

(editor's note: This paper was transcribed from a handwritten cursive copy with various difficulties. For a perfect rendition, the reader might wish to consult the original, itself a copy, in the volume entitled *Literary Club Papers*, Dec 20, 1890 to May 30, 1891)

## Home Rule For Ireland

We have a very severe and rigid theory about non-interference with the affairs of foreign nations which we call the Monroe Doctrine, but in practice we compensate for the coldness and unsympathetic quality of our theory by jumping tail foremost into the midst of every squabble which occurs annoying our effete neighbors – the monarchies. Especially in this case with Ireland. We have got up a sort of sacred war, whether Great Britain or this country shall give the form of government to Ireland. Whether the Turks are killing the Americans, or the Russians are gradually squelching out the natural life of the Poles, or whether Portugal is about to add Liberia to her African domains, are matters which we discuss impartially in the newspapers and journals; and even in regard to the Patagonian's, whether they eat our missionaries on toast or made into hash, we hear the pros and cons with judicial coldness; but when you mention “Home rule for Ireland”, then you turn the frying pan into the fire, and the whole political chimney blazes with wrath.

This is the political 4–11–44 of oratory; it always draws a prize; it is the hack piece in the repertory of every politician. Governors of states, congressmen and senators, when they address the people upon questions of permanent importance to the state, always insist that unless you obtain Home rule for Ireland, life is scarcely worth living. Editors of newspapers are constantly reminding the nice young lads who go from Hamilton County to the legislature and, that the duty of all duties, even those colossal duties piled up in the McKinley bill, was the duty of enforcing Home rule for Ireland. And any ambitious Juliet who desires to bring down the house can do so in four words, if, when asked by Romeo “what light from yonder convent breaks?” She would only shriek out – “home rule for Ireland.”

Even in this club young and ardent orators have solemnly warned us that the man who does not desire Home rule for Ireland has, or had or will have some time in his life Bass pale ale in his veins.

Do not imagine or suppose that I am writing this paper with any notion of levity, or seeking to degrade a sobriquet so vital to our political life. Nor do I insist that this theme is the fly in our political ointment, for the truth is there is more fly than ointment.

But the thing that I am about to insist upon is, if Home rule is a good thing for Ireland, why not first of all try to rescue it for the United States of America? And the question constantly arises in my mind, what is this Home rule which we are determined shall be thrust into the British constitution, whether the rulers or the ruled desire it or not? I remember once hearing at a minstrel performance one of the pseudo darkies pathetically explained that while songs were always being sung about the mother, no one ever sings about the old man.

Now if Home rule is a good thing for the old woman, Britannia, why isn't it good for the old man? We have about hundred 60,000 Indians – what sort of Home rule do they get? Are their neighbors, the cowboys, ranch men and scouts, pleasant to live with? Is the agent who cuts the blanket in half, and gives a calf for an ox carrying out the principles of home rule?

But to come back to our question, have we home rule? Has any other city got it? And if it has, is it a thing to thank God on? Is Falstaff says.

There is New York. Has that Metropolis got Home rule? And if so, how long has she had it? Unless Tammany and Boss Tweed are products of it, the thing is unknown in the East. But to come nearer home, have we got Home rule in this city? If we have let us hold the article on to the light and see if it belongs to the wardrobe or to the ash barrel. Is taxing manufacturers so heavily that they are glad to get out of the country; paying a carpenter to fill the office of hydraulic engineer, selecting judges and city officers from men who shinned their legs off to get them; putting saloon keepers on the Board of Education; in short handing the city over to be plundered by the dregs of political clubs – is all that home rule? If it be, then I do not think we ought to give it out to Ireland. Macauley once said of a certain person that he was too orderly for liberty, and not disorderly enough for Bedlam – the lunatic asylum. And if our Home rule is of this unfortunate and misfitting quality, ought we really to insist that if other nations do not adopt it, we will go over there and lick 'em into a sense of imitation and obligation?

I have never seen a down trodden Irishman and sincerely hope that I never shall, but if there be anything capable of doing the business, it is this sort of thing. As a political catch word or phrase, it is no doubt as good as any other shibboleth. Besides it furnishes an opportunity of publicly pulling the lion's tail, which is a thing that never will be stopped until the British put tar on the end of it.

But good government, municipal or state, should commence at home. Is the following a feature of good government? A fellow whom you higher occasionally to shovel your coal is elected, thanks to your political party, to assess your property for taxation, which he does by multiplying the real value by two; and then another fellow, and alleged lawyer, who ought to be shoveling your coal for the balance of his life, charges you an enormous fee to take off the fictitious value, and place the real one thereon; and there is so-called [“ ”].

And if Home rule does not mean good government, of what use is it?

In conclusion: Why stand in the public highways, and bawl about Home rule for Ireland, when the best men in this Republic, the most enterprising, vigorous and intelligent men in the fact the men who have been and are the nerves and brains of this great Commonwealth, deny that there is a city in the land that we can hold up and say to the world – Behold this is what American intelligence can do; the human [ ] has here its highest and fullest value! And until we have achieved something of that sort, we might

postpone the gift to Ireland, until we have achieved it ourselves.

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Hy Hooper Informal  
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