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Letter to the Queen

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SATURDAY, APRIL 21st, 1900.

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EDITED BY STANDISH O'GRADY.

ONE PENNY

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LETTER TO THE QUEEN.

—o—

Your Majesty, I perceive that it would be in the last degree imprudent and impolitic on your part to take the least notice of my last letter with its suggested curtailment of the tyrannical power now exercised, and so blindly and irrationally, by the loquacious Third Estate of the Realm. To what I wrote I shall but add this, that, so far as I can understand the signs of the times, that loquacious Third Estate will not require any abolishing on the part of your Majesty, or your House, for it is very steadily abolishing itself and stands condemned already for some 50 years in the mind of all the thinking and observing men in your Empire. Only I would like your Majesty and your children to be ready to assume the reins as soon as they shall have fallen out of those very incompetent hands.

Your Most Gracious Majesty, this poor country is failing and perishing, and I would ask you not to attach any importance to the signs of prosperity which are so evident in Dublin; for Dublin, as the Seat of Government, thrives upon the Imperial plunder which is drawn out of your Provinces and a good proportion of which is spent in the Capital. All the well-paid Mandarin class live in Dublin, quite a host of them; and all very gay and festive. But, your most gracious Majesty, it is no so in the Provinces, where the country is slowly, quietly, almost inevitably, faring to destruction.

About 50 years ago, your Majesty, Ireland sustained two great reverses whose operation still continues, one of them, perhaps inevitable, was the adoption by your Ministers of the policy of Free Trade, which was a great blow to a country so agricultural and pastoral as ours. The other a gross act of tyranny, a wanton, and, I think, illegal measure of spoliation was the simultaneous extension to this country of certain taxes whose imposition in Ireland was very carefully provided against by Pitt and Castlereagh and the other framers of that solemn international compact, the Act of Union.

During the debates that accompanied the passage of that measure an Irish member of the Imperial House of Commons asked the Prime Minister what "security" Ireland had that, after the Union, the Imperial Parliament would observe the fiscal clauses of the Act which provided that we should be only taxed in proportion to our wealth and resources.

The Prime Minister, Pitt, replied proudly—"The honour of England!"

Your Majesty, things like this cannot be done without results.

Concerning Free Trade I shall be silent, but concerning the Imperial Taxes levied on Ireland I would most humbly and respectfully ask your Majesty to consult with your advisers.

Towards the close of the last century when everything here was going forward prosperously, the Imperial taxation of Ireland was about a million a year; now, when population is rapidly declining, and when everything is on the downward—not the upward grade—it is eleven or twelve or thirteen millions a year.

We cannot endure it, your Majesty, and therefore we are failing from the land; and, I think, pardon me if I take a liberty, that at a time like the present when the English people entertain such kindly feelings to Ireland, your Majesty, without any exertion of your Prerogative, but only the expression of a wish conveyed privately to your Ministers might relieve us of that burthen, and so enable us to multiply and provide your Majesty and your House with plenty of soldiers and sailors and civil servants, and be able, without any assistance, to defend here this western and exposed flank of your Empire, and in a condition too to send a quarter of a million of men to put down rebellion or anarchy in London or wherever else any enemies of your House may appear.

Trust us not at all, or all in all, your Majesty, and we will not fail you or your children.

And just one word to end with—if you would see us multiply and flourish and be a pride and a strength to you and your Line, bid your Ministers take off the taxes.

You will learn all about it, your Majesty, in the Report of the Childers Commission.

The Irish difficulty which, I have no doubt, has been a trouble and a sorrow to you all your life is—nine-tenths of it—a very simple matter. Bid your Ministers take off the taxes against whose imposition we thought the Act of Union had securely provided. Then, after five years come to see us again, and I think I can promise your Majesty that a full nine-tenths of that difficulty will have disappeared.

Indeed, your Majesty, the condition of the Provinces is a great deal sadder than I fear you will ever believe. The other day a correspondent wrote to me as follows:—"I know personally about 500 people living within a radius of a few miles from this; but amongst the 500 there is not one marriageable young man or woman. Dear Mr. O'Grady," he concluded, "where is it all to end?"

Please think of this, your Majesty, all the fine young men and all the fine young women, your Majesty's born subjects, streaming away out of the country, not from choice but necessity, and because they cannot at the same time be your subjects and keep themselves alive. It is all very sad, your Majesty, and I am sure you feel it as much as I do myself, and though you may be unwilling to take such a step as I recommend, I would nevertheless ask you to take it for our sakes, and because for us it means either death or life.

I remain, very sincerely,

Your loving subject,

STANDISH O'GRADY.