

they have the name of being Irish, and that is enough to make the robbery desirable.

What our enemies think they could gain by this proposed plunder is something beyond our powers to conceive. Do they fancy that they will maim Ireland, by mutilating the Representation that sits in their alien Parliament? Do they imagine that they will weaken Ireland, by stopping this influx of Irishmen into the British Legislature?

They are egregiously mistaken. Their effort, if successful, would result in hindering an outflow of strength, in stopping a waste of force, in giving back some lost men to Ireland.

The result would be good, but the intention is evil, offensive, and outraging. We have a right to regard it as a purposed act of political plunder, and to resent it as a deliberate act of insulting tyranny.

By that Charter of Robbers—the so-called Act of Union—it was stipulated that Ireland should possess a fixed number of representatives in the conjoined Parliaments. That was, in form, at all events, a Treaty between the Legislatures of the two Nations. To enact it, it was necessary that a majority of the Irish representatives should give their assent. Its provisions cannot be annulled by a mere majority of English or Scotch members—in other words, by a mere majority of the British Parliament.

The contrary may be asserted by the British, and they may even act upon the assertion. That, however, will only put their conduct in conformity with their past, and prove to demonstration before the world that they prefer brute force to justice.

This point has never been properly put: it has always been systematically ignored. Of course we can make allowance for ignorance, and for the weakness of understandings which are imposed upon by words. But we cannot conceive of men omitting to mark and maintain the rights of their country, even that poor remnant which was laid on the parchment of the Union, that it might not seem altogether as black as Erebus.

Our argument is this: Taking the Act of Union for what it is worth, it is

a Treaty between two kingdoms. To give it validity it was necessary, on this side, that a majority of the Irish Representatives should assent to all its provisions. Being a Treaty between two Powers, its stipulations cannot be annihilated at the will of one of the high contracting parties. Otherwise a treaty would have no meaning, and be a farce. Hence, if it were required to annul any one of its provisions, it would be absolutely requisite to get the assent of a majority of the Irish Representation.

To assert the contrary is to maintain that those statesmen who engaged in the work of drawing up this professedly solemn Treaty, in preparing its stipulations, and in sanctioning its provisions, were all imbeciles and idiots. If a British majority in the conjoined Parliaments could upset every arrangement, any arrangement was futile. If they had so much as dreamed that it could be thought that a British majority in the united Parliaments could, next day, annihilate every agreement which they had come to, and destroy every stipulation they had inserted, they would not have taken the trouble to draft so elaborate a document. All that would have been required, on this theory, would be a short Act declaring that the Irish representation was henceforth amalgamated with that of Britain.

There are stipulations in the Act of Union. These were made to bind whom? The British Legislature. They cannot, therefore, be annulled by the British members.

The assent of a majority of the Irish members is absolutely required. Whether they sit in College Green or in Westminster, they still form the Irish Representation. Their assent is as much required to the annulment of the stipulations of the Act as was that of their predecessors to the insertion of these stipulations.

One of these stipulations refer to the number of Irish members, and, fixing the Representation, should be jealously guarded by them. The present English proposal to strike off a fifth of the Irish members, and so to mutilate the Irish Representation, should be firmly met, and plainly declared to be a proposal to abrogate the Act of Union.

They should not, we hold, conde-