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Approaches to Home Rule : Froude and Lecky on eighteenth century Ireland.

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APPROACHES TO HOME RULE: FROUDE AND LECKY ON EIGHTEENTH CENTURY IRELAND

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ABSTRACT

This thesis is concerned with two interpretations of Irish history at the time when Home Rule was being debated inside and outside Parliament. In an attempt to discover what ideas were circulating about the fitness of the Irish for self-government it examines two historical works with a single question in mind: it asks what bearing Froude's and Lecky's analyses of eighteenth century Ireland had on their attitude to the Home Rule issue.

Chapter I seeks to justify this whole approach. Chapters II and III contain an analysis of Froude's and Lecky's histories of Ireland. Chapter IV, by bringing out what two such different thinkers had in common, tries to give some idea of the strength of the opposition that Gladstone faced.

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CHAPTER I

Aims and Sources

The usual route to the discovery of Froude's The English in Ireland in the Eighteenth Century, and Lecky's History of Ireland in the Eighteenth Century lies through the bibliographies of more recent historians. Today, eighty to a hundred years after their appearance on the scene of history, politics and literature, these works are still the standard authorities on the period they cover. They are monumental works: monuments to the skill, industry, personality and opinions of their authors, and, in varying degrees, to their scholarship.

The two works are, and will no doubt continue to be, indispensable, both for their intrinsic qualities and by reason of the fact that they make use of material which is no longer available.[1] However, they are not normally regarded as being of equal merit. A bibliographical reference to Froude's work is likely to be accompanied by a warning to the effect that he is partisan, while Lecky's is regarded without qualification as a classic.[2]

Both works it may be argued are limited in their scope. Froude was much less concerned with writing a history of Ireland

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[1]See D. Lindsay Keir, "Froude and Lecky on Eighteenth Century Ireland" Bulletin of the Irish Committee of Historical Scie[illegible] No. 14, 1941, p. 4-5.

[2]See for example Edith M. Johnston, Irish History - A Select Bibliography. (London: The Historical Association, 1969), p. 37.

as such than he was with showing how and why England had failed to create in her a mirror image of herself: Lecky, following in Froude's footsteps, dwelt on precisely the same topics as Froude, since he wanted to correct at every point what he felt was a distortion of Irish history. Consequently they both tread the same path - covering, for example, the penal laws, the commercial restrictions, the constitution of 1782, the rebellion of 1798 and the Union. Lecky, at certain points, impairs the artistic unity of his work by dwelling at excessive length on topics which strictly speaking have little to do with his main theme, such as the rebellion of 1641 and the abduction of Protestant heiresses, precisely because he feels compelled to counter the false impression left by Froude. Consequently, in what they emphasize and in what they omit, both Froude and Lecky have certain deficiencies. Their treatment of constitutional issues, the effects of the penal code, dissent and economic life, all need revision in the light of modern research.[3]

There would be ample scope for writing a thesis on the scholarship of Froude and Lecky. Such questions as, "To what extent is Froude a reliable guide to eighteenth century Ireland?" and, "To what extent does Lecky provide us with a more reliable and balanced picture than Froude?" immediately come to mind, along with that raised by Keir - "How and where do Froude and Lecky need to be supplemented?". Such a thesis would have eighteenth century Ireland as its pivot.

However, a totally different approach is also possible.

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[3] Keir, loc. cit.

At the time when Froude's and Lecky's works appeared the interest that attached to them was not purely, or even primarily, historical. It was topical. They, and their readers, were involved in eighteenth century Ireland less for its own sake than for its bearing on nineteenth century Ireland and the crucial issue of Home Rule. Froude is explicit about this. He states in the preface to his 1881 edition that his aim in writing is to expose the folly of Gladstone's Irish policy.[4] Lecky is more circumspect. He makes no precise statement of his aims, other than saying that he wants to take Irish history out of the hands of "half-educated and uncritical enthusiasts",[5] but it is clear from many asides in his work, as well as from the closing pages of Volume V, that current developments were vividly before him as he wrote.

For their readers the works had the same topical interest. It is more than coincidence that Froude's book was reprinted in 1881 at a time of crisis in Irish history: Lecky's volumes became, in spite of his conclusions, a rich source of arguments for Home Rule supporters and helped to shape Gladstone's own opinions. As Trevelyan[6] observed of Lecky's history in 1887 - "The foolish and

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[4] J. A. Froude, The English in Ireland in the Eighteenth Century (3 Volumes, New York: AMS Press, 1969) reprinted from the edition of 1881, Vol. I, p. Vll. These volumes will be referred to as Froude I, Froude II, and Froude III.

[5] W. E. H. Lecky, A History of Ireland in the Eighteenth Century (5 Volumes, New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1893), Vol. I, p. 281. These volumes will be referred to as Lecky I, Lecky II, Lecky III, Lecky IV, and Lecky V.

[6] Trevelyan, Sir George Otto (1838-1928). Secretary for Ireland, 1882.

unworthy references to modern politics lie on the surface and are in no sense justified by, or even connected with, the texture of the narrative, which is the most convincing case for a new treatment of Ireland that ever I read."[7]

Froude and Lecky were not the only historians to enter the political arena. They are examples of a once flourishing, but now extinct, breed of "politicized historians".[8] The author of a recent study of anti-Irish prejudice in Victorian England has written that, "Few of the leading historians in the second half of the century shunned publicity, and most of them relished their participation in public controversies ranging from the Governor Eyre dispute to the American Civil War, the Eastern Question, and Irish Home Rule."[9] Nor were they without influence. To quote a pertinent example, "many of the parliamentarians who voted on the Home Rule bills of 1886 and 1893 owed what history they knew to the works of men like Lord Macaulay, Edward Freeman, John R. Green, James A. Froude and Bishop Stubbs".[10]

In this context it may not be irrelevant to note that history in the latter half of the nineteenth century was only in the

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[7] J. L. Hammond, Gladstone and the Irish Nation (London: F. Cass, 1964), p. 524.

[8] A term used by Lewis P. Curtis, Anglo-Saxons and Celts: A Study of Anti-Irish Prejudice in Victorian England. (Bridgeport, Conn.: Conference on British Studies at the University of Bridgeport, 1968), p. 74.

[9] Ibid., p. 74.

[10] Ibid., p. 74.

process of emerging as an academic discipline in its own right. Historians did not, indeed could not, write as they do now primarily for other historians. Instead their audience was wide and diversified and their influence was correspondingly broad. In this context it ceases to be surprising that two of Lecky's early works, dealing with apparently esoteric themes and with the forbidding titles, The History of the Rise and Influence of the Spirit of Rationalism in Europe, and The History of European Morals had a popular appeal.[11]

It is therefore not inappropriate to take Froude's and Lecky's works on Ireland and consider them not so much as secondary sources for eighteenth century Irish history as primary sources for nineteenth century British history. The leading questions will not then be directed at the quality of Froude's and Lecky's scholarship, but will centre on their attitudes. How, it may be asked, did each of these historians approach what they thought of as "the Irish problem?" How did they analyse it and break it down? What features of Irish history did they single out for emphasis? What did they consider to be the turning points in Irish history? What was the essence of their opposition to Gladstone and Home Rule? What solutions did they envisage?

These are the questions to which this thesis will attempt to provide some answers. Gladstone, we are told in the standard work on the subject, had "the intellect of England ranged against him."[12]

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[11]H. Ausubel, J. B. Brebner and E. M. Hunt (eds.), Some Historians of Modern Britain: Essays in Honor of R. L. Schuyler (New York: 1951), p. 137.

[12]Hammond, Gladstone and the Irish Nation, p. 523.

Besides Froude and Lecky, the list of notables opposed to his policy includes Huxley, Tyndall, Tennyson, Browning, Seeley, Goldwin Smith, Martineau, Jowett and Herbert Spencer.[13] This thesis aims to probe a little into the nature of that intellectual opposition as it is embodied in two major works, by two eminent men of deep convictions, who approached their subject matter with a sense of its crucial importance to the right order of the world.

In the two chapters which immediately follow this introduction I have attempted to analyse first Froude's and then Lecky's approach to Irish history, touching a little on what seem to me to be the influences to which each was subjected, but concentrating mainly on the works themselves. The theme uppermost in my mind in trying to draw out the essence of their substantial volumes was that of Home Rule, the issue that surely preoccupied the majority of nineteenth century readers. These chapters are not intended to represent a precis or summary of what Froude and Lecky actually said.

In the final chapter I have considered various aspects of their case against Home Rule. This inevitably meant dwelling on what they have in common rather than on what distinguishes them. In this chapter I have drawn on some material other than the works in question, particularly in the case of Lecky, whose views sometimes need to be elucidated from other sources precisely because he is more wary than Froude of being explicit. His views are also more complex and harder to pin down. In this regard the Memoir[14] written by Lecky's wife is

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[13] Ibid., p. 523-24.

[14] A Memoir of the Rt. Hon. William Edward Hartpole Lecky by his wife (London: Longmans, Green, and Co. 1909).

invaluable since it contains many extracts from letters and speeches linked together by a well written narrative. The letters published by H. Montgomery Hyde[15] are a useful supplement to this, since they not only amplify Lecky's views but also convey a more lively impression of his personality. Some use has also been made of contemporary reviews in Macmillan's Magazine.[16]

The secondary sources on which I have drawn are enumerated in the bibliography. If one of these has proved more valuable than all the others it is the study of anti-Irish prejudice by Lewis P. Curtis, a small work which is intended to be the prelude to a much longer one.

Finally, if this thesis tends to dwell at certain points on Lecky rather than on Froude it is because Froude's views are crystal clear while Lecky's are often enigmatic.

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[15] H. Montgomery Hyde, A Victorian Historian: Private Letters of W. E. H. Lecky, (London: Home and Van Thol, 1947).

[16] W. E. H. Lecky, "Mr. Froude's English in Ireland", in Macmillan's Magazine, XXVII (1873), p. 246-264, and XXX (1874) p. 166-184.

Also William O'Connor Morris, "Mr. Lecky's Last Volumes", in MacMillan's Magazine, LXIII (1890-1), p. 142-152.

CHAPTER II

Froude's Approach to Irish History

1. First principles

The reader who comes upon Froude's The English in Ireland in the Eighteenth Century uninitiated into certain channels of Victorian thought, inevitably experiences a sense of shock on opening his first volume. In place of the expected openings - perhaps some brief summary of Anglo-Irish relations, some reference to the significance of the Irish question, or some geographical or economic observations, he finds a statement of dogma. In the opening pages of his work Froude clearly enunciates the principles which govern his whole approach to Irish history. They are crucial to an understanding of his work.

He begins by considering the proper relationship of one country to another, and assumes as his starting point that, "In a world in which we are made to depend so largely for our well-being on the conduct of our neighbours, and yet are created infinitely unequal in ability and worthiness of character, the superior part has a natural right to govern; the inferior part has a natural right to be governed".[1] He goes on to explain that the superior and inferior parts may be readily recognized by their relative strength for "right is forever tending to create might".[2] He is careful to distinguish between this "rational" principle and its converse that "might

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[1] Froude I, p. 2.

[2] Ibid., p. 2.

constitutes right"[3] which, he says, only holds good among wild beasts and savages.

The right of a people to self-government therefore consists in their power to defend themselves.[4] He considers, only to discard them, other possible bases for nationhood - such as geography, race and language - and concludes by restating his basic assumption that "as nature has so constituted us that we must be ruled in some way, and as at any given time the rule inevitably will be in the hands of those who are strongest, so nature also has allotted superiority of strength to superiority of intellect and character".[5] But the subject nation, he argues, is not the loser by this arrangement since there is "no freedom possible to man except in obedience to law, and those who cannot prescribe a law to themselves if they desire to be free must be content to accept direction from others".[6]

All this Froude lays down without so much as a whisper of the name of Ireland, but in the 1870's and 1880's the implication of his words was clear enough. In his concluding paragraph he certainly comes close to alluding to Ireland as an example of precisely what he means for "a nation which at once will not defend its liberties in the field, nor yet allow itself to be governed, but struggles to preserve the independence which it wants the spirit to uphold in arms by insubordination and anarchy and secret crime, may bewail its

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[3] Ibid., p. 2.

[4] Ibid., p. 4.

[5] Ibid., p. 5.

[6] Ibid., p. 5.

wrongs in wild and weeping eloquence in the ears of mankind"[7] but will not vindicate its right to liberty in the process.

However, lest his allusions be lost on any undiscerning reader, Froude goes on to spell out precisely what he means in the following pages. Scotland, he points out, long resisted any form of union with England, but in the struggle for independence evolved "a race of men who had been hammered to a temper which made them more valuable than mountains of gold".[8] Consequently when they did enter into a union it was on terms of mutual respect. The Welsh too, at a certain stage, realized the futility of resistance and submitted.

Ireland's crime was that she would neither resist courageously nor honourably submit. What she chose instead was a form of guerilla warfare prolonged over the centuries. She fought not on the battle-field but by means of "assassination and secret tribunals".[9] "Nations" Froude expostulates, "are not permitted to achieve independence on these terms".[10] Ireland, he says, has succeeded only in exasperating England until "it seemed at last as if no solution of the problem was possible save the expulsion or destruction of a race which appeared incurable".[11] With these grim words Froude turns to the narrative portion of his history.

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[7] Ibid., p. 6.

[8] Ibid., p. 9.

[9] Ibid., p. 12.

[10] Ibid., p. 12.

[11] Ibid., p. 13.

It is clear from these opening pages that Froude is nothing if not dogmatic in his approach. England has the right to govern: Ireland has the right to be governed. Since the Irish have been unable to assert their independence successfully, therefore they are incapable of self-government. Whatever is, is right. Might is right - in spite of Froude's protestations to the contrary. Such are the immutable laws of nature, or, to put it another way, such is the divine order of things willed by God.[12] And God's prophet is Froude.

Froude has a message to proclaim. The burden of his three volumes is not only that Ireland has resisted her subordinate role, but also that England has failed in her task as the "superior part". Froude's role, as he conceives it, is to point out to both parties their respective failures, as demonstrated in Irish history, and to call them both, but especially England, back to the path of duty. Froude begins with certain principles and demonstrates them from history. This is a legitimate exercise for a prophet, but it is not the historian's task as normally conceived. What he has written is in reality a tract and we his readers are invited to understand and explore Irish history only in order to repent.

These are severe criticisms of Froude as a historian.[13] Were they based only on an understanding of his introductory pages they might be dismissed as an aberration. However, not only does Froude adhere to this line of thought throughout the length and breadth

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[12] Ibid., p. 573.

[13] They would have to be modified if all his historical works, and notably his History of England, were under consideration.

of his three volumes but he also represents a distinct current of Victorian thought. He is almost an echo of his mentor Carlyle. There are arresting similarities between Froude's approach and this summary of Carlyle's philosophy:

> That God is for Carlyle the great sovereign of the universe, who imposes the law which it is man's firm duty to obey must have led Carlyle not only to an emphasis on authority and obedience in general, but also to an emphasis on these things as vested in His representatives. The injunction that Carlyle ever makes, that it is man's duty to obey God's law (the law of right), that only by so obeying can he lead a just life and attain freedom, raises the question, how are men to know God's law?...The law is to be discerned in history.[14]

Again "Carlyle drew from Fichte the doctrine that history is the revelation of God and that the man of perception may see right triumphing as might".[15] One final quotation from Carlyle's "Latter-day Pamphlets" may sum up his, and Froude's, approach. "There is no biography of a man, much less any history or biography of a nation, but wraps in it a message out of heaven".[16]

These are grave words and they impose a heavy responsibility on the historian. They place him on a pinnacle from which he is to pronounce judgment. But in thus raising him above the common herd of men they also raise him above some useful everyday virtues. Or rather,

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[14] Benjamin Evans Lippincott, Victorian Critics of Democracy (New York: Octagon Books Inc., 1964), p. 29-30.

[15] Ibid., p. 22.

[16] Ibid., p. 30.

they make those virtues superfluous. A prophet has no need to be detached, indeed he cannot be almost by definition. A prophet has no need to question his basic ideas and assumptions - in fact he cannot do so and remain true to his vocation. Nor can a prophet be changed or mellowed by experience. If he were once to doubt he would be untrue to his role.

It is something of a paradox that Froude who was so uncompromising in his attitude to Ireland, in fact had a greater acquaintance with that country than most Englishmen. He certainly knew it a great deal better than Gladstone who paid it a single visit. He went first in 1840 and subsequently in 1845, 1848 and between 1867 and 1870 when he spent the summers writing in a rented house at Derreen.[17] Yet his visits only served to strengthen his views. His ideas seem to have been fixed as early as 1840 and to this period he ascribes "the beginning of my interest in Ireland and the origin of the book (The English in Ireland) which I wrote about it thirty years after".[18]

Many of the ideas expressed in Froude's autobiography on the subject of his first visit anticipate those which are axiomatic in his later work. A passage such as the following illustrates in graphic terms just what Froude meant when he clinically set forth the distinction between the "superior" and "inferior" parts:

> Do what we will with Ireland, we cannot destroy the beauty of it. From Bandon I drove to Bantry, from Bantry to Glengariff and Killarney. In all

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[17] Curtis, Anglo-Saxons and Celts, p. 85.

[18] W. H. Dunn, J. A. Froude - A Biography (2 Volumes, Oxford: 1961 and 1963), Vol. I. p. 69.

> the world I have never seen a lovelier road. The inhabitants, except where they have been taken in hand and metamorphosed into police, seemed more like tribes of squalid apes[19] than human beings. In the towns where I had to stop for a few minutes, my car would be surrounded by forty or fifty beggars of both sexes and all ages, whining, howling, and screaming for the price of the tobacco for the love of God, shoeless, hatless, the elf-locks hanging over their half-naked shoulders, and the rags hanging about their bodies, with faces made prematurely hideous by dirt and misery. This feature at least the famine made an end of.[20]

Elsewhere he touches on one of the main themes of his work when he relates how his Irish experiences led him to understand "what the Duke of Wellington had said, that Ireland was a half-conquered country. We should have to conquer it altogether or to let it go."[21]

Froude was very vulnerable both to the impact of his Irish experiences and to the simple dogmatic approach of Carlyle, for his critical faculties had never been seriously cultivated. As a small boy he had shown great promise and had been entered by his ambitious father at Westminster School at the age of twelve. Small and delicate, he proved utterly unequal to the rigours of public school life in the days before Arnold's reforms. The five years that he spent there were a total academic loss. The wonder is that he survived at all. It is impossible to avoid the impression that he never really made up

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[19]Kingsley referred to the Irish as "human chimpanzees". Curtis Anglo-Saxons and Celts, p. 84. For more on the same subject see L. Perry Curtis, Jr., Apes and Angels (City of Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1971).

[20]W. H. Dunn, Froude Vol. I, p. 69.

[21]Ibid., p. 10.

for those lost years. As he said himself, "The five years most important for an education in scholarship had been entirely wasted".[22] Certainly he had read widely during that period but that "had done nothing for my scholarship. The only accomplishments which I had brought away from Westminster lay in cooking, shoe-cleaning, fire-lighting, bed-making and such like...But these would be no use to me at College, and in Greek and Latin and mathematics I was now as backward at seventeen as at twelve I had been absurdly precocious".[23]

After a period spent at home, in the course of which his disappointed father threatened to apprentice him to a tanner, he read enough to qualify himself for entrance to Oriel in 1836. But once more he admits that his studies "had no scholastic value. I read merely because I liked it, skipped over the difficulties and paid small attention to the niceties of scholarship."[24]

Froude never really outgrew the stage of uncritical enthusiasm. The description that he wrote of himself at Buckfastleigh School before he went to Westminster holds true of him in all its essentials as a grown man, with the difference that the combats he became involved in then were not those of the heroes of antiquity but those of Celt and Saxon. He writes of one of his boyhood teachers as follows:

> The younger Mr. Lowndes was a Homeric scholar. He was not accurate and knew little or nothing of the delicacies of the language, but the Greeks and Trojans delighted him. He flung

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[22] W. H. Dunn, Froude Vol. I, p. 45.

[23] Ibid., p. 43.

[24] Ibid., p. 48.

> himself into the combats of Gods and men with as much eagerness as if he had been one of the warriors. He found in the small me a partner in his enthusiasm.[25]

In precisely the same spirit Froude flung himself into Irish history, making his heroes into gods and their opponents into something almost less than men. The greatest of these heroes was Cromwell.

2. Cromwell

The inclusion of Cromwell in a history of eighteenth century Ireland requires some explanation. He is, it is true, a colossal figure, and even now in Eire an almost contemporary villain.[26] Froude, however, had his own special reasons for giving a prominent place to Cromwell. Foremost among these must be reckoned the influence of Carlyle who assigned to the heroes of history the special role of transmitting God's law to the masses who owed to it unquestioning obedience. For Carlyle, Cromwell was among the greatest of these heroes. He was "the autocrat by divine appointment, who attempted to bring the Divine Law of the Bible into actual practice in men's affairs on earth".[27] For Froude too Cromwell was God's messenger, and as the only ruler of Ireland with a vivid sense of his divine commission, his regime was the yardstick by which to measure all other attempts at governing Ireland.

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[25] Ibid., p. 27.

[26] Owen Dudley Edwards (ed.), Conor Cruise O'Brien Introduces Ireland (London: Andre Deutsch Limited, 1969), p. 22.

[27] Lippincott, Victorian Critics, p. 26.

In order to justify his defence of Cromwell, Froude feels called upon once more to restate his principles. Justice, he explains, means not freedom, not leaving Ireland to her own devices, but protection - protection of the honest, the industrious and the worthy. The first step was to remove the oppressors, that is to say all those who were in arms against Cromwell. The massacres of Drogheda and Wexford were a necessary part of the process of liberating Ireland. The country was then "a blank sheet of paper, on which the English Commonwealth might write what characters they pleased".[28]

What they spelt out was a policy of military occupation. Cromwell's army was settled on the land they had conquered, regiment by regiment, troop by troop. The Irish peasantry indeed remained in their old homes but "the families of the chiefs, the leading members of the Irish race - the middle and upper classes as we should call them, from whose ranks the worst elements of disorder arose"[29] were banished beyond the Shannon to Connaught, in the hope of drawing a strict line between the Teutons and the Celts. Catholic priests were declared guilty of high treason and banished. As Froude summarized it, under the Cromwellian settlement the "owners of the soil had forfeited their rights and were deprived of them. The religion out of which the worst of their crimes had originated was proscribed".[30]

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[28] Froude I, p. 130.

[29] Ibid., p. 133.

[30] Ibid., p. 136.

With the native population thus rendered powerless, Cromwell proceeded to identify Ireland with England. The separate Irish Parliament was abolished and free trade between the countries was established, with beneficial results for Irish industry and prosperity.

Since the Cromwellian regime represents for Froude the ideal Irish government, it may be as well to dwell a little on its salient features. On the one hand it involved destruction: the conquest of the Celts and the massacre of some of them, the confiscation of their land and the suppression of their religion. It also involved the abolition of that essentially Anglo-Irish institution the Irish Parliament. On the other hand, it involved some positive action - the fostering of trade and industry. As Froude writes of the Cromwellian regime, "Ireland's interests were not sacrificed to England's commercial jealousies...he Cromwell refused to sacrifice to English selfishness any single real benefit which it was in his power to confer".[31]

The implications of this are clear. In Froude's eyes the destruction of Irish identity, whether in its Celtic or Anglo-Irish features, was no loss. On the other hand, what he does commend is the fostering of industry and industrious habits among the Protestant garrison which he hopes to draw ever more closely towards England. The wisdom of suppressing what is Irish and cultivating what is English, these are the lessons that Froude draws from the Cromwellian regime. These are the tests he applies to

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[31] Ibid., p. 137-8.

subsequent English policy.

Before leaving the subject of Cromwell it may be well to realize that his person was constantly before Froude. He reverts to him at the end of Volume I. There was, he says, only one period when the English attempted to govern "wisely and firmly under a rule impartially just, by the laws, so far as the intellect can discern them, appointed by the Maker of the world" and that was under "the high impulse of Puritanism". But it was only for a brief period. "When they ceased to govern themselves nobly they were no longer able to govern Ireland nobly and after a short-lived experiment gave up the effort".[32]

3. The pattern of English government

The bulk of Froude's three volumes are devoted to his analysis of the misgovernment that followed the death of Cromwell. His approach is essentially a narrative one with his own comments freely interspersed among the tale of events. Here an attempt will be made to single out the salient features, that is to say the salient errors, of English policy towards Ireland. Just as it had been Cromwell's great merit to foster Irish trade and industry, so it was a leading feature of England's normal policy to suppress them. In Froude's estimation this was probably the cardinal error.

Only three years after the Restoration a Navigation Act was passed from which Ireland was excluded. Froude describes its effect upon Ireland in words which reveal his feelings about the injustice of the measure:

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[32] Ibid., p. 573-74.

> She had established an independent trade with New England; it was destroyed. All produce of the colonies sent to Ireland, all Irish produce sent to the colonies, had first to be landed in England and thence reshipped in English bottoms. She had established a large and lucrative cattle trade with Bristol, Milford and Liverpool. It was supposed to lower the value of English farm produce, and was utterly prohibited. Neither cow or bullock, sheep or pig, fat or lean, might be transported from Ireland to England. Salt, beef and bacon, even butter and cheese, lay under the same interdict.[33]

This was only the beginning of the crippling of Irish trade. In 1698 an export duty of four shillings in the pound on all broadcloths was imposed and of two shillings in the pound on jerseys, flannels and friezes. Moreover, the Irish were forbidden to export either wool or woollen manufactures to any country except England and then only through specified ports on each side of St. George's Channel.[34] Froude's comments on this measure deserve to be quoted. He graphically describes the sentiments of the "purblind commercial politicians"[35] who were responsible for it:

> This Ireland with her harbors and rivers, her unnumbered sheep flocks, fattened on her limestone pastures, producing the finest fleeces in the world, this nest of Popery and sedition, this bottomless morass of expense and confusion, was to lift up its head and prosper, tempt away their capital and their workmen, rob England of the secret of her wealth, her monopoly in the world's markets of the broadcloth, frieze and flannel trade.[36]

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[33] Ibid., p. 161-62.

[34] Ibid., p. 267-68.

[35] Ibid., p. 264.

[36] Ibid., p. 263-64.

He goes on to explain precisely why he considered England's commercial policy disastrously short-sighted:

> No spirit could have more effectually killed the genius of Popery and Jacobitism, or could have more surely provided that Ireland should never again be a burden on the English exchequer than the growth of trade and manufacture there. The practical intelligence, the fixed and orderly habits, the class of persons who would have been attracted over to make their homes...these things would have formed the links of an invisible chain, which could never have been broken, to bind the two islands into one.[37]

But the chance to turn Ireland into an extension of England was lost. The wool trade was prohibited and the result was "to convert the Irish, beyond their other troublesome peculiarities, into a nation of smugglers".[38]

The policy pursued with regard to the woollen industry was extended to other fields. Measures put forward by the Irish House of Commons in 1716 and 1719 in the interests of agriculture were rejected by the English House and not until 1728 were any concessions forthcoming on the grounds that "to condemn the Irish to recurring famine was neither safe nor wise."[39]

The linen industry Ireland retained until 1773 and with it some hope remained of creating four Ulsters instead of one. In that year, however, it suffered a fatal blow in the shape of duties levied

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[37] Ibid., p. 264.

[38] Ibid., p. 268.

[39] Ibid., p. 403.

"on the coarse kinds of Irish linen fabrics in direct breach of the engagement for which their woollen industry had been sacrificed".[40]

Froude writes with considerable bitterness of the effect of these repressive measures:

> If Ireland had fallen into sloth England had first annihilated the most flourishing branch of her industry. She had left her the linen trade, and boasted of having given her exceptional advantages in the prosecution of it, but she was repenting of her magnanimity, invading the compact, and by side measures stealing it from her in favor of her own people. She had cut off Ireland from the sea by her navigation laws, and had forced her into a contraband trade which enlisted half her population in organized resistance to the law. Even her wretched agriculture had been discouraged, lest an increasing breadth of corn in Cork or Tipperary should lower the value of English land. Her salt meat and butter were laid under an embargo when England went to war, that the English fleets and armies might be victualled cheaply at the expense of Irish farmers.[41]

There is in this passage, as well as in those quoted above, an implication that the restriction of Irish trade was more than an economic disaster. It was also a moral and political disaster. As far as Froude was concerned industry implied virtue and virtue was associated with Protestantism and England. Something of this emerges in his treatment of Cromwell's achievements. He writes that the "vice of Ireland was idleness: therefore by all means he stimulated industry"[42] and again that industry "was everywhere alive,

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[40] Froude II, p. 162.

[41] Ibid., p. 197.

[42] Froude I, p. 138.

creating wealth and comfort, order and organization".[43] His most emphatic statement on the virtues and implication of industry comes in his comment on the Irish gentry of the Restoration period, who, he says, "were well aware that, as the world then was, skill and industry were mainly Protestant virtues; and if Ireland was to become as they intended a second England, Irish Popery, with its idleness and its faction fights, and slatternly habits, could not be allowed to recover the ascendant".[44]

In restricting Irish trade successive English governments were, Froude argues, doing more than condemning her to perpetual poverty. They were also condemning her to sloth and thus attaching her to Popery. At the same time they were alienating her from England and English virtues and thus hanging a millstone round their own necks. So strongly did Froude feel on this issue that when he came to speak of the constitution of 1782 he so far forgot his prejudice against the Patriot party as to commend their agitation for free trade. He writes that for once "Ireland had a definitely just cause, and was strong in virtue of it."[45]

England's failure to foster typically English and Protestant virtues was matched by her failure to take a strong line with typically Irish and Catholic vices. In other words she pursued a policy of concession where she should have followed one of repression. He writes

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[43] Ibid., p. 140.

[44] Ibid., p. 159-60.

[45] Froude II, p. 240.

with the assurance that characterizes his whole approach that:

> There had been, was and ever would be but one way of governing Ireland - by putting authority exclusively into the hands of men of personal probity and tried loyalty to the British connection. Untaught by unvarying experience England has persisted from the beginning in the opposite method. She has sought to rule with the support of men by whom it has been a disgrace to be supported, to sacrifice the known and obvious interests of the Irish people to the intrigues of demagogues for whom the horsewhip would have been a fitter reward. From the days of the Earls of Kildare to the days of the modern Upas Tree she has walked in the same footsteps and always to the same goal. She has encouraged the hostility which she hoped to disarm. She has taught those whom she wished to conciliate that they may defy and insult her with impunity.[46]

An instance of this was England's failure to enforce the penal laws. They were as "unshotted cannon loud sounding and conspicuously impotent".[47] While in 1728 the Established Church disposed of a mere 600 men, there were in Ireland 3,000 priests, all of them liable, according to the letter of the statute, to either death or transportation. Yet chapels were built and Mass said openly while the Catholic Primate resided in Dublin and ordained clergy without concealment. There were also houses of Augustinians, Franciscans, Carmelites and Dominicans. Froude saw this as the deliberate policy of the English government. "The Catholics were a weapon in their hands to keep the Protestant gentry from being troublesome. They allowed the penal laws to stand, and the odium of them to rest on the Irish Parliament. But the success which would have been the justification of those laws,

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[46] Froude II, p. 74-5.

[47] Froude I, p. 379.

they took care to make impossible."[48]

The laws forbidding Catholics to carry arms were more honoured in the breach than in the observance. When in 1732 an attempt was made to prosecute Lord Gormanston for appearing in public with a sword he was indeed convicted, but the judges were rebuked by the Viceroy for their action on the grounds that it would create an unfavourable impression abroad.[49] Needless to say the episode drew some strong words from Froude. It implied, he says, that:

> ...the Irish Catholics were not to be interfered with except in time of war, or when there was present imminence of rebellion. They were to be left undisturbed to prepare at their leisure for action when a foreign quarrel should give them an opportunity. The Irish Protestant gentlemen, on whose heads the tempest would fall, were unable to regard the proposal with the same equanimity. The treachery of England towards them compelled them to persevere in a course which tended more and more to embitter their relations with the people. They continued to insist on a disarming act as indispensable for Ireland's safety and England continued to resist; until, in 1739, her ministers found themselves on the edge of a rupture with Spain. When danger brought them to their senses they remembered that the Protestants formed after all the sole part of the population of Ireland on whose loyalty they could rely in time of trial, and wavered back to a policy of coercion, which was doubly galling because it had been so long suspended.[50]

The toleration of Catholicism seemed to Froude to be a dagger

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[48] Ibid., p. 380.

[49] Ibid., p. 586.

[50] Ibid., p. 586-87.

aimed at the Protestant ascendancy who "had been planted as a garrison in a hostile country...They were in possession of the estates of the native proprietors who had lost them in defence of their religion; and the toleration of that religion was a quasi-confession that the confiscation had been an unrighteous act".[51]

Froude argues that for the safety and well-being of Ireland the Catholics were too little repressed. Conversely another group was too much repressed. He saw the Presbyterians, or non-conformists, as the most valuable element in the Irish colony and the least appreciated. As he points out the Protestant ascendancy - the clergy, the peers and the landowners - were essentially High Church and they were loud against "principles of church government which tended, as they were pleased to say, to republicanism".[52] The High Church party:

> ...chose to believe that Ireland was theirs; that it was for them to dictate the terms on which either Catholics or Dissenters should be permitted to abide among them. The Bishops argued that if they agreed to a toleration act, they must be protected by a sacramental test. Nonconformity must be laid under a ban of some kind, and, if liberty of worship was allowed, the army and navy, the learned professions and the Civil Service must be reserved to Churchmen.[53]

In 1704 a Test Act was introduced by which:

> The Presbyterians, the Independents, the Huguenot immigrants, the Quakers...were swept under the same political disabilities, and were at once cut off from the army, the militia, the civil service, the commission of the peace and from seats in the municipal corporations.[54]

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[51] Ibid., p. 576-77.

[52] Ibid., p. 239.

[53] Ibid., p. 239.

[54] Ibid., p. 313.

While, as Froude notes, the penal laws against Catholics were allowed to remain a dead letter, those against the non-conformists were put into effect. Presbyterians magistrates in Ulster were removed, non-conformist aldermen were ejected from Belfast and Derry and the validity of Dissenters' marriages was assailed.[55]

In Froude's estimation these laws were nothing short of madness. The non-conformists were, he stressed, the most valuable element in Ireland. Many of them were descendants of the Cromwellian settlers and in a crisis, they could be counted on for their loyalty to England. At the defence of Derry they:

> ...flung over the wretched annals of their adopted country a solitary gleam of true glory. Even this passed for nothing. They were still Dissenters, still unconscious that they owed obedience to the hybrid successors of St. Patrick, the prelates of the Establishment...vexed with suits in the ecclesiastical courts, forbidden to educate their children in their own faith, treated as dangerous to a state which but for them would have had no existence, and associated with Papists in an Act of Parliament which deprived them of their civil rights, the most ernest of them at length abandoned the unthankful service...During the first half of the eighteenth century, Down, Antrim, Tyrone, Armagh and Derry were emptied of Protestant inhabitants, who were of more value to Ireland than Californian gold mines.[56]

Religious persecution, persevered in till the reforms of 1782, completed the work begun by the destruction of the wool trade. Year by year non-conformists left Ireland for the American colonies where "in the War of Independence, England had no fiercer enemies than the grandsons and great grandsons of the Presbyterians who had held Ulster against Tyrconnell".[57] With their departure strength ebbed away from

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[55] Ibid., p. 320.

[56] Froude II, p. 130-31.

[57] Froude I, p. 392.

the Protestant cause. The responsibility for upholding the true religion devolved upon the Anglican Church for which Froude had nothing but contempt.

It was in the first place utterly unsuited to Ireland. It was a creation of compromise, the religion of educated gentlemen - as Froude puts it.[58] In other words, it was totally unsuited to a missionary situation. Froude makes the most of its shortcomings. He cites the case of Hacket, the Bishop of Down and Connor, who habitually resided in Hammersmith, and the scandalous condition of his diocese,[59] and he goes on to generalize about the condition of the church:

> Irish government patronage, spiritual and secular, ran generally in political grooves, and was disposed of to purchase votes in Parliament. A corrupt secretary, if he chose to use his opportunity and distribute Church preferment to his own advantage was never at a loss for a clergyman who was eager to make a simoniacal bargain with him.[60]

He cites as an example of the destructive power of the Castle the case of the amalgamation of the livings of Kilmakilloge and Kenmare with that of Tralee, though distance and terrain would make it impossible for one man to oversee them personally. However "The Dean of Tralee had his promotion and the last English service had been heard in the church of Kilmakilloge. The church itself lies a roofless ruin littered with skulls".[61] Even if corruption had not been at work the mere 600[62]

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[58] Ibid., p. 157.

[59] Ibid., p. 242-43.

[60] Ibid., p. 243-44.

[61] Ibid., p. 248.

[62] Ibid., p. 376.

beneficed clergy of the Anglican Church could scarcely hope to make headway against either the Presbyterians or the Catholics.

It is clear from Froude's whole approach that he would scarcely have been happy if it had made headway. For him an Anglican, at least in eighteenth century Ireland, was only the next thing to a Catholic. As he puts it, in the eyes of the bishops:

> ...a Catholic was but an erring brother, while a Calvinist was a detested enemy. The Catholics were good friends to the Pretender and, in the event of a revolution, might unite ultimately with themselves. Whigs, Low Churchmen, and Non-conformists were malignant Hanoverians and foes to their very heart of hearts of Sacerdotalism and Episcopal authority.[63]

Thus the Anglican Church was ranged in Froude's mind with the forces of darkness. It belonged with the Catholics and the Jacobites against the cause of Protestant England. In 1689 the "bishops and clergy of the Establishment prayed for James till William entered Dublin"[64] and in 1715 the Primate signed a declaration of loyalty to the King "with an ill grace on the margin of the page from which it could be cut off when the Pretender came to his own".[65]

The bishops, in Froude's view, constituted the main weakness of Protestantism in Ireland. It was they who failed to carry the religion to the people; they who failed to supervise the Charter Schools which were supposed to raise the younger generation as loyal

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[63] Ibid., p. 323.

[64] Ibid., p. 237.

[65] Ibid., p. 384.

and industrious Protestants;[66] they who held that they discharged their obligations sufficiently by "mouthing sonorous platitudes in the House of Lords, and by preaching occasional sermons, while they divided their time between their Irish palaces, or their London Houses, varied with crusades in the House of Lords against a relaxation of Dissenters' disabilities".[67] It was the clergy of the established church who derived their income from tithes paid unwillingly by Catholics and Presbyterians. It was the bishops who set Anglicans against Dissenters and thereby weakened the whole Protestant cause. They were for Froude one of the most pernicious aspects of English rule in Ireland.

4. Irish ideas

Implicit in Froude's first principles, in his analysis of the Cromwellian regime, and of English misgovernment, is an atttitude to the native Irish that needs to be examined separately if the spirit of his book is to be understood. He argues that while they are passionate in everything "passionate in their patriotism, passionate in their religion, passionately courageous, passionately loyal and affectionate - they are without the manliness which will give strength and solidity to the sentimental part of their dispositions".[68] To put it another way the Irish were an essentially feminine nation: what they needed for their well-being was discipline and

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[66] Froude II, p. 452.

[67] Ibid., p. 452.

[68] Froude I, p. 22.

masculine authority.[69]

He goes so far as to suggest that the Irish really enjoyed their subject status:

> Among the peculiarities of the Celtic peasantry, one of the most striking is a contempt for those who are afraid of them; a submissiveness and even real attachment, which is proof against much injustice and many cruelties, to a master who is a master indeed.[70]

Authority, he argues elsewhere, was only a form of "gentleness and kindness" and was never more favourable to Irish interests than when exercised, as under Cromwell, in its most inflexible form.[71]

Uncompromising authority was also essential to English interests for the Irish peasant was comparable to "some half-tamed animal, docile under restraint, and obedient and uncomplaining when governed with firmness and justice" but liable if let alone and told to be his own governor to fly "with a blind instinct at the hand which has unlocked his chains".[72]

Given this view of the Irish character Froude's ideas follow with a relentless logic. Nothing could be worse in such a situation than a policy of half repression which, on the one hand, bred a hatred for English rule and, on the other, left the Irish the means of retaliation. Yet as we have seen this was the normal English policy. Froude dwells at some length, at many junctures, on its consequences.

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[69]See Curtis, Anglo-Saxons and Celts, p. 61-2 for the theme of "masculine" and "feminine" nations.

[70]Froude I, p. 363-64.

[71]Froude III, p. 471.

[72]Ibid., p. 116.

It gave Irish ingratitude every chance to express itself: or, to put it another way, it gave Catholicism a chance to express itself. For Froude, Irish, or Celtic, and Catholic are interchangeable terms. Because England, from the reign of Henry VIII onwards, was Protestant, therefore Ireland was Catholic and in Elizabeth's reign "zeal for religion identified itself with political freedom".[73] By the 1590's the belief had crystallized that no Catholic:

> ...could without sin submit to a heretic sovereign, far less take part against the faithful who were in arms for Holy Church. This miserable doctrine, which was the root and foundation of all Ireland's woes, which made toleration impossible and compelled the maintenance of laws which in turn provoked insurrection, continued to work among the people, and had yet to issue in fresh and terrible consequences.[74]

The Irish, in Froude's mind, were identified with Catholicism and Catholicism was identified with treason. Their religion was the origin of the worst of Irish crimes and was in addition "intellectually degrading and spiritually poisonous".[75] Treason inevitably took the form of rebellion. The episode on which Froude dwells the most, as demonstrating most clearly the sanguinary and unwholesome nature of Catholicism, or Irish nationalism, was the uprising of 1641. It was for him the turning point "on which all later controversies between England and Ireland hinge"[76] and even in the 1870's it constituted

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[73] Froude I, p. 48.

[74] Ibid., p. 62.

[75] Ibid., p. 213.

[76] Ibid., p. 83.

for him an insuperable stumbling block to the establishment of amicable relations between the two countries. Froude's own account of Catholic atrocities committed in the course of the rebellion deserves to be read in the original if the full force of his invective is to be appreciated. As important as the episode itself was its memory, to which Froude makes constant reference throughout his three volumes, as the supreme example of what might be expected as the first fruits of Catholic ascendancy. Of the year 1686 he writes that the "generation which remembered 1641 had not yet died out. The traditions of the massacre were told by the fireside of every Protestant family",[77] and again "1641 was not forgotten. When the Irish had the bit between their teeth they were unrestrainable savages".[78] He writes, with special reference to the 1641 rebellion, that not:

> ...till they have done penance, all of them, by frank confession and humiliation - the Irish for their crimes in their own island - the Catholics generally for their yet greater crimes throughout the civilized world - can the past be forgotten, and their lawful claims on the conscience of mankind be equitably considered.[79]

Subsequent rebellions partook, for Froude, of the same essentially Catholic character. The United Irish insurrection of 1798, for example, though originally intended to incorporate the Ulster Presbyterians "declined rapidly into the form which rebellions in that country

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[77] Ibid., p. 170.

[78] Ibid., p. 181.

[79] Ibid., p. 106.

inevitably assume and became a strictly nationalist movement of the Catholic Irish".[80]

Froude's attitude to Irish nationalism is vividly and unforgettably portrayed in his description of Fr. John Murphy, the leader of the rising in Wexford in 1798:

> Father John was too enterprising a general to rest upon his laurels. Others could superintend executions of Protestants... Father John's place was in pursuing the campaign which he had so auspiciously commenced. On Whit-Sunday he had murdered a clergyman and his parishioners. He had burned a Bishop's palace, and had fought and won a battle. On Whit-Monday he had fought another and more desperate battle, and had taken Enniscorthy. On Whit-Tuesday, having established his camp and left 10,000 men there, he marched the same afternoon to Wexford. Flood, Grattan, Wolfe Tone, O'Connor, Edward Fitzgerald, these all in their way had seemed to pass for representative Irish patriots. But here was the real thing. The politicians were but shadows. Father John was the substance. With pistols in his holsters, his sword at his side, and a large crucifix in his arms, he rode at the head of his army, the true and perfect representative of Catholic and Celtic Ireland.[81]

Froude, with his strong views of the Irish character, naturally wanted the natives to be distinctly separated from their Anglo-Saxon conquerors. Once more Cromwell with his "line of physical demarcation...between the Teutonic and Celtic population"[82] was his exemplar. Yet again successive English governments failed to

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[80] Froude III, p. 265.

[81] Ibid., p. 398.

[82] Froude I, p. 133.

appreciate his wisdom.

For Froude any intermingling of the superior and inferior parts resulted not in a harmonious blending but in the abasement of the conquering race. The insidious process began with the Normans and continued through the generations to produce in the eighteenth century the typical "Irish gentleman" whom Froude describes with such derision. The Protestant garrison assimilated themselves to the conquered race "as the fish takes the color of the gravel on which he lies".[83] The process was hastened by the total disregard of Irish interests by England. As Froude puts it "community of injury created a sympathy of resentment"[84] and the seeds were laid for a common revolt against England. The suppression of the wool trade for example drove a wedge between Protestants on opposite sides of St. George's Channel and led to the Irish gentry making common cause with the native population.

Froude's description of the type of lesser landowner who, cut off from the civilizing influence of England, grew to his full stature in the Irish environment is memorable for its vehemence and invective. Like other chapters of Froude's history it deserves to be read in its entirety. Here, as elsewhere in his work, he is concerned with certain immutable characteristics of the Irish people:

> These were the men who...made the name of Irish rebellion forever infamous by the massacre of 1641. These were the men who...avenged the wrongs of their bleeding country by midnight murders, as Rapparees and Tories, or else as cosherers, were not ashamed to be fed in idleness and vice by the tenants of

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[83] Ibid., p. 280.

[84] Ibid., p. 610.

> the lands which they had lost. These, too, are the same men whom we have known in later years, either as the spendthrifts who still lived by robbery in the shape of debts which they could never pay; as the hard riders, gamblers, drunkards, duelists, the rakes of Mallow, the half savage, half humorous Irish blackguards that figure in the legends of the first years of the present century,—as the professional political agitators, as the place hunters under the disguise of patriots, the heroes of the tragi-comedy of the cabbage garden, or the Fenians of the raid of the "Red River".[85]

The growth of this type was much accelerated by the practice of absenteeism, which removed from the Irish scene the moderating influence of the greater landlords. Froude pinpoints this as one of the main causes of Irish woes. As it became increasingly clear that England intended Ireland to be not an equal partner but a poor relation, Irish noblemen and gentlemen left their estates to middlemen and established themselves in London and Bath.[86] "Rank, genius, wealth, intellectual cultivation, all, or almost all, that could have given vigor to her legislation, and tone to her society forsook her",[87] and Ireland was left to virtual anarchy. "English owners, reducing their duties to the receiving of rents and spending them, left the lands to those who have created modern Ireland and the modern Irish race".[88] To these absentees Froude attributed the chief blame for the rebellion of 1798.[89]

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[85] Ibid., p. 405-6.

[86] Ibid., p. 278-79.

[87] Ibid., p. 593.

[88] Ibid., p. 457.

[89] Froude III, p. 375.

Froude saw in Ireland an amalgam of forces he detested. He saw the inherent weaknesses of the Celts, compounded by the vices of Catholicism, issuing inevitably in rebellion. England's fault was to aggravate a volatile situation by encouraging the forces of disorder and undermining authority. The elements in Irish life that he detested Froude stigmatized as "Irish ideas". Originally used by Gladstone in a purely neutral sense to indicate the right of the Irish to their own identity[90] this phrase was seized on by Froude and held up to scorn. One chapter of his work bears it as a title. It is entirely given over to a description of Irish vices so extreme as to be almost comic. Froude comes close to parodying himself. He dwells at length on the abduction of young Protestant heiresses by Catholic hooligans with, of course, the connivance of the priests. The picture of anarchy is completed by a section on smuggling written in Froude's most colourful style. Once again he impugns Irish nationalism by associating it with the worst elements of Irish life. Apropos a notable smuggling incident he observes that the:

> ...barony of Iveragh and Darrynane Abbey, where the Connells, or O'Connells, of later celebrity had already established themselves, was but seven miles distant across the water and it is thus possible, and even probable, that Daniel Connell who had assisted at Puxley's murder and escaped the bullets at Cleinderry, was a scion of the same family which, in the next generation, produced the Liberators.[91]

"Irish ideas" Froude argues were endemic among the native Celts and came also to permeate the lesser gentry he describes so vividly.

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[90] Hammond, Gladstone and the Irish Nation, p. 81.

[91] Froude I, p. 465.

In fact, they came to pervade the totality of Irish life, expressing themselves in the constitution of 1782, and in Grattan's tolerant attitude to the Catholics, as well as at lower levels of society. The Protestant gentry could not be regarded as a safe governing agency any more than could the Celts. His treatment of Grattan's Parliament is therefore, to say the least, partisan.

5. 1782 and Grattan's Parliament

In his treatment of the revival of the Irish Protestant nation Froude's fixed views of Irish history find their full scope. In Grattan, the leader of the Patriot Party, and in Fitzgibbon, his main opponent, he finds the embodiment of his own black and white views.

For Froude Irish self-government was out of the question, as we have seen. Attempts to establish an independent legislative assembly he labelled "visionary and impossible".[92] It was, he argues, a cardinal error to have granted Ireland a separate Parliament in the first place. "How easy had there been no Parliament the task of governing Ireland"[93] he writes and elsewhere he described it as "the common source of all the disorders of the country".[94] Cromwell, his ideal governor, abolished it. The grant of a Parliament, he argues, was based on the mistaken assumption that the Irish were ready for a "free government". If, on the other hand, the Irish had been "regarded

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[92] Froude II, p. 427.

[93] Ibid., p. 43.

[94] Ibid., p. 99.

from the start as a conquered people whom a stronger neighbor had forced for its own convenience into reluctant submission, Ireland would have escaped the worst of her calamities".[95]

With such preconceptions Froude naturally finds it impossible to take the Irish national movement seriously. He contrasts the leaders of the American rebel colonies with the Irish leaders in 1769:

> America meant to fight. The Irish meant only to clamor and to threaten to fight. The American leaders, rightly or wrongly, were working for the benefit of the whole population of the colonies. The Irish leaders were using the wrongs of their country as a means of forcing England to bribe them into connivance. Had the Irish at any period of their history aspired to any noble freedom they would have fought for it as the Scotch fought at far greater disadvantage. They expected to obtain the privileges which are only the prize of the brave and the noble by eloquence and chicanery. They desired those privileges only to convert them into personal profit and when the hard truth was spoken to them they screamed like hysterical girls.[96]

Froude dismisses the Irish patriots as mere self-seekers. Writing of Ireland in 1747 he says that the "modern Irish patriot now appeared on the scene; the adventurer whose trade was agitation who, careless of Ireland's welfare, made his own way to wealth and distinction constituting himself the champion of her wrongs".[97] True liberty, he goes on to explain, consists not in self-government but in submission to just government,

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[95] Ibid., p. 1.

[96] Ibid., p. 84-5.

[97] Froude I, p. 608.

It is true that Froude exempts Grattan from his general censure of the Patriots with a firm declaration to the effect that he alone was incorruptible,[98] but at the same time he does everything possible to diminish his stature. For example, he impugns his motives when in 1782 he rose in the House of Commons to protest against England's legislating on behalf of Ireland. He comments that how much of "Grattan's action was a sincere emanation of patriotism, how much was due to concerted action with the English Whigs to embarrass and overthrow Lord North's tottering administration was known to Grattan himself, and perhaps to no other person".[99]

When he comes to consider the most dramatic moment in Grattan's career when, in 1782, he moved a Declaration of Rights, Froude is distinctly ungenerous. He quotes but one brief paragraph of that speech and then continues:

> Into what wild tumult of applause floors and galleries burst at hearing these words it is needless to tell. Neither is it needed to follow further the stream of eloquence which has passed into the standard manuals of oratory among the schoolbooks of two hemispheres. The brilliance of oratory is at all times and from the very nature of the art in the inverse ratio of the truth contained in it; and as therenever was a more shining speech delivered in the English language, so never was there speech with less substance in it which would bear the test of time. Nations are not born on the floors of debating societies, nor on the parade grounds of volunteers. Freedom must be won on the battlefield or it is perishable as the breath that boasts of it.

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[98] Froude II, p. 182.

[99] Ibid., p. 309.

He continues in the same vein until he concludes by dismissing the high point of Grattan's career as so much "vain bombast".[100]

Not content with describing him as a mere sounding gong or clanging cymbal, Froude does not hesitate to accuse him of complicity in "wholesale infanticide" in the managing of the Foundling Hospital in Dublin.[101]

Grattan, in Froude's estimation, was no true friend of Ireland. Had he been so his first task would have been to work for the restoration of a resident Irish gentry with some sense of their obligations to society on the model of the English J.P.'s. But:

> ...far from Grattan was a desire to heal the real sores of the country for which he was so zealous. These wild disordered elements suited better for the campaign in which he engaged of renovating an Irish nationality.[102]

Grattan's championship of Irish self-government led in Froude's view straight to anarchy. He describes the Patriot Party as believing that:

> ...the spirit which ravished Protestant girls, nailed the ears and cheeks of clergy to gateposts, houghed soldiers, and carded tithe-procters was to be cured by additional liberty. Having opposed the Police Act in vain in all its stages Grattan's now most ardent hope was to repeal it, to arm the rabble with votes, and lay the country at their mercy, without a force to maintain the elements of order. And out of these constituents he dreamt that he could create a nation.[103]

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[100] Froude II, p. 328-29.

[101] For an account of the whole episode see Froude III, p. 30-33.

[102] Froude II, p. 449.

[103] Ibid., p. 497-98.

Not the least of Grattan's errors was to advocate some degree of Catholic emancipation. The Protestant ascendancy, he argued, had nothing to fear from the spiritless and broken Catholics.[104] For Froude such a step was only another move along the fatal path of concession. In answer to Grattan's contention that there was nothing to fear from the Catholics he points to the disestablishment of the Church, the obliteration of Protestant as a political power, and the reduction of the Viceroy into a registrar of the decrees of the Vatican.[105]

Froude clearly believes that though Irish nationality might originate as the expression of the Irish Protestant nation it could end only in the revival of Catholic, Celtic Ireland. On the eve of the struggle over the constitution of 1782 he writes with praise of Fitzgibbon's foresight:

> But no one knew better than he, bred as he was from the very heart of the Irish people, the meaning of the revival of an Irish nationality; it meant a nationality not of the Irish Protestants, but of the Irish Catholic Celts. It meant if successful, the undoing of the work of Elizabeth and James and Cromwell. It meant the overthrow of the Irish Church, and in some shape or other a struggle for the recovery of the lands.[106]

Froude is afraid that if the Irish Parliament is taken seriously then it might be necessary to constitute a truly representative House of Commons and that, as Sir Hercules Langrishe[107] put it in 1783

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[104] Ibid., p. 277.

[105] Ibid., p. 278.

[106] Ibid., p. 259.

[107] Sir Hercules Langrishe, 1731-1811. Member of Irish House of Commons.

"in a country like ours, where the democracy does not profess the religion of the State" could only be "subversive of the laws and the constitution".[108]

Froude despises Grattan and all that he stood for. On the other hand, he finds much scope for praise in the character and policy of Fitzgibbon who stands only second to Cromwell in the category of true friends of Ireland. From the moment he appears on the political scene he is presented in the most favourable light:

> He was a small, delicately-made man with a handsome oval face, a bold gray eye, a manner so haughty that patriot members complained of his intolerable insolence...He was the most just as well as the most determined of landlords; and he was loved and trusted by his tenants as profoundly as he was afterwards hated by demagogues and agitators...He had sought for no preferment. Preferment was now seeking him.

With even greater force Froude writes that there:

> ...had grown out of the Irish race by some freak of nature a man who had no personal objects of his own which he wished to serve, who detested anarchy, who despised as well as detested the cant which passed under the name of patriotism, who combined with high intellectual power the most dauntless personal courage.[109]

With such an introduction it is not surprising to find that Fitzgibbon's views coincide with those of Froude. He was highly critical of the constitution of 1782; he denounced the Volunteers, on which the nationalist movement relied, as "sons of sedition"[110]

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[108] Froude II, p. 437.

[109] Ibid., p. 390-91.

[110] Ibid., p. 430.

and, needless to say, he was bitterly opposed to Catholic Emancipation.

As might be expected, he was a strong friend of the connection. In 1785 he spoke in a debate on a proposed treaty of commerce between England and Ireland. Among other things, the treaty would have bound the Irish legislature to re-enact whatever navigation laws were passed by the British Parliament. Grattan and the Patriots saw in this an attack on the newly acquired Irish constitution, but Fitzgibbon described Ireland as a "besotted nation"[111] if she sought to quarrel with England and stressed the commercial advantages that the Irish might expect to enjoy if they agreed. Again in the course of the Regency crisis of 1789 he reminded his listeners that the "only security for your liberty is the connection with Great Britain"[112] and in a second speech on the same subject he pointed out to the gentlemen of Ireland that "the only security by which they held their property...is the connection of the Irish crown with, and its dependence upon, the Crown of England".[113]

These views Froude hastens to endorse as "true" and as the utterances of Ireland's "greatest statesman".[114] Fitzgibbon stood for all that Froude held most dear - for the extinction of everything distinctively Irish and the elevation of Ireland to the economic and

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[111] Froude II, p. 443.

[112] Ibid., p. 499.

[113] Ibid., p. 505.

[114] Froude III, p. 307.

cultural status of a second England. He did not, like Cromwell, have an army at his back, but as one of the principal architects of the Union of 1801, and as the chief opponent of the simultaneous passing of Catholic emancipation, he made his contribution to the same cause.

Grattan and Fitzgibbon became for Froude the symbols of folly and wisdom respectively. In his partisan treatment of their careers, policies and personalities we have an admirable illustration of his whole approach both to Irish history and to historical scholarship.

CHAPTER III

Lecky's Approach to Irish History

1. Lecky's approach

Froude's analysis of Irish history was clearly intolerable to anyone with any feeling for Ireland or for historical scholarship. To Lecky, already at work on his History of England when the English in Ireland burst upon the scene between 1872 and 1874, it came as a challenge:

> I believe" he wrote "no-one else in Ireland could do anything very considerable to supply an antidote, for I happen to have the ear of the English public, and I am one of the very few persons in Ireland who have the patience to go through the original documents and who are not (I hope at least), under the influence of some overpowering craze. I have always hoped to get through my literary life without a quarrel, but I believe that in putting on record my views about Mr. Froude's book and the grounds on which these views are based, I am doing some real service to history, to the cause of truth and to the reputation of Ireland.[1]

This is a very fair summary of Lecky's qualifications. He was Irish by birth and education, yet well-known in England: he had considerable historical and literary experience: he was as detached as it lies within human competence to be and he had a lofty conception of his task. Consequently his work possesses a distinction which sets it

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[1] This quotation appears on pp. 29-30 J. J. Auchmuty, Lecky - a biographical and critical essay (London: Longman's Green and Co., 1945) Unfortunately this work contains not a single footnote. No sources are given for the many quotations which appear in it.

apart from Froude's and which has secured for it an enduring place in historical scholarship. The whole pivot of his work is not certain pre-conceived ideas but his sources: it is his one historical work to be based essentially on manuscript material.[2] Where Froude booms from the pulpit, Lecky marshalls his evidence and states his case, not indeed without fervour, but without gross prejudice.

His academic background was favourable to the composition of a major historical work. He had gained valuable experience in the production of the History of the Rise and Influence of Rationalism and the History of European Morals from Augustus to Charlemagne, two works in which he had applied what he called the "historical method" to the evolution of theological opinions. That is to say he examined the causes that produced those opinions and the "degrees and ways in which they benefited or injured mankind".[3] Already he had made a preliminary incursion into Irish history and had formulated his approach around the key figures of Swift, Flood, Grattan and O'Connell.[4]

He had been fortunate in coming under the influence of Buckle[5] whose works had determined him to enter on a historical career. Buckle's History of Civilization in England, which appeared between 1856 and 1861, enjoyed an immense success on its first appearance and influenced the young Lecky along the lines that the "real history of the human

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[2]Auchmuty, Lecky - a biographical and critical essay, p. 78.

[3]Memoir, p. 58.

[4]W. E. H. Lecky, The Leaders of Public Opinion in Ireland.

[5]Buckle - 1821-62. English Historian.

race is the history of tendencies that are perceived by the minds, and not of events that are discerned by the senses".[6]

Buckle's approach formed a valuable counter-influence to that of Carlyle. Lecky's aim was to find a mean "between Carlyle, who resolves all history into the acts of individuals and deliberately says that it is wrong ever to write the history of small or bad men except as far as they illustrate the lives of great men, and Buckle, whose idea is history, leaving out the men and women".[7] In his Irish history Lecky was at pains both to do justice to key figures such as Grattan, and to institutions such as parliament, while taking into account social factors such as the penal laws.

Lecky had a high regard for his sources and a lofty conception of his task as a "philosopher historian" but like anybody else he approached his work with a mind already shaped and formed by certain influences. The most powerful of these from his days as a Trinity College undergraduate to his ripe old age was that of Burke. The Reflections on the French Revolution became his staple reading while he was still a student and it was his constant companion on long solitary walks in Ireland and Switzerland. Hardly a page we are told, was not marked in his own hand.[8] With Burke, Lecky came to evince:

> ....a deep veneration for the past and a profound fear of change. With Burke he insisted that stability was indispensable

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[6]Fritz Stern (ed.) The Varieties of History (Cleveland and New York: The World Publishing Company, 1956), p. 21.

[7]Memoir, p. 106.

[8]Lippincott, Victorian Critics of Democracy, p. 211.

> to the life of the state, and was best reached by placing the chief political power in the hands of the propertied classes. Again with Burke he thought that democracy was extremely dangerous.[9]

The effect was to enhance the natural conservatism of a product of the landowning class.[10] His obsession, if that is not too strong a word, with the role of property owners in the constitution, and in society at large, emerges clearly in passage after passage in his Irish history.

Burke was one great formative influence. Another was a profound love for Ireland, though only a fraction of his life was spent there. A friend describes him as he remembered him as a young man at Trinity College:

> His main enthusiasm was directed to the history and politics of Ireland. He studied the speeches of the principal orators and could repeat by heart many passages from them. He was thoroughly acquainted with the history and especially with the 'wrongs' of the country; he was saturated with the writings and poetry of the patriotic party, and he looked upon a junior Fellow, who was the author of "Who Fears to Speak of '98" with feelings of unbounded admiration. Patriotism seemed to be then his one absorbing passion: it found expression in his earliest poetry and formed the subject of much of his conversation.[11]

At this period of his life he certainly considered a parliamentary career, and the idea haunted him long afterwards.[12] The award to him

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[9] Ibid., p. 215.

[10] Lecky was the product of several generations of Irish landowners. See Auchmuty, A biographical and critical essay, p. 15.

[11] Quoted in the Memoir, p. 13.

[12] Ibid., p. 30 and p. 100.

while at Trinity College of the Oratory Gold Medal would certainly indicate that such a career lay well within his grasp. It is interesting to speculate on what might have been the outcome if he had entered parliament while still a young man and if he had risen to the leadership of an Irish national party. Perhaps some of his bitterness against Parnell can be explained in terms of frustrated ambition.[13]

There is abundant evidence for Lecky's patriotism in the Irish history. At an earlier date his general sentiments and the shape of his ideas emerge from his Leaders of Public Opinion. The whole tenor of that work is governed by a love of Ireland. Swift, he argues, first created public opinion in Ireland: Flood placed the Irish parliament at the head of that opinion and of the national movement: Grattan helped it forward and did more than any other single individual to achieve a free Irish parliament: O'Connell mobilized Catholic opinion to achieve the undoubted boon of emancipation.

The Lecky who took up his pen to answer Froude was a man of strong convictions. He was emotionally involved in his subject matter. He once said in a letter that:

> As far as my experience goes, I can always write very well on ~~any~~ subject when I care so much about it that the tears come into my eyes when I think about it.[14]

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[13]Helen Mulvey, "The Historian Lecky - opponent of Irish Home Rule" Victorian Studies, I (1958), p. 337-51.

[14]Memoir, p. 53.

Nevertheless Lecky produced a work of scholarship where Froude produced a manifesto. Perhaps because his temperament was more flexible, perhaps because he came under moderating influences, his whole approach was different.

The following passage, dealing with the origins of the Orange Order, conveys much of the spirit of his work:

> It is with a feeling of unfeigned diffidence that I enter upon this branch of my narrative. Our authentic materials are so scanty, and so steeped in party and sectarian animosity, that a writer who had done his utmost to clear his mind from prejudice, and bring together with impartiality the conflicting statements of partisans, will still, if he is a wise man, always doubt whether he has succeeded in painting with perfect fidelity the delicate gradations of provocation, palliation and guilt.[15]

2. The misgovernment of Ireland

For Lecky Irish history provided an object lesson in how not to govern a country. As he writes on the opening page of his work, in the "history of Ireland...we may trace with singular clearness the perverting and degrading influence of great legislative injustices, and the manner in which they affect in turn every element of national well-being".[16] This is one of his principal themes.

First, both in the order of events and in its evil effects, Lecky placed the confiscation of Irish land, which was a settled feature of English policy from the time of Elizabeth onwards. He

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[15] Lecky III, p. 421.

[16] Lecky I, p. 1.

quotes Burke "who had studied Irish history with much care, and whose passing remarks on it alwasy bear to an eminent degree the traces of his great genius" to the effect that this was the outstanding characteristic of English policy between the accession of Elizabeth and the Revolution.[17] For Lecky it was certainly one of its most destructive features. "Feelings of fierce and lasting resentment must have rankled in many minds" he writes "and traditions were slowly forming which coloured the whole texture of Irish thought".[18] Under Mary, under Elizabeth, under James the policy of expropriation followed by plantation was pursued to satisfy the appetite of English adventurers. Legal flaws of the most trivial kind were made an excuse for expelling the natives. The attempt to expel all proprietors in the province of Connaught was only the most flagrant case of an abuse enacted on a much smaller scale elsewhere.[19] By the time of the accession of Charles I the "native proprietors began to feel themselves doomed to certain and speedy destruction"[20] and under Wentworth it became government policy to root out the native Irish by men "who cared no more for their rights or happiness than they did for the rights and happiness of the worms which were severed by their spades".[21] The policy culminated

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[17] Ibid., p. 14.

[18] Ibid., p. 21.

[19] Ibid., p. 29-30.

[20] Ibid., p. 30.

[21] Ibid., p. 33.

in the almost complete extinction of the native proprietors under Cromwell. Virtually all the land in the three largest and richest provinces was confiscated, while the native Irish were confined to the barren and rocky province of Connaught. Lecky, with one eye on the Cromwellian settlement and the other on the Ireland of the 1870's writes that it was "the foundation of that deep and lasting division between the proprietary and the tenants which is the chief cause of the political and social evils of Ireland".[22]

At the same time as the Irish were being systematically deprived of their land a determined effort was being made to exterminate their religion. Under Elizabeth the Act of Uniformity came into force in Ireland. All religious worship other than the Anglican became illegal and fines were imposed on those who absented themselves from Church. All ecclesiastics and civil officials were bound to take the Oath of Supremacy. However, these laws were not generally enforced. The Mass continued to be celebrated and Catholics continued to hold office. Under James I and Charles I more vigour was seen in the execution of these laws but the persecution was as nothing to that threatened by the rising Puritan Parliament. It was the fear that an attempt would be made to exterminate Catholicism that led to the rebellion of 1641. Under Cromwell it was proscribed. At the Restoration it revived briefly but with the Revolution of 1688 and its identification with Jacobitism and treason, it felt once more the full vigour of the law. The Revolution began a new phase of Irish history.

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[22] Ibid., p. 106.

By that date the ownership of almost every acre of land in Ireland had passed, through expropriation and conquest, to a Protestant minority. But their tenure was insecure. They were as Lecky says "thinly scattered among a hostile population".[24] The return of the Stuarts would undoubtedly have placed all their land titles in jeopardy. The memory of James' II's parliament of 1689 was vividly before them. Consequently, once William of Orange was securely on the throne it became a settled feature of English policy to suppress Catholicism by any means. This marked the opening of the Penal Era. At the same time commercial jealousy led to the systematic suppression of Irish trade and industry. Together the two codes exercised "a most fatal influence on Irish life".[25]

Lecky argues that some portions of the Penal Code might be justified as legitimate self defence but he goes on to say that it went far beyond this, its aim being to "demoralize as well as to degrade"[26] while "it produced more pernicious moral, social and political effects than many sanguinary persecutions".[27] In order to illustrate its all pervading evil influence he goes into its ramifications in great detail.

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[24] Ibid., p. 136.

[25] Ibid., p. 137.

[26] Ibid., p. 145.

[27] Ibid., p. 138.

One set of provisions was intended to exclude the Catholics from civil life, thus offering them every inducement to conform. Another was designed to keep them in a condition of ignorance by barring them from all except Protestant schools and universities. A third group was intended to continue the work started by a century or more of confiscation and plantation by separarating the Catholics from the land. It was this aspect of the Penal Code that appeared to Lecky to be one of its most destructive. Here he touches on one of the major themes of his work. Speaking in the same breath of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries he says that land:

> ...being an irremovable property, subject to Government control, has always proved the best pledge of the loyalty of its possessor, and its acquisition never fails to diffuse through a disaffected class conservative and orderly habits...To make the landlord class almost exclusively Protestant, while the tenant class were almost exclusively Catholic, was to plant in Ireland the seeds of the most permanent and menacing divisions. On the other hand, a class of Catholic landlords connected with one portion of the people by property and with another portion of the people by religion could not fail to soften at once the animosities of class and of creed,

Lamenting the absence of a stable and homogeneous Irish society he continues that they "would have become the natural political leaders of their co-religionists, and it is to the absence of such a class that both the revolutionary and sacredotal extravagences of Irish Catholic politics are mainly to be attributed".[28]

A fourth aspect of the penal code impinged upon domestic life.

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[28] Ibid., p. 150-51.

If the eldest son of a Catholic apostasized then the control of the estate passed to him, the father being reduced to the position of a life tenant. If a wife apostasized then a certain proportion of her husband's property passed to her. If a child apostasized then he too might receive a proportion of his father's property. As Lecky describes it, the effect of this law was that the "undutiful wife, the rebellious and unnatural son, had only to add to their other crimes the guilt of a feigned conversion, in order to secure both impunity and reward".[29]

For Lecky the effect of the Penal Code on Irish character and society was disastrous. It destroyed the "spring and bouyancy of enterprise", divided Catholics from Protestants and brought about "the degradation of a nation".[30]

The second of the immediate consequences of the Glorious Revolution was the introduction of a series of restrictions on Irish trade and industry. Lecky's treatment of the scope and nature of that legislation does not differ essentially from that of Froude, but where the latter dwelt chiefly on what England lost by it, Lecky is chiefly aware of the "wrong" done to Ireland. He quotes the bitter comment of Swift to the effect that the "conveniency of ports and harbours which Nature bestowed so liberally on this kingdom, is of no more use to us than a beautiful prospect to a man shut up in a dungeon".[31]

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[29] Ibid., p. 153.

[30] Ibid., p. 169.

[31] Ibid., p. 174.

By means of the penal laws England degraded and demoralized the Catholics. By means of the commercial restrictions she crushed the Protestant garrison, drove them into exile and "prevented the formation of those industrial habits and feelings which are the most powerful support of a Government".[32]

These were, for Lecky, the most serious features of English misrule but the full weight of his case against England rested also on such abuses as the use of patronage and the tithe system.

The great Irish offices of state were at the disposal of English ministers who distributed them according to their own interests. Swift, in one of the Draper's Letters written in 1724 provided a list of Irish offices distributed among English politicians. Lord Berkeley was Master of the Rolls, Lord Palmerston First Remembrancer and he continues down the list concluding that "those who have the misfortune to be born here have the least title to any considerable employment, to which they are seldom preferred but upon a political consideration".[33] Court favourites, whether mistresses or illegitimate offspring, were regularly in receipt of Irish pensions.[34] These abuses were not checked until signs of growing independence made themselves felt towards the end of the century.

In the matter of exploitation the Church fared no better than

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[32] Ibid., p. 190.

[33] Ibid., p. 198.

[34] Ibid., p. 198-99.

the state. Here too Irishmen were passed over for Englishmen who had manifested their loyalty to the Hanoverians. In 1716 Archbishop King[35] complained that the king:

> ...has disposed of six bishoprics in Ireland since his accession to the throne, and only two of them have been given to persons educated in Ireland. The same method was taken in her late Majesty's time, especially towards the later part of her reign, when the Primacy, Kildare, Ossory, Derry and Waterford were given to persons educated at Oxford.[36]

The Anglican Church was a failure as a missionary body. It was a totally alien institution of "an exotic and anti-national character".[37] The very fact that it was an English institution established in the wake of conquest was sufficient to account for the fact that it never took root among the people. If anything, more was needed to set up a barrier between it and the people to whom it was supposed to minister it was the tithe system. This was universally unpopular. The landlords, who were almost entirely Protestant, escaped virtually all responsibility for supporting their own church by banding together and refusing to pay the "tithe of agistement", the tithe for the pasturage of dry and barren cattle. When the clergy demurred the House of Commons threatened to appoint a committee to enquire into the Church's execution of its pastoral duties. The threat was enough. The clergy yielded and from 1735 the

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[35]Archbishop King - 1650-1729. Archbishop of Dublin.

[36]Lecky I, p. 202-03.

[37]Ibid., p. 204.

tithe ceased to be exacted.[38]

The Catholic peasantry, however, were in no position to exert a comparable pressure. The main burden of paying tithes fell upon them while the landlord was exempt. Often the collection of tithes was left to a tithe farmer, who repaid himself for his trouble by taking an extra percentage. If the cottiers were unable to pay in full then, as Grattan put it, "the peasantry are made tributary to the tithe farmer, draw home his corn, his hay, and his turf for nothing; give him their labour, their cars and their horses at certain times of the year for nothing. These oppressions not only exist, but have acquired a formal and distinct appellation - tributes".[39]

Lecky regarded the tithe system as another of the serious abuses which, if England did not directly perpetrate, she at least did nothing to remedy. Pitt, it is true, tried to modify the system,[40] but meeting with total lack of co-operation from the Irish Parliament, he did not press the matter. The tithe question continued to be a source of disorder and crime until tithes were commuted into a land tax paid by the landlord in 1838.[41]

Ireland, we are forced to conclude from Lecky's work, derived little or no benefit from her connection with England. When England actively intervened in the Irish scene her influence was pernicious

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[38] Ibid., p. 201-02.

[39] Lecky II, p. 16.

[40] Ibid., p. 459.

[41] Ibid., p. 460-61.

and divisive. When she failed to intervene, or did so only half-heartedly, she permitted the perpetration of great abuses. Moreover, she failed in what might be considered the most basic of all her tasks, that of protecting her colony.

Lecky traces the genesis of the Volunteers to the "old complaint that in time of war Ireland had often been left almost unprotected".[42] In 1778, for example:

> Ireland found herself almost absolutely without the means of maintaining tranquility at home, or of repelling a foreign invasion. The English fleet was occupied elsewhere, and the Irish coast was unprotected. It was said that little more than a third part of the 12,000 men who were considered necessary for the defence of the country were actually there...[43]

Again in 1796 Ireland found herself totally unprotected. She was saved from French invasion by the merest chance. It was to Lecky "a strange and startling thing, that a great French fleet should have been able to sail unmolested to the coast of Ireland, to remain in an Irish bay for five whole days, and then to return to France without encountering an English fleet".[44]

When Lecky came to consider the condition of Ireland on the eve of the Union, he recalled these episodes and reinforced them with the argument that the task of suppressing the 1798 rebellion had fallen mainly on the Irish yeomanry and militia. English troops had arrived only when the back of the rebellion had been broken. Lecky had good

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[42] Ibid., p. 218.

[43] Ibid., p. 220.

[44] Lecky III, p. 540.

reasons for asking whether the obligations of the Irish Protestants to English assistance were in truth very great.[45]

The whole trend of his work is to answer that question in the negative. Whether he considers the Irish Protestants or the Irish Catholics he finds everywhere evidence of "the corrupt and selfish government of England".[46] His own feelings on the subject come through clearly:

> It would be difficult in the whole compass of history to find another instance in which such various and such powerful agencies concurred to degrade the character and to blast the prosperity of a nation...The commercial legislation which ruined Irish industry, the confiscation of Irish land, which disorganized the whole social condition of the country, the scandalous misapplication of patronage, which at once demoralized and impoverished the nation, were all directly due to the English government or the English Parliament.[47]

The Irish Parliament, as Lecky points out in the same passage, was a mere tool of the English government. Though it was primarily and directly responsible for the penal laws it was no more than "clay in the hands of the potter".[48] The Irish Parliament was powerless. It was unrepresentative. Its members could be easily bribed by peerages or pension. Most Irish grievances Lecky attributed to "the small power which the Irish gentry had in the government of their country".[49] That power they were to win back in the last quarter

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[45] Lecky V, p. 165.

[46] Lecky I, p. 241.

[47] Ibid., p. 241.

[48] Ibid., p. 241.

[49] Lecky II, p. 53.

of the eighteenth century. A new era of Irish history was to open.

3. The Golden Age

For Lecky, it was a distinctly hopeful period. He writes that Ireland from being the slave of England rose to the dignity of independence and that after a "long winter of oppression and misery, the sunlight of hope shone brightly upon her".[50]

The immediate cause of the revival of the Irish Parliament was the revolt of the American colonies which, on the one hand, provided an object lesson in what might be achieved by a country determined to secure its liberty and, on the other, embarrassed England and made her vulnerable to outside pressure. Moreover, the unprotected state of the country at a time when French invasion seemed a distinct possibility led to the rise of the Volunteers, an armed body which could serve to co-erce England as well as to protect Ireland against the French.

The combination of all these factors, coupled with the aspects of English misrule that bore most hardly upon the Protestants, led to the rise of the doctrine that:

> ...self-government is the characteristic feature of English liberty, that Ireland, though subject to the King of England, was not subject to the English parliament, that no laws were valid in Ireland which had not been made exclusively by the King, Lords and Commons of Ireland...[51]

This was coming to be "the dominant creed of the country".[52]

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[50] Ibid., p. 317.

[51] Ibid., p. 228.

[52] Ibid., p. 228.

It is characteristic of Lecky that he should go on to point out that there was nothing revolutionary in this doctrine. On the contrary, the:

> ...right of Ireland to parliamentary independence had been unanimously asserted by the Irish Parliament of 1641; it had been a leading topic in the Remonstrance presented by the Irish Catholics to the Commissioners of Charles I in 1642, and in the negotiation of the Catholic Confederates for peace in 1645, and it was reiterated in emphatic terms by the Parliament of James II, convened at Dublin in 1689. On the ruin of the Catholics the banner which dropped from their hands was caught up by the Protestants. The doctrine of the legitimate independence of the Irish Parliament passed from Molyneux to Swift, from Swift to Lucas, from Lucas to Flood...It was the first principle of the policy of Charlemont; and the eloquence of Grattan, assisted by the example of America and by the independence which the sense of power naturally gives, was rapidly preparing its triumph.[53]

It was also typical of Lecky to trace the rise of civil liberty even further back to the grant of Magna Carta.[54]

He clearly derived immense emotional satisfaction from the contemplation of this period of Irish history. Whatever aspect of it he touches on, whether it is the characters of Charlemont and Grattan,[55] the character of the Volúnteers,[56] the quality of the debates in the house of Commons,[57] or the nature of the legislation passed,[58] he finds room for praise. Eighteenth century Dublin was his spiritual home and he might have been a happy man if he had been

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[53] Ibid., p. 229.

[54] Ibid., p. 228.

[55] Ibid., p. 295.

[56] Ibid., p. 295.

[57] Lecky III, p. 337.

[58] Lecky II, p. 502.

born a century earlier and if his political aspirations could have been satisfied as a colleague of Flood and Grattan.

Grattan's Parliament comes close to fulfilling Lecky's constitutional ideal. It is the yardstick by which he measures later developments in Ireland. As indicated in the lengthy passage quoted above its outstanding charactoristic was that it enjoyed legislative independence. Grattan, the spokesman of what Lecky refers to as the "popular" or "national"[59] party, in a speech in the House of Commons in 1782 enumerated three principal Irish grievances - the claims of the British Parliament to legislate for Ireland, the power of the Privy Council to suppress or alter Irish bills and the perpetual Mutiny Act which placed the Irish army beyond the control of the Irish Parliament.[60] At any other time such a statement of the Irish case would probably have fallen on deaf ears but at this juncture England yielded. Fox announced in the British Parliament the government's decision to yield to the Irish demands absolutely and unconditionally. In his own words he would "meet Ireland on her own terms and give her everything she wanted in the way she herself seemed to wish for it".[61] Grattan summed up what had been achieved. "I understand" he said "that Great Britain gives up in total every claim to authority over Ireland".[62]

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[59] Ibid., p. 295.

[60] Ibid., p. 301.

[61] Ibid., p. 308.

[62] Ibid., p. 309.

This gave formal recognition to a process which had already begun. At the close of 1779 and the beginning of 1780 acts which prohibited the Irish from exporting their woollen manufactures and glass were repealed and trade with British colonies in America and Africa was thrown open.[63] These new measures became "the main sources of whatever material prosperity Ireland enjoyed during the next twenty years".[64]

With the attainment of legislative independence some features of the Penal Code were modified. Catholics were still forbidden to proselytize, but they were allowed to engage in teaching and were permitted to be the guardians of Catholic children. A Protestant might no longer appropriate a Catholic's horse on tendering him £5.[65] Dissenters too benefited in that their ministers were allowed to celebrate valid marriages for their co-religionists.[66] In 1780 the Test Act was abolished.[67]

Foster's Corn Law of 1784 promoted arable farming by granting large bounties on the exportation of corn and imposing heavy duties on its import.[68] This measure, together with the repeal of the restrictions on trade, made the last twenty years of the eighteenth century a period of great and growing prosperity.[69]

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[63] Ibid., p. 242.

[64] Ibid., p. 243.

[65] Ibid., p. 312-14.

[66] Ibid., p. 314.

[67] Ibid., p. 244.

[68] Ibid., p. 286-87.

[69] Ibid., p. 488-89.

An increase in prosperity, a slackening in religious animosities, these were two benefits that sprang from the agitation of the 1780's. They do much to explain Lecky's enthusiasm for Irish legislative independence. Yet, important as they are, they are not the features that Lecky emphasizes above all others. They were only the outward proofs of an inner well-being. What he delighted in above all was the nature of the constitution itself and what he stressed was the role played by property owners and the loyalty of the Parliament to the English connection.

The belief that the principal role in a legislative assembly should, for the sake of society's stability, be taken by property-owners, is one of Lecky's underlying assumptions. When he treats of Grattan's Parliament, he is anxious to stress what it was not, as well as what it was. He writes that:

> ...few things can be more grotesquely absurd than to suppose that the merits or demerits, the failure or the success, of the old Irish Parliament has any real bearing on modern schemes for reconstructing the government of Ireland on a revolutionary and Jacobin basis; entrusting the protection of property and the maintenance of law to some democratic assembly consisting mainly of Fenians and Land-leaguers, of paid agitators and penniless adventurers.[70]

The eighteenth-century parliament, he is at pains to stress, should be described essentially as "the government of Ireland by the gentlemen of Ireland, and especially by its landlord class" and he continues to the effect that it "comprised the flower of the landlord class. It was essentially and pre-eminently the representative of the property of the country. It had all the instincts and the prejudices, but

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[70] Ibid., p. 501.

also all the qualities and capacities, of an educated propertied class, and it brought great local knowledge and experience to its task".[71]

Lecky makes much of the point that Grattan's:

> ...whole theory of Irish politics was very far from democratic. From first to last it was a foremost article of his policy that it was essential to the safe-working of representative institutions in Ireland that they should be under the full guidance and control of the property of the country and that the greatest of all calamities would be that this guidance should pass into the hands of adventurers and demagogues. He desired the House of Commons to be a body consisting mainly of the independent landed gentry and leading lawyers, and resting mainly on a freehold suffrage.[72]

Lecky admits that an aristocratic form of government may have faults but he claims that it does at least save a nation from "the two greatest calamities that can befall it - from government by fanatics and experimentalists and from government by gamblers and adventurers".[73] Armed force, too, he argues, should rest in the same hands. He agrees with Grattan that the "old, the original volunteers had become respectable because they represented the property of the nation" but that an "armed beggary"[74] would be a potentially dangerous force.

The role played by property in the movement to secure a free Irish Parliament was always closely linked in Lecky's mind with another of its incontestable merits - its loyalty to the connection.

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[71] Ibid., p. 501-02.

[72] Ibid., p. 427.

[73] Ibid., p. 57.

[74] Ibid., p. 396.

He stresses, no doubt with nineteenth century developments in mind, that those:

> ...who were leading the movement were not rebels and were not demagogues. They had made - they were making - they were prepared to make every effort in their power for the defence of the Empire and of the connection. They were the gentry of Ireland, and they were asking nothing more than the restoration of their ancient rights - nothing more than that political liberty which Englishmen themselves maintained to be the first of blessings...Loyal men, devotedly attached to the Crown and the connection, who had strained the resources of the country to the utmost for the support of the Empire, who had borne with signal patience misgovernment of the most varied and most crushing character, who were themselves discharging by an admirable voluntary effort the neglected duties of the Government, might surely afford to bear the imputation of ingratitude if they availed themselves of the one opportunity which had arisen since the Revolution of recovering their birth-right of freedom.[75]

Grattan summed up all Lecky's own hopes and ideals when he said that Ireland should work to correct and improve her constitution but "with a fixed, steady and unalterable resolution to stand or fall with Great Britain".[76]

In Lecky's praise of Grattan's Parliament and of the entire movement associated with it, we have a faithful picture of what he himself wanted for Ireland. He writes that the "national movement" was in almost all respects "worthy of a very high degree of admiration".[77] For him Grattan and Charlemont, the leader of the Volunteers, were

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[75] Ibid., p. 250.

[76] Lecky III, p. 226.

[77] Lecky II, p. 295.

comparable to Hampden or Washington. The Volunteers were a disciplined and responsible body in the discharge of their military and police functions. The animosity between Anglicans and Presbyterians, and between Protestants and Catholics, was diminishing and while the country was determined upon constitutional freedom it was loyal to the connection.[78] In addition commerce was reviving and the country was prospering.

However, while Lecky recognized the great merits of Grattan's Parliament, he had also a vivid awareness of its shortcomings. While it settled some points at issue between the two countries it raised new problems to which solutions had to be found.

Foremost in Lecky's mind was the danger that if the Irish constitution of 1782 remained unqualified by any further arrangement then it might weaken and endanger the Empire. While he cast no doubt on the loyalty of Grattan and his colleagues he bore in mind that a "separate Irish Parliament consisting of men who were disloyal to the English Government could only lead either to separation or to civil war. It would be the most powerful and the most certain agent that the wit of man could devise for organizing the resources of Ireland against England".[79]

Even without active disloyalty in the Irish Parliament there was scope for friction. The mere knowledge that the constitution of 1782 had been extorted from England under duress was enough to engender

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[78] Ibid., p. 295-96.

[79] Ibid., p. 328-29.

a perpetual suspicion of the mother country. There is no doubt that English ministers cherished the hope of regaining the lost supremacy.[80] Also, while in law, the two legislatures were co-ordinate and co-equal in practice, they were not. English ministers were responsible to the English Parliament but Irish ministers were not responsible to the Irish Parliament. "They were Englishmen, strangers to Ireland, appointed and instructed by English ministers and changed with each succeeding Administration".[81] Clearly this raised the possibility of serious conflict particularly if the Irish Parliament were reformed so that it became less amenable to English influence.[82] Lecky envisaged the possibility of a conflict of interests over such questions as the imposition of duties and the declaration of peace and war.[83]

The question of the precise nature of the relationship between England and Ireland was one unresolved issue. A second related problem was the awakening of the country to political awareness. As the eighteenth century drew to a close, forces were at work beyond the confines of Parliament. Parliament must either reform itself so that those forces might be brought within the pale of the constitution or else it must face the possibility of its own destruction. As Lecky saw it, it was necessary to make parliament more representative without

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[80] Ibid., p. 335.

[81] Ibid., p. 336.

[82] Ibid., p. 348.

[83] Ibid., p. 340-43.

destroying "the healthy and indispensable ascendancy of property and intelligence".[84] This proved to be an impossible task.

4. Decline

In the early 1780's Lecky found a growing unity in Ireland. In the late 1780's and down to the time of the Union, he traced the growth of division and animosity. In place of the leadership of a loyal and responsible gentry he found the people given over to rebels and agitators. The way was being prepared for the almost total disruption of society that he himself witnessed as he wrote in the 1870's and 1880's.

Lecky describes the deterioration as taking place on several fronts simultaneously, events in one sphere interacting with those in another, and all of them contributing to the rebellion of 1798. The failure to find a satisfactory answer to the Catholic question brought out into the open latent religious animosity which crystallized into Defenderism on the one hand and the Orange Movement on the other. These movements, relying on terror and violence, hastened the breakdown of the established order which was in any case threatened by the tide of the French Revolution, and by its offspring the United Irishmen. The whole fabric of society was endangered. The fledgling constitution of 1782 might have survived any one of these trials separately but their combined effect was fatal.

Among the most urgent problems to be grappled with was Catholic Emancipation. Grattan was its enthusiastic advocate. It would he said have been the coping stone of the Constitution of 1782. As he saw it

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[84] Ibid., p. 517.

the question was whether:

> ...we shall be a Protestant settlement or an Irish nation...for so long as we exclude Catholics from natural liberty and the common rights of man we are not a people... As the mover of the Declaration of Rights I should be ashamed of giving freedom to but 600,000 of my fellow-countrymen, when I could extend it to two millions more.[85]

The establishment of a free Irish Parliament had certainly impressed on the Catholics more vividly than before the injustice of their position, for while it ostensibly placed Ireland "in the rank of free and self-governed kingdoms...it left the Catholics with no more political rights than the serfs of Russia or Poland".[86] Every relaxation of the Code that had already taken place only increased impatience with those that remained. The demand of the Catholic Committee in 1791 that the Code be abolished in its entirety and a petition to the King in 1792 indicate that the Catholics were no longer prepared to suffer in silence.

The question had some far reaching implications. If, as Lecky writes, the Catholics could be enfranchised then "the chasm that yawned between the two great sections of the Irish people could be finally bridged" and "Ireland would indeed become a nation". But if:

> ...the task was tardily or unskilfully accomplished, there were dangers of the most terrible and the most permanent character to be feared. Religious animosities and class antipathies which had long been slumbering might be revived in all their fierceness. The elements of anarchy and agitation which

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[85] Ibid., p. 313.

[86] Lecky III, p. 25.

> lay only too abundantly in a population poor, ignorant, turbulent, and superstitious beyond almost any in Europe might be let loose and turned into politics. The Catholics of Ireland, who had hitherto scarcely awakened to political life, and whose leaders had been uniformly loyal, and much more inclined to lean towards the English government than towards the Irish Parliament, might be permanently alienated from the connection. In the clash of discordant elements Ireland might be once more cursed with the calamities of civil war; and confiscations and penal laws had placed landed property so exclusively in the hands of the ascendant class, that a danger still graver than rebellion might be feared. It was that which Burke truly called 'the most irreconcilable quarrel that can divide a nation - a struggle for the landed property of the whole kingdom'.[87]

Lecky's forebodings were to be amply fulfilled: the task was roughly carried out with dire consequences. The English cabinet, faced with the prospect of a major European war, decided on a policy of conciliation. The Irish House of Commons, with the exception of a small but virulent anti-Catholic party, was generally in favour and in 1793 an act giving the majority of Irish Catholics the vote was passed. For Lecky it was a disaster for while in enfranchised the "ignorant and excitable Catholic population"[88] it witheld power and influence from the gentry. It drove another wedge between the class that he looked upon as the natural leaders of the people and the multitudes they were supposed to guide. Moreover, by withholding complete emancipation it laid the foundation for the long struggle, which did not end till 1829, in the course of which "the foundation was laid for the political anarchy of our own day".[89]

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[87] Ibid., p. 28-9.

[88] Ibid., p. 150.

[89] Ibid., p. 150.

An important episode in that struggle was the brief lieutenancy of Lord Fitzwilliam. Lecky examines it in great detail in order to bring out the full arbitrariness of English policy. He stresses that from the very beginning of his period of office, Fitzwilliam believed himself commissioned to carry to completion the process of emancipation begun in 1793, and previous to his departure for Ireland he found the "Cabinet, with Mr. Pitt at their head, strongly impressed with the same conviction".[90] It was true that the Cabinet was not enthusiastic, true that they would much prefer to delay the whole question to some more tranquil period, but still in Fitzwilliam's words "if the Catholics should appear determined to stir the business, and to bring it before Parliament, I was to give it a handsome support on the part of the Government".[91]

The Catholics were determined. As soon as Fitzwilliam landed, the question was forced upon his attention. The belief became current that Emancipation would soon be carried. Within ten days of his arrival the new Lieutenant was writing home to Portland that "not to grant cheerfully on the part of the Government all the Catholics wish, will not only be exceedingly impolitic, but perhaps dangerous".[92] In no other way, he said, could internal tranquillity be restored and the danger of collaberation be removed if the French should decide to invade. As French arms made progress on the Continent

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[90] Ibid., p. 262.

[91] Ibid., p. 262.

[92] Ibid., p. 266.

in 1794 the danger of an invasion became more pressing: it became imminent with the fall of Holland in 1795.

Within Ireland there was little opposition to the measure. Catholics of all classes were in favour. The Protestant gentry appreciated the advantages of strengthening the conservative elements in the constitution at a period when "the ascendancy of of property, rank and intelligence, was strained and weakened"[93] and the people were inclining towards new leaders. Fitzgibbon, it is true, maintained a stout opposition to the measure but this would not have availed against government determination to carry it.[94] There was every reason to suppose that Fitzwilliams' aim of "one people, one Christian people, binding themselves in one common cause by one civil oath"[95] was going to be achieved.

If the Cabinet had been wholly behind him there is no doubt that it would have been. But while Fitzwilliam on the spot regarded the whole matter with an ever-increasing sense of urgency the English ministers dithered, and Portland[96] in a letter to the Lieutenant rehearsed all the traditional arguments against Emancipation. How, he asked, could the Protestant establishment survive in face of the numerical superiority of the Catholics if the old safeguards were withdrawn?[97]

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[93] Ibid., p. 286.

[94] Ibid., p. 281.

[95] Ibid., p. 283.

[96] Portland - Secretary of State for Home Department in Pitt's ministry. Former Lord Lieutenant of Ireland.

[97] Lecky III, p. 293.

Fitzwilliam countered these arguments at length but to no avail. He was accused of pressing on with Emancipation with unseemly haste and was ordered to break off the proceedings. The Cabinet then agreed that he should be recalled.[98]

For Ireland it was a disaster. Not only did it divert the Catholics from the path of constitutional reform into the arms of the United Irishmen, but it also alienated the Protestant gentry. In the words of Sir Lawrence Parsons[99] the:

> ...hopes of the public were raised, and in one instant they were blasted. If the House did not resent that insult to the nation and to themselves, they would in his mind be most contemptible; for although a majority of the people might submit to have their rights withheld, they would never submit to be mocked in so barefaced a manner.[100]

For Lecky the episode was a "fatal turning point in Irish history".[101] Even without it the condition of Ireland was "exceedingly dangerous";[102] with it it became hopeless. Such signs of progress as there were in Ireland - her material prosperity, the fading of religious animosities, the loyalty of the people to England - all these were cancelled out:

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[98] Emancipation was only one factor in his recall. See Ibid., p. 300-312.

[99] Parsons - 1758-1841. Member of Irish House of Commons.

[100] Ibid., p. 315-16.

[101] Ibid., p. 323.

[102] Ibid., p. 322.

> ...from the day when Pitt recalled Lord Fitzwilliam, the course of her history was changed. Intense and growing hatred of England, revived religious and class animosities, a savage rebellion savagely repressed, a legislative union prematurely and corruptly carried, mark the closing years of the eighteenth century, and after ninety years of direct British government, the condition of Ireland is universally recognized as the chief scandal and the chief weakness of the Empire.[103]

Lecky describes the condition of Ireland as going from bad to worse. The government having decided to resist Emancipation went out of its way to impress upon the Catholics their inferior status. They were told that "their disqualifications were permanent and indelible, essential to the connection of their country with England, essential to the monarchical constitution under which they lived"[104] while Fitzgibbon, their most implacable enemy, and the opponent of all moderate reform of the constitution was made Earl of Clare.[105]

In these circumstances frustration naturally found unconstitutional outlets. The tradition of lawlessness which had long existed among the peasantry broke out in the shape of a "new Whiteboy movement" which aimed at the abolition of tithes and the redress of agrarian grievances.[106] The recall of Fitzwilliam contributed to the

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[103] Lecky III, p. 324.

[104] Ibid., p. 345.

[105] Ibid., p. 324.

[106] Ibid., p. 215.

spread of the movement. In the county of Armagh it came into conflict with the militant Protestantism of the North in the shape of the Orange Movement which pledged itself to support the Protestant ascendancy as represented by the policy of Fitzgibbon.[107] The formation of this society in 1795 was the signal for the persecution of Catholics in Armagh and the adjoining counties. From that time onwards the:

> ...disloyalty of the Catholics advanced with gigantic strides. Up to the period of the recall of Lord Fitzwilliam, though there was great positive lawlessness, and almost complete alienation of sympathy from the Government, there appears to have been, in these masses, but little active political disaffection.[108]

However, the events in Armagh and the belief that the persecution was condoned, or rather instigated, by the Government, drove the Catholics into the ranks of the United Irishmen.[109]

That body was the Irish offspring of the hopes and ideals of the French Revolution. The revolutionary message had, besides its universal appeal, a special applicability to Ireland: the cry for the abolition of tithes and still more that for the abolition of all religious disqualifications and for universal franchise was likely to find a ready hearing in the Ireland of the 1790's.

In 1791 the Society of United Irishmen was founded for the purpose of forming a political union of Protestants and Catholics to

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[107] Ibid., p. 426.

[108] Ibid., p. 446.

[109] Ibid., p. 447

achieve Parliamentary reform. Aims so moderate would have been endorsed by Lecky himself. However, the movement soon veered in a more extreme direction and even from the beginning at least some of its members, including Wolfe Tone and Napper Tandy, thought in terms of separation from Britain.[110] It was the more radical elements that gave shape and direction to the movement.

Lecky is at pains to bring out the essential differences between Tone's aims and Grattan's. Where Tone looked forward to separation, Grattan upheld the connection: where Tone advocated democracy, including equal electoral districts, manhood suffrage, payment of representatives and annual parliaments, Grattan upheld the primacy of the propertied classes.[111] The constitution of 1782 was for Tone a shabby compromise and its heroes, Grattan and Charlemont, deceivers. "They are not" he said "sincere friends of the popular cause, they dread the people as much as the Castle does".[112]

It is hardly necessary to say that for Lecky this was a dangerous and subversive movement. Its democratic and levelling tendencies made themselves felt in a situation that was already sufficiently inflammable:

> The riots of the Peep of Day Boys and Defenders rose and fell, but they had infected many counties, and secret

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[110] Ibid., p. 15-16.

[111] Ibid., p. 17-22.

[112] Ibid., p. 16.

> combinations were spreading among the lowest class to resist the payment of tithes and hearth money, and sometimes of priests dues, and of rent. Westmorland and Hobart wrote that...equality not only of religion but of property was expected, that large numbers of pikes were manufactured, and that there were constant rumours of an impending insurrection.[113]

Lecky saw everywhere the elements of sedition and anarchy multiplying. As a final solvent there was the constant fear of French invasion:

> Under any circumstance the condition of Ireland in the last years of the eighteenth century must have been exceedingly dangerous. Nothing disorganizes and demoralizes a country in which there are great internal elements of disorder, so certainly as a constant menace of invasion; and the situation was enormously aggravated by the fact that the probable invaders were the soldiers of a great and contagious Revolution, whose first object was to set the poor against the rich, to sweep away established Churches, and to destroy the whole existing distribution of property and power.[114]

Ireland was on the brink of the rebellion of 1798. Lecky believed that some modest reforms might have prevented it. Catholic Emancipation, parliamentary reform and the abolition of tithes, generously granted and quickly executed, might have prevented the disintegration of society that he delineates:

> But the men in whose hands the direction of affairs was placed, were determined to resist the most moderate and legitimate reforms and they made the perpetual disqualification of the Catholics, and the unqualified maintenance

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[113] Ibid., p. 196.

[114] Ibid., p. 322.

> of all the scandalous and enormous abuses of the representative system the avowed and foremost objects of their policy...Very naturally then, the reforming energy of the country ebbed more and more away from the constitutional leaders, and began to look to rebellion and foreign assistance for the attainment of its objects.115

5. The Union

The Rebellion of 1798 prepared the way for the Union of 1801. Grattan's Parliament, which for Lecky embodied all that was best in Ireland, was prevailed upon to vote itself out of existence. It was yet another instance of the corrupt and selfish government of England.

Lecky, as we have seen, was vividly aware of the defects of the 1782 Constitution. He frankly admitted that it could not be a permanent settlement. The anomaly of a separate Irish Parliament with an executive appointed and instructed by the English Cabinet raised the constant possibility of serious conflict that might culminate in either separation or a union.116 Moreover there remained the problem of reforming the corrupt borough ascendancy, by means of which English hegemony was maintained, without running the danger of a democracy from which nothing could be expected but "confiscation and anarchy".117 Lecky was apparently overwhelmed by the difficulty of solving these problems in the then condition of society:

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115 Ibid., p. 547.

116 Lecky V, p. 420.

117 Ibid., p. 421.

The contemplation of Ireland in the last ten years of the eighteenth century filled him with despair, and it might have been logical for him to welcome the Union as a new start. But on the contrary, in 1799, as in the early 1780's, he still placed his faith in the gentry of Ireland. He writes that in the aftermath of the:

> ...complete suppression of the rebellion, the danger of Parliament being conquered by the party of disloyalty or anarchy cannot have been imminent; and if it had become so, there can be little doubt that the governing, the loyal, and the propertied classes in Ireland would have themselves called for a Union. It is quite certain that in 1799 it was not desired or asked for by the classes who were most vitally interested in the preservation of the existing order of property and law, and who had the best means of knowing the true condition of the country. The measure was an English one introduced prematurely before it had been demanded by any section of Irish opinion, carried without a dissolution and by gross corruption, in opposition to the majority of the free constituencies and to the great preponderance of the unbribed intellect of Ireland. Under such conditions it was scarcely likely to prove successful.[118]

Lecky detested both the timing of the Act of Union and the way in which it was carried. In the closing pages of his work he describes its total failure to bring peace and security to Ireland. The Ireland of his own day, he says, is as disaffected as a newly conquered province - and this he attributes principally to the "contradictory experiments of legislation"[119] which had brought

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[118] Ibid., p. 421-22.

[119] Ibid., p. 480.

about the decline of Irish industry and agriculture and totally disrupted landlord-tenant relations.

His brief summary of Ireland since the Union, as well as the substance of his five volumes, constitute a crushing indictment of English rule. His work became a mine of arguments for Home Rule supporters but Lecky himself was a stalwart Unionist. His essential conservatism outweighed his Irish nationalism. In a revealing passage he contrasts Grattan's Parliament with its potential Home Rule equivalent. He says of it that:

> ...all the members were Protestants, and elected by Protestants, and the most liberal regarded the propriety of Protestant ascendancy as an axiom. The party which now calls itself distinctively national was absolutely unrepresented. The Catholic priesthood, who are now perhaps the strongest element in Irish political life, had not a vestige of power and although corrupt and factious motives may often be detected, the great tribe of knaves and fanatics who now win political power by stimulating disloyalty, or class hatred, or agrarian crime, had as yet no existence.[120]

The essence of Lecky's opposition to Home Rule lay in his preferring eighteenth century corruption to nineteenth century democracy and clericalism. Since it was impossible to revive Grattan's Parliament a hundred years after its heyday Lecky opted for the Union as the only bulwark against the forces of darkness. In it alone did he see any hope of "maintaining law, or securing property, or enforcing contracts, or protecting loyal men, or supporting in times of difficulty and danger, the interests of the Empire".[121]

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[120] Lecky II, p. 97.

[121] Lecky V, p. 492.

When treating of the eighteenth century, Lecky had deprecated the reactionary views of Fitzgibbon, but in giving priority to the security of property and the stability of the established order, he approximated to his views. Fitzgibbon stated the problem clearly in 1800. He asked:

> What was the security of the English settlers for their physical existence at the Revolution? And what is the security of their descendants at this day? The powerful and commanding protection of Great Britain. If by any fatality it fails, you are at the mercy of the old inhabitants of the island; and I should have hoped that the samples of mercy exhibited by them in the progress of the late rebellion would have taught the gentlemen who call themselves the Irish nation, to reflect with sober attention on the dangers which surround them.[122]

Lecky saw the National League as a purely destructive force. It had destroyed the capacity of the Irish for self-government by "making cupidity the main motive of political action, and by diffusing the belief that outrage, and violence, and dishonest and tyrannical combinations against property, contracts and individual liberty, are the natural means of attaining political ends."[123]

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[122] Ibid., p. 372-73.

[123] Ibid., p. 486.

CHAPTER IV

Some Comparisons and Conclusions

The contrasts between Froude and Lecky make an immediate and vivid impact upon the reader. On the one hand, there is the Englishman pleading for the extinction of everything characteristically Irish in the interests of English hegemony: on the other, there is the Irish patriot laying bare the wrongs suffered by his country and asking for a more just appraisal of its history. On the one hand, there is the prophet seeking to impose his own views on his readers: on the other, there is the meticulous scholar inviting his readers to make up their own minds on the basis of the evidence he puts before them.

Froude trusts to his instincts and his prejudices to see his work through. "I am accused of being a prejudiced man" he once said "and it is true. A good stiff prejudice is a very useful thing. It is like a rusty weather-cock: it will yield to a strong breeze, but it does not go veering about with every little puff of wind".[1] He distrusts the effects of too much thinking. He evidently approves of Swift who "left behind him one more evidence that the fanaticism of fools may be keener sighted than the most masculine of intellects"[2] and of Pitt who though "he had no leisure to master the intricacies

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[1] W. H. Dunn, Froude Vol. I, p. 6.

[2] Froude I, p. 329.

of the past administrative blundering...grasped instinctively the only principles of which order and good government could be restored".[3] As the Times observed in its obituary, Froude was "not a student in the real sense of the term; he had neither the desire to probe his authorities to the bottom nor the patience to do so".[4]

Lecky, on the contrary, possessed precisely the qualities that Froude was deficient in. In a letter written in 1876 he describes himself at work in Dublin Castle on manuscript material:

> I am going through all the informations and presentments before, or of the grand juries in the different counties of Ireland in the first sixty years of the eighteenth century, and the confidential letters of the Lords Justices to the Viceroys, who were usually in England; and there is also a vast mass of curious and miscellaneous correspondence which I must examine. It is most strange that all this mass of interesting, and often most quaint and picturesque information, though open to everybody and, for the most part, nearly as legible as print, should be almost absolutely unknown. Not half a dozen persons in a year, it seems, come there and then usually only to make out some particular point. Sir Bernard Burke says that the whole secret history of the Rebellion of '98, all the treachery and all the secret informations of the United Irishmen, are there preserved and perfectly unknown - Froude, who seems to have gone very superficially through these papers, not having even gone over that part. I am finding a great deal that is useful to me, and I fear it will give my Irish chapter a very disproportionate magnitude and originality of research. I expect to be at least six weeks more at work here.[5]

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[3] Ibid., p. 631.

[4] David Alec Wilson, Mr. Froude and Carlyle (London: W. Heinemann, 1898), p. 9.

[5] Memoir, p. 108.

Where Froude was content to follow in well-worn paths, Lecky, not without courage, made more than one new departure. In another letter written in 1878, he wrote that he had "to prove, often from very recondite sources, positions which are in direct opposition to the best English authorities. Besides Clarendon, Hume, and many old writers, the story of a general St. Bartholemew Massacre in 1641 is repeated by Hallam, by Goldwin Smith, and by Green - while my story of the Jacobite Parliament of 1689 is in direct opposition to Macaulay".[6]

Lecky himself appeared to be vividly aware of the contrast between himself and Froude. In his review of Froude's work in Macmillan's Magazine, for example, he was at pains to point out precisely how, where and why he differed from him, and he also dwells on the same subject in a passage in which the latter is not mentioned by name but is indicated by the context. He deprecates bias in the writing of history and proceeds to say that it is:

> ...peculiarly necessary that the history of such a nation should be written, if not with some generosity, at least with some candour, that a serious effort should be made to present in their true proportions both the lights and shades of the picture, to trace effects to their causes, to make due allowance for circumstances and for antecedents. When this is not done, or at least attempted, history may easily sink to the level of the worst type of party pamphlet. By selecting simply such facts as are useful for the purpose of blackening a national character, by omitting all palliating circumstances...by employing the artifices of a dramatic writer to heighten, in long, detailed, and elaborate pictures, the effect of the crimes committed on one side, while those committed on

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[6] Ibid., p. 121.

> the other are either wholly suppressed or are dismissed in a few vague, general, and colourless phrases...by these methods, and by such as these, it is possible, even without the introduction of positive misstatement, to carry the art of historical misrepresentation to a high degree of perfection.[7]

Lecky then goes on to allude to the essential difference between his approach and that of Froude. In his view:

> Irish history is unfortunately to a great extent a study of morbid anatomy, and much of its interest lies in the evidence it furnishes of the moral effects of bad laws and of a vicious social condition. It will appear clear, I think, from the foregoing narrative, how largely the circumstances under which the national character was formed explain its tendencies, and how superficial are those theories which attribute them wholly to race or to religion.[8]

In this passage we have two schools of thought clearly delineated. They have been termed Anglo-Saxonism and Environmentalism.

Froude may be described as an arch Anglo-Saxonist, one of those who found his explanation of the rise of the British Empire not in Providence, or luck, or the laws of political economy but "in the distinctive racial attributes of the English people. Conversely, he tried to explain the failure of other nations and people to match that achievement by the absence of those same racial traits or features".[9] The attitude implied, as Gladstone put it in the course of one of the Home Rule debates, that the Irish had a double

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[7] Lecky I, p. 395-96.

[8] Ibid., p. 396-97.

[9] Curtis, Anglo-Saxons and Celts, p. 8.

dose of original sin.

However, as Lecky was at work on his book in the 1880's and 1890's there arose the school of thought to which, with some qualifications, he himself belonged:

> Environmentalists were basically optimistic about human nature, and...they believed that good laws made good men. They had little or no time for a concept so vague, insidious and pessimistic as race, and they scorned the notion that national character was a permanent, immutable, and inherited force which could never be altered by the hand of man. Entirely opposed to the Anglo-Saxonist emphasis upon the transmission of desirable or undesirable traits through the bloodstream from one generation to another within the same racial unit, the environmentalists ...found their key to human behaviour in the total historical and contemporary context of any given country or nation.[10]

There is evidence in every chapter of Lecky's History to show that he belonged to this school, but with one important qualification: Lecky could never be described as an optimist. Perhaps from certain inborn tendencies, perhaps because he devoted so much of his life to the tragic history of Ireland, Lecky was essentially a pessimist. What he describes in his five volumes of history is not good laws at work creating good men, but bad laws at work creating bad men. Therefore, although his point of departure is so different from Froude's, he shares with him conclusions and views that have much in common.

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The very fact that Froude and Lecky remained on friendly

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[10] Ibid., p. 14.

terms before, after and during the publication of their respective works should alert us to their similarities as well as to their differences. It may also be instructive to remember that both were close friends of Carlyle. Lecky's wife describes "walking with Mr. Carlyle" and "talking over Irish history with Mr. Froude"[11] as among his activities in the spring of 1871. His friendship with Carlyle survived a temporary estrangement over their respective views on Irish history[12] and when the Prophet of Chelsea died it was he, Froude and Tyndall, who accompanied his body back to Scotland for burial.[13] Consequently, it is not entirely surprising that there should appear in Lecky's thought some muted overtones of Froude's views.

We have seen that one of the principal themes of Froude's book is his interpretation of the Celtic character and of the nature of Catholicism. Lecky is too tolerant to dwell much on these features of Irish life, but there is some evidence that he shared something of Froude's approach. Froude describes the Irish as essentially fickle, unreliable and unfaithful to each other.[14] Lecky, while allowing for many "genuine enthusiasts" also has some trouble in taking Irish disaffection seriously, except when "allied with

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[11] Memoir, p. 80.

[12] Ibid., p. 92.

[13] Ibid., p. 150.

[14] Froude I, p. 54-55.

religious or agrarian passion". He writes that:

> ...disloyalty was often a fashion, a sentiment, and almost an amusement, which abundantly coloured the popular imagination, but was much too feeble and unsubstantial a thing to induce men to make any genuine sacrifice in its cause. Everyone who has any real knowledge of Irish life, character, and history knows how widely a sentiment of this kind has been diffused, and knows also that districts and classes where it has been most prevalent have again and again remained perfectly passive in times when the prospects of rebellion seemed most favourable...[15]

Lecky believes, like Froude, that this weakness in the national character was reinforced by Catholicism. While free from any gross prejudice he nevertheless feels bound to say that:

> ...it is on the whole a lower type of religion that Protestantism, and it is peculiarly unsuited to a nation struggling with great difficulties. It is exceedingly unfavourable to independence of intellect and to independence of character which are the first conditions of national progress. It softens, but it also weakens the character and it produces habits of thought and life not favourable to industrial activity, and extremely opposed to political freedom.[16]

He then goes on to make the point which is crucial to Froude's thought, namely that:

> ...there is no doubt that the Catholicism of the bulk of the people has in more than one way largely contributed to their alienation from England. It deepens the distinctive differences of the national type. The Church as an organized body becomes the centre of the national affections, bringing in its train political sympathies, affinities, and interests,

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[15] Lecky IV, p. 2.

[16] Lecky I, p. 402.

wholly different from those of the great majority of Englishmen.[17]

Froude, on the basis of his racial theories, and Lecky, on the basis of his environmentalist theories, both tend to think in terms of a stereotype Catholic Irishman. Froude places this stereotype in the very forefront of his history and deduces from it the conclusion that the Irish should be reduced to hewers of wood and drawers of water in a land ruled by the descendants of Cromwell's regiments. Lecky, as we have seen, touches on this stereotype much more lightly. He deals with the "Celtic problem" by sweeping it under the carpet and concentrating on the Protestant nation. The reader of Froude is at least in no danger of forgetting about the native Irish, but Lecky ignores them, or alludes to them, only as a potentially sinister force liable, if detached from their natural leaders, to be whipped into a frenzy by demagogues or agitators. Both attitudes were equally negative.

A profound pessimism prevails in both their works. In Froude's because he seems to have despaired of England's ever exerting herself, and in Lecky's because he focused his hopes on an ideal constitution that, even he acknowledged had passed for ever. Both, in effect, cut themselves off from a whole dimension of Irish history. Lecky, for all his love of Ireland, was deaf and blind to the revival of Gaelic culture that was going forward as he wrote. Only by reading works such as Justin McCarthy's Ireland

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[17] Ibid., p. 402-03.

since the Union[18] and William O'Brien's Irish Ideas[19] can we gain some idea of what is missing from his work.

Lecky looked on nineteenth century Ireland and despaired. But the democracy that to him was only another name for anarchy was for others a source of hope. For "the Irish masses from being a horde of helots in their own country have become its masters. Popular power is still only in its infancy but the infant is born. It is waxing fat and kicking".[20] Lecky saw only that the "world seems...to have grown very old and very sad".[21]

It was inevitable that Froude and Lecky should despair for they both hoped to create out of Ireland a second England. Froude was explicit on this point. Lecky, the champion of a separate Irish identity in the shape of Grattan's Parliament, might feel a sense of injustice at having such views imputed to him. It is nevertheless true that when Lecky considers Irish identity he always does so in English terms.

The constitution of 1782, for example, was for him "the Irish analogue of the English Revolution of 1688" by means of which Ireland "participated at last in all that was best in the English Constitution".[22]

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[18]Justin McCarthy, Ireland Since the Union (Chicago: Donahue, Henneberry and Co., 1888).

[19]William O'Brien, M.P., Irish Ideas (Port Washington, N.Y.: Kennikat Press, 1970. Reissue of 1893 edition).

[20]Ibid., p. 156.

[21]Memoir, p. 256.

[22]Lecky II, p. 317.

Again he writes that it "was scarcely possible, indeed, that the contagion of English liberty should not have spread to Ireland, and that its political condition should not have appeared intolerable to those Irishmen who derived their notions of freedom from the English Constitution".[23] Grattan always maintained that "Ireland should improve her Constitution, correct its abuses, and assimilate it as nearly as possible to that of Great Britain"[24] and this was clearly Lecky's view too.

For both Froude and Lecky, Irish history had no value or interest except in relation to English history. This is implied even in the title of Froude's work The English in Ireland in the Eighteenth Century: in fact, it is essentially a continuation of his History of England, in which he develops a theme already touched on there - the failure of the English to colonize Ireland. In the same way Lecky's History of Ireland in the Eighteenth Century is both in spirit and in fact a part of his history of eighteenth century England. It consists of chapters, and parts of chapters, drawn from his larger work: it was not published as a separate history until 1893.

Lecky finds it as impossible as Froude does to consider Ireland as a separate entity. For him, as he tells us on his opening page, its history is a "portion of the history of the Empire"[25] and

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[23] Ibid., p. 51-2.

[24] Lecky III, p. 226.

[25] Lecky I, p. 1.

he maintains this theme right down to his last volume where he writes that there:

> ...was much force, or at least much plausability in the contention that a system which placed the government of Ireland directly in the hands of men of property who were strongly and indisputably attached to the Empire... was conducive both to the well being of Ireland, and to its attachment to the Empire. No political madness could be greater than to put the legislative machinery of an integral and essential portion of the Empire into the hands of men who were largely or mainly disaffected with that Empire.[26]

It would be seriously misleading to consider Lecky as a straight Irishman even though he spoke, wrote and thought as an Irish patriot. He was, it is true, born in Ireland of a family who had been Irish landlords for a hundred and fifty years: he was educated at Trinity College Dublin and represented his university in the House of Commons from 1895 to 1902, but these facts tell only half the story. As a boy he was educated at various schools in England, including Cheltenham College; from 1866 he normally resided in London and when he was not travelling in Spain, France, Holland, Switzerland or Italy, he figured in London society. He was a member of the Privy Council, a member of the Order of Merit and he was offered the Chair of Modern History at Oxford.

The bare outline of his life speaks for itself. Lecky moved in two worlds. He was truly Anglo-Irish in the sense of being equally at home in both societies. One suspects that he was slightly

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[26] Lecky V, p. 190.

more at home in England. His connection with his Irish estates seems to have been of the most tenuous kind. In the very comprehensive Memoir written by his wife they are mentioned in connection with Gladstone's land legislation and in a light-hearted letter in which he says:

> I went, among other things, to visit (I am ashamed to say for the first time) some of my tenants, at the prospect of which I was considerably alarmed, for when one hardly knows the difference between a potato and a turnip it is not easy to be very imposing in conversation with farmers. However, I think I acquited myself satisfactorily, lamented the appearence of the potatoes, eulogised the cows, did the cattle disease, and abused the Government for not stopping their importation (which they have not yet done).[27]

Lecky paid frequent visits to Ireland but primarily either in order to work on manuscripts or to seek relaxation.

In a letter to his future wife he speaks of Ireland with affection and yet with a certain detachment as though he were not wholly part of it. He says:

> I wish you knew Ireland. I have so many enthusiasms and associations connected with it, and its history and its politics have so deeply coloured all my way of thinking. I always return to Killarney as in some respects the most perfectly beautiful place I have ever known...I am sure, too, you would be struck with the people, the most affectionate, imaginative, and quick-witted race I have ever known.[28]

While both Froude and Lecky appreciated the physical beauty of Ireland, its cultural and political life in the latter half of the

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[27] Memoir, p. 43.

[28] Ibid., p. 75-6.

nineteenth century lay, as we have seen, totally beyond their comprehension. Whatever was Celtic was alien to them both. Added to this was a deep-seated fear of democracy that completed their estrangement from the developments going forward as they wrote.

Froude's hostility to democracy was an integral part of the hero worship that he derived from Carlyle. The hero was the mediator between God and Man whose mission it was to guide the masses on the path to salvation. Once more we have to refer to the military dictatorship of Cromwell as his ideal.

Froude writes in general terms of the shortcomings of democracy as follows:

> The volunteer politicians in every class, those who put themselves forward in elections to choose or to be chosen, are usually the vain, the restless, the personally ambitious; and therefore the same causes which undermine aristocracies destroy even more rapidly popular governments. Democracies are proverbially short lived. They can destroy class privileges, they can overthrow institutions, but their function ends in destruction: and when the generations pass away which under a sterner system had learnt habits of self-command and could, for a time, dispense with control they pass away to give place usually to despotism. Private character degenerates. Individuals forget their country to care only for themselves and therefore dwindle to their personal level.[29]

He continues in the same vein to the effect that the multitude "who are slaves of their own ignorance will choose those to represent them who flatter their vanity or pander to their interest. Emancipation from authority cannot elevate, but can only degrade those who are not emancipated by nature and fact".[30] He then goes on to trace

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[29] Froude III, p. 2-3.

[30] Ibid., p. 4.

the degeneracy of authority under Grattan and its inevitable result - the rebellion of 1798.

These strictures on democracy, whether it extended to universal suffrage or simply to a modest degree of self-government, were essential to Froude's thought and naturally applied with a special force to Ireland. Lecky, under the influence of Burke, was also hostile to democracy as such, and especially to an Irish Catholic democracy.[31] This is clear from his Irish history and receives confirmation from speeches and letters.

As late as 1871 he seems to have believed that some degree of self-government was still possible for Ireland. He wrote in the introduction to the second edition of his Leaders of Public Opinion in Ireland that to:

> ...call into active political life the upper class of Irishman and to enlarge the sphere of their political power, to give, in a word, to Ireland the greatest amount of self-government that is compatible with the unity and security of the Empire, should be the aim of every statesman.[32]

Lecky, however, can hardly have been hopeful that his ideal would be realized since, even as he wrote this, he was careful to disassociate himself from the very moderate Home Rule party of Isaac Butt.[33]

The arrival of Parnell on the political scene turned him for

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[31] Oddly enough he champions the "will of the majority" in his review of Froude's work. See Macmillan's Magazine XXVII (1873), p. 246.

[32] Memoir, p. 76-7.

[33] Ibid., p. 76.

ever against Home Rule. He stood in Lecky's mind for the antithesis of all that he valued. In a letter to the Times in 1886 he described the Home Rule party as "animated by two leading ideas - a desire to plunder the whole landed property of the country, and an inveterate hatred of the English connexion in every form".[34]

In a letter written to O'Neill Daunt in 1879 he expresses himself at greater length:

> Whatever else Parnell and his satellites have done, they have at least in my opinion, killed Home Rule by demonstrating in the clearest manner that the classes who possess political power in Ireland are radically and profoundly unfit for self-government.

He goes on to explain that:

> ...a stern exclusion from public life of all men who in any degree coquet with or palliate crime, and a hatred of disorder and violence and lawlessness are the qualities that are found in all classes which are capable of self-government.

It passed his intellect, he says:

> ...to conceive how men can imagine that they are improving the political condition of Ireland by instigating a fierce war of classes, or its economical condition by destroying all respect for contracts and making property utterly insecure, or its moral condition by persuading the people that dishonesty backed by intimidation is the best resort in bad times.

Almost inevitably he then refers to the "great merits" of Grattan's Parliament and says he has no doubt "that it would have applied exceedingly drastic remedies to such proceedings as those of Mr. Parnell".[35]

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[34] Ibid., p. 186.

[35] Ibid., p. 138-39.

In yet stronger terms he writes in a letter of 1892 that:

> ...it is impossible for any candid man to doubt that the Parnellite movement was essentially a treasonable conspiracy, promoting its end by calculated fraud, violence and lawlessness, by an amount of cruelty and oppression seldom equalled in modern times, by constant and systematic appeals to the worst passions of the Irish people.[36]

If there was one feature of Irish political life in the nineteenth century that perturbed Lecky more than any other, it was the power of the clergy. Froude was hostile to the Catholics as such: Lecky to the clergy. This was one of the settled principles of his thought. It occurs for example, in the series of letters that he wrote to an Irish relative, Knightley Wilmot-Chetwode. He urges him to read his "dearly beloved Buckle" even though "having read so little you cannot possibly appreciate the wonderful discrimination and depth of his literary criticisms and though eloquence and intellectual beauty are as a general rule quite thrown away upon you. His central principle that the secularization of politics is the chief measure and condition of political progress, is also that of my Leaders of Public Opinion".[37]

Knightley Wilmot-Chetwode was evidently slow to take offence for the correspondence continued in the same vein. In a subsequent letter Lecky observes "You say you don't understand what I mean by 'the secularization of politics'. I mean conducting politics with an

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[36] Ibid., p. 237.

[37] H. Montgomery Hyde, A Victorian Historian (London: Home and Van Thol, 1947), p. 41-2.

exclusive view to secular interests. I don't think you would have had any difficulty about it if you had read Mr. Buckle's book".[38]

Lecky clung tenaciously to this principle. In his Ireland in the Eighteenth Century he elaborates on the unfortunate effects of Catholicism on the Irish character by stressing that;

> ...no class of men by their principles and modes of life and of thought are less fitted for political leadership than Catholic priests. It is inevitable that they should subordinate political to sectarian considerations. It is scarcely possible that they should be sincerely attached to tolerance, intellectual activity or political freedom. The theological habit of mind is beyond all others the most opposed to that spirit of compromise and practical good sense which is the first condition of free government and during the last three hundred years the gradual restriction of ecclesiastical influence in politics has been one of the best measures of national progress. It may indeed be safely asserted that under the conditions of modern life no country will ever play a great and honourable part in the world if the policy of its rulers or the higher education of its people is subject to the control of the Catholic priesthood.[39]

Lecky pleads consistently in his Irish history for the introduction of the clergy into the mainstream of Irish intellectual life in the belief that "it would be difficult to exaggerate the benefit, both moral and political, which Ireland might have derived from a priesthood imbued with the best liberal education of their time and associated in some measure with the most cultivated and enlightened of their countrymen".[40] In practical terms this meant

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[38] Ibid., p. 45.

[39] Lecky I, p. 402.

[40] Lecky III, p. 351.

that the education of candidates for the priesthood should be carried out in connection with Dublin University rather than in a purely ecclesiastical establishment such as Maynooth.

The establishment of Maynooth was, from Lecky's point of view, a retrograde step, a move towards sectarianism in education which helped to divide Ireland and restrict the benefits of a liberal education. He detested sectarianism at all levels of education. He writes, for example, that "the real education of the Irish people dates only from 1834, when that system of unsectarian education was founded which, though violently assailed by conflicting bigotries, has proved probably the greatest benefit imperial legislation has ever bestowed upon the Irish people".[41] It is true that in the 1890's Lecky came to support the cause of a Catholic University but this was partly because it would give Catholic priests and laymen a chance to be educated together.[42]

Lecky feared the power of the Irish clergy. In the 1860's he wrote to Wilmot-Chetwode that he did not see "the faintest symptom of that religious indifferentism which must be the precursor of renovation"[43] and in the 1890's he reverts to the same theme:

> Two very interesting election trials which lately took place show clearly what terrible spiritual threats are habitually employed for electioneering purposes, that not only

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[41] Lecky I, p. 238.

[42] See Donal McCartney, "Lecky and the Irish University Question", Irish Ecclesiastical Record, series 5, CVIII, 1967, p. 102-12.

[43] H. M. Hyde, A Victorian Historian, p. 51.

> the pulpit and the altar, but even the confessional is made use of for those purposes.. A return has just been published showing that at the last general election in Ireland the illiterates (who profess to be unable to read the names on the ballot paper) were more than one in five...It is well known that numbers of these Irish electors are not illiterate, but are compelled to declare themselves so in order that they should vote through their priests...[44]

The power of the clergy was for Lecky one of the worst aspects of Irish life and he opposed Home Rule partly because "he had more confidence in the improvement of British government than in the elimination of clerical influences".[45]

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Froude was unequivocally hostile to Celtic Ireland. Lecky had strong reservations about it. Both contributed something to the Anglo-Saxonist stereotype of the Irish Celt which, more than anything else, brought about the defeat of the Home Rule Bills.[46] The stereotype, as described by Curtis, was "made up of the following adjectives: childish, emotionally unstable, ignorant, dirty, vengeful, and violent".[47] Again, to quote from Curtis, the "political lesson which many Victorians drew from the prevailing stereotype of Irish Celt was that the sum of Irish traits, the excess of

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[44] Memoir, p. 249.

[45] Auchmuty, Lecky - a biographical and critical essay, p. 73.

[46] Curtis, Anglo-Saxons and Celts, p. 103.

[47] Ibid., p. 53.

vices over virtues rendered the Irish people completely unfit for those ancient Anglo-Saxon liberties enshrined in the Constitution... What the Celtic temperament needed was Anglo-Saxon authority... Paddy was not yet ready for Home Rule because in his ignorant, inexperienced and unstable hands, Anglo-Saxon liberty would degenerate either into anarchy and civil war or into the dictatorship of the Roman Catholic hierarchy and priesthood".[48] Both Froude and Lecky would, I think, have given an unequivocal assent to this general statement.

In their hostility to Home Rule they reflected prevailing opinion. Gladstone was an intensely lonely man. He wrote to Morley in 1894 that a:

> ...very great difficulty for me in this matter is that circumstances have imposed on me an absolute isolation. It was in process of time determined for, not by, me, that a large proportion of my political character and action should be lodged outside this country. I feel keenly for my colleagues that this is hard upon them, that they should have to act under or with a man who has been moulded, and that by pretty strong hands, under influences to which they are wholly strangers.[49]

Almost alone among Englishmen he had a positive policy for Ireland. He wrote to Clemenceau in 1882 that:

> What I hope for and desire, what I labour for and have at heart, is to decentralize authority in Ireland. We have dis-established the Church, we have relieved the tenant class of many grievances and we are now going to produce a state of things which will make the humblest

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[48] Ibid., p. 64.

[49] Hammond, Gladstone and the Irish Nation, p. 694. Hammond identifies the chief influences as Homer and Dante.

> Irishman realize that he is a governing agency and that the government is to be carried on by him and for him.

The letter drew from Lord Salisbury the remark that he did not much like the idea of the humblest Irishman as a governing agency.[50]

Froude and Lecky would have agreed. They saw no hope in the Irish situation. Home Rule was necessarily out of the question and Gladstone's other measures they subjected to severe criticism. For Froude they were yet another example of the fatal policy of concession.[51] He laments the disestablishment of the Irish Church and deplores the Land Acts because together they meant a grave weakening of English influence. All that he can offer is the suggestions that were:

> England, even now at this eleventh hour, to say that she recognized the state of Ireland to be a disgrace to her, that she would pass no hurried measures at the dictation of incendaries, but that deliberately and with all her energies she would examine the causes of her failure, and find some remedy for it, that meanwhile she must be free from political pressure, that the constitution would be suspended, and that the three Southern provinces would for half a century be governed by the Crown, the committee of the Land League are well aware that without a shot being fired in the field their functions would be at an end.[52]

Froude was simply returning to his old axiom that the superior part had only to exert herself to be obeyed.

Lecky too has little to offer. He writes that:

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[50] Ibid., p. 709-10.

[51] Froude III, p. 525.

[52] Ibid., p. 532.

> ...the political condition has certainly not improved and the difficulty of Irish government has not diminished. The elementary conditions of national stability, of all industrial and political prosperity are in few countries more seriously impaired. The Union has not made Ireland either a loyal or an united country.[53]

But he still believed in its continuance. His views on Church Disestablishment and the Lands Acts are equivocal and need to be elucidated by a competent biographer.[54]

Both Froude and Lecky were trapped within the narrow circle of their convictions. They could not begin to appreciate the political creed of Parnell expressed in a speech delivered in Cork in 1885. "No man has a right to fix the boundary of the march of a nation: no man has a right to say to his country - thus far shalt thou go and no further". This was the view that Gladstone came to endorse.

Froude would certainly have replied that the Irish were incapable of marching anywhere since they were not a nation in the true sense of the term. Nationhood, as he constantly tells us, has to be won on the battlefield and cannot be attained, as he puts it, by assasinations and secret tribunals.

Lecky's view was, as always, more complex. For him the Irish were certainly in some sense a nation but his use of the term lacks clarity and definition. Sometimes he uses it to refer to the sum

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[53] Lecky V, p. 492.

[54] According to Auchmuty, A Biographical and Critical Essay, p. 23, Lecky regarded the Church Disestablishment as "just" but it is hard to reconcile this with Lecky V, p. 360. According to the Memoir, p. 69 Lecky favoured a peasant proprietorship but passages in the Irish history appear to be critical of Gladstone's legislation, e.g. Lecky III, p. 403.

total of the inhabitants of Ireland, as when he talks about Catholic Emancipation creating an Irish nation out of the two great sections of the people.[55] Sometimes it refers, or appears to refer, to the Celts, as when he describes the Anglican Church as "anti-national".[56] Both these uses of the word suggest a broad meaning, reaching down to include what Gladstone called the "humblest Irishman". Usually, however, Lecky uses the word in a much more elitist and traditional sense. He identifies the nation with a group, that is with the landed gentry, in much the same way as Luther, for example, identified the German nation with the bishops and princes, and Louis XIV identified it with himself.[57] What Lecky refers to as the "popular" or "national" party is not a mass movement but the little group of aristocrats led by Grattan.[58] It was nationalism in this very traditional and limited sense that, as we have seen, captured his imagination and became the focus of all his aspirations. Consequently when under Parnell nationalism came to mean the inclusion of the rank and file he found himself totally out of sympathy with it. Here his own background was naturally important. As the descendant of a long line of landowners he found it impossible to identify with the agrarian reforms that were part and parcel of Irish nationalism at the end of the

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[55] Lecky III, p. 28-9.

[56] Lecky I, p. 204.

[57] See E. H. Carr, Nationalism and After (London: Macmillan & Co., Ltd., 1945), p. 2.

[58] Lecky II, p. 295.

nineteenth century. As Harold Laski has put it, "We are the prisoners of our experience; and since the main item in our experience is gained in the effort to make our living the way in which that living is earned is that which most profoundly shapes our notions of what is desirable".[59]

An indispensable element in Lecky's whole approach was the importance of maintaining the connection. He, and those who thought like him, could never embrace the nationalist creed in its developed form since, as described by Hans Kohn, it "centers the supreme loyalty of the overwhelming majority of the people upon the nation state either existing or desired".[60] Lecky, and others gave their supreme loyalty not to the nation state but to the wider and more amorphous unit of the Empire.

Parnell, on the contrary, appears to have envisaged the nation as the ultimate unit. When he said that no man had a right to fix the boundary to the march of the nation he spoke in the context of Home Rule, but the words clearly opened up the possibility that Ireland might become a sovereign state.

Froude was a nationalist in the developed sense of Hans Kohn. This is not fully apparent from the English in Ireland but it does emerge from his History of England which makes it clear that supreme loyalty should be directed to the nation state, at least as long as

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[59]Harold Laski, The Nature of the Modern State in Politics, (J. B. Lippincott Company, 1931)

[60]Hans Kohn, "Nationalism", International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences, 1968, Vol. II, p. 63.

the state was England. He was a thoroughgoing English nationalist and, because he believed that the superior part had a right to govern, a thoroughgoing imperialist. His life moved in a purely Anglo-Saxon groove. He "followed England round the world", literally in paying visits to the colonies and figuratively in advocating a commonwealth of English-speaking peoples that might come to include even the United States.[61]

Lecky, though certainly an Anglophile, and though anxious as we have seen to maintain the integrity of the Empire, was in a sense detached from all local loyalties. Even his beloved Ireland he once described as a perfectly hopeless country inhabited by fools - and that was in 1866 before the rise of the Home Rule Movement.[62] Throughout his life, from the time he was an undergraduate, he travelled widely in Europe for months at a time and he became a regular guest of the Queen of the Netherlands in the House in the Woods outside the Hague. There he formed one of a group of intellectuals which included Guizot, Renan, Thiers, Macaulay, Clarendon, Napier, Ranke and Motley.[63] His links with the Continent were further strengthened when he married one of the Queen's ladies-in-waiting and thereafter he spent many happy weeks in Holland as a guest of his wife's family. Consequently Lecky never became trapped within an Anglo-Saxon context as Froude did.

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[61] W. H. Dunn, Froude Vol. II, p. 351-53.

[62] H. Montgomery Hyde, A Victorian Historian, p. 67.

[63] Auchmuty, A Biographical and Critical Essay.

However, he was trapped within the mental outlook of his class. His marriage into a titled Dutch family can certainly have done nothing to weaken it. His position may become somewhat clearer in the light of some observations of Eric Strauss who writes that:

> ...as far as any special group itself enjoyed a privileged position within Irish society which needed the English connection for its maintenance its professed nationalism was limited and qualified to an extent sufficient to enable this group to combine the advantages of unfettered development for its members with the security which only English support could guarantee.
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> This basic fact explains the gradual transfer of leadership of the nationalist movement from more to less privileged groups, as each of them in turn was confronted by the choice between the heroic policy of leading a rebellious people at manifest risk to its own privileges and the prudent resignation to security and stagnation through a compromise with the paramount power.[64]

Thus, the leadership of the nationalist movement passed from the landlords, represented by Grattan, to the middle-class represented by O'Connell, to the lower middle class represented by Parnell and the Land League. As leadership passed lower and lower down the social scale Lecky became more and more alienated from Irish nationalism. Grattan was his ideal: about O'Connell he had very severe reservations: Parnell meant only anarchy and treason.

Froude and Lecky were united in their opposition to Home Rule. To a great extent their thoughts moved in the same groove. In varying degrees they both approached Irish history from without. Neither was in a position to identify with the mass of the Irish people, neither could enter into the memories, the joys and the sufferings

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[64] Eric Strauss, Irish Nationalism and British Democracy (London: Methuen, 1951), p. 276.

which Ernest Renan describes as the soul or spiritual principle of a nation.[65] It is true that Lecky felt the shame of the demise of Grattan's Parliament, but neither he nor Froude had any part in the long history of poverty, persecution and humiliation that had moulded the Celtic Irish.

The Celts were a nation in the sense that they had "a heritage of glory and grief to be shared" and "in the future, one common plan to be realized".[66] Neither Froude, nor Lecky had a part in that past or future.

While in this sense they have much in common they cannot be put in the same category as historians. Froude, like the rushing stream from which his name is derived,[67] froths and bubbles and sparkles, sweeping all before him in a headlong dash for his goal. Lecky fairly limps along.[68] His style and the composition of his work correspond astonishingly with the description we have of his physical appearance. He was "an unworldly figure, with his head on one side, his disjointed limbs and his flapping hands".[69] Yet his book, for all its lack of co-ordination is a work of integrity.

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[65] Ernest Renan, "What is a 'Nation?" Lecture at the Sorbonne, 11 March 1882, cited in Arend Lijphart, (ed.) World Politics (Boston: Allyn and Bacon), p. 80-81.

[66] Ibid., p. 80-81.

[67] According to Froude's biographer "Froude" is derived from the Celtic "ffrwd" meaning "a rushing stream", W. H. Dunn, Froude Vol. 1, p. 214.

[68] See William O'Connor Morris, "Mr. Lecky's Last Volumes" review of Vols. VII and VIII of W. E. H. Lecky's A History of England in the Eighteenth Century in Macmillan's Magazine, Vol. LXIII, 1890-91, p. 142.

[69] Auchmuty, A Biographical and Critical Essay, p. 4.

It is a contribution to historical scholarship where Froude's is a mere manifesto. It is also a contribution to clear thinking for while he "does not prove that Home Rule is right or wrong... he trains the minds of Unionists and Home Rulers alike to think sensibly about that and other problems".[70]

Froude provides us with a classic statement of the Orange view of Irish history. Lecky raises some perennial questions such as, "When is a country ready for self-government? When, and under what conditions may a mother country refuse self-government?" and helps towards the formulation of some intelligent answers.[71]

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[70] Stern, The Varieties of History, p. 236. A quotation from G. M. Trevelyan.

[71] See Helen Mulvey, Victorian Studies, I (1958), p. 337-51.

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