

SPECIAL  
ARTICLES

## Our Contributors

BOOK  
REVIEWS

## IRAS ENGLAND WRONGED IRELAND?

(Golden Smith in the Nineteenth Century.)

## Second Article Continued.

Since that time, it may be truly said, legislative reform and improvement have advanced in the two countries with nearly even step. Sad necessity, which it is idle to deny, made an exception in the case of the criminal law. O'Connell with his virulence did his best to keep up an estrangement between the two countries and make concession difficult. Ireland has suffered under exploitation by political adventurers such as Sadleir and Keogh, painted to the life by an Irish hand.

It is not denied, O'Connell himself testified, that in the famine England and Scotland did their best to succour Ireland, though this unfortunately did not prevent the renewal of bitter language on the Irish side. Agitation against the Union had become an Irish calling. It has made the task of the real friends of reform in Ireland very hard.

O'Connell's original object was Catholic emancipation, which, warmly supported from the beginning of British Liberalism, was presently conceded. But he had taken his place as a leader and monarch of agitation, and he was evidently determined to retain his throne. From Catholic emancipation he went on to the repeal of the Union and was defeated in the House of Commons by an overwhelming vote, followed by an address to the king pledging the House to stand by the Union. From that time everything that was or went wrong in Ireland, the sufferings of the peasantry from over-population, from unthrift, from the treacherous potato, and from evils which are the sad heritage of a disastrous history, has been charged to the account of the Union, and Repeal has been the cry. Sympathy with this crusade and contributions to it have been sought wherever hatred of England could be found. It must be owned that British faction, pandering to Irish Anglophobia for votes, has to bear a part and no small part of the blame.

The agitation for Repeal, however, made comparatively little way under the immediate successors of O'Connell. The peasantry, simple-minded as they were, must have had an inkling of the fact that the Union after all was not the source of the potato blight. The priesthood, at all events, after Catholic emancipation, had got pretty much what it wanted, and could not relish the connexion with continental revolution and scepticism into which the Repeal movement had got, and which bred 'Young Ireland.' Smith O'Brien's rising ended in widow McCormack's cabbage garden. It was when Parnell united the agrarian with the political movement that the active interest of the Irish peasantry in the political movement was revived, and that movement became formidable again.

Even so, however, a movement with no more military force than could be crushed by a policeman in a cabbage garden would not have become formidable to the Empire had it not been for the madness of British faction which angled for support in Irish discontent. Gladstone had at first not only opposed Home Rule, but anathematised it in the very strongest terms, proclaimed the arrest of Parnell to a shouting multitude at Guildhall, thrown him and his leading followers into prison. But he found that

this had cost his party and his general policy the Irish vote. He must have seen also that the Conservatives were beginning to flirt with the Irish against him. Then he suddenly turned round, took Parnell's hand, and ultimately brought in a measure of Home Rule giving Ireland virtually a Parliament of her own, and in addition to it a representation in the Imperial Parliament, to bend by intrigue its councils to her will. That the House of Commons could by a considerable majority pass such a measure as Gladstone's Home Rule Bill is surely a proof both of the character of government by party and of the need of a second Chamber to guard the nation against the tendencies of the popular House.

Gladstone's Home Rule Bill would have been virtually Repeal of the Union. After giving Ireland legislative and executive power of her own, there would have been little use in saying that these were to be exercised subject to the legislative and executive power of Great Britain. The restriction could never have been patiently endured. British supremacy would have dwindled into a form like the Royal veto. This would be worse than the grant of independence outright, since it would involve a series of quarrels, while Great Britain would not be free from Irish responsibilities. Between union and separation the choice must apparently be made. What the Home Rule party demands is nationality, which implies complete separation.

There seems to be no general forecast of the course which things would take in Ireland were she left to herself. The influence of the priesthood would at first at all events be great, and would practically be used by them as delegates of the Papacy. The Roman Catholic Church in Ireland and that in French Canada are probably about the two best things that Roman Catholicism has to show. I never heard in Ireland anything about the character and lives of the priesthood that was not favourable from an ecclesiastical point of view. In a head of Maynooth I had a friend who was as liberal-minded as he was good. But Maynooth could not fail to be very narrow. A young peasant was there kept for a series of years in intellectual seclusion, after which he would go forth into the world proof against all but Church influences, and with his mind absorbed in the objects of his profession. Progress would be hardly possible under such rule. The country would be lucky if there were no backsliding in its civilization. To be under the dominion of the Papal priesthood is of course also to be under the dominion of the Pope, whose will would be made known through his delegate. But Ultramontanism and 'Modernism' are evidently coming into collision. Quebec shows us what an Ireland ruled by the priesthood would be.

The demands of the Church upon the pockets of the people are apparently beginning to be felt.

It is the tendency of the Irish generally in both hemispheres to follow popular leaders, and it is equally the tendency of ambitious men of the upper class to furnish them with the leaders to follow. Political adventurers would probably be numerous. O'Connell and Parnell were both of them agitating for an object which lifted them out of the depths of political adventure. But the ordinary political adventurer will be found vividly painted by Mr. T. P. O'Connor in his Parnell Movement. Sadleir and Keogh were extreme specimens of a class. The people have been trained too much to look to agitation instead of looking to

self-exertion for improvement of their lot. That there would be a general settling down to steady industry and commerce cannot surely be very confidently assumed.

A more disastrous situation than that of a country with a land-owning oligarchy and a peasantry alien to it in race, language, and religion, the bitter memories of a deadly war between the two being still fresh and its wounds bleeding, the malice of fortune could not have devised. Unutterably degraded and cruel was the lot of the serf. But James the Second, Louis the Fourteenth, and Rome were not less responsible than the England even of that day. Much less can the England of this day be held answerable.

For her share in the Penal Code, England had to plead that her own rights and liberties had been attacked by a Catholic king with Jesuits as his advisers, the Catholic despot of France as his ally, and Catholic Ireland as his ardent supporter. Her escape had been narrow.

It is fair in condemning Protestant intolerance in general to remember what the attitude and practices of the Papal Church then were. The fires of the autos-de-fe were still burning. There were autos-de-fe in Mexico as late as 1815. It is not on the charge of intolerance that the liegemen of the Papacy in Ireland will put the Orangemen to shame.

In defence of the protectionist policy, excluding Irish goods and killing Irish trades, which English manufacturers and producers forced on their Government, thereby naturally estranging even Ulster and preparing her for revolution, there is not a word to be said, saving that it was the prevailing folly of the time. Pitt when he came on the scene did his best for free trade between the countries, but his offer, having been reduced by the selfishness of the English manufacturers, was rejected by the Irish Parliament, which had better have accepted the instalment and afterwards bargained for more.

After the union of Scotland with England, which proved so beneficial to Scotland, Ireland held out her hand, but was unhappily repelled, owing, it seems, to fear of the character of the Irish population, though Protectionist cupidity no doubt did its part. Thus was formed the growing element of discontent in which Swift, exiled to Ireland, found play for his own spleen.

As the Protestant gentry were politically the privileged body in Ireland, it must have been as much the tariff as any political or administrative grievance that caused the rising of the Volunteers for independence of England, whose hands were then tied by the war with the American colonies. The Castle Government was one of shameful corruption, but a misuse of Crown patronage, or official corruption of any kind, could hardly have seemed to traders in rotten boroughs a sufficient cause for a revolution. The relief which the change brought to the Catholic serf was not religious freedom and equality, or a real share in legislation and government, but merely the electoral franchise to be exercised subject to landlord influence and giving no real hold upon Parliament. The nation to which Grattan bowed in adoration was in effect still not so much a nation as a Pale; nor, when disaffection broke out, could anything be more ruthless than the Irish Parliament's treatment of the people. Repeal agitators of the present day in identifying their cause with that of the Volunteers as a body are surely astray.

After the hideous civil war of '98 between races and religions; after the al-