

1861, vindicating the right of the Italians to choose their own rulers, was greeted with enthusiastic delight throughout the Italian peninsula. The cause for which Cavour lived, only to die in the moment of its triumph, was nowhere pleaded with more persuasive power than by Mr. Gladstone in the Parliament of 1859. Although Lord Palmerston's Government could never reckon upon a majority of fifteen, the opposition to their Italian policy came chiefly from a few Irish Catholics. Sir John Acton, though a Roman Catholic, and an Irish Member, took no part in it. He was deeply imbued with the spirit of liberty, and he held with all the strength of his mind that the cause of religion was the cause of freedom. To maintain Austria in Italy, or even the temporal power of the Pope, did not belong to Catholicism as he understood it. To identify soundness of faith with arbitrary rule was, in the eyes of a Liberal Catholic like Acton, one of those blunders which are worse than crimes. He was drawn to Mr. Gladstone both by admiration of his splendid capacity and by agreement with his continental Liberalism. In the House of Commons he hardly ever raised his voice. For six years he only put two questions, and made one speech. The questions were unimportant. The speech, delivered on the 4th of May 1860, was characteristic. It was in effect an appeal for information about the government of the Papal States. No Catholic, said Sir John Acton, would defend bad government because it was exercised in the name of the Pope. In this case the evidence was contradictory, and all he wanted was the truth. Lord John Russell was unable to give a satisfactory reply, because the Queen had no accredited representative at Rome. Macaulay's description of the Papal States a few years before this time is well known. If, he said, you met a man who was neither a priest nor a soldier, and who did not beg, you might be pretty sure that he was a foreigner. Sir John Acton, though he deprecated hasty judgments, was incapable of defending oppression or injustice. The fact that it was