Irish Review (Dublin)

The Denial of North-East Ulster

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Source: *The Irish Review (Dublin)*, Vol. 2, No. 17 (Jul., 1912), pp. 228-234

Published by: [Irish Review \(Dublin\)](#)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/30062841>

Accessed: 16/06/2014 10:45

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THE DENIAL OF NORTH-EAST ULSTER

By AN ULSTER SCOT

SO much has been written and spoken lately with reference to Ulster, that the writer, being in very truth an "Ulster Scot"—the favourite nomenclature adopted by the Anti-Irish Ulsterman—feels no false modesty in joining with the various Englishmen and Scotsmen, who have been exploiting Belfast and the North these last few months.

I have referred to myself as being in "very truth" an Ulster Scot, as I am of mixed Scottish and Irish (Ulster) descent.

In my youth the Unionists of the North-east corner of Ulster were contented with the name of "Ulstermen," "North-of-Ireland" men, or even "Scotch-Irish," but as all these terms tend to make them only a special brand of the despised "mere Irish" of the South and West, "Ulster Scot" now appears to be the favourite term. Amongst the Protestant Unionists of Ulster such names as Murphy, Malone, Gallagher, Doherty, Kane, Macafee, Maguire, O'Neill, McManus, Quin, Mullan, Magee, McKinley, are far from uncommon.

We are told that there are two nations in Ireland. It would be interesting to know to which "nation" these Murphys, Gallaghers, etc., belong. They can scarcely be Scots of any breed, and their inclusion in the term "Ulster Scot" must be solely due to the fact that they are strong opponents of their country's claims. As we find so many Milesian names among the Ulster Protestant Unionists, it is a fair deduction to make that at least a similar number of Wilsons, Campbells, Bells, Moores, Boyds, etc., have mothers of this strangely un-Scottish-named breed.

It is again surely unique that people should live in a country for 300 years, and derive their sustenance therefrom, and yet not consider themselves as belonging to the country. This is to the looker-on the most astounding feature of the Ulster question. It has no parallel in the South or West, where the Protestant Unionists are proud to consider themselves Irish, and not "Munster Scots,"

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“Connaught English,” or “Leinster Welsh,” on the strength of a remote Scotch, English, or Welsh progenitor!

I had a discussion with a typical Ulster Unionist the other day, in which he refused to label himself as Irish, Scotch, English, or Welsh, or anything else but an “Ulster Scot.” His family has resided in Ireland for an unknown period, probably from the beginning of the 17th century, anyway so long that no record exists of from what part of Scotland, or in what epoch his ancestors migrated; but in his estimation he was still an alien in Ireland!

If the descendants of the French Huguenots, who took refuge in Great Britain, refused now to consider themselves Britishers, what would one think of their sanity? The anomaly, indeed, now exists that whilst the descendants of French Huguenots such as Lefroy, Lefanu, Blackquiere, Chenevix, Fleury, Guerin, La Touche, etc., who settled in the South of Ireland, consider themselves Irish, and whose names in England are now considered Irish, the descendants of Grahams, Campbells, Murrays, Martins, Kennedys, Mackays, etc., who settled in Ulster some fifty years before the French Huguenots in the South, still consider themselves “not Irish,” although in many cases they were only representatives of another branch of the old Gaelic stock.

It may be said that the cases I mention are extreme, but I claim that they are not so, and that the foregoing truly represents the opinions of three-fourths of the Protestants Unionists of Ulster. I grant that some of them may in Parliament or publicly be made to acknowledge themselves as Irishmen, as in the case of the member for St. Augustines—Mr. Ronald McNeill—who, on continually referring to himself as “an Ulsterman,” was asked if he wished it to be understood that he was not an Irishman, and replied that he was one. The bulk of the Ulster Unionist M.P.’s, however, are not honest enough, or patriotic enough, to do likewise.

Having been away from Ulster for some years, I expected to find that the more moderate and conciliatory spirit that has arisen in Nationalistic and ex-Ulster Unionist politics—*vide* the Reform Association—would have a counterpart in Ulster Unionist politics.

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But no! the old irreconcilable, unreasonable, uncharitable, bigoted, Orange attitude is still in its pristine vigour. The passage of time has brought no better feeling to the "Ulster Scot."

One of the arguments in favour of Home Rule is that it will do away with the old Protestant ascendancy and place Catholic and Protestant on equal terms. The very existence of this ascendancy is stoutly denied by the Unionists. Whether it exists in the other provinces or not, I am unable to say; but no honest person can deny that it exists in full force in the minds of the Protestant Unionists of the North. The "Papish" is looked down upon by his Protestant fellow-countrymen, and half the ire raised by the idea of Home Rule is due to the fact that the despised "Papish" will be on terms of absolute equality. It is to him as if the Kaffir in the Transvaal were to dominate at the polling booths, and the Africander be bottom dog. Out of this feeling arises the intolerance shown to Irish Protestants who support Home Rule.

They are to the eyes of the Ulster Unionists as the abolitionists appeared to the eyes of the Southerners in the United States, and should be treated as they were treated in the North v. South American War. See the abuse heaped on Lord Pirrie, the refusal to allow the Ulster Hall to be used for a Liberal meeting, the stoning of a respectable Liberal merchant at Greenisland, and the social ostracism dealt out to a Protestant "betrayed of the Union."

"Never trust a 'Papish.'" "He has a 'Papish' face on him." "A low 'Papish' name." "You can tell he is a 'Papish'—he has the mark of the beast on him." These are remarks which you may hear from the lips of respectable Ulster Unionists. You will also be told that "Papishes" are cowards, lazy, untruthful, under the thumb of the priests, dirty, utterly unfitted for business, etc. In the same breath they will tell you how hurt they are at the untruthful accusations of bigotry brought against them, and that they are quite free from any taint of the same!

I quite expect that if this article comes to the eye of an "Ulster Scot," he will indignantly deny that such intolerance exists; but every expression quoted has been heard by the writer himself, and many

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similar ones, all enunciated by intelligent and educated Ulster gentlemen; what, then, must be the views held by the lower classes? The former are, of course, too well bred to mention the subject at all before a Roman Catholic, but amongst Protestants of their own brand, even if they know that some of them may be on the other side politically, they place no curb on their tongues, and would never dare to express publicly the views they then divulge. Extreme as are the speeches of the Ulster Unionist leaders, they are mild and weak compared to the opinions openly expressed by the rank and file.

This explains the difficulty of making any compromise with the leaders of the Ulster Unionist Party, as they themselves are not—at least openly—as extreme as the men they represent. Up to the present the inhabitants of Belfast and its environs seem to have hugged to themselves the delusion that they were the salt of the earth—not to speak of Ireland—and the shock to their self-esteem caused by the attacks of Harold Begbie and others is ludicrous. As a matter of fact, Belfast is no better, and but little worse, than other towns of its description; but then other towns have not assumed to themselves all the virtues, as Belfast in particular, and the Protestant Unionists in general, have.

It must be a great shock to them to find that in other countries their despised countrymen from the other provinces are thought much of, or even more, than their noble selves. Ireland has benefited greatly by the linguistic, literary and industrial revival which has sprung up in the last twenty years. The Ulster Unionists pooh-pooh the whole movement, laugh at the Gaelic Leaguers as madmen, although the major share of the credit for the renaissance is due to them. With few exceptions, they stand aside and jeer at this non-political movement, which has excited the sympathy and compelled the admiration of the civilised world.

The Gaelic language is studied by Germans, Poles, French, English, Austrians, Scandinavians, and other savants, but to an "Ulster Scot" it is not worth while even to tolerate it, although it may be his original mother-tongue, as many of the class to which I refer, are of Scotch-Gaelic descent. "If there were no one about,

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I would pull down every sign-post I saw written in Gaelic," was the amiable speech of an otherwise charming young "Ulster Scot" of my acquaintance.

Whilst the rest of Ireland is working for its country's regeneration, the "Ulster Scot" looks on and laughs, or tries to hinder the work as much as he can. He is not above taking full advantage of the industrial movement, although he takes no more part in the literary than in the linguistic revival, and is entirely out of sympathy with the forces which have produced it, and which alone can carry it successfully forward.

How can he? Why should he? He is that most miserable of men—a man without a country—and the only interest he takes in the land of his birth is to vilify it! He denies Ireland, and even on his own showing is neither Scotch nor English. When referring to "Ulster Scots" in all these remarks, I, of course, do not mean to include the Irishman (Ulsterman) of Scotch-Irish descent, who, whatever his politics or religion may be, is proud to recognise as his native land the country which gave him and his fathers birth, and which gives him his livelihood. This kind of naturalised Irishman is an asset to his country, and anyone acquainted with Ulster will know many such Irish-Irelanders.

I had the opportunity—and took it—of being present at the Balmoral demonstration, which was in its way a marvel of the results of organisation—and free railway tickets—and the charming effect produced by bowler hats. It proved what all Ireland had known for the last ninety years, that the North-North-East corner of Ulster is bigoted and reactionary. Their war-cry is an example of this attitude. "We will *not* have Home Rule." Theirs is not the mind open to conviction; they do not want safeguards, one Home Rule Bill is as bad as another with them, no concessions will satisfy them.

To every argument they advance *their* "argument." "We will not have Home Rule." Elsewhere in the world the artisan and the worker is beginning to think and act for himself, but in Belfast the Orange worker is tied hand and foot to the old Ascendancy Gang, who trade on their dupe's bigotry to keep them unenlightened and

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well under their thumbs. This is good tactics, as they would otherwise be mainly Liberal; and, oh whisper it! perhaps some of them would become Socialists.

Naturally the employer is a "True Blue," and at the least sign of independence or absence of bigotry, on the part of the employee, comes the tap of the Orange drum to bring the erring sheep back to the fold.

What will the end be?

There will doubtless be some broken heads before Home Rule comes into force; for, to give the devil his due, the Ulster Unionist is no coward, and after all his talk, he must surely do something. He is—he says—determined to fight, but does not at present know whom. He drills assiduously, and is quite sure that he can lick single-handed at least three "Papishes," but is doubtful as to how many of the British Army he can take on. He is delighted with the idea that he will resist the payment of taxes under a Home Rule Government, but he will presumably not refuse to pay his local rates—and alas, income tax is about the only direct tax he will have to pay, and by no means all of them will have to pay that. If he carries out his project in its entirety, he would have to refuse to buy whisky, tobacco, and tea, thus some good at least may come out of evil.

Similar threats, however, were made by the Canadian "loyalists," but they were never carried out. Let us hope for the Ulster Unionists' sake that history will repeat itself in this particular in Ulster. History, by the way, is a matter of which the "Ulster Scot" is profoundly and amazingly ignorant. I will wager that there is no class of people in the civilised world so ignorant of their country's history as they are. If they did read and study the history of their country, there would be more, as in '98, on the Nationalist side.

McCracken, Hope, Munro, Neilson, the *names* are Scotch, the *men* were patriotic Ulstermen, who died *for* the ideal of Ireland a Nation, and not *against*, as men of their blood threaten to do to-day.

The frame of mind of the Ulster Unionist is also shown by his monopolising the term "Loyalist" to himself. His loyalty is surely the most peculiar brand in the world: it is ever on his lips, and then

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if any measure of which he does not approve is mooted, he is ready to "kick the Crown into the Boyne," etc. He now talks of armed rebellion if an Act comes into force, which will have to pass both Houses of Parliament and receive the Royal Assent. This "conditional loyalty" is really too ludicrous for comment, and his "loyalty" is a laughing matter even to the Unionists of England who are supporting him.

Time is a great healer, so let us hope that after Home Rule is an actual fact the bitterness will pass, and the "Ulster Scots" be found in their proper place—the van of the Irish Nation—and emulate the patriotic efforts of their forefathers who died for Ireland in the "bad times."