

THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT BILL

Mr. T. W. Russell, M.P., Answers a Letter from the Secretary of an Orange Lodge.

He Gives His Reasons for Supporting the Measure.

The manly letter of Mr. Russell to Mr. Thomas Johnstone, Grand Secretary of the Orange Lodge, Belfast, will be read with much interest by all friends of the Local Government Bill. Mr. Russell does not mince his words, and, after telling the Belfast gentleman some truths, he insinuates that all the brains of the United Kingdom may possibly not be confined to the Grand Lodge. Following is Mr. Russell's letter:

"I am in receipt of your letter in regard to my action on the Local Government Bill. Perhaps I may be allowed to say that in calmly assuming that you represent the views of the Irish Unionist party you assume a great deal too much. Be this as it may, however, I beg to say that I have been pledged to a broad and democratic scheme of local government ever since I entered Parliament. It was made a condition of my first election as candidate in 1886. I placed it in my election addresses in 1892 and 1895, and you simply call upon me to break these deliberate pledges.

Again on hundreds of British platforms and all through the Home Rule controversy I declared that Irish Unionists desired no privileges, and they were content to be governed as England and Scotland were governed. You ask me to repudiate every word I then uttered, and what is it all about? In Belfast you have this identical local government which I am gladly voting to secure for the people of South Tyrone and every other part of Ireland. Why are you so churlish as to refuse to others what you have got for yourselves?

You plead the cause of the Southern Unionists. By whose authority do you act in so doing? I live and all my interests are in the South. Probably no people know less of the people of the South and West than the people of Belfast. It is an unknown country to most of your citizens, the communication between Belfast and Glasgow being much closer than between Belfast and Cork. My own firm belief is that the Southern Unionists are not a bit obliged to you for your violent advocacy of their cause. They are in a minority now, and it is their interest, as I know it to be their desire, to live in amity and at peace with their neighbours. It is not the Southern minority you are thinking of at all. You are against all popular rights. In this I am absolutely opposed to you. I do not consider it good for Ireland that this feud of ages should go on for ever. Men will differ in religion and politics until the crack of doom, but it does not follow that in the administration of the fiscal affairs of the country, in the sanitation of a district, in the case of the poor, the insane, and the afflicted, they should not meet on common ground and work for the common good. Everywhere else it is possible to do this; I refuse to believe that Ulster is the only place where it is impossible for this agreement to take place.

The real difference between us is simple. You and your friends still linger on the banks of the Boyne—I recognize that we are on the verge of the 20th century. You desire to see Ulster separated into hostile parties—I recognize facts as they exist, but I do not acquiesce in them, and where common ground is possible I desire that Irishmen should unite. It is because I believe the Local Government Bill will tend to break down barriers between classes and parties, teaching both sides they have common interests, that I support it, and in doing so I have not received, although I am in daily touch with my constituents, one word against the Bill. You have twelve members for Belfast, Down, and Antrim. You have Orange men sitting for Armagh and other places. Are they all given over to reprobate mind? Are they all, like the member for South Tyrone, bereft of principle, common sense, and reason? There are six hundred and seventy members in the House of Commons. Not a single man of these could be found to vote against the Bill. Had all political wisdom taken refuge in the Grand Orange Lodge? Is it not just possible that the Unionists who support the Bill may be right?

In conclusion, you will permit me to say that I have not either hand, act, or part in what you call the jerry-mandering of Belfast.

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There is a certain limit to be observed even in our amusements; that we do not abandon ourselves too much to a life of pleasure, and, carried away by such a sink into immorality, sport and merriment, are, at times, allowable, but we must enjoy them as we do sleep and other kinds of repose when we have performed our weighty and important duties. — Cicero.

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MY FUTURE BROTHER-IN-LAW.

Six months ago I was a bachelor and an unbeliever. I didn't believe in love, and I didn't believe in ghosts, and, being 35, I ought to have been wiser. But I did believe in Bessie Denning. Oh, you needn't begin to smile. Being in love and believing in a person are two distinct things! She was a pretty girl, and had charge of the ribbon counter in the store where I worked. I boarded on the next street to her home, and simply because I am a social fellow it soon became the regular thing for us to walk home together after work was done.

For five months this sort of thing continued, and then—well, grin if you must—I fancied that Bessie was getting fond of my company. I began to dream dreams that made my boarding house a howling wilderness, and I decided to ask Bessie a most important question. The very morning I made this decision I found Bessie talking with Bronson, a fellow who had been in the linen department only two weeks. I hated the youngster, who was a conceited puppy, and seemed to think Bessie admired his style.

When it came time for dinner he waited for Bessie, and as my dinner hour came an hour later I could do nothing to keep him from going with her. It being Saturday we kept open for the evening, and at tea time he went and came with her again.

When 10 o'clock came he hurried after her before my department was covered and asked if she was going his way. I made no attempt to respond when she looked in my direction for an answer, and as I left the store I saw them ahead of me. How I hated that fellow! I hurried to my room, threw off my coat, seated myself by the fire and thought what an insignificant little cad he was. I told myself Bessie was a flirt and tried not to think of her. I must have been sitting there for an hour when the door suddenly opened and in walked a smiling young fellow of about 18. He pulled a chair up to the fire and sat down, asking:

"Are you Jack Harrington?"
I admitted that I was.
"Deliberately looking me in the eye, he began: 'Well, I just dropped round to tell you that you are the biggest idiot I ever saw.'"

Sheer astonishment kept my mouth shut and, he continued, "Yes, sir, without exception, you are the biggest fool that I ever met."

That was enough! I wasn't in the mood to stand the insults of a stranger at my own fireside, even if it was a boarding house fire. I seized the tongs and aimed a blow at his head. The stroke would have made me a murderer, if in some mysterious manner he had not evaded it.

Full of fury at my failure, I made a second attempt and fell headlong. Quickly taking advantage, he seated himself across my knees, held my arms down and went on: "As I was saying, you are the biggest idiot I ever met. You think you are in love with Bessie Denning, do you? Rather expected her to stand on the steps and ask you to go home with her, did you? Well, I am glad she has a little common sense left. She doesn't care a straw for that little corner jumper who went home with her. She's at home this very minute, crying over your hateful letter." He asked her to go for a drive.

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to-morrow and she refused on account of an engagement that I'm sure never existed. If you happen round there to-morrow and ask her to go you may get a chance to spring that proposal that you've been so long winded about. It may interest you to know that I'm Bessie's brother Harold, and I hope you'll lose some of your conceit before you become my brother-in-law!

Here he raised himself and started toward the door, while I got up, feeling rather sheepish. With his hand on the knob he turned and remarked: "Now, I'm off to advise Bessie to go to bed and quit worrying over your hateful letter. Take it! Better go to bed yourself, as it's after midnight, and you ought to take care of yourself for Bessie's sake. Mind you don't tell her I called!"

The door closed with a bang, and I was alone again. Astonished? Well, rather. I was conscious of having made a fool of myself. "Harold," I repeated, "I didn't know Bessie had a brother. Wish I'd given him a more brotherly greeting. I'd no idea I showed her how ugly I felt. Crying! By Jove, I wish I could go to her now!"

I looked at my watch. It was a quarter of one, and I went to bed. Sunday afternoon I hired a team and called for Bessie. We had a very interesting talk about things that concerned nobody but ourselves, and went home perfectly happy.

That evening Bessie remarked: "I dreamed of my brother Harold last night."

"Why didn't you ever tell me that you had a brother," I asked.

"I don't know why I never happened to mention him," replied Bessie. "He was my only brother and he died four years ago, when he was 18."

"Do I believe I saw a ghost? Well, sir, I have seen what I have seen. Just let me give you a bit of advice, and if you are green enough to think there's no such thing in this world as love, and that ghosts are seen only in nightmare dreams, just hold your tongue till you are wiser. You'll find it embarrassing when you come to change your mind, as I did after the only visit I ever received from 'My Future Brother-in-Law.'—Boston Post.

The communicating of a man's life to his friend works two contrary effects, for it redoubleth joys and cutteth griefs in half; for there is no man that imparteth his joys to his friend, but he joyeth the more, and no man that imparteth his grief to his friend, but he grieveth the less.—Bacon.

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The transfer books will be closed from May 15th to May 31st inclusive.

The general annual meeting of the Shareholders will be held at the office of the Bank at Montreal, on Wednesday, June 16th next, at noon.

By order of the Board of Directors.

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44-5 General Manager.

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The Transfer Books will be closed from the 15th to 31st of May next, both days inclusive.

The Annual General Meeting of the Shareholders will be held at its Head Office on Tuesday, the 21st day of June next, at noon.

By order of the Board,

W. WEIR, President.

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