

tains numerous stipulations. They were made to *bind*, or they mean nothing. They were made to bind the British Legislators, or their very existence would have been as absurd as useless.

If the British Legislators break any one of these without the formal consent of a majority of the Irish Legislators—the present representatives of the Irish Parliament—then, necessarily, the Act of Union falls asunder, like exploded glass.

We pointed out that this result would happen if, for instance, the hostile English proposal of reducing the number of Irish Representatives were carried into effect, against the protests of the Irish Legislators. It was expressly stipulated, in the so-called Act of Union, that Ireland should have a number of Representatives, fixed at one hundred and five—consequently, that stipulation would be glaringly broken, and the Act rendered void, if the said hostile proposal were carried through the London Parliament by the British Legislators.

This is the high ground that the Irish members should take, and would take if they had thoroughly preserved the traditions of Grattan, and realized perfectly the feeling that they are the Representatives of a Nation. It is pitiable to see that several of them have allowed themselves to be drawn down to discuss the details of the proposition, as though it were a clause in an English Reform Act, instead of meeting it as Irish Representatives ought only to meet it. Instead of upholding their dignity as Ambassadors, they descend to the role of clerks in England's antechamber.

It may be said that the English will demur to our position as regards this question. We cannot as yet conceive what pretexts they could possibly allege in the place of reasons, beyond the old statement that Parliament is omnipotent. That, however, would be misapplied. Parliament may be omnipotent over its own legislation, to amend or undo it—but, certainly, it cannot alter the clauses of a Treaty without the concurrence of the parties to that Treaty. British Legislators cannot rid themselves of stipulations made to bind British Legislators, unless with the

concurrence and distinct consent of the Representatives of those on whose behalf such stipulations were inserted. In this case the formal assent of the Irish Legislators must be obtained.

But we doubt whether there would be such a demur to this proposition of ours as might be supposed. Nay, already the idea that the Act of Union can be broken by a breach of one of its stipulations by the British Parliament has been admitted by the English mind. It is, in fact, too self-evident to be ignored, except, perhaps, by some of our own feeble friends.

The following extract from a letter, inserted prominently in the *Pall Mall Gazette*; concedes and establishes our argument. After mentioning that in "a large mixed company" he heard Englishmen denouncing Ireland, the writer proceeds to prove our position:

"The speaker went on to say that, in his judgment, both in law and equity, the Union had been repealed by Mr. Gladstone's Government. He put the case in this way: The Irish Church, by the sixth article of the Treaty of Union, was made an essential part of the Union. In destroying the Irish Church, Mr. Gladstone unconsciously destroyed the Union. He said that he should be glad to get those Irishmen (indeed, he used another word than 'men' out of the House of Commons; he said that they had been at the beck of any Minister, for any mischief, who choose to purchase their aid by any job for any measure, however destructive of the kingdom in general and Ireland in particular. He gave as an instance the conduct of the Irish members and their support of Sir Robert Peel's free trade measures in 1846, from which Ireland is now so justly suffering. He observed, in the course of talk, that he saw no need of an Irish House of Commons, even if the Union were repealed—that Ireland would be much better ruled by an English and Scotch Parliament, without any Irish members. I confess that personally I have long held similar opinions without venturing to announce them—as being too unpopular for publicity. 'But my point is this: nobody had anything to say to the contrary—and that in a mixed company of all sorts of people, except Irish. Now, I would have the Irish ponder this little story, and consider that if the British public is provoked a trifle further it may be sufficiently aggravated to put some deep policy into action now not often publicly avowed.'"

We need not trouble about the animus of the writer. It is all the better that he should be full of animosity towards us. Perhaps it is not altogether