

offered the choice of submission or excommunication. The official head of the English Catholics, Manning, was among the most zealous supporters of the Papacy. Newman, not, of course, a member of the Council, deeply deplored, but humbly submitted. So even did Strossmayer, the brave and eloquent Croat, who had been shouted down at the Council in violent and abusive language when he denied that Protestantism was the source of Atheism, and pleaded for the old Catholic rule of unanimity. Dollinger, challenged by the Archbishop of Munich to accept the decree, refused, and was cut off, like Spinoza, to his eternal honour, from the congregation of the faithful. Acton, on the other hand, the stay and support of the minority throughout the Council and before it, was not molested, perhaps because he was a layman, perhaps because he was a peer.

For while he was at Rome, in November 1869, Acton had received from Mr. Gladstone, and accepted, the offer of a barony. Considering that he was only thirty-five, this was a great and most unusual distinction. It was made all the greater by the fact that his name occurred in the first list of such recommendations submitted by the Prime Minister to the Queen. At that time the general public hardly knew Sir John Acton's name. But he had all the usual qualifications for a peerage, except wealth, being connected with the aristocracy by birth and marriage, the head of an old English family, and the inheritor of an old English baronetcy, who had gained six years' political experience in the House of Commons. "His character," Mr. Gladstone wrote to the Queen, "is of the first order, and he is one of the most learned and accomplished, though one of the most modest and unassuming, men of the day." No praise could be better deserved, or expressed with more studious moderation. Lord Acton pursued in the House of Lords the same silent course that he had adopted in the House of Commons. He remained, unlike many peers of Mr. Gladstone's creation, faithful to the Liberal party, at that time, and for so many years afterwards, led by his step-father, Lord Granville.