

Lord Acton was made an Honorary Doctor of Philosophy by the University of Munich in 1872, the last year of the *North British Review*, after which he ceased to write regularly for the Press. In 1873 a very different honour was in contemplation. He had been consulted by Lord Granville upon the European situation, then regarded as critical, and showed such remarkable knowledge of it that the idea of sending him as Ambassador to Berlin was seriously entertained. The appointment would in many ways have been desirable, and in some unexceptionable. For Lord Acton was a born diplomatist, and, though the German Emperor was a Protestant, half the empire was Catholic. But the prize was apparently thought too high for a man outside the diplomatic service who had filled no other post under the Crown. Lord Acton remained at home, and in 1874 found himself suddenly once again in the thick of a theological battle. The echoes of the Vatican Council, and of Papal Infallibility, seemed to have died away, when, in November 1874, Mr. Gladstone, freed from the trammels of office, and regarding his leadership of the Liberal party as near its close, startled the world by a pamphlet on "The Vatican Decrees in their Bearing on Civil Allegiance." He had previously, in an article on "Ritualism," contributed to the *Contemporary Review*, expressed his opinion that Romanising in the Church of England was least to be feared at a moment "when Rome had substituted for the proud boast of *semper eadem* a policy of violence and change in faith; when she had refurbished and paraded anew every rusty tool she was fondly thought to have disused; when no one could become her convert without renouncing his moral and mental freedom, and placing his civil loyalty and duty at the mercy of another; and when she had equally repudiated modern thought and ancient history." While in this frame of mind, Mr. Gladstone paid a visit to Munich, and had many long talks with the venerable Professor Döllinger. The spectacle of a man so wise, pious, learned, and holy under the ban of the Church seems to have kindled in him a burning indignation