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Richard Moynan: Irish Artist and Unionist Propagandist

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IT IS A WELL-ESTABLISHED FACT that history is written by the victors, but it is less widely acknowledged that history is also painted by the victors. In *Inventing Ireland*, Declan Kiberd argues that the bloody Irish revolution of 1916–23 was preceded by a verbal battle, a primarily literary war of poetry, plays and songs designed to construct an indigenous Irish identity. According to Kiberd, this ideological clash prepared the way for the military and political struggle yet to come.¹ Artists played a key role in the formation of this new identity. Painters like Aloysius O'Kelly, Jack Butler Yeats and Seán Keating established images designed to ratify the nation's emerging identity. A new confidence was abroad, and the next generation of painters had, for the first time, nationalist artistic role models.

But there was another group of artists in Ireland, a cadre whose patriotism was no less fervent than those mentioned above, although their particular brand of patriotism was linked to a different set of political values. These were the traditionalists, painters whose art and unionist politics were closely connected with extant academic and eco-

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1. Declan Kiberd, *Inventing Ireland: The Literature of the Modern Nation* (London: Vintage Press, 1996), 196.

conomic values. These artists hailed predominantly from a Protestant, business-class background, and identified strongly with the metropolitan center. This essay examines one of the most prominent of these artists, Dublin-born painter Richard Thomas Moynan (1856–1905), an Irish artist who used his work to help forge stronger bonds with Britain and its empire.

Richard Moynan was born on 27 April 1856 at 1 Eldon Terrace, off the South Circular Road, Dublin. He was fourth of eight children; three sons and five daughters, born to Richard Moynan, Sr., and his wife Harriet Nobel. The painter's father held a managerial position with the fabric importers Ferrier, Pollock and Company, while his mother was the daughter of Arthur Nobel, a Church of Ireland clergyman. The younger Moynan initially studied medicine but, shortly before his final examinations, he changed tack and opted instead for a career in the arts, commencing his training at the Dublin Metropolitan School of Art in the autumn of 1879.

Moynan achieved early success within the art school system. More mature than his fellow students in terms of age and education, he won prizes in both the Taylor and Cowper competitions. In 1882 he moved on to the Royal Hibernian Academy, where he won both silver and bronze medals for his work, crowning these achievements the following year with the Albert Scholarship for the best picture shown in the Royal Hibernian Academy by a student.² This painting, *The Last of the 24th at Isandula* (RHA, 1883), portrayed an episode in the Zulu wars, providing an early indication of the artist's unionist outlook, a characteristic evident throughout his career.

Following the example of fellow Irish painters Walter Osborne, Nathaniel Hill, and Joseph Malachy Kavanagh, Moynan enrolled in *Académie Royale des Beaux Arts* in Antwerp in October 1883. His Dublin colleagues Roderic O'Connor and Henry Allen registered for the same course. The intensity of his studies was such that, for the first time in four years, he did not contribute to the Royal Hibernian Academy exhibition. Moynan instead focused on preparing for the most important competition in the *Académie*, the annual *concours*. This approach yielded the desired results, and he gained the highest acco-

2. Walter Strickland, *A Dictionary of Irish Artists* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 1989), 114.

lade, attaining first place in painting from the living model. He was the first Irishman to achieve such an award. This prestigious prize paid immediate dividends, ranking him among the élite. It allowed him the privilege of special tuition from Professor of Painting Karl Verlat (1824–90), as well as extra studio space, facilitating the painting of the human figure in life scale. This success influenced his decision to remain in Antwerp for a further year. But affairs of the heart also had to be settled, and he returned to Ireland immediately after the *concours* and married his cousin, Suzanna Mary Moynan, in her home in Thurles on 9 April 1884.

Moynan spent another year at Antwerp, where he produced a number of works depicting group interiors such as *The Reading Lesson* (1884), *Girls Reading a Newspaper* (1885), *The Laundress* (1885), and *What does it want?* (1885–86). These canvasses are painted in a highly academic style, rendering architectural features, furniture, and textiles in great detail, with particular reference to the Dutch seventeenth-century tradition. Ever anxious to broaden his artistic experience, Moynan moved on to *Académie Julian* in Paris in 1886. His sojourn in the French capital facilitated the use of a lighter palette, looser brushstrokes, and a brief flirtation with the “square brush technique.”

The artist returned to Dublin in the winter of 1886, where he set up practice as a professional painter. Conscious of the importance of networking, he joined a number of artistic associations, becoming a committee member of the Dublin Art Club and president of the Dublin Sketching Club (1889) while continuing to exhibit in the Royal Hibernian Academy. He consolidated this position by becoming a member of the Grand Lodge of Freemasons. Works dating from this period demonstrate his ability to imaginatively interpret the role of the artist in society. The 1887 painting, *We hope we don't intrude* (National Gallery of Ireland, hereafter NGI), shows the painter in his studio in Harold's Cross welcoming a group of ladies into his small, well-equipped work place. This theme is reinforced in *Taking Measurements* (NGI, 1887), which depicts the artist sketching a cast of a lion from the Mausoleum in Halicarnassus in the hall of the National Gallery of Ireland.

April 1887 marked the beginning of a short but intense period where Moynan became a political illustrator with a unionist publication. On 29 January 1887, a newspaper was launched in Dublin called *The Union*; its banner proclaimed that it was “A Journal devoted to the

maintenance of the Union in the three kingdoms.” One early issue carried a supplement designed to outline the new journal’s agenda. The final paragraph underscores the importance given to providing a free cartoon with each issue:

The Separatist party in Ireland is well served by several weekly papers, such as *United Ireland*, *The Nation*, *The Weekly News*, and other organs, all illustrated with cartoons, which are distributed in thousands all over the United Kingdom. This is done largely by gratuitous circulation, and a similar method ought, it is submitted, to be adopted by the Loyalist party.³

This newspaper was one of a syndicate of three unionist papers with the same name, editorial strategy, and political agenda, published respectively in London, Dublin, and Glasgow. The editorial mandate of *The Union* made no pretense of providing a balanced view of current social and political events; it was designed as a weapon of attack against nationalist politicians and their policies. It is interesting to note that the editor cites the importance of the use of political cartoons in rival newspapers. Cartoons and illustrations had a very immediate impact as their message transcended literacy and had an appeal that aided the dissemination of information. These images were frequently collected and framed by readers. The editor of *The Union* understood the significance of these drawings and proposed this approach himself, augmenting the text with visual illustrations. The appointed cartoonist would play a key role in trumpeting the newspaper’s message.

The Union’s manifesto clearly implies the sense of threat felt by many unionists in Ireland at this time, as the Land War and the rise of Parnell’s Home Rule party began to undermine the very fabric of unionist dominance. Political certainties such as unchallenged landownership, British political support, and Ireland’s guaranteed place within the British Empire were no longer assured. In fact, all three had eroded over the previous decade. *The Union*’s opening proclamation specifically mentions the threat of the Home Rule party and, indeed, Parnell and his policies were at the very core of many of the issues of concern to those who regarded themselves as loyal Irish unionists.

3. Supplement to *The Union*, 21 February 1887, 1.

In 1886, *The Times* (London) purchased a number of forged documents from an anti-Home Rule group called the Irish Loyal and Patriotic Union. These papers, known as the Pigott letters after their author, Richard Pigott, subsequently were published under the title *Parnellism and Crime* in the British press. The Pigott letters linked Parnell with the Phoenix Park murders, and were the subject of extensive inquiry in both the British and Irish press. It is possible that the advent of the Pigott letters prompted Irish unionists to rethink the need to have their own mouthpiece. Moreover, it is important to note that Richard Moynan's contributions to *The Union* coincide with the period when the Pigott letters and the subsequent inquiry dominated British and Irish political discourse.

Although *The Union* was launched during the last week of January 1887, Moynan's earliest illustrations did not appear in the paper until two months later, on 2 April 1887. The first eight or nine cartoons were supplied by Thomas Fitzpatrick (1860–1912). Fitzpatrick, or Fitz, is better known as a cartoonist for the nationalist press.⁴ It is possible that he may have been employed as a stopgap measure by *The Union*, as his political affiliations were nationalist rather than unionist.

The role of unionist cartoonist must have appealed to Moynan on political, economic and social grounds. His father, Richard Moynan, Sr., was a merchant and his family had roots in the Protestant business community. As noted earlier, the artist's loyalty to the crown was evident in early paintings such as *The Last of the 24th at Isandula* (1883) and *Home Again* (1883). The former painting, which won Moynan the lucrative Albert Scholarship, depicted the story of the British defeat at Isandula during the Zulu wars when an entire company of the 24th Regiment was killed. In addition to its support of imperial politics, the painting's theme of self-sacrifice (and eventual triumph) also expressed a note of sympathy with those assassinated in the Phoenix Park murders. This was an episode very close to the artist's heart, as Moynan knew one of the victims, Thomas Henry Burke. In fact, he had studied under Burke's brother, Augustus, who was Professor of

4. See *The Dawn of Freedom*, a weekly supplement to the *Weekly Freeman and National Press*, 24 December 1892. Reprinted in L. Perry Curtis, *Images of Éire in the Age of Parnell* (Dublin: National Library of Ireland, 2000), 55.

Painting in the Royal Hibernian Academy. Augustus Burke was devastated by his brother's murder and shortly after this event he left his post and moved with the remaining members of his family first to England and then to Italy.

These developments impacted Moynan at both a professional and personal level. Indeed, they may well have acted as a spur to encourage the artist to employ his skills in a way that directly expressed his political beliefs. The publication of the Pigott letters, with their allegations linking Parnell to the murders, certainly resonated with the artist. This reopening of the subject prompted Moynan to write to *The Union* and make a personal declaration against the violent killings of Cavendish and Burke.⁵ He signed the letter using the pseudonym Lex, or law, a name he would use throughout his career as political cartoonist.

This was not uncommon, as various contributors to *The Union* protected their identity by using Latin pen-names such as Tacitus and Coriolanus. In Moynan's case, this served the dual purpose of protecting his anonymity and separating his role as a painter and aspiring member of the Royal Hibernian Academy from the workaday job of periodical illustrator. The segregation of these roles was important. Other artists such as Jack Butler Yeats also used pseudonyms (W. Bird), thus drawing a clear distinction between the work of a professional painter and the mundane activity of a cartoonist.

Lex's illustrations in *The Union* were executed in black and white. They were large in scale, measuring 35 x 29 cm, and were initially printed on Indian paper to be distributed *gratis* with the newspaper. In August 1888, the publication's format changed and Lex's cartoons were drawn directly on to the front page. The subject of the images was used to reinforce the editor's central message for each relevant edition.

In its manifesto, *The Union* underscored its intention to focus on the activities of Parnell's party. One would therefore expect that Parnell and his associates would be the paper's chief target, and to a certain extent they were. But an examination of Moynan's body of work, dating from April 1887 to October 1889, demonstrates that Lex's treatment of Parnell was a lot kinder than his take on Parnell's fellow parliamentarians, men such as William O'Brien and Dr. Charles Tanner, the MP for Mid-Cork. Revealingly, the principal object of the cartoonist's ire

5. *The Union*, 30 April 1887.

was William Gladstone, who was clearly presented as *The Union's* main nemesis. British support for Parnell's political goals was seen as the most threatening of all recent developments, and Lex's treatment of the Liberal leader trumpeted this message. He used every ploy in his cartoonist's bag of tricks to express unionist disgust at this politician who had made such a dramatic political U-turn.

Lex's first recorded cartoon was published on 2 April 1887 and is entitled *A Match Race*. This shows the British Prime Minister, Lord Salisbury, confidently galloping past the winning post while, in the background, Gladstone's horse, a dreadful, truculent nag called "Home Rule" has come to a standstill. Gladstone is frantically flogging the protesting beast, while an enthusiastic Irish supporter tries to whip the unfortunate animal into action from behind. In this work, we see Gladstone cast as a jockey. This is just one in a long series of occupations Lex uses to express the British politician's incompetence. Some other images include Gladstone as a pot mender in *Past Tinkering*:

Our cartoon is an excellent illustration of Mr. Gladstone's present predicament. Mother Parnell has sent her two brightest boys (William O'Brien, M.P. and John Dillon, M.P.) to ask the traveling tinker to mend the old kettle Home Rule, and with sad face he is obliged to declare that it is Past Tinkering, as the bottom is knocked out of it altogether.⁶

The craft of tinkering is just one of many roles used to express Gladstone's failure to achieve Home Rule for the Irish Party. The concept of the head of state inefficiently "tinkering" with a problem dates back to the 1779 print by James Gillray entitled *State Tinkers*, which shows Lord North assisting King George III and the Scottish-born Earl of Bute in their attempts to mend the National Kettle.

Moynan contextualized the image by depicting Parnell's associates William O'Brien and John Dillon as knock-kneed schoolboys in short trousers. The narrative is expressed through eye contact and gesture. Mr. Dillon is portrayed as a respectable and somber student. His solemn visage suggests an understanding of the seriousness of the situation, while O'Brien's posture (he is literally shaking with shock), implies a less refined, more impulsive nature. The fact that the Irish

6. Ibid., 7 April 1888, 1.

MPs are depicted as schoolboys underscores the unionist position that the Irish were too immature to govern themselves.

Lex also depicted Gladstone as a swineherd in *The Grand Old Pig-Jobber*, and as an incompetent sea captain in *Wrecked and Breaking Up* (figure 1). The editor explains:

Our cartoon depicts the breaking up of the “Separation” raft and the destruction of its motley crew. The Grand Old Man (Gladstone) grasps at his last resources, the Dynamite barrel, while Mr. Tim Harrington (of Artane) holds on by sheer force of habit to the contents of the cash box. Even the mast to which it is tied “the Jolly Roger” that well known emblem of the buccaneers, has broken in Mr. Dillon’s hand, and Mr. Parnell’s oars are smashed to match wood. They are going down and they know it.⁷

This lively drawing shows the entire cast of the Home Rule campaign dressed as buccaneers thrashing about in the Irish Sea. Gladstone’s role as leader is emphasized by his prominent position in the foreground. The fact that he is clinging to a barrel of dynamite is significant as Lex continuously hints that Parnell’s crusade is not as peaceful as it purported to be. Lex has attributed certain characteristics to the Home Rulers. The treasurer, Tim Harrington, is shown with money bags or a cash box while the journalist William O’Brien looks untrustworthy and shifty. O’Brien’s glasses glint speculatively as he reads Gladstone’s expression. The composition has a Tenniel-like quality. This stylistic device was deliberate on Lex’s part as most of the nationalist papers printed cartoons drawn in broad outline and blocked in color, whereas Moynan followed the more traditional approach of the “Black and White” artists who represented mainstream politics in the British press.

Other images depict Gladstone as a nurse in *The Tanner Dispensary* and *Crying for the Moon*. He is shown as an evil scientist in *The Grievance Factory* and as a railway worker in *Short of Steam*. Cartoons of a more sophisticated nature show Gladstone as characters from classical mythology—such as *Samson Agonistes* pulling down the pillars of Empire—while other illustrations have literary themes in which Glad-

7. Ibid., 2 June 1888, 5.



FIGURE 1. *Breaking Up*. Supplement to *The Union*, 2 June 1888. The National Library of Ireland.

stone is depicted as a modern Richard III at the Battle of Bosworth in *O Coward Consciences* and as an indecisive Hamlet in *Gladstone's Ghost*. He is also shown as a foolish child in *Led by the Nose* and *Bubble Blowing*. But the most disrespectful approach is when Lex turns the politician into an object, as in *The Grand Old Pump* and *The Grand Old Battering-ram*, where Gladstone's head is used to knock down British defenses, or as a marionette in *Cunning O'Conor's Parliamentary Puppet*.

High on Lex's list of despised MPs was William O'Brien, a parliamentarian who hailed from Mallow in County Cork. Although O'Brien was born of Catholic parents, he was educated at Protestant Cloyne Diocesan College and Queen's College, Cork (now University College Cork). In the early 1880s, O'Brien was editor of the *United Ireland* newspaper, the militant voice of agrarian radicalism. In 1886, he worked in tandem with John Dillon on the Plan of Campaign. Lex lampooned O'Brien's ineffective efforts to heighten awareness of the nationalist cause in cartoons such as *Don Quixote O'Brien* (figure 2).

In May 1887, William O'Brien set off for Canada on a promotional mission on behalf of the National League. *The Union* took a keen interest in the tour and tried to counter nationalist reports on the success of the mission. Two weeks prior to the publication of *Don Quixote O'Brien*, *The Union* published a letter from one of its readers describing the "triumphant" departure of Mr. O'Brien from his constituency in Mallow:

I think it only right to let you know the composition of the deputation that waited on Mr. O'Brien to present him with *An Address* on behalf of the people of Mallow. Five or six small publicans, a cattle jobber and ex-policeman without a pension, a peddler, and a few corner boys.⁸

Lex wished to convey the message that O'Brien's trip to Canada was futile, and, employing literary allusion, cast O'Brien as a modern Don Quixote, with his associate Kilbride as Sancho Panza. The editor explained the illustration as follows: "Don Quixote O'Brien having charged the Lansdown windmill finds himself unhorsed and badly hurt. Sancho Panza thinks they had better bring the two portmanteaus back to Ireland as quietly as possible."⁹

8. Ibid., 14 May 1887, 5.

9. Supplement to *The Union*, 28 May 1887.



Figure 2. *Don Quixote O'Brien*. Supplement to *The Union*, 28 May 1887. The National Library of Ireland.

The sequel to this work is *Come Back to Erin*. This cartoon once again refers to O'Brien's Canadian tour, an event that received widespread attention in the unionist press. The National League's fundraising mission in Canada was unsuccessful because the Irish Canadian community was more satisfied with their lot. Undoubtedly this reflected both Canada's relative political autonomy and the greater economic opportunities an expanding Canadian economy presented for Irish Catholic emigrants and their descendants. In addition to this, the Canadian government, aware of the Irish vote and anxious to forestall fundraising for the nationalist cause, voted a sum of \$100,000 to Irish famine relief. The illustration *Come Back to Erin* shows O'Brien and Kilbride in a washtub, frantically pulling away from the Canadian shoreline, while the natives pelt them with missiles. The accompanying caption in *The Union* reads as follows: "W. O'Brien, M.P.:—Come, Sancho, quicken up, or we shall never get out of range. Kilbride:—It's all very well for you, but I am rather tired of being the 'Awful Example.' Come and take a pull yourself."¹⁰

Another politician who attracted Lex's attention was the rather suave Dr. Charles Tanner, MP, who is most frequently seen in crown scenes such as *Flogging a Dead Horse* and *The Tanner Dispensary*, where the cartoonist exploits his medical connection. But the most original and telling image of Dr. Tanner is to be found in *The Tanner Challenge Cup*. The good doctor was known for his staunch support of Parnell and his irascible temperament.¹¹ *The Irish Times* dubbed him "the militant medical" because of his behavior after the defeat of the Home Rule Bill: "Dr. Tanner ran amuck in the lobby, shouldering and pushing in the pent up throng the individuals making a jubilee over the failure of the bill."¹² This lively cartoon demonstrates Lex's biting satire at its best. This cartoon refers to the unseemly behavior of the Parnellite politicians in the House of Commons by inferring that the Irish MPs lacked breeding and manners:

Among things understood and taken for granted, no rule was more firmly established than that which required every member of the Com-

10. *Ibid.*, 26 June 1887.

11. In a speech given in Cooldorrihy, Kilmichael, on 12 September 1888, Tanner famously stated that "Parnell is for Ireland, the morning star of our liberty."

12. *The Irish Times*, 4 April 1887, 5.

mons to be a gentleman and to act up to the standard of his class. Rebels chose to violate the Commons to stop all business . . . mere howling, undistinguished buffoonery, downright tipsy maundering are among their methods.¹³

The target of Lex's wrath is the Irish M.P.'s short temper, and he manages to convey his message in a most elegant and forceful way. He stressed Dr. Tanner's eminence in the field of rude behavior and designs an award in his honor called *The Tanner Challenge Cup* (figure 3). This trophy is constructed of three basic parts. The bowl of the cup features Tanner rudely thumbing his nose, a message that is reinforced on the handles, as two full-length figures provide the central motif, while the pedestal is molded from two male mirror images facing one another across the base of the cup, each with aggressively protruding tongues. *The Tanner Challenge Cup* is a celebration of Lex's talents as an illustrator and shows that he is frequently at his best when he allows free reign to his imagination.

Lex often used classical allusions to help express an opinion in a succinct and effective way. In *The Three (Dis)graces* (figure 4) he conveys the erroneous national loyalties of William Gladstone, Michael Davitt and Charles Stewart Parnell. Each of the three figures is playing an instrument which symbolizes their "adopted country." Gladstone's instrument, the harp, shows his support of Irish politics rather than British. Davitt is shown here playing the Scottish bagpipes, a reference to his efforts to gain the support of industrial workers in the Scottish coalfields rather than concentrating on Irish land reform. Parnell, whose mother was American, shows his allegiance to the United States by playing the trombone. The editor of *The Union* described the cartoon in the following terms:

Our cartoon this week gives a study in Nationalities which has been suggested by the marvelous love which Messrs. Gladstone, Parnell and Davitt have recently displayed for every country but their own. These three dis(graces) are aptly illustrated in borrowed plumes.¹⁴

This blend of classical allusion and music-hall images helps to make the political message more accessible. The musical reference has particu-

13. *The Union*, 12 Jan. 1889, 5.

14. *Ibid.*, 10 Sept. 1887, 5.



FIGURE 3. *Tanner Challenge Cup*. *The Union*, 19 Jan. 1889, 1. The National Library of Ireland.

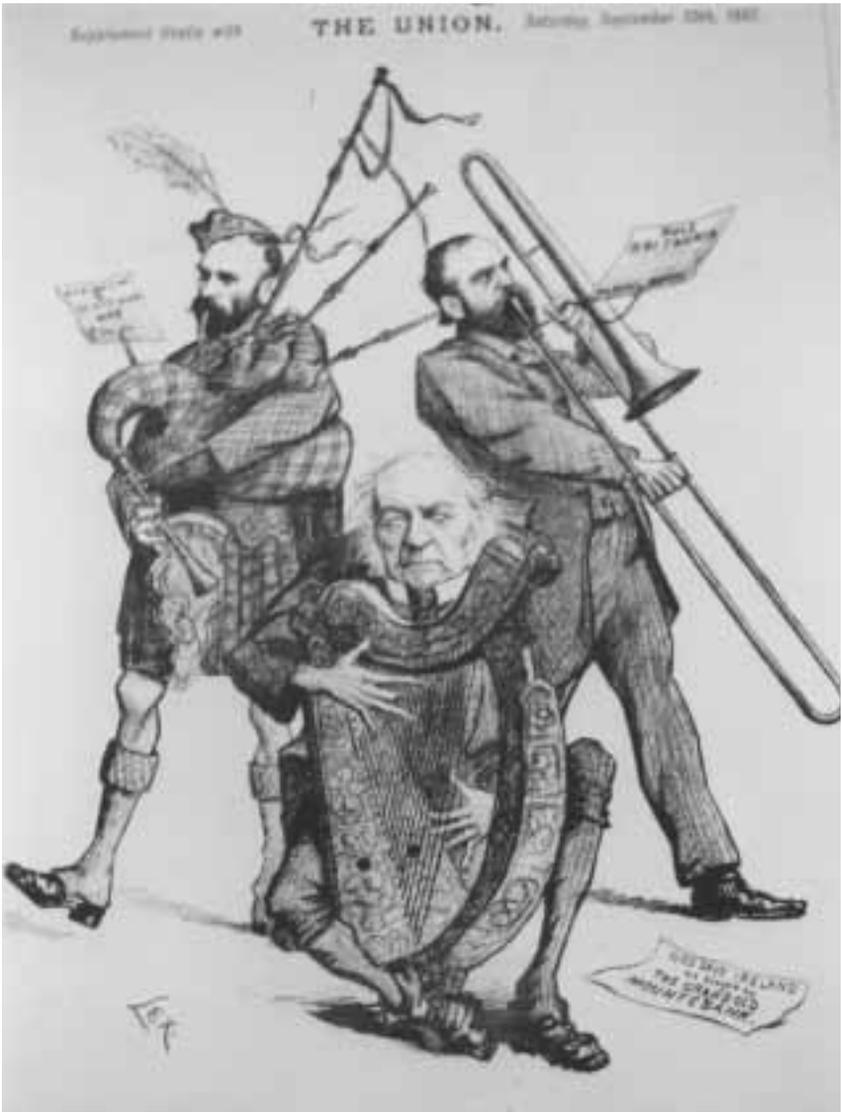


FIGURE 4. *The New Gladstone Band/The Three (Dis)graces*. Supplement to *The Union*, 10 Sept. 1887. The National Library of Ireland.

lar resonance in the context of the well-known accusation made against an earlier head of state, the Roman Emperor Nero, who is said to have amused himself playing the lyre while Rome burned.

Lex's depictions of Parnell initially were quite mild, but as the Parnell Commission got underway the images became less charitable. Earlier cartoons show him engaged in gentlemanly pursuits such as boxing in *Knocked Out*, and dueling with Joseph Chamberlain in *Chamberlain Scores One*. He is portrayed as foolish and indecisive in works such as *Between Two Stools* and *Flying a New Kite*, while a secretive Parnell emerges in *Where the Shoe Pinches*. In *Full Retreat* and *On the Tramp* depict a cowardly Parnell, while other images, such as those in *End of Session*, refer to his supposed political defeat. Parnell's astuteness and political cunning are commented on in *The Elixir of Life* and in his depiction as Robin Hood. Finally, his truthfulness is questioned in *Parnell Unveiled*, and his underhanded ability to propagate unpleasant political progeny is shown in *Swag Hounds*. But even so, there is pathos in the manner in which Lex shows Parnell as an unhappy, isolated figure with hunched shoulders and a bewildered expression. This contrasts with his merciless approach to Gladstone and the various members of the Irish Party.

As *The Times* (London) continued to publish its "revelations" about Parnell's character, any unionist sympathy for him rapidly disappeared. The cartoon entitled *Public Opinion* (figure 5) shows a lonely Parnell perched on a rock, reading about his downfall as the tide of public opinion threatens to drown the Home Rule leader. Parnell's isolated figure is dressed as a parody of the American flag, with the stars on his top hat and the stripes on his trousers alluding to the fact that his mother, Delia Tudor Stewart, was a member of a prominent American family. The cartoon suggests that even Parnell's American connection could not save him from the rising tide of public opinion. The caption reads "The tide is fast rising, and will soon cause the 'Uncrowned King' to take the plunge." The editor elaborates:

Sitting on a rock, reading *The Times*, Mr. Parnell is doomed to await the rising of the tide of public opinion, hoping against hope, no doubt, that the tide may turn and ebb ere it overwhelms him. In this he is fated to be disappointed; the tide will rise higher and higher, and either voluntarily, or under fear of compulsion of being swamped, he will have to



The tide is fast rising, and will soon cause the "Uncrowned King" to take a plunge.

FIGURE 5. *Public Opinion*. *The Union*, 21 July 1888. The National Library of Ireland.

face his difficulties and swim to the shore of a rehabilitated character, if he can.¹⁵

Of course, the tide did turn for Parnell, and eight months after the publication of this cartoon *The Irish Times* published a diary-type feature on the suicide of Richard Pigott, in which he admitted to forging certain letters and documents that had tied Parnell to the infamous Phoenix Park murders.¹⁶

These revelations did not, however, immediately impact *The Union's* editorial policy or the vitriolic nature of Lex's cartoons. It was the following August before the newspaper shifted direction as its editorial mandate instructed a change of format. Richard Pigott's well-established exposure as a forger and Parnell's resultant exoneration corresponded with a new tabloid version of *The Union*. The new paper styled itself in broader political terms, veering away from its eternal opposition to Irish Home Rule toward a more inclusive pro-British editorial line. Lex's cartoons still appeared on the front cover, but the force of their subject matter is very much diluted. These latter images lack bite and on 6 October 1889 Moynan's last political cartoon was printed. The newspaper did not comment on this event.

In the period between April 1887 and October 1889 Lex published 128 cartoons in *The Union*. These works illustrate some of the core themes of unionist thought and document the central political concerns of Moynan and his peers. Many of these works featured well-rehearsed stereotypes about the barbaric and violent nature of the Irish. Cartoons such as *Home Rule Rehearsed* (24 April 1888) show three peasants with simian features sitting upon and restraining two members of the landlord class, rifling through their pockets. Indeed, the artist's treatment of the Irish peasant changes as the Parnell Commission progresses. Earlier works pay great attention to the individualization of the Irish man, but as politics became more contentious, Lex increasingly utilized stereotypical images and dehumanized the Irish peasant class. Predictably, the Irish propensity to violence is another central theme of his political illustrations, as attacks on British law enforcers or those who would not comply with "mob rule" are frequently depicted in Moynan's work. Images such as *The Clare Outrage*

15. *Ibid.*, 21 July 1888, 1.

16. *The Irish Times*, 4 May 1889, 5.

(1 Oct. 1887) and *The Pat Dolan Story* (21 May 1887) showed merciless brigands performing evil deeds under the cover of darkness. In these works Lex cleverly employs his medium as he explores the theme of good and evil through the symbolic use of black and white.

These images were augmented by depictions of a variety of authority figures in the Catholic Church, who are shown aiding and abetting both Home Rule politics and agrarian radicalism and violence. One example of this is *The Priests and the People* (29 Sept. 1888), which features a church gate scene where a priest actively encourages a reluctant farmer to “contribute” to the Land League. Other cartoons express a fear of collusion between British authorities, the rebellious Irish, and the Catholic Church. One work, entitled *Strange Bedfellows* (11 Feb. 1888), depicts Captain Moonlight, Gladstone, and the Pope all in bed together!

Given the political controversies of the period, it is not surprising that dishonesty is another subject frequently illustrated in Lex’s cartoons. Parnell is shown as a liar in *I Do Not Recollect* (18 May 1889). This refers to an episode that took place during the Parnell Commission when the politician claimed that mice got into his portmanteau and devoured some important documents. A similar message is conveyed in *Where the Shoe Pinches* (8 June 1889), which depicts Parnell with a pained expression on his face as he removes his right shoe. The shoe itself purports to display an ethical set of political values, while the foot inside reveals otherwise. Lex also explored the theme of financial dishonesty in various other cartoons. Images such as *That’s the way the Money Goes—Pop goes the Weasel* (9 July 1887) shows the treasurer of the Irish Party, Tim Harrington, engaged in some underhanded accounting.

These negative or oppositional illustrations were balanced by various other images expressing support for the British crown and her agents. The noble stance of *The Royal Irish Constabulary* (14 May 1887) portrays an image of the force that owes much to the style of military handbooks. Unionist political leaders were certainly given more elegant treatment than Gladstone. In *Appeal for the Brave in Ireland* (24 Dec. 1887) Lord Salisbury is shown as a Roman general taking part in a triumphant procession, while *Lord Salisbury Right and Left* (17 Aug. 1889) depicts the Conservative leader on a shoot, killing off anarchy and other sources of evil.

Lex’s political cartoons ceased to appear in *The Union* in October 1889. There are no subsequent political illustrations by the artist

recorded in this medium. However, Moynan continued his career as a professional painter until his death in 1906. His continuing interest in political matters is evident as he persisted in using his art as a vehicle for his own political beliefs. Large important paintings addressed a wide range of political subject matter; works such as *Military Maneuvers* (1891) explored the influence of the military on a group of children in an Irish rural setting. Other titles provide a strong indication of the artist's beliefs. *Cromwell and the Portrait of Charles I* (1889) shows Oliver Cromwell confronted by his conscience as he happens upon a portrait of King Charles I. This large and complex work takes its starting point from Sir Walter Scott's *Woodstock*. Cromwell's personality fascinated the artist. He made a number of studies of the military revolutionary, and his studio equipment included a copy of the statesman's death mask. Moynan, like many Irish Protestants, regarded Cromwell as the hero who had defeated the rebellious Catholic Confederation of Kilkenny and assured the survival of Protestant hegemony. Needless to say, this work shows the leader in a very positive light.

Richard Moynan's last significant work was *Death of the Queen* (1902).¹⁷ This almost life-size painting demonstrates the impact that the death of Queen Victoria had on the everyday lives of the people of Dublin as they gather around a newspaper billboard anxious to gain details of the sad event. The narrative is mediated through a young newspaper boy, whose ability to read might be regarded as a direct consequence of empire, as Ireland had a state-supported primary school system since 1831. The young newsboy has purchased a bunch of violets, signifying fidelity, and has placed them on the newspaper billboard. The onlookers include a variety of people from different social backgrounds: a flower seller, a schoolboy, a prosperous looking couple, a soldier and a policeman. The scene is located on Dublin's Grafton Street, outside the Provost's House at Trinity College. On the left is the Bank of Ireland, and the viewer's eye is guided down in the direction of Westmoreland Street, toward the commercial heart of the city. The Terenure tram trundles up from Sackville Street (now O'Connell Street), followed by a horse-drawn vehicle. Moynan presents an impression of a thriving economic center adorned with aesthetically pleasing architec-

17. This image appears on the cover of this issue courtesy of the National Gallery of Ireland.

ture. The melancholy subject matter is offset by the affluence of the city's inhabitants, implying that Dubliners benefited from the good government provided by Queen Victoria throughout her long reign.

In his introduction to *Images of Erin in the Age of Parnell*, L. Perry Curtis pays tribute to the talents of nationalist cartoonists, claiming that they “produced a striking propaganda that not only enhanced the intrinsic appeal but also heightened the public’s awareness of British wrongs and Irish rights.”¹⁸ And, yet, it is also important to note that these nationalist illustrations were part of a contentious political dialogue in Ireland. As we have seen, Lex’s cartoons provided a powerful counterbalance to nationalist images, as he employed his talent, humor, and irony to express a potent unionist political agenda. Indeed, when we consider Declan Kiberd’s thesis regarding the importance of the Irish cultural revival preceding national military action, the significance of this unionist artist’s work begins to come into focus. Richard Moynan’s illustrations in *The Union* provide a unique and enduring document of some of the core elements of unionist political culture during the struggle over Irish Home Rule. By shaping and articulating the unionist response to Home Rule politics, Moynan played an important role in constructing a unionist political culture that would be strong enough to withstand the challenges ahead.

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