will be worth while for England to rid herself of this charge. And so with the religious question. The Protestant democracy of Ulster will not always be the dupes of leaders who do not know how to lead. A year or two of honest and fair government will convince them that the Pope has no designs upon their conscience—that their civil and religious liberty will stand unimpaired, and that by becoming Irishmen, they have lost nothing and have gained much for themselves and for their country. Upon this question I might give you

#### My Own Experience in Cork

the other day. Cork, as you know, is an overwhelming Catholic and Nationalist city. Well, in Cork a vacancy was advertised for a principal in the local Technical Institute at a salary of £400 a year. To begin with, there were 77 applications. The committee, desiring to act fairly, sent a communication to the Department asking them to look over the applications and to send down a short list of the more suitable candidates—a very reasonable request to make. We sent down a list of eight; and the committee sent up another request. They said, first of all, that they wanted to see me about getting more money—everybody wants money from me. They also desired that Mr. Fletcher, the assistant secretary of the Department, should attend with me to give them any assistance they might require in making this appointment. Well, the committee met on Wednesday last at half-past 11 o'clock; and we sat until 5 in the evening and examined the eight candidates most carefully. When they had all been heard the chairman said: 'Mr. Russell, we would be glad if you and Mr. Fletcher would confer for a quarter of an hour on the subject and tell us what you think. Mr. Fletcher is an expert, and knows the qualifications of these men; and he probably has before his mind one of them whom he would think would be the most qualified. Would you and he retire and bring us up a short list of three?' We retired, continued Mr. Russell; but instead of bringing up a list of three we brought up a list of five. Now, out of that list of eight there were only two Irishmen; but that committee, four-fifths of whom were Nationalists and Catholics, set aside the two Irish Catholics and Nationalists, and they elected an Englishman and a Protestant; and they did it unanimously. I say emphatically that the religious cry counts very little at the present time. That committee set aside their religious predilections, and they were so impressed that this was the right thing that they were doing that they withdrew one candidate in order that the election might be unanimous. I say that is an answer to those who raise the religious bogey—at all events, it is an indication that the right thing is done, and done in the right way by the Catholics of Ireland.

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