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Isaac Butt and the creation of an Irish  
parliamentary party

1868-79

David Thornley

1959

volume one

This thesis has not been submitted as an exercise for a degree of any other university; it is entirely my own work, and I have not received any assistance in writing it apart from the comments and advice of my supervisor, Dr T. W. Moody, to whom I am much indebted.

*David Thomley*

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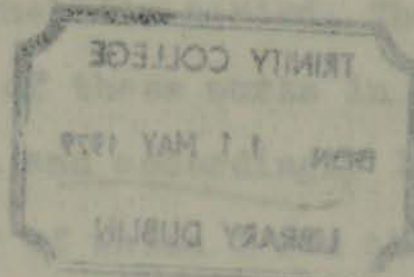
PREFACE

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ISAAC BUTT AND THE CREATION OF AN IRISH PARLIAMENTARY PARTY

1868-79

Volume I



David Thornley

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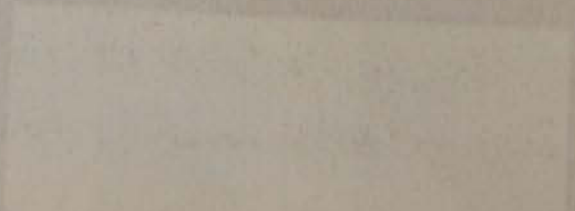
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## PREFACE

In writing this thesis I have drawn mainly upon manuscript and newspaper sources. There are a large number of printed works - memoirs, biographies, and secondary histories which theoretically include within their chronological scope the period here considered, but which in fact, in the great majority of cases, dismiss it with a few generalisations, often identically repeated, before proceeding to the better-known conflicts of the Parnellite period. There seemed little point in compiling a list of these works in the bibliography at the end of this thesis, and accordingly I have cited only those works from the study of which I was able to learn something of relevance to my own period.

In regard to the manuscript sources, some explanatory comments are called for. All the collections used below are to be found in the National Library of Ireland; in the bibliography at the end of this work they are listed alphabetically, with the manuscript numbers under which they are identified in that library. It is necessary, however, to note that the manuscript section of the library is undergoing a long-term reorganisation, in the course of which MSS numbers are sometimes changed: the B and PC numbers, for example, are only temporary classifications. This has caused me some inconvenience only in the case of the Butt MSS, which is however, my most valuable source. This collection falls into

three parts:

MSS 830-2. Three bound volumes of letters from Butt to various of his colleagues and between the latter. Footnote references to these letters give date, volume, and MS number; e.g., Daunt to Henry, 8 Oct. 1877, Butt MSS, vol iii, MS 832.

MS 10415. A small quantity of letters to Butt, spread over the period 1864-78, discovered and purchased for the library as late as the beginning of this year. I refer to this collection throughout as Additional MSS, citing date and MS number; e.g., Gray to Butt, 27 Aug. 1870, Butt Add. MSS, 10415. Though only recently purchased, this collection derives from the same source as, and is generically part of:

MSS 8686-8713. This section is by far the largest of the three and the most useful. When I first worked on these letters approximately four thousand in all, they were in loose unsorted bundles, in three boxes temporarily numbered B 33, 34, and 40. As a preliminary to the compilation of a typescript record of their contents, I sorted these letters, dated whenever possible those which were without dates, and arranged the collection chronologically. They were then stored in unnumbered boxes, and are referred to in this thesis as 'Butt MSS', without MS number; e.g., Callan to Butt, 12 Dec. 1872, Butt MSS. They have now, too late for inclusion in references to them in this work, been renumbered MSS 8686-8715, but my chronological arrangement of them has been preserved, and letters cited in this thesis can easily be found by their date.

All references in this work to Butt MSS which give neither

volume nor MS number are to this part of the Butt collection.

In regard to punctuation, lay-out, etc., I have endeavoured to follow the standards laid down for contributors to Irish Historical Studies. I have, however, used capitals when referring to members of the two great English parties, viz., Conservative, Liberal, whereas I have used lower-case type when referring to Irish conservatives and liberals. This is designed to prevent a total identification between the political labels of the two islands which, especially in the case of the so-called Irish liberals and their English counterparts would be a falsification of a relationship whose peculiar character is of considerable importance in the period under discussion, and which is analysed in some detail in the pages which follow.

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## PART I

### IRISH NATIONALISM AND THE LIBERAL ALLIANCE, 1868-74

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## INTRODUCTION

### (a) The political background

The attitude of mind which we regard today as Irish nationalism is largely the product of forces which first reached their full expression in the nineteenth century. Attractive though it may be to the emotionally patriotic, there is no more dangerous oversimplification of our history than to regard the desire of the Irish people for independence as an immutable force, an historic nationhood, working through different leaders and different generations, but always recognisable as the incorruptible will of the folk to satisfy its group consciousness by the purging ~~from~~ its soil ~~of~~ the invader. The resentment of the common people against their rulers was produced by no question-begging folk myth: it drew its vigour from three great stimuli, at once emotional and practical. Of these a sense of nationality was only one; the others were land and religion. The rivalry of these three great forces at some times paralysed the popular will; their sporadic coincidence produced great cataclysms in our history. In their interaction lies the explanation of many of the apparent paradoxes of Irish history.

Nowhere is this interaction more clearly at work than in the period which is the subject of this thesis. The Roman Catholic church, mute and suffering in the eighteenth century, had become, largely through the genius of O'Connell,

fully articulate as the religious spokesman of the great majority of the Irish people. At the outset of our period it was seeking finally to dispossess the minority church of its legalised ascendancy and to gain control of the education of the children of its own faith. The land movement had won no comparable power. Purged by the famine, the peasantry had yet to rediscover the stimulus of desperation which was to produce the Land League. The one serious attempt to organise its grievances politically, that of Cavan Duffy in the early 1850's, had failed for a multiplicity of reasons, not the least of which was its conflict with the rival priorities of religious feeling. But the experience of the famine, if politically prostrating, had burned into the popular memory a resentment to which ownership of the land had become significantly both the means to economic survival and a nationalist symbol.

The constitutional representatives of Ireland in this period between Cavan Duffy and Butt were not difficult to ignore at Westminster. Men of indifferent calibre for the most part, without a commanding spokesman, they came together intermittently upon the three issues of catholic education, disestablishment of the church, and tenant right, the 'charter' of Cardinal Cullen.<sup>(1)</sup> The cardinal, as leader of the catholic church in Ireland, was eager to eschew nationalism and to

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1 O'Leary, Recollections of Fenians and Fenianism, 1896, Vol 2, p. 165.

enter into an alliance with the English Liberal party. Such an alliance might be incongruous in terms of nineteenth century ideologies, but it was not difficult to justify upon the basis of the peculiar local divisions of Irish politics.

Great forces, however, lay beneath the apparently stagnant surface of this period. They could find no outlet through their constitutional spokesmen, who were content to express their O'Connellite heritage in terms of catholic liberalism. But two rival solutions were preparing. In Ireland the fenians were arming for final separation; in England a great statesman was pondering a new approach to the responsibilities of unionism.

In the late 1860's the period of quiescence came to a violent end as the eruption of the fenian conspiracy shattered the complacent illusions of both islands. The rising itself failed ignominiously. But the striking demonstration which it gave of the impermanence of the Irish settlement and of her un placated grievances produced two major and opposing results. It permitted the constitutional nationalists to revive their demand for a native legislature, and it drew from Gladstone the offer of a new and more generous settlement.

In a third and less calculably important way the fenian rising also helped to determine the nature of the conflict that was to follow. In September 1865 the government arrested the authors of the fenian Irish People, the first

in a long series of such arrests. The brief for the defence was first offered to Whiteside, the leading Irish lawyer of the day, who declined it. It was then offered to his next most outstanding colleague, Isaac Butt, a former Irish politician who had lately lost his seat in parliament and who now at fifty-two years of age had returned to Ireland to rebuild the remains of a once great career. As the personality and ideas of this man were to have considerable influence upon the character of the constitutional nationalist movement some consideration of his own political background is necessary.

Other addresses in the Irish subject were occasionally imperial problems. It is public controversy in 1845 as yet no inconsistency in addressing himself to a subject of such magnitude. (1) When the constitutional reform movement of the mid administration in 1845 appeared to destroy the system of ascendancy, Butt's combination of ability and legal brilliance caused him to be chosen to serve the cause of the old Dublin Corporation before the House of Lords. (2) His career as a conservative spokesman reached its zenith when in 1843 he was chosen to put forward the constitutional party of O'Connell in the great corporation debate at Dublin.

1 Butt, The Irish Question, London, 1847.  
 2 Ibid. pp. 11, 12.  
 3 Sir William Sturton, who enjoyed his defeat in the Dublin City by-election of 1843, recalls him in such words as 'a very fine specimen of a man - a man of high intellect, high energy, high ability'. (Sturton, Reminiscences, London - 1884, p. 104)  
 4 1847, The Irish Question, London 1847.

(b) The home rule leader

Isaac Butt first rose to prominence in the early 1840's when as a brilliant young lawyer and a distinguished graduate of Trinity College Dublin he appeared the most outstanding of the younger conservatives. Even at this early stage some of his work as editor of the Dublin University Magazine, notably his pamphlet in 1837 upon the Irish poor law, (1) had significantly demonstrated that his conservatism rested upon two pillars, an emotional sympathy with the grievances of the peasantry, and the conviction that this and other weaknesses in the Irish economy were essentially imperial problems. (2) But in public controversy he found as yet no inconsistency in conducting himself as a violent Orange bigot. (3) When the municipal reform measures of the whig administration in 1840 proposed to destroy this citadel of ascendancy, Butt's combination of bigotry and legal brilliance caused him to be chosen to argue the case of the old Dublin Corporation before the House of Lords. (4) His career as a conservative spokesman reached its zenith when in 1843 he was chosen to put forward the conservative reply to O'Connell in the great corporation debate on repeal.

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1 Butt, The poor law bill for Ireland examined, London, 1837.

2 *ibid.* pp. 8, 29, 35.

3 Sir William Gregory, who enjoyed his support in the Dublin City by-election of 1842, recalls him in this period as 'the very type of ultra-dominieering, narrow-minded, Protestant ascendancy'. (Gregory, Autobiography, London - 1894, p.60)

4 Butt, The Irish corporation bill, London 1840.

By this time, however, Butt's natural breadth of mind and generosity of spirit, his love of country and his susceptible emotional nature, had stripped much of the bigotry from his politics. The conservatism which he put forward in this period was justified on national grounds as an Irishman. Its basis was a belief in the imperial partnership of Great Britain and Ireland, in a joint civilising destiny, a partnership of reciprocal rights and duties inherent in the union settlement. It was upon this basis that he opposed O'Connell. Repeal would give Ireland only the status of a province; union gave her equal partnership in a great empire.<sup>(1)</sup> The idealism of Irish nationalists, especially Tone, he warmly conceded,<sup>(2)</sup> but their agitation he denounced:

It is our duty now to abandon agitation that can lead to no practical or real good, and cordially unite in a generous <sup>(3)</sup> rivalry and co-operation to improve the condition of our people

Butt's arguments upon this occasion were not highly praised by his own party, but they were quite warmly received by the repealers, who remarked 'the broad and candid admissions with which his speech was thickly studded'.<sup>(4)</sup> It was these admissions which inspired the famous prophecy of O'Connell:-

Depend upon it that Alderman Butt is in his inmost soul an Irishman, and that we will have him struggling with us for Ireland yet. (5)

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1 Butt, Repeal of the union, Dublin 1843, p.17.

2 ibid., p.17.

3 ibid., pp.35-36.

4 Nation, 4 Mar. 1843.

5 Nation, 11 Mar. 1843. Swift MacNeill relates also that after the debate O'Connell said to Butt: 'Isaac, you are young and I am old. I will fail in winning back the Parliament, but you will do it when I shall have passed away.'

(J.G.Swift MacNeill, What I have seen and heard, (1925), p.123

In the 1840's Butt became the chief exponent of a new kind of Irish conservatism which conceded not a whit to its nationalist opponents in love of country. It was a philosophy which could not master the basic conservative dread of O'Connell, but it could appeal more closely to the spirit of young Ireland, with which, especially in its literary attitudes, it had much in common. Two lectures of Butt's on protection to Irish industry, published in 1846,<sup>(1)</sup> were actually purchased for distribution to repeal reading-rooms on the motion of John Mitchel, who characterised them as 'a very admirable repeal essay, potent to convince any Irishman (except perhaps the author of it) that Ireland's only hope lay in the restoration of a national legislature'.<sup>(2)</sup> 'A soul has come into Ireland', said T.F.Meagher of the new conservatism.<sup>(3)</sup> But it was left to another of the younger nationalists, T. McNevin, to sum up this emotional sympathy most aptly, and to express a shrewd understanding of Butt's attitudes which was to remain more or less true for the rest of his life. Writing to Smith O'Brien he semi-jocularly grouped the younger conservatives of the Butt-Samuel Ferguson school under the heading of "Orange Young Ireland".<sup>(4)</sup>

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- 1 Butt, Protection to home industry, Dublin 1846. The two lectures were actually delivered in 1840.
  - 2 Nation, 4 Apr. 1846
  - 3 Nation, 11 Apr. 1846
  - 4 O'Brien papers, National Library, no 2291; Duffy, Young Ireland, 1880, pp.503-504.



This new conservatism might have had much to contribute to Ireland in more peaceful times. But the famine, the imperial neglect of Ireland, and the rebellion which followed created a new political situation in which it had no place. For Isaac Butt these events were the final disillusionment which destroyed the basis of his conservatism and left him for twenty years without a practicable political philosophy. In April 1847, in the midst of the famine disaster, he wrote :

Irishmen were told, indeed, that in consenting to a Union which would make them partners with a great and opulent nation, like England, they would have all the advantages that might be expected to flow from such a union. How are these expectations to be realised, how are these pledges to be fulfilled, if the partnership is only to be one of loss, and never of profit to us? If, bearing our share of all imperial burdens - when calamity falls upon us we are to be told that we then recover our separate existence as a nation, just so far as to disentitle us to the state assistance which any portion of a nation, visited with such a calamity, had a right to expect from the governing power<sup>(1)</sup>.... this calamity ought to be regarded as an imperial one, and borne by the empire at large. If this be not conceded - if the state be not, as we have said, our government - if we are not to receive the assistance which government can render upon such an occasion - what alternative is there for any Irishman but to feel that the united parliament has abdicated the functions of government for Ireland, and to demand for his country that separate legislative existence, the necessity of which will then be fully proved. (2)

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1 Butt, A voice for Ireland, the famine in the land,  
Dublin, 1847, p.22.

2 ibid., p. 53.

Butt participated in the early works of the Irish Council, a non-party association formed to consider famine remedies, but the futility of this body soon became apparent. In April 1848 a new 'Protestant Repeal Association' was founded; Butt's old friend Samuel Ferguson gave in his support, and Butt's own impending adhesion was rumoured in the press.<sup>(1)</sup> But events were moving too fast for the gentler nationalists. In May Smith O'Brien and Meagher were put on trial for sedition and Butt was briefed for their defence, on the understanding that nothing they had said would be retracted or disavowed.<sup>(2)</sup> In this trial Butt unmistakably placed himself in the eyes of the Irish people at the head of the new conservative repealers. O'Brien, he argued, was guilty not of contempt of the crown but of contempt of the union, and the kernel of his defence was a justification of repeal. In each case the jury disagreed, and both prisoners were discharged.

Butt was now thirty-five years old and at the peak of his career. Throughout Ireland his name was cheered as that of a national hero. The Nation sounded a timely note of warning :

Mr. Butt performed his task nobly.... he has done Ireland good service, but she cannot afford to permit him to stop here. No man since Grattan has a greater career open to him if he be true to the principles himself has taught; but Ireland is no longer content with half a heart; she is rich enough in power and genius to reject it. <sup>(3)</sup>

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1 Nation, 8, 22, 29 Apr. 1848  
3 ibid., 20 May.

2 ibid., 13 May

That was on 20 May 1848. On 27 May John Mitchel was sentenced and immediately transported. Soon afterwards the Confederate leaders at last decided upon the import of arms.<sup>(1)</sup> In July violence broke out and the political reactions of men like Butt became largely irrelevant. For twenty years he was to pay the moral price of his hesitation.

Elected for Youghal in 1852 as a 'Liberal-Conservative' he transferred his residence to England, but as an old-fashioned protectionist and a Palmerstonian imperialist, a brilliant Irishman of uncertain consistency, he could find no satisfactory outlet in either party. Unable to advance politically, he could grasp the opportunities which London offered for dissipation and extra-marital adventures, acquiring a burden of debt and parental responsibility which was to embarrass him financially and morally for the rest of his life. As hopes of preferment receded, he became increasingly the champion of the Irish tenantry and of catholic education.<sup>(2)</sup> When at last in 1865 he lost his tiny borough to the blandishments of a wealthier man, his passing gave cause for regret both to the fenian leader John O'Leary,<sup>(3)</sup> and to the nuns of the local convent, who 'cried when they heard I had resigned. On Friday when the school was breaking up, they made all the little children kneel down and pray for my success'<sup>(4)</sup>

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1 Duffy, My life in two hemispheres, 1898, Vol 1, pp.277-278.

2 Hansard, Vol 159, 2036-43; *ibid.*, 1200; *ibid.*, 1849-50; Vol 163, 1502-14.

3 O'Leary, Recollections of Fenians and Fenianism, 1896, Vol 2, (p.165)

4 T. de Vere White, The road of excess, (Dublin, 1946), p.194.

But the compulsion to return to legal practice which followed upon his defeat was in fact a blessing in disguise. Through it Butt obtained what Ireland has given to few of her leaders - a second chance.

Although it was the fenian trials which placed Butt at the head of what was almost a new generation of Irishmen in many cases unfamiliar with the conflicts of his youth, yet a knowledge of his own political development is a precondition to the understanding of much that happened under his leadership. Most obviously, though not most important, the debts which he had acquired were to compel him always to divide his energies between politics and legal practice. This strain upon his resources together with his diminished moral status and his recurring indebtedness to many of his political lieutenants, was to contribute much to the weakness of his leadership. But more fundamentally important, in the period before 1865 he had evolved the curious imperial nationalism which was so often inexplicable to the younger men around him in the home rule movement. He returned to Ireland already a believer in his country's right to legislative independence,<sup>(1)</sup> but no simple separatist. The conception of an imperial partnership in a great destiny which he had evolved in the 1840's was still the basis of his nationalism, overlaid now by an eagerness learnt from Young Ireland to awake in every

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1 Irish Times, 6 Sept. 1871.

denomination of his people a realisation of their own cultural unity which would bring them into the 'united nationalist party'<sup>(1)</sup> which had become his life's aim. Federal home rule was for him no mere second best; it was at once the thought-out expression of his own emotional view of the relationship between the two islands, and an offer of partnership to Irish protestantism. Davis could have grasped the generosity of his thought; his new allies were for the most part only to detect in it the suspect conservative origins which had given it birth. But for the moment it was enough for Ireland that Butt was the protector of the fenian convicts, whom free she had repudiated, but who now in captivity acquired their martyrdom. Butt was principal in nearly all the state trials which spread over two years, to the virtual abandonment of his lucrative private practice. Speaking often for four hours at a time, bullying informers, haranguing juries, above all he reached an avid national audience which followed the full-length reports of the trials in the daily press. The beginning of 1868 found him a prisoner for debt in the Marshalsea, but once again, as in 1848, the legal tribune of nationalist Ireland.

1. Nation, (13 Nov. 1869).

But if the shock of the fenian rising threw up a new nationalist leader, it created a great antagonist for him in William Ewart Gladstone. For the first time since the 1830's it became possible for a great body of national Irishmen to argue the merits of support for the English Liberal party and the mischievousness of separatist agitation. The cause which produced this new situation and which precipitated the general election which marks the beginning of our period was Gladstone's offer of 'justice for Ireland', which in its turn was produced by his altered attitude to the affairs of that country.

In May 1868, Gladstone, as leader of the opposition, secured the passage in the House of Commons of three resolutions calling for the abolition of the Church of Ireland as an establishment, and requesting the queen to create no further personal interests pending such a measure,<sup>(1)</sup> and a dissolution of parliament became inevitable. The election which followed was fought by the Liberals almost entirely upon the issue of Irish administration. Speaking at St. Helen's at the outset of the campaign, Gladstone described the state of Ireland as 'the question which is of paramount importance at this juncture'. In the face of the continued suspension of the habeas corpus act, which had now endured for over two years, no statesman, he declared, could congratulate himself on the state

of Ireland. 'Do not conceal from yourselves this fact... you have arrived at a point only one step from civil war.' On behalf of the Liberal party he said:-

We have asked ourselves whether in this state of things we stand clear in the face of Ireland and of the civilised world; whether the laws and institutions in Ireland are such as ought to prevail; whether they are such as in the face of national danger we should be bold enough to maintain.... I have asked myself this question, and I do not find that the laws and institutions in Ireland are such that I am willing to be responsible for maintaining them. (1)

Gladstone was now in the first stage of that massive reconsideration of Irish problems which was to lead him to the Land Act of 1881 and ultimately to the incorporation among the basic tenets of the English Liberal party of the principle of Irish home rule. In 1868 Gladstone had come to realise, as no English leader of comparable authority had ever before realised, the immensity of the grievances under which the bulk of the Irish people laboured. At this period, however, he still believed that these grievances could be removed by a belated act of reparation on the part of the English to the Irish nation, without disturbing the ties which bound the two partners together. The programme which he now outlined soon became known as that of 'justice for Ireland'.

The Irish question has many branches; I will not mention all of them. The two principal questions that arise for the consideration of the coming parliament are, the one concerned with the tenure of land, the other that which is connected with the religious institutions of the country. As respects the tenure of land, that question is to the rear, whilst the other occupies the front.

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1 Freeman's Journal, 7 Aug. 1868.

On the land question, he affirmed the desire of his party to 'give to the Irish cultivator the security for his efforts and results of his industry which he does not adequately enjoy.'

With regard to the church issue, he denied the practicability of a partial reform: the real struggle between the two parties was between:

the removal of the Irish Church on the one hand and maintaining it on the other, between perpetual attempts to bolster it up by throwing sops to other parties in the shape of state grants and state endowments, and abolishing that church as an establishment.

He concluded by asking his hearers to assist in the mitigation of 'these inveterate causes of alienation' between the two races. 'I trust you will exhibit an earnest determination to do justice, and open a future of happiness, prosperity, and contentment, which shall stand in joyful contrast with the past of that unhappy land.'<sup>(1)</sup>

The bid which Gladstone thus made for the loyalty of the Irish people was to dictate the course of the conflict which followed in the next six years. It had been possible at periods in the past for Irish leaders to justify a temporary alliance with one or other of the English parties upon the basis of local reforms, but never before had an English leader so totally identified his party with the redress of Irish grievances. Those Irish liberals, and there were many, in whom the ideological attachment to repeal had become drugged by time and security, could now welcome, perhaps, an ultimate fruition of the union settlement. Others were still emotionally attached to the idea of legislative independence, but no less

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1 Freeman's Journal, 7 Aug. 1868.



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sharply aware of the immediacy of their practical grievances. The catholic church had found at last a champion who would lift the last galling yoke of protestant ascendancy from its neck. It was not difficult for Irish clerics to overlook the ideological chasm which separated them from nonconformist English Liberalism, to forget for the moment its implacable opposition to the endowment of denominational education.<sup>(1)</sup> For the tenant farmer there was the offer of security for himself and his family in his holding. Only the irreconcilable nationalist could withhold his support from the Liberal party.

Two forces, then, were to struggle for supremacy in the next six years, two alternative solutions to the Irish problem: the operation of the united parliament to grant redress of grievances on the one hand; on the other, the achievement first of legislative independence as a prelude to reform. It was not that this was a new conflict. But in the 1850's and 60's the paralysis of the national movement, and the equal hostility to Irish demands shown by both the English parties, had robbed it of much of its vitality. Now fenianism had revived political controversy. It had re-awakened in Irishmen an emotional awareness of their nationality. But at the same time it had swept away the Liberalism of the Durham

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1 Even at St. Helen's, in a passage full of the seeds of future conflict, Gladstone had said: 'I might go further and show that our policy is intended to arrest the system which has led to the establishment of the Maynooth grant, which was intended to lead to the support of a Roman Catholic University.' Freeman's Journal, 7 Aug. 1868.

Letter. In its place stood a statesman who offered what might at last be a true reconciliation between the two islands.

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1... 1881, p. 23.  
2... 1887, pp. 47-51. See also...  
... 9 Oct. 1880.

Chapter I

The issues in the 1868 election

The outstanding feature of the 1868 election was the campaign for disestablishment. On the party political level, the dissolution which preceded the election was directly consequent upon Gladstone's official adoption of the principle of disestablishment on behalf of the Liberal party, and on the popular level, at least so far as Ireland was concerned, the issue was argued as the vital question of the election, the core of the popular campaign. The agitation for it, which now reached a crescendo under the stimulus of English Liberal support, had gone on intermittently for many years. Motions in the commons by the English Liberal Dilwyn in 1865,<sup>(1)</sup> and in 1866 and 1867 by Sir John Gray, who had been 'put in charge' of the subject by the Irish members concerned;<sup>(2)</sup> these last two motions had elicited significantly sympathetic statements from Fortescue in 1866 and from Gladstone himself in 1867, the latter declaring then that he trusted the time was not far distant when parliament would take up the question. The

Disest-  
ablish-  
ment

had been put

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1 Annual Register, 1865, p.22.  
2 ibid., 1866, pp.41-2; 1867, pp.144-5. Gray in Freeman's Journal, 8 Oct.1868.

occasion for Gladstone's own adoption of the cause of disestablishment had been J. F. Maguire's motion on the state of Ireland in March, 1868.<sup>(1)</sup> So far as much of Irish opinion was concerned, the principal exponent of the policy of disestablishment, and the leader of the campaign for it, was Gray, member for Kilkenny City, proprietor of the Freeman's Journal, and architect of the 'Freeman's Journal Church Commission', a series of studies on the state of the Irish church which first appeared in the Freeman in the parliamentary recess of 1867, and which were published as a book in the spring of 1868.<sup>(2)</sup> Certainly, those to whom disestablishment was the great issue of this election looked to Gray as the most authoritative spokesman of their ideas. 'O'Connell will never be dead while Sir John lives', declared one catholic parish priest,<sup>(3)</sup> employing a favourite form of eulogy which in this case illustrated in truth what was a very real continuity of Irish catholic nationalism, for although Gray himself was a protestant, the party for which he spoke was essentially that of the clerical-liberals. As its spokesman, and as the leading Irish lay agitator for disestablishment, Gray

1 Annual Register, 1868, pp. 46-58.

2 Sir John Gray, The church establishment in Ireland: the Freeman's Journal church commission, Dublin, 1868.

3 Archdeacon Redmond of Glendalough, Freeman's Journal, 20 Oct. 1868.

pledged his not inconsiderable forces to Gladstone:

Anxious to be free from all party trammels, and to be as independent as you are, I nevertheless desire to give a cordial, generous, and trusting support to Mr Gladstone, as the recognised leader of the movement for religious equality, - a statesman who is, I believe, thoroughly sincere in his professed desire to legislate for Ireland in a spirit of justice and equity. (1)

But there was nothing passive in this endorsement. It was the contention of many conservatives that there was no genuine popular demand for disestablishment; but whether or not the Irish peasant had the same kind of enthusiasm for it that he may have had for land reform or fenianism, there can be no doubt that under the influence of the liberal press, the clergy, and the popular-liberal candidates, the contest from the beginning resolved itself into a bitter struggle on the church issue. Cardinal Cullen summed up the 'official' Irish liberal attitude in a letter endorsing the two liberal candidates in Dublin City: referring first to land and education, he went on:

However, these and other matters, though of the greatest moment to the welfare of the country, cannot all be settled at once. They must give preference to the all-absorbing question of the protestant establishment. As soon as that shall have been finally settled, and the principal cause of dissension removed, we may expect the land and education questions will be discussed with a proper regard to the material and religious interests of the country, and that measures will be adopted in reference to them calculated to meet the approbation of all classes. (2)

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1 Freeman's Journal, 19 Oct. 1868

2 Freeman's Journal, 3 Nov.

'We have arrived at a momentous crisis, the magnitude of which cannot be overstated', declared Bishop Leahy of Dromore. (1)

'If the established church is not the only grievance we have to complain of, it is the one which lies at the root of all others', said Dr Kieran, archbishop of Armagh and primate of all Ireland. (2)

It was natural, although unwelcome to the protestant conservatives, that the catholic bishops should have adopted this attitude towards disestablishment. 'The priests are exerting all their power at the present moment to keep attention fixed on the one question of the church', wrote the conservative Mayo Constitution. (3) Equally, it was natural that Chichester Fortescue, M.P. for Louth, and popularly regarded as Gladstone's Irish spokesman, should have described disestablishment as 'a condition indispensable to the success of all other legislation'. (4) What is more interesting is the extent to which this principle was sustained by the popular liberal representatives throughout the country.

The Freeman's Journal persistently maintained the first importance of disestablishment:

When the church question is settled, we shall agitate the land question, if indeed it be advisable to postpone it so long. One at a time, however, is a salutary maxim. We should not distract popular feeling and diminish its power. The land question will come round in its appointed time. (5)

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- 1 Freeman's Journal, 7 Nov. 1868
  - 2 ibid., 12 Nov.
  - 3 Mayo Constitution, 20 Oct.
  - 4 Freeman's Journal, 4 Nov.
  - 5 ibid., 30 Sept.

This attitude was endorsed by the majority of the provincial liberal press.<sup>(1)</sup> The popular candidates, too, can rarely have been so unanimous upon a programme which, moreover, vague as it may have been upon all but the one issue, had the support of an English party leader. Seventy-five per cent of those election addresses which were aimed at the liberal or popular vote, and which specified the views of the candidate, listed disestablishment first in importance, and of the remainder, nearly all mentioned it. Most followed the same pattern, citing three main issues: disestablishment first, land reform and the improvement of catholic education second and third, in order of preference, followed, perhaps, by one or more of the several minor issues of this election.<sup>(2)</sup> It is symptomatic of the Anglo-Irish liberal unanimity that Fortescue's address in Louth is so representative of the great majority; 'never, during these twenty years, has an Irish question of the first magnitude reached the stage at which it is ripe for decisive settlement by parliament', he begins by declaring, and he describes disestablishment as

the source from which benefits without number will flow, and a condition indispensable to the success of all other legislation. But I am far from thinking that it ought to stand alone..... other questions remain to be dealt with.

First among these other issues he lists 'education in all its

1 Maurice Lenihan's Limerick Reporter called disestablishment 'the Test question of the day'. (8 Oct. 1868)

2 See below, pp. 36-8.

branches, university, middle class, and popular', but he takes care to avoid the issue of united versus denominational education. Next comes a section on land reform, no less vague: 'the laws relating to the tenure and occupation of land still await amendment, with a view to the security of the tenant farmer'. 'Since the great days of 1826 to 1829', he concludes, 'we have not had times like these.'<sup>(1)</sup>

On the whole these vague generalisations were echoed by the majority of the liberal wing, stemming as they did from the attitude that Gladstone should be given an opportunity of fulfilling his promise of justice for Ireland without too many hampering conditions. Even on the main issue of disestablishment, few candidates chose to discuss the legislative details of the proposed reform; a demand for 'disestablishment and disendowment', or an expression of support for Gladstone's policy on the church issue, or a combination of both - this was the normal attitude for an Irish liberal candidate to adopt. The slogan of most election platforms was 'religious equality', and although controversy about the complex technical problems which would arise in the course of disestablishment might occasionally occur in the correspondence columns of the press, on the campaign level most of the candidates were concerned solely with the principle

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1 Freeman's Journal, 4 Nov. 1868.



which they linked with the name of Gladstone, leaving it to him to produce a practical plan in the event of their being successful in returning him to power.<sup>(1)</sup> It might indeed be said that here, for the first time, a great Irish issue was directly linked to the return of the English Liberal leader.

2  
Land  
reform

On the second issue of this election, that of land reform, the bulk of the popular candidates were no more explicit, and the notorious complexity of this issue lent itself to far greater divergencies amongst those who were superficially in agreement upon the necessity for reform. Conservative candidates could without injury to conscience or party declare themselves in favour of a measure of land reform, and in this election many such candidates were glad to be able to give evidence of their good intentions upon some less vexed topic than that of the church.<sup>(2)</sup> Lord Crichton, standing in Enniskillen, declared that he would give the tenant-farmer 'compensation for all unexhausted improvements, and in cases where money had been spent, he would grant leases sufficiently long to recoup the tenant for his outlay'.<sup>(3)</sup> Another conservative candidate, Sir Leopold McClintock, in

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1 An extreme example of this attitude was provided in Galway Borough, where the liberal import from Liverpool, John Bridge Aspinall, summed up his views on disestablishment in a eulogy of Gladstone, 'one of the greatest statesmen whom the world knows'. (Galway Vindicator, 23 Sept. 1868)

2 A.M. Kavanagh in Carlow County considered the land question 'one of much more importance to the Irish people'. (Freeman's Journal, 16 Oct.)

3 Ibid., 19 Nov.

Drogheda, declared 'the industrious occupiers of the soil entitled to have secured to them by legislative enactment a right to the fruits of their labour and outlay', pledging his support for 'any measure calculated to effect that desirable object'.<sup>(1)</sup> Many liberals committed themselves to pledges no more precise: typical was the declaration of William Fagan, in Carlow Borough, for 'legislation which would give to the tenant security of tenure, and a guarantee that he will be compensated for the labour and capital he may expend on his land'.<sup>(2)</sup> Few

1 Freeman's Journal, 12 Nov.

2 *ibid.*, Compensation for improvements, generally coupled with 'security of tenure against capricious or arbitrary eviction' a favourite phrase, secured in some unspecified way by legislation, represented the land programme of the following popular candidates who were returned in this election:

Barry - Cork Co	( <u>Freeman's Journal</u> , 25 Sept.)
Blennerhassett - Galway Boro	( <i>ibid.</i> , 3 Oct.)
Brady - Leitrim	( <i>ibid.</i> 26 Oct.)
Bryan - Kilkenny Co	( <i>ibid.</i> , 19 Nov.)
Castlerosse - Kerry	( <u>Limerick Reporter</u> , 30 Oct.)
Colthurst - Kinsale	( <u>Freeman's Journal</u> 29 Aug.)
D'Arcy - Wexford Co	( <i>ibid.</i> , 15 Aug.)
Digby - Queen's Co	( <i>ibid.</i> , 28 Sept.)
Dowse - Londonderry City	( <u>Derry Standard</u> , 18 July)
Ellis - Kilkenny County	( <u>Freeman's Journal</u> , 19 Nov.)
Fitzgerald - Kildare	( <i>ibid.</i> , 14 Nov.)
Fitzpatrick - Queen's Co	( <i>ibid.</i> , 24 Oct.)
French - Roscommon	( <u>Roscommon Journal</u> , 14 Nov.)
Greville - Westmeath	( <u>Freeman's Journal</u> , 5 Sept.)
Herbert - Kerry	( <u>Limerick Reporter</u> , 23 Oct.)
Kirk - Newry	( <u>Derry Standard</u> , 12 Sept.)
McClure - Belfast	( <u>Freeman's Journal</u> , 1 Sept.)
Mathews - Dungarvan	( <i>ibid.</i> , 3 Sept.)
Murphy - Cork City	( <i>ibid.</i> , 19 Aug.)
Nugent - Longford	( <i>ibid.</i> , 2 Nov.)
O'Connor - Roscommon	( <i>ibid.</i> , 11 Nov.)
O'Connor - Sligo Co	( <u>Roscommon Journal</u> , 25 July)
O'Donoghue - Tralee	( <u>Freeman's Journal</u> , 15 Oct.)
O'Reilly - Longford	( <i>ibid.</i> , 9 Nov.)
Power - Wexford Co	( <i>ibid.</i> , 15 Aug.)
Russell - Limerick City	( <u>Limerick Reporter</u> , 23 Oct.)
Urquhart - Westmeath	( <u>Freeman's Journal</u> , 22 Oct.)
Weguelin - Youghal	( <u>Limerick Reporter</u> , 16 Oct.)
White - Tipperary	( <u>Freeman's Journal</u> , 12 Oct.)
Whitworth - Drogheda	( <i>ibid.</i> , 15 Aug.)

were prepared to state how this might be achieved; many committed themselves even less precisely. Jonathan Pim in Dublin City promised to 'omit no proper opportunity of advancing the settlement of the land question'<sup>(1)</sup>; Peter Paul McSwiney in Dublin County advocated 'a measure securing all that is equitable to the landlord, securing all that is just to the tenant'<sup>(2)</sup>; Viscount Burke in Galway County expressed the hope that 'measures will soon be matured to secure an impartial adjustment of the legitimate rights of both landlords and tenants'.<sup>(3)</sup>

There were, of course, some who fully appreciated that the desire of the occupier for security in his holding could only be realised by a virtual revolution in the landlord-tenant relationship. Isaac Butt, at this time probably the most widely-read pamphleteer upon the subject, and the most radical of the leading tenant spokesmen, had produced a detailed plan for security of tenure based upon the periodic revaluation of rents. His Land tenure in Ireland: a plea for the Celtic race <sup>(4)</sup> proposed

an enactment which would give to the occupier of every agricultural tenement an interest in his holding for sixty years, provided he observed some reasonable covenants and punctually paid a rent ascertained to be the fair setting value of the land. (5)

1 Freeman's Journal, 14 July 1868.  
 2 ibid., 18 Nov.  
 3 Galway Vindicator, 30 Sept.  
 4 Dublin, 1866.  
 5 ibid., p. v.

Writing again in 1867 he had urged the commencement of a serious agitation on the basis of this demand:

The example of the English Corn Law League is before the Irish people... If the Irish people were to imitate that example; if those who have their confidence were to combine the tenant farmers of Ireland in one great "tenant league"; if such an association were to use all rightful means of influencing public opinion, both in England and Ireland..... I do not believe that in the pressure of the moral power of such an association our present system of land tenure could last three years. (1)

The land issue was not ripe for such an agitation in 1868, and the paramountcy of the church question further militated against it. Tenant organisations did exist in wide areas of the country in the shape of the 'Farmers' Clubs'. These clubs, although respectable rather than revolutionary, were quite active in the period of the election; the most prominent was probably that of Limerick, which, under the presidency of William Bolster, organised a great tenant-right demonstration in September, at which, before the tenant farmers of three counties, Butt as guest speaker urged his scheme of sixty-three year leases at a rental to be assessed by periodic revaluation. (2) But schemes such as these, which came to be grouped under the broad heading of 'fixity of tenure', were still regarded by the bulk of the landlords as dangerously subversive of the rights of property, and by no means possessed.

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1 Butt: The Irish people and the Irish land: a letter to Lord Lifford, Dublin, 1867, p.289.

2 Limerick Reporter, 4 Sept.1868.

as yet, the support of the generality of Irish liberal candidates, who clung to the vaguer 'security of tenure'. In the face of the general preoccupation with the church issue the tenant party could exert little influence. Its most notable victory was in Cork County, where McCarthy Downing, a veteran of the independent opposition movement of 1852, and a future home ruler, defeated the Honourable Robert Boyle, a cousin of Lord Cork, who had the support of the local liberal landowning interest. This was conceded to be a direct victory for tenant farmer organisation and power.

But on the whole, despite the fact that land reform was in theory one of the great issues of this election, argued in principle by every liberal spokesman, lay or clerical, one is left with the impression that in practice, in land reform as in disestablishment, the initiative lay with the English Liberal leader; the criterion was once again a general support, at least for the moment, of that statesman. It must be remembered that this election was fought upon the basis of a franchise virtually untouched by the English reforms of Disraeli, and that it was the last fought before the ballot replaced open voting; the landlord class could still exercise a considerable influence upon the election contests in addition to supplying seventy per cent of the Irish representatives. When these factors are taken in conjunction with the absorption

education, would a party with such an element in it endorse

of the liberal press and leaders, and of the clergy, with the church issue, the feebleness of the tenant demand in this election is less surprising.

3  
Catholic  
educ-  
ation

The third and last of the major issues of this election was that of education. The demands for denominational education and a catholic university were still before the public, unsatisfied. Negotiations on the subject of a catholic university charter between the catholic prelates and Lord Mayo, the conservative chief secretary, had just broken down at the outset of the campaign, thus dashing catholic hopes that the endowment of such a university formed an integral part of the Conservative theory of concurrent endowment or 'levelling-up' which had been mooted as an alternative to Liberal disestablishment or 'levelling-down'. This disappointment may have helped to reinforce catholic loyalty to, and expectations from, Gladstone. Yet in the context of this election any form of denominational endowment was out of its place and time; a party which, with exaggerated scrupulosity, proposed to withdraw the regium donum and the Maynooth grant was scarcely likely to support a sectarian university, and conservative journals did not hesitate to remind independent catholic candidates that the strong nonconformist element in the English Liberal party was fundamentally devoted to the principle of non-sectarian education. Would a party with such an element in it endorse

the establishment of the denominational system in Ireland? If English nonconformist opinion is temporarily equated with Ulster liberal opinion, the result is instructive. The Northern Whig opposed denominational education as a feature of Tory 'levelling-up';<sup>(1)</sup> the Derry Standard was firmly for disestablishment, and for its liberal upholder in the city, Richard Dowse, but the whole denominational idea was to it a 'medieval retrogression..... the principle involved in sectarian state universities is fundamentally vicious'.... and on the abortive talks with Lord Mayo it commented: 'it is well that the intolerable nature of ultramontane despotism has been self-exposed before the country'.<sup>(2)</sup> Whereas in the south of Ireland the demand for denominational education formed a part of virtually every liberal election address, the six liberal candidates in Ulster<sup>(3)</sup> omitted any reference to education, with the exception of Dillon Lewis in Dungannon, who simply remarked that the subject was likely to come up in the next parliament.<sup>(4)</sup> It is scarcely surprising that the Galway Vindicator should have countered the prevailing enthusiasm for Gladstone with the contention that immediately after the passage of disestablishment the Irish catholic

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1 Northern Whig, 16 July, 25 Aug. 1868.  
 2 Derry Standard, 11 July.  
 3 McClure (Belfast), Lewis (Dungannon), Collum (Enniskillen), Dowse (Londonderry), Kirk (Newry), and Gray (Monaghan).  
 4 Freeman's Journal, 14 Nov.

Galway Vindicator, 28 Aug. 1868.  
Northern Whig, 8 Aug.

members would very probably find themselves in opposition to the Liberal party on the subject of education; ideologically it was the weakest link in the Anglo-Irish liberal alliance. (1)

*Conservative  
attitude  
to  
disest.  
absh-  
ment*

If disestablishment occupied the liberal mind to the exclusion of much else, still more so were the conservatives preoccupied with it; one would scarcely, in fact, be guilty of oversimplification if one were to characterise the entire election as 'religious equality' versus 'the church in danger'. The liberal presbyterian Banner of Ulster detailed the conservative attitude on the church with a brevity and lucidity that merits quotation:

Its disestablishment would be contrary to the Act of Union; it would make Roman Catholic members of parliament forswear themselves, inasmuch as, on their entering into parliament, they disavowed, disclaimed, and solemnly abjured any intention to subvert the present church establishment as settled by law within this realm. It would make the queen break her coronation oath. The religious supremacy of Rome in Ireland would be assured, for the Roman Catholic priests are the political as well as the religious leaders of the people; the protestant population would rapidly diminish, absenteeism would increase, and the landlords, who are mostly protestant, would, wherever it is possible, become non-resident. Our scheme of government would degenerate into a mere system of police; that sacred union between church and state, which has hitherto been the chief means of our civilisation, and is the only security for our religious liberty, would be dissolved: the Church of England would follow next: the protestant religion would be endangered: the rights of property would be subverted and the landlords spoliated. The church is, after all, self-supporting, for the tithe is paid by the landlord: it has stood for many generations. A sacred feeling towards it has grown up in the hearts of men; and if time-honoured institutions are thus swept away, where will the spoiler stop? - the throne itself will be in danger, and the glory will have departed from England. (2)

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1 Galway Vindicator, 12 Aug. 1868.  
2 Banner of Ulster, 8 Aug.



Without going into the more technical legal issues involved, this paragraph sums up what was, in any case, rather an attitude of mind than a cogent political theory. One aspect of it might be emphasised: the warning that agrarian revolution and repeal would be taken up by the Irish liberals if disestablishment were gained. Anthony Traill, addressing Trinity College constituency, regarded Gladstone's resolutions as 'certain to lead eventually to the repeal of the legislative union of Ireland with Great Britain'.<sup>(1)</sup> Reporting the speeches at the Limerick reception to Butt the conservative Daily Express commented: 'From these speeches the English Liberals will be able to form some idea of how much nearer to pacificating Irish agitators the disestablishment of the Irish church would bring them.'<sup>(2)</sup>

Most of the conservative candidates, while determined to uphold 'the protestant constitution in church and state',<sup>(3)</sup> and generally in addition 'to oppose all plans which may be brought forward for the endowment of error',<sup>(4)</sup> were 'prepared to assist in removing any anomalies and abuses which, after careful consideration, may appear to exist',<sup>(5)</sup> with the reservation, added Anthony Traill, that any such plan must not 'abolish the parochial system, which I consider to be

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1 Belfast News-Letter, 2 Nov. 1868.

2 Daily Express, 7 Sept.

3 Stronge (Armagh Co), Belfast News-Letter, 12 Oct.

4 Lanyon (Belfast), Banner of Ulster, 12 Sept.

5 Hill Trevor (Down), Belfast News-letter, 2 Nov.

the essence of the establishment, or weaken the power of episcopal government by a diminution in the number of bishops'.<sup>(1)</sup> Pledges of this kind, for what they were worth, were given by nearly all the conservative candidates. Disestablishment, they argued, was a 'false issue', got up by an unholy alliance of Gladstone's craving for office with Rome's thirst for ascendancy; 'the question has never really had any importance in Ireland until within these few months'.<sup>(2)</sup> Tenant right, they argued, was a much more vital issue,<sup>(3)</sup> a line of argument particularly favoured by conservative candidates in the southern part of the country. But although it has been remarked that the liberals themselves were vague upon this issue, the conception of tenant right as landlord wrong was much more deeply ingrained in the conservatives, drawing, as they did, such a high proportion of their Irish members from the ranks of the large landowners.<sup>(4)</sup> The tenant farmer might expect little from those who, while demanding 'a simple means of securing to the tenant the means of improving his holding without risking the loss of his money or his labour',<sup>(5)</sup> with their next breath condemned 'the wild schemes of all those who follow Mr Butt and Mr Bright on this issue'.<sup>(6)</sup>

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1 Belfast News-Letter, 2 Nov. 1868.

2 ibid., 29 Aug.

3 ibid., 22 Aug.

4 The proportion was over eighty per cent. (See Appendix III)

5 Belfast News-Letter, 22 Aug.

6 ibid., 31 Aug.

If the catholic liberal or the episcopalian conservative had his duty clearly pointed out to him, Ulster presbyterianism found itself substantially divided. The Ulster conservative candidates made a point of wooing the presbyterian voter by promising to oppose the withdrawal of the regium donum. (1) 'Ninety-nine out of a hundred of the presbyterian laity concur with the episcopalian laity on this church question', wrote the Belfast News-Letter, urging the protestant people to stick together and resist those who would 'jesuitically' divide them. (2) But against this the Banner of Ulster could repeatedly point to the opposition of the Ulster conservatives in the last session of parliament to the Burials Bill of William Monsell, (3) and to their failure to nominate a single presbyterian as a candidate for parliament. (4) The Banner described the presbyterian episcopalian alliance as 'a match by which the presbyterians have nothing to gain and everything to lose' (5); with regard to the loss of the regium donum, 'the sacrifice required is not great. To secure religious equality it (the presbyterian church) must surrender £40,000 a year..... It is a small price to pay for a great principle.' (6)

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1 R.P. Dawson, in Londonderry Co, promised to seek 'a more dignified and suitable endowment' for them. (Derry Standard 11 Nov.)  
 2 Belfast News-Letter, 10 Aug.  
 3 It proposed that under certain conditions a presbyterian clergyman should be allowed to officiate at the burial of a member of his own church in an episcopalian graveyard.  
 4 Banner of Ulster, 13 Oct.  
 5 ibid., 3 Sept.  
 6 ibid., 3 Oct.

It is impossible to gauge accurately presbyterian opinion upon the church issue; there appear to have been very strong and active parties upon both sides. The general assembly passed a resolution which all were able to support, and interpret differently,<sup>(1)</sup> and while the moderator, Dr. Morell, threw his weight behind the conservative Keown in Dungannon, being credited by the liberal press with the responsibility for their candidate's defeat, Dowse in Londonderry City seems to have had a considerable amount of active presbyterian support, being proposed by Professor Smyth of Magee, and sustained by fifty-two presbyterian clergymen who published an advertisement denying that the resolution of the general assembly had been a declaration of support for the establishment.<sup>(2)</sup> On the whole, the liberals probably had

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1 'that they declare their unwavering adherence to the principles of an ecclesiastical establishment as set forth in the standards of the presbyterian church - viz. that it is the duty of the state to recognise and endow the truth and to withhold all encouragement from anti-Christian error, while, at the same time, the church is left free from state control in the exercise of all her proper functions, and continues subject to Christ alone, her king and head.' (Derry Standard, 4 Nov. 1868)

2 Derry Standard, 14 Nov. Professor Smyth was elected moderator next year, accompanied the tenant deputation to Gladstone in March 1870, and was elected liberal M.P. in 1874. But Dr. Porter and the venerated Dr Cooke urged presbyterians to support the conservatives. Dr Cooke was a very sick man at this time, and when a letter from him in support of the conservative candidates in Belfast appeared in the press its authenticity was disputed by the liberals. He died on 13 December 1868. (Belfast News-Letter, 26, 27, 28 Oct; Derry Standard, 4 Nov.)

considerable grounds for gratitude to the presbyterians at the end of the election; in addition to this aid in Londonderry, two much-prized liberal successes were won by presbyterian candidates in Belfast and Newry. These three seats were the only liberal victories in Ulster.

minor  
issues  
There remain to be considered briefly those minor topics which were raised by some of the candidates in this election. Two of these topics were of particular local significance to Ulster, the Burials Bill, mentioned above, and the Party Processions Act. (1) In the rest of the country

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1 The repeal of this act, which imposed irksome restrictions upon the orangeman, was the particular object of William Johnston of Ballykilbeg, master of the Belfast Orange Lodge, and himself a martyr under the act. His return was regarded as a great triumph for the Sandy-Row workmen and for the principle of opposition to the act. In the campaign struggle the liberals of Belfast were effectually in coalition with him against the official Tory candidates, Lanyon and Mulholland; the refusal of the party organisation to sustain Johnston was felt to have been the cause of the liberal McClure's return. Liberal fondness for Johnston, always rather illogical, was soon dissipated by his behaviour as member, including his voting against disestablishment (Appendix V).

Orangeism, besides returning Johnston, influenced Ulster conservatism to the extent that Hamilton (Londonderry City), Verner (Lisburn), Bruce (Coleraine), and Lanyon included references to the repeal of the Party Processions Act in their election address. It may or may not be significant that these boroughs, two of which returned liberals, together with Newry, which returned a liberal presbyterian, and Carrickfergus, which returned a liberal-conservative in opposition to the sitting conservative member, had a higher proportion of presbyterians among the protestant population than any of the other parliamentary boroughs in Ulster.

there were also a number of secondary issues raised; some of these, like the question of state railway purchase, crossed the boundaries of party; others, like amnesty, repeal of the union, and the ballot, were generally the preserve of the more advanced liberals. Amnesty and repeal, despite their lack of practical influence in this election, deserve separate consideration; (1) the others played little part in the election struggle. Fourteen liberal candidates, including Sir John Gray, demanded the introduction of the ballot, as did William Johnston in Belfast; the latter, and H. Herbert, the inconspicuous liberal landlord representative of Kerry, called for a further electoral reform with a redistribution of seats in Ireland. (2) Five conservatives and eight liberals, including Chichester Fortescue, referred in their election addresses to the associated questions of grand jury reform and poor law rating, in relation to which it had long been demanded that the electoral district should be replaced by the union as the rateable unit. (3) John Bright urged through the press that the poor rate should be made a tax upon all Irish incomes, (4) and W. J. O'Neill Daunt proposed that the appropriated funds of the disestablished church should be used

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1 See Chapter IV, pp. 71-98.

2 Limerick Reporter, 23 Oct. 1868.

3 Locker-Lampson, A consideration of the state of Ireland in the nineteenth century, London, 1907, pp. 188-9.

4 Irishman, 10 Oct.

to liquidate this charge.<sup>(1)</sup> Nine conservatives and six liberals called, in their election addresses, for state purchase of the Irish railways. This was the question upon which there was by far the greatest degree of unanimity among the Irish representatives; a requisition on the subject to Lord Mayo, which was got up immediately after the election, included the signatures of many of the leading Irish nobles and fifty-four M.P.s of both parties.

*(The requisition, 'An all-Ireland, the only one in the world, wrote the Belfast News-Letter; 'Does not will the whole of the parliament meet in the Hall of St. Stephen's.' (2) By comparison the Irish Act was described by one liberal member as 'a mockery'. (3)*

- 1 Nation, 31 Oct. 1868.
  - 2 Peers included Lords Donegall, Clanricarde, Charlemont, Howth, Bessborough, Dunraven, and Bandon. M.P.s were: Booth, Leslie, Burke, Castlerosse, Trevor, Cogan, Monsell, Archdale, Synan, Annesley, Nugent, Hamilton (I.T.), De la Poer, Gregory, Urquhart, O'Reilly, Fitzwilliam, Bryan, Herbert, O'Brien, Sherlock, O'Conor Barry, Downing, Vandaleur, Moore (C), Esmonde, D'Arcy, St. Lawrence, Crichton, Guinness, Pim, Gavin, Johnston, Vance, Knox (L.E.), McClure, Dowse, Knox (W.S.), Delahunty, Keown, Devereux, Damer, O'Beirne, Dalway, Bla Russell, Callan, Gray, Blennerhassett, Kirk, Weguelin, Maguire, Verner (.E.W.)
- (Freeman's Journal, 8, 9, 11 Dec.)

1 Representation of the House of Commons, 1868, p. 100.  
 2 Belfast News-Letter, 1 Oct. 1868.  
 3 Freeman's Journal, 3 Nov.

Chapter II : The state of the franchise

Like all previous reform acts, that of Disraeli was not extended unaltered to Ireland. Instead, a special act relating only to Ireland was passed.<sup>(1)</sup> Disraeli's English act was expected to produce radical alterations in the representation: 'At all events, the old regime is over', wrote the Belfast News-Letter; 'Never more will the middle-class Parliament meet in the hall of St. Stephen's.'<sup>(2)</sup> By comparison the Irish act was described by one liberal observer as 'a mockery'<sup>(3)</sup>.

The Irish measure provided, briefly, that in borough constituencies the poor rate qualification for the franchise was to be reduced from £8 to 'over £4' for rated occupiers, and the franchise was also extended for the first time to lodgers, the minimum qualification being twelve months continuous residence in sole tenancy of an apartment having an unfurnished letting value of at least ten pounds per annum. The county franchise remained unchanged, the qualification being a £12 rating.

Although not on a par with the parallel British

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1 Representation of the People (Ireland), 31 & 32 Victoria.  
 2 Belfast News-Letter, 1 Aug. 1868.  
 3 Freeman's Journal, 3 Nov.



legislation, the measure did provide possibilities for the agents of both parties, and in several boroughs vigorous efforts were made to get as many claimants as possible on to the list before the closing date at the end of August <sup>(1)</sup>. But in most boroughs, even those where there was such party activity, the list of claimants was proportionately not great; Limerick had only 36 claimants under the lodger franchise, and 247 who claimed under the new rating qualification <sup>(2)</sup>. This was in proportion to an existing electorate of 1,944. Ennis had 59 new applicants over an existing electorate of 178. But it was in Dublin that the registration activity was most highly organised, and the practical working-out of the act most publicised. Here four revising barristers were initially appointed, Messrs O'Hara, Exham, Kernan, and Purcell. Each party entered objections to most of the claimants sponsored by the other, so that agreement was reached that all claims should be treated as having been objected to, even if no formal objection had in fact been entered. This was one of several factors which mitigated against claimants. In London at the Guildhall court the revising barrister decided to demand written notice of objection before the hearing of a claim was arrived at; where no such notice had been entered beforehand, he was prepared to accept the certificate of claim in place of personal attendance. This arrangement was

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1 Freeman's Journal, 19 Aug. 1868.  
 2 ibid., 28 Aug.

made in response to the pleadings of the liberal counsel who pointed to the difficulty experienced by working-class claimants in leaving their occupations to attend.<sup>(1)</sup> In Dublin personal attendance was in all cases demanded. In the early stages of the Dublin hearing the delays were particularly noticeable, the original four barristers being totally unable to handle all the work and having ultimately to be augmented. Liberals maintained that many claimants were compelled by these early delays to abandon their claims: certainly, in the closing stages, many were struck off for non-attendance. The prospects of a large increase under the lodger franchise were made all the more dubious by the definition of that class adopted; against the strong objections of the liberals, the four barristers, sitting together, ruled that:

A lodger is a person who occupies part of a dwelling house as his residence, either where the landlord resides on the premises, or where although the house is wholly let out in tenements the landlord retains a control over the outside door entitling him to enter the premises without thereby becoming a trespasser. (2)

In this way was engendered what became known as the 'latchkey franchise'. Claimants were asked whether their landlord possessed a latchkey to the house: if not, the claimant was deemed not to be a lodger, a ruling which resulted in, among other things, some hasty improvisation on the part of claimants.

1 Freeman's Journal, 15 Sept. 1868.  
 2 ibid., 11 Sept.

Henry Watts, liberal, 19 Lower Liffey Street, cross-examined by Mr Fair, stated that he never saw the landlady use a latchkey, but he knew that she had one.

'When did she get the latchkey? I think she got it today' (laughter).

'Did she tell you so? She did' (laughter).

'Mr Kaye rejected the claim on the grounds that the landlady had no control over the premises'. (1)

The obvious way to determine the effect, if any, that the new act had upon the Irish franchise, is by a

1 Freeman's Journal, 18 Sept. 1868. In enforcing this and other limiting rulings, Purcell, Kernan, and Exham showed especial scrupulosity; this was not surprising, for all three were conservatives. Purcell addressed Dublin University as a conservative in the election, and he in particular was accused by the liberals of partisanship. While other barristers were prepared to sit at night to facilitate working-class claimants, he refused to do so - 'I am happy to hear you say that', commented Mr Bradley, the conservative agent (Freeman's Journal, 19 Sept.). Purcell also refused to open the hearing of applications from more than one ward area at a time, instead reading out each list singly and striking off absentees before proceeding to the next ward (Freeman's Journal, 19 Sept.). On the other hand, Curran, a liberal by politics, openly declared the 'latchkey franchise' to be nonsense, and adopted the existence of a general right of supervision by the landlord as his standard (Freeman's Journal, 22 Sept.). Another reason for the rejection of claimants was the omission of their occupation from an otherwise complete claim (Freeman's Journal, 23, 25 Sept.). It is hard to say how much difference in point of numbers all this may have made; writing in 1880, when the situation was little altered G. Dawson in the liberal 'Fortnightly Review' declared: 'In England every facility is afforded to those entitled to the franchise to become possessed of it. In Ireland a restricted class is met at every stage with wanton obstruction authorised by law'.

It is scarcely surprising, then, that the new lodger franchise had negligible results. In Dublin alone was there a fair number of lodger electors - 717 out of 13,000 in 1871. Cork came next with 14; Londonderry had 12; Belfast 2.

(Return...parliamentary and municipal electors...& county and constituencies, p. 15, H.C. 1872, (17), xlvii, p. 295.)

comparison of the electoral statistics for the various boroughs before and after its introduction (See Appendix I ). The overall increase in the Irish borough vote between 1866 and 1868, excluding Belfast from both periods<sup>(1)</sup>, was one of nineteen per cent. Greater increases were on the whole found in the boroughs of Ulster and Leinster than in those of Connaught and Munster. The electorates of Limerick and Cork rose by only four and a half per cent and nine per cent respectively; Dublin increased by approximately the average

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1 Belfast. It is impossible to compare the figures for the Belfast electorate before and after the act, since by chapter 49 of Section 9 of that measure it was laid down that where any Irish parliamentary borough was smaller than the municipal borough, the two were henceforth to be equated. This had a serious effect only upon Belfast, whose municipal borough was double the area of the old parliamentary borough, and in 1868 contained a population of 121,369, to the parliamentary borough's 78,344. As a result of the increase in area and the extension of the franchise the Belfast electorate rose from 3,615 to 12,168. Nevertheless, it is possible to conclude that the new franchise affected Belfast more than any other town in Ireland, since it possessed over five thousand houses rated between £4 and £8, as compared with a figure of three thousand in Dublin, and on the basis of the old area it was estimated in a government paper that the electorate would increase by 3,376 (Return as to rating, population, number of electors, etc., p. 2, H.C. 1867-8, (236), lvi, 509. This is presumably explained by the fact that Belfast was the most industrialised city in the island, and the one in which most working-class housing had been recently constructed. The estimated increases in this paper are reasonably accurate, erring more often on the side of underestimation.

In making any comparison of the tables in Appendix 1, the effect of the increase in the area of Belfast (and of the disfranchising of Sligo and Cashel) should be borne in mind.

percentage, while the largest increases were on the whole recorded in Ulster, the Belfast electorate approximately doubling itself while that of Londonderry rose by over seventy per cent. These increases were maintained to a lesser extent in subsequent registrations: a comparison of the statistics of 1868 and 1873-4 shows a further increase of just over eight per cent (1).

Nevertheless the Irish borough electorate was still extremely restricted, representing less than four per cent of the borough population, and even apart from the actual exclusiveness of the franchise, the most obviously necessary reform was a redistribution of seats. Of the thirty-three Irish boroughs, two had electorates of less than two hundred, another nine had between two and three hundred voters, and five had between three and four hundred; in other

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1 Freeman Franchise. It should also be borne in mind that these figures include voters who possessed the franchise by virtue of this qualification. In most cases the number so qualified was insignificant; the following had proportionately high numbers of freemen voters:

Dublin.....	2,662
Belfast, Galway.....	427
Waterford.....	350
Wexford.....	84
Carrickfergus.....	742
Cork.....	254
Drogheda.....	114
Youghal.....	33
Clonmel.....	31

Their proportionate strength was obviously greatest in Carrickfergus, whose total electorate was only 1,201 in 1868 (Return of the different cities and boroughs in Ireland in which the freeman franchise at present exists, H.C. 1867-8, (305), lvi, 515.

words, almost half the Irish boroughs had less than four hundred voters, and 4197 electors chose sixteen representatives. On a provincial basis, the disparities more or less cancelled each other out; Ulster, with a population of 1,914,236 returned twenty-nine members, Leinster (1,457,635) returned thirty-four, Munster (1,513,558) twenty-seven, and Connaught (913,135) thirteen. Ulster was obviously worst and Leinster best treated. But the disproportionate influence of the small borough must have encouraged the continuance of dubious forms of influence in an open election.

The county electorate, meanwhile, rose almost three per cent between 1866 and 1868, to drop again slightly by 1874. It should not, of course, be forgotten, that between the censuses of 1861 and 1871 the population of the country fell by almost four hundred thousand, or six and a half per cent. Meanwhile the population of the parliamentary boroughs appears superficially to have slightly increased, but this is explained by the increase in the population of Belfast, which rose by over forty per cent during these ten years: almost everywhere outside Ulster and a few of the larger southern centres the population declined.

In conclusion, the impression gained from these statistics is of relatively little alteration in the Irish electorate throughout this period. It required firstly, the ballot, and secondly, a redistribution of seats, radically

to alter the character of Irish representation. The reform of 1868 was insignificant in itself, and its insignificance was accentuated by the manner of its interpretation and administration.

... of disestablishment has been discussed above. The importance of this liberty of vote in the election would be difficult to exaggerate. It gave to the electors an invaluable asset of a central authority which could reach into the majority of the constituencies in England, Ireland, and Scotland, and would be able to exert an influence on behalf of the party candidates, and writing upon them.

the folly of accepting a candidate who would vote against the church (or any other measure of national importance in Ireland), and at the same time support the party who, as long as they are in office, will make it impossible to overthrow the church.

'My views and feelings are quite in unison with your own', replied the Reverend Dr Delany, Bishop of Cork.<sup>1</sup> The Bishop of Limerick, wrote to his 'dear friend' Russell to the same effect; he had visited Cork to see Mr Keane, Bishop of Cloyne, and Dr O'Connell, Bishop of Ross, and reported:

1 Keane to Russell, 15 May, Russell MSS, 6312.  
2 Delany to Russell, 27 May, Russell MSS, 6313.

Chapter III

The influence of the catholic clergy in the election

The identity of view which prevailed between Gladstone and the catholic clergy as to the first importance of disestablishment has been discussed above. The importance of this identity of view in the election would be difficult to exaggerate: it gave to the liberals the invaluable asset of a central authority whose influence could reach into the majority of the constituencies of southern Ireland. William Monsell, the leading Irish catholic in the English Liberal party, took upon himself the duty of writing to members of the hierarchy appealing to them to use this influence on behalf of the party candidates, and urging upon them

the folly of accepting a candidate who would vote against the church (or any other measure of national importance to Ireland) and at the same time support the party who, as long as they are in office, will make it impossible to overthrow the church. (1)

'My views and feelings are quite in unison with your own', replied the Reverend Dr Delany, Bishop of Cork.<sup>(2)</sup> Dr Butler, Bishop of Limerick, wrote to his 'dear friend' Monsell to the same effect; he had visited Cork to see Dr Keane, Bishop of Cloyne, and Dr O'Hea, Bishop of Ross, and reported:

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1 Keane to Monsell, 13 May, Monsell MSS, 8318.  
 2 Delany to Monsell, 27 Mar., Monsell MSS, 8318.



I was glad to find them both quite determined to admit no candidate for county or borough except on a distinct pledge of opposing D'Israeli and supporting Gladstone at least until the Established Church is disestablished and disendowed..... Drs Keane and O'Hea were to have a meeting with Dr Delany and Dr Moriarty so as to have perfect unanimity for Cork. (1)

The outcome of this meeting was a public statement, issued from the palace at Killarney:

We are of opinion that no candidate aspiring to represent an Irish constituency in Parliament ought to be accepted unless on a distinct pledge to support the policy enunciated by Mr Gladstone with reference to the Established Church and to oppose any ministry which is not prepared to carry it into immediate effect.

We are also of opinion that candidates should make a distinct declaration of principles in conformity with those enunciated by the Church and people of Ireland on the all-important questions affecting land tenancy and public education.

While the latter questions must be kept prominently before the people without any relaxation of our efforts to carry them the disestablishment and disendowment of the Protestant Church must be insisted upon as of absolute and pressing necessity.

Should a number of candidates solicit the suffrages of the constituencies of Cork we recommend to our clergy to ascertain the views of the gentry and people, and to arrange, if necessary, for the holding of a county meeting to whose arbitrament the choice of candidates may be referred.

Our representatives should be men whose antecedents and position may be a guarantee for their fidelity to this pledge. (2)

This kind of arrangement was by no means unusual.

So far as the selection or endorsement of liberal candidates was concerned, in most contested constituencies outside Ulster

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1 Butler to Monsell, 16 Aug. 1868, Monsell MSS, 8317.  
2 Monsell MSS, 8319, undated.

these same clergy were the instruments of order and regulation. In Dublin alone was there a liberal organisation in a more or less modern sense: the Central Franchise Association was a formal body, meeting frequently in committee, with a secretary, John McSheehy, who had permanent offices in Dame Street and who actively supervised the formation and operation of the local ward committees which were set up for this election.<sup>(1)</sup> But this body was mainly concerned with registration; it appears to have had no say in the choice of candidates except insofar as its personnel were individually influential. Even in their registration work, the ward committees availed themselves of the parish organisation, often meeting in the presbytery with the local parish priest as chairman.<sup>(2)</sup> Registration committees as such were quite normal in Irish boroughs, both in the conservative and in the liberal interest. Nowhere throughout the country was there much trace of a permanent secular liberal organisation. Chichester Fortescue, the most prominent Irishman in the upper ranks of the English Liberal party, was anxious that a liberal candidate should be started in Dublin County in order to occupy the attentions of Colonel Taylor, one of the two conservative members for the county, who was the Irish Conservative whip. In order to bring this

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1 Freeman's Journal, 1, 11, 13, 14, 18, 21 July, etc.  
 2 Ibid., 11, 16, 22, 27, 28, 29 July, etc.

about he and his fellow liberal candidate for Louth, Matthew O'Reilly Dease, found it necessary personally to put up the sum of £1500 and to instruct their solicitors in Dublin to set about persuading a suitable candidate to stand. (1) In Cavan, the bishop, Dr Conaty, presided over a liberal meeting which agreed to set up a

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1 R.W. Meade letter-book, MS 3924, Meade to Fortescue, 17 Nov., + R. Colles to Dease, 17 Nov. A. M. Sullivan was first approached but declined to stand because, he later wrote, he would not accept money from those whom in all probability he would be opposing in the future. He then suggested Judge Little, who also declined, and then P.P. McSwiney, who accepted. The version in Meade's letter-book bears out that of Sullivan in this regard (New Ireland, 14th ed., pp.320-25).

O'Reilly Dease, who put up the greater part of the money (£1000), was extremely generous with his wealth in securing his political ends. He figures in the only blatant attempt at personal bribery which I have discovered in this election. His rival for Louth was Tristram Kennedy, the sitting Liberal member. At the same time as arranging for a painstaking attempt to discredit Kennedy as a conservative, his solicitor (Meade) arranged for a third party to approach him in London with a proposition: 'perhaps the most delicate way to put the matter to him would be: "If you fight Mr Dease in Louth you cannot get in under £3000 the people will not subscribe pennies for you; go elsewhere and Mr Dease would pay your expenses not to exceed £....." My own opinion is that he would take the money but the amount would be the question. I imagine £1000 ought to be very good pay for him. Some of the electors I know are most anxious for Mr Kennedy to resign and save the county from a contest and I make not the smallest doubt but that there are others at work and will say to my friend now pay me so and so and I'll get the M.P. to resign. I would far prefer putting £50 or £100 in your way than into the pocket of a stranger so don't let the matter cool.'

(Meade to 'My Dear John', 20 July; Meade to Satchell, 22 July, Meade Letter-book, MS 3924). There is no evidence as to the success or failure of these negotiations, but Kennedy withdrew and there was no contest in Louth.

county club, with the local clergy to form the basis of parish sub-committees,<sup>(1)</sup> but despite the 'active organising' of the club's secretary, the Reverend P. Calligan,<sup>(2)</sup> the county returned two anti-disestablishment members unopposed in November. Another constituency in which such an organisation existed was Queen's County, where an 'Independent Liberal Club', under the presidency of Richard Lalor of Tinnakill, brother of Fintan Lalor, had been formed, against the wishes of the local bishop, in 1866.<sup>(3)</sup> Having met on 30 June, this body published an advertisement promising that 'a good liberal candidate' would be brought forward, and after several efforts to discover a suitable person,<sup>(4)</sup> a subsequent meeting, which included six priests in its attendance, selected T. Mason Jones, a member of the English Reform Union and a frequent lecturer upon the evils of the establishment.<sup>(5)</sup> The club showed its independence by declaring that Jones was the only candidate whom it would support, despite the fact that thirty-seven priests of the county had just announced their continued confidence in the sitting liberal member, the landowner Wilson Fitzpatrick.<sup>(6)</sup>

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1 The club was to have a subscription of 5s per year; only those with six months membership might vote in selection of candidates. Freeman's Journal, 20 July 1866.  
 2 Dublin Evening Post, 4 Aug.  
 3 Michael Dunne to Lalor, 12 January 1866, Lalor MSS, 8566. Lalor (b.1823, d.1893) was a Home Rule M.P. from 1880-92 -  
 4 Lalor to Sullivan, 9 April 1867 (?), Lalor MSS, 8566.  
 5 Freeman's Journal, 7 July, 12, 13 Aug.  
 6 ibid., 15, 17 Aug. The other member, General Dunne, was a conservative.

Unhappily for Jones and his supporters A.M. Sullivan was able to recall in the Nation that a few years earlier in Liverpool the candidate had been drawing large audiences to his lectures as the friend and apologist of Garibaldi, and Mason Jones withdrew from the contest before a barrage of clerical disapproval.<sup>(1)</sup> The club's second choice, Kenelm Digby, was more fortunate, being accepted by the clergy. A very real conflict between the more advanced liberals and the whigs seems to have lain behind all this activity. Fitzpatrick was a whig<sup>(2)</sup> with few popular sympathies, one whose vote for disestablishment represented for him the ultimate concession to radicalism. This was, indeed, quite enough for several of the clergy, who feared the outcome of a contested election; Father Magee, parish priest of Stradbally, wrote to Fitzpatrick:

It seems to us as a just and natural compromise, that the conservative party, who possess so much of the property of the county, should have a representative of their views; and in the selection of a liberal candidate most of the clergy, if not all, would (forgetful of some things in the past) place their confidence in you, provided your views on the land question and tenant right are as enlightened as those you entertain in regard to the church..... (3)

Fitzpatrick himself feared for his seat, and appears to have made no secret of his lack of enthusiasm for his liberal fellow-candidate, so much so that Lord Russell wrote urging

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- 1 Freeman's Journal, 28 Aug., 5 Sept. 1868; Nation, 22 Aug., 5 Sept.
  - 2 Dod's Parliamentary Companion, 1869. He opposed the ballot and the repeal of the corn laws.
  - 3 Magee to Fitzpatrick, 15 June 1868, Fitzpatrick MSS, National Library, PC 58. This letter was understandably marked 'most confidential'.

him to swallow his feelings for the sake of gaining a seat for the party.<sup>(1)</sup> It proved, in fact, that Fitzpatrick had underestimated the chances of returning two liberals for the county; the clergy endorsed both, and Queen's County was the scene of one of the most vigorous campaigns in the whole country, with clerical addresses from the pulpits, and a succession of public meetings in the main towns of the county. At these meetings Fitzpatrick did not appear, the clergy spoke on behalf of both candidates, and Messrs Lalor and Michael Dunne of the Independent Club adverted only to Digby.<sup>(2)</sup> Even among the clergy, some of the more advanced were not too enthusiastic in Fitzpatrick's cause.<sup>(3)</sup> But the coalition held long enough to compel the conservative to retire, and the two liberals were returned unopposed.<sup>(4)</sup>

1 Russell to Fitzpatrick, 20 Oct. 1868, Fitzpatrick MSS. Since, judging by his correspondence, Fitzpatrick had dedicated his life to the recapture of the earldom of Upper Ossory from which his illegitimacy debarred him, this request no doubt would carry considerable weight. In 1869 Fitzpatrick was created Baron Castletown of Upper Ossory.

2 Freeman's Journal, 13, 21, 27 Oct.; 10 Nov., also T. Franks (election agent) to Fitzpatrick, 11 Oct. 1868, Fitzpatrick MSS.

3 *ibid.*

4 After the contest E.G. Dease, Fitzpatrick's proposer at the nomination, who might himself have been chosen in Digby's place if he had had the money and the clerical support ( ? to Mrs Fitzpatrick, 24 Aug., Fitzpatrick MSS), and who succeeded Fitzpatrick as liberal and later home rule M.P., suggested that the latter should pay part of Digby's expenses. Fitzpatrick's agent commented: 'Digby came to the county not as your nominee but as the nominee of a club hostile to you, and you have all along abstained from doing any act to coalesce with him'...as a stranger 'it was necessary for him to travel about a good deal through the country and entertain the priests. I confess I do not understand the nature of the claim?' (J. Roe to Fitzpatrick, 4 Dec.)

In the Queen's County contest one sees natural antagonisms between whig and popular elements subsiding temporarily before the intervention of the clergy, a picture not uncommon in the election.

The exact measure of clerical influence in this election cannot be assessed, but it would be difficult to overestimate it. Of the twenty-eight constituencies outside Ulster in which contests were started, the clergy were active in at least twenty-four. The extent of this activity naturally varied in each constituency. The forms which it took may be roughly divided into three classes:

(1) episcopal pronouncements upon political issues, (1)

(2) similar clerical pronouncements upon contests in particular constituencies, (2)

(3) participation by the local clergy in constituency campaigns. (3)

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1 This form of participation has been discussed in Chapter I  
 2 In this section may be listed Cork Co, Dublin City, Dungarvan, Galway Co, Galway Boro, Kilkenny City, King's Co, Leitrim, Louth, Mayo, Meath, Waterford Co, Waterford City, and Wexford Co, in which episcopal addresses to the electors were issued.  
 3 In this section may be listed all those of the above constituencies in which contests did take place, together with Athlone, Carlow Boro, Drogheda, Dublin Co, Ennis, Limerick City, Queen's Co, Sligo Co, Sligo Boro, New Ross, Tipperary, Wexford Co, Wexford Boro, Wicklow, and Youghal. In addition to these contests, catholic clergy took part in the nomination proceedings in Clare, Clonmel, Limerick Co, and Roscommon.

30 Nov. 1837.  
 1838, 11 Nov.  
 1838, 18 Nov.

The precise form which this clerical participation took naturally varied even within these categories in accordance with the local circumstances which elicited it. In Louth for example, Chichester Fortescue and the 'very wealthy and influential' O'Reilly Dease<sup>(1)</sup> seemed to have established claims which no one would oppose when at the beginning of November the conservatives started the Honorable Jenico Preston, a catholic and the younger son of Lord Gormanston.<sup>(2)</sup> 'Who now dare say that the catholics of Ireland are, to a man, against our church?' asked 'a voter and an Orangeman', in a public advertisement in the Freeman's Journal.<sup>(3)</sup> This provoked Dr Kieran, archbishop of Armagh, to publish another advertisement denouncing Preston's candidature and calling upon the clergy of County Louth to dissuade from supporting him any of their flocks whom they might find so inclined.<sup>(4)</sup> Preston withdrew.

The clerical contributions to the contests in Galway Borough and Dungarvan are discussed elsewhere.<sup>(5)</sup> In the diocese of Tuam Dr MacHale issued a pastoral letter to be read in all the churches after the twelve o'clock mass on 15 November; this letter attacked the landlords and the

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- 1 Belfast News-Letter, 7 Aug. 1868. Fortescue was brother to Lord Clermont, who owned one tenth of the land of Cavan.
  - 2 The liberals accused Preston of agreeing to stand in return for a promise of a raise in the peerage for his father; the latter was in fact raised to the United Kingdom peerage as Baron Gormanston of Whitewood as one of the last acts of the Conservative administration. (Freeman's Journal, 30 Nov. 1868).
  - 3 *ibid.*, 11 Nov.
  - 4 *ibid.*, 12 Nov.
  - 5 See below, pp. 67-75, and 93-7.



establishment in general terms;<sup>(1)</sup> in addition he called a meeting of the clergy and electors of Mayo which, in Castlebar on 6 August, rejected the claims of Valentine O'Connor Blake, who had already gained the support of some of the local clergy, and selected G. H. Moore as the people's candidate.<sup>(2)</sup> Mayo has much in common with Queen's County in this campaign; in each, one seat only was regarded as vacant; in each, the clergy threw themselves into an organised series of mass meetings; in each, the clerically sponsored candidates were successful.<sup>(3)</sup>

In Cork County, on the other hand, many of the clergy seem to have favoured the Honourable Robert Boyle

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- 1 Freeman's Journal, 16 Nov. 1868.
  - 2 According to the liberal (but possibly pro-Blake) Ballinrobe Chronicle, very few of the laity attended this convention as there was considerable vagueness as to whether or not it was public. (Ballinrobe Chronicle, 8 Aug. 1868).
  - 3 Freeman's Journal, 27 Aug., 10 Sept., 2, 10 Oct., 13 Nov. 1868. Ballinrobe Chronicle, 31 Oct. Indeed, in the report of the nomination proceedings in the conservative Mayo Constitution, George Ekins Browne, who seconded Dr MacHale's nomination of Moore, and who, after Moore's death, succeeded him as liberal and later home rule member for Mayo, is reported as saying 'This contest is not between George Henry Moore and Lord Bingham, but between the priests and the landlords' (24 Nov.), and the Reverend Mr Fowler of Ballina wrote to Jonathan Pim, M.P. Dublin City, 'The landlords and the priests got in each their man. As to the people, they had no voice in the matter.' (Fowler to Pim, undated, Pim MSS, National Library, B,110).

rather than his successful opponent McCarthy Downing, the 'friend of the tenant farmers'.<sup>(1)</sup> The bishops of Cork, Cloyne, and Ross met in Skibbereen and were reported in the Cork Examiner as having given their approval to Downing's candidature.<sup>(2)</sup> Immediately a statement was issued denying this: what the bishops had decided was that they would only endorse candidates pledged to support a Gladstone administration and to press the disestablishment question 'in priority to all others'. The land question they admitted to be the most important of all, but the other was ripe for settlement. If more than two such candidates should persist in coming forward, they proposed that the parish priests should call parish meetings to nominate delegates to a county meeting which would select the candidates.<sup>(3)</sup> In the weeks that followed Downing received a much greater volume of support, especially from the farming community, than his aristocratic opponent, his candidature being endorsed by the Farmers' Clubs of the county.<sup>(4)</sup> When the county meeting was held it declared for Downing, together with Smith Barry, the sitting liberal member, whose seat was not regarded as in question. The Nation wrote:

It is of course true that all the parishes of the county were not represented at that meeting, but it is equally true that

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1 Tipperary Advocate, 14 Nov. 1868. See also above, pp. 27-8.  
 2 Freeman's Journal, 11 Sept.  
 3 ibid., 12 Sept.  
 4 ibid., 14, 15 Sept.; 13 Oct.

many of these, not so represented, were not so because of any unwillingness to accede to the plan proposed by the bishops, but because the clergymen of the parishes, holding opinions opposed to what they knew to be the opinions of their parishioners, declined to summon the meetings, or, having summoned them, allowed them, as our friend Canon Fitzpatrick stated the other day as his own case, to lapse. (1)

Downing's address had been one of the more independent published in this election:

If elected I will enter parliament as a supporter of Mr Gladstone, on the terms stated by Mr Bright at Limerick, namely, that "reparation should be made to Ireland for the wrongs inflicted upon her by England, and that Ireland should give in return her forgiveness". But if Mr Gladstone, once he attains power, wavers in or falters in honestly carrying into effect the policy which he has enunciated, then will I be found in determined hostility to his government. (2)

The Cork County result was a direct victory for the determination of the local farming community to keep their needs in the forefront of political debate. Efforts to return a candidate on a land platform in Meath, which in 1874 was to be the first Irish constituency to elect a representative who was actually a member of the tenant-farmer class, were less successful. Here J. T. Hinds published an address which was concerned exclusively with tenant right, (3) and J.A. Farrell published one in which tenant right was placed before disestablishment. (4) Despite the resolutions of the bishop, Dr Nulty, and the Meath clergy, expressing confidence in the sitting members and demanding the withdrawal of their opponents who 'have by their addresses and acts,

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1 Nation, 21 Nov. 1868.  
2 Freeman's Journal, 4 Nov.  
3 ibid., 22 Oct.  
4 ibid., 9 Nov.

practically proclaimed themselves to be the enemies of the liberal cause',<sup>(1)</sup> Hinds went to the poll. He would vote for disestablishment and disendowment, he declared, but he had not referred to it because 'it was already a thing of the past'. He had been asked to come forward for 'freedom of election' and because 'the people believed that the land question was the great question of the day, for the establishment was practically at an end'. Hinds' 'audacity' in coming forward, declared Father P. O'Reilly at the nomination, recalled to his mind the escaped lunatic who tried to jump to the moon; he would produce 'a document which was his death warrant, signed with his own hand', to wit, the declaration of the Protestant Defence Association in support of the Irish church.<sup>(2)</sup> Hinds polled eighty-eight votes.<sup>(3)</sup>

It would be wrong to imply that clerical participation was necessarily unwanted or unsolicited. In Sligo Borough the sitting member, Sergeant Armstrong, feeling unable through ill-health to contest the seat again, informed the local bishop, Dr Gillooly, who thereupon convened the meeting which chose a liberal candidate to succeed him.<sup>(4)</sup> In Tipperary the entry of a conservative candidate into the lists galvanised into activity the hitherto quiescent supporters of the two sitting members, Charles Moore and

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1 Freeman's Journal, 11 Nov. 1868.  
 2 ibid., 25 Nov.  
 3 ibid., 1 Dec.  
 4 ibid., 13 Aug.

Captain White. Meeting in Thurles they resolved:

That we respectfully but earnestly ask the most Reverend the Archbishop, the Right Reverend the Bishops, and the Very Reverend and Reverend Clergy of the county of Tipperary, to co-operate with the people in maintaining the independence of this great county, for which the clergy and people have made such sacrifices, and with this view to exert their influence on behalf of the candidates of our choice. (1)

It has been remarked above that the liberals in Dublin City were glad to be able to avail themselves of the parish organisation. It was employed also in the rural constituencies of Queen's County, Sligo County, Wexford County, and Mayo. Wexford County shows this technique very well developed. First the clergy met in St Peter's College, Wexford with the bishop in the chair, and resolved that the candidates, D'Arcy and Power, should begin active canvass, that local committees with representation on a central committee in Enniscorthy should be set up, and that:

at the coming election, when the question of the disestablishment and disendowment of the established church is for the first time before the electors, and demands an expression of their opinion, we resolve on united action with the laity to secure the return of Messrs D'Arcy and Power, the candidates pledged to the support of that measure. (2)

Aggregate meetings were then organised all over the county, generally with the local parish priest in the chair, and with the local clergy on the platform; forty were on the platform in Enniscorthy, including the bishop of Ferns. (3) In Mayo

G. H. Moore progressed from town to town, greeted by the local

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1 Freeman's Journal, 27 Oct. 1868. At the same meeting it was resolved to establish a county liberal club.  
2 ibid., 14 Sept.  
3 ibid., 22 Sept.

clergy, speaking with them from open-air platforms, canvassing each town in their company, and usually concluding the day by dining with the parish priest.<sup>(1)</sup> In King's County the two candidates, O'Brien and Sherlock, would arrive on a Sunday morning, attend mass, and afterwards proceed with the parish priest to the place of meeting.<sup>(2)</sup> In only three constituencies was a candidate returned in direct opposition to the stated wishes of the clergy, Dungarvan, Sligo Borough, and Youghal; the peculiar circumstances of the Dungarvan contest are discussed elsewhere;<sup>(3)</sup> in the diminutive boroughs of Sligo and Youghal the successful candidate was in each case unseated on petition, the former borough being disfranchised, after a verdict of bribery and 'the grossest intimidation'.<sup>(4)</sup>

It is difficult to draw any definite conclusion from all this clerical activity. Clerical influence was, of course, in no way unusual in nineteenth century elections in Ireland, and it is impossible to gauge its relative degree in different elections, since no accurate standard of comparison exists. But certainly the clergy themselves frequently felt it incumbent upon them to justify the scale of their activity in this election as something produced by the nature of the main issue involved. 'Under ordinary circumstances I should be unwilling to address you on an approaching election for a member of parliament', said

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1 Freeman's Journal, 27 Aug., 11, 25 Sept. 1868;  
Roscommon Journal, 31 Oct.; Ballinrobe Chronicle, 31 Oct.  
2 Freeman's Journal, 21 Oct.  
3 Chapter IV, pp. 91-7.  
4 Copy of Judge Keogh's judgment in O'Loughlen MSS, PC 286,  
First box.

bishop Leahy of Dromore, recommending William Kirk to the electors of Newry, 'but these are exceptional times, when some additional advice may be expected from one holding my position, for we have arrived at a momentous crisis, the magnitude of which cannot be overstated.'<sup>(1)</sup> 'In the long course of a missionary career he had never addressed a political meeting', said Father Doran, P.P. Rathnure, county Wexford, but 'this election is an exceptional one. It is one purely religious, that is, to secure the equality, on religious grounds, of the catholic millions with a handful of anglicans.'<sup>(2)</sup> Monsignor McCabe, P.P. Kingstown, speaking at a local liberal meeting, declared: 'If it had been a purely political meeting, he would not have been there.'<sup>(3)</sup>

This was undoubtedly a logical attitude in the case of a direct struggle between a liberal and a conservative candidate; the catholic who voted for the conservative was voting for the maintenance of protestantism as the established religion of the state. Dr Walsh, bishop of Ossory, saw this issue as so clear-cut that he could say:

If you should happen to meet with any catholic elector - I cannot believe you will - who would not vote for Sir John Gray - who would even vote against him - say nothing offensive; but you can conscientiously tell that voter that he is committing grievous sin in so doing, because he thereby co-operates in continuing injustice to his religion and his country, which is a very serious sin indeed. (4)

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1 Freeman's Journal, 7 Nov. 1868.

2 ibid., 8 Nov.

3 ibid., 19 Nov.

4 ibid., 12 Nov.

Let misrule cease, said the Reverend Dr Power in Clonmel, and Ireland be governed

in accordance with the enlightened views and reasonable desires of Irishmen themselves - let that state of things be established, and then the clergy of Ireland will retire from the field of politics. (1)

In the light of all these pronouncements, one is led to the conclusion that the peculiarly ecclesiastical character of the controversy in this campaign occasioned an exceptional degree of clerical participation on the liberal side. It will be demonstrated in the following chapter that where two or more liberal candidates were in opposition to one another, this clerical influence was generally exerted on behalf of the candidate who would give an unqualified pledge to sustain the administration that would make disestablishment a cabinet issue - in practice the administration of Gladstone. In these circumstances the other great issues such as tenant right, self-legislation, or amnesty, could scarcely be forcibly advanced, nor could the element which placed these issues before all others expect to find much favour. Again and again John Martin lamented that the bishops and clergy, 'who have virtual control of so many as perhaps thirty constituencies.....are not electing nationalist representatives.' (2) But to infer from this that these issues were unaturally postponed would be to ignore the

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1 Freeman's Journal, 16 Oct. 1868.  
2 Martin to Daunt, 14 Oct. 1868, Daunt MSS, 8047.



all-pervasive influence of Gladstone. The great boon which he offered in 1868 was disestablishment; it was natural that it should have been seized upon by those from whom all concessions had long been withheld. If the values of the election seem stunted in retrospect, they were his values; it was his hand which lifted one issue from the storehouse of Irish discontent. The election of 1868 was fought upon the level of political maturity in respect of Irish problems which he had attained in that year.

after the fusion with...  
 inception of the...  
 sympathized with the first...  
 in the second...  
 how did these react to the liberal proposals in the election

In considering this question, it is necessary, in the first place, to examine the relationship in this election of the Irish candidates to the British Liberal party. In discussing the main issues of the election in Chapter IV their lack of definition has been pointed out. This lack of definition continues imposed upon the election the period choosing between the liberal candidates who might both call for 'religious equality', 'constitutional education', and 'compensation for improvements with security of tenure'. In these cases some criterion had to be imposed. One of these

Chapter IV

The liberal alliance and the theory of independent opposition

The official liberal programme as expressed by the average parliamentary candidate is relatively easy to trace. More interesting in many ways is the attitude of the recalcitrants, the dissenters, those to whom other issues less politically respectable were more important than that of the church. The 1868 election took place less than two years after the fenian outbreaks, less than two years before the inception of the home rule movement. The people who had sympathised with the first, the people who were to participate in the second, and the attitude of mind which produced both, how did these react to the liberal programme in the election?

In considering this question, it is necessary, in the first place, to examine the relationship in this election of the Irish candidates to the English Liberal party. In discussing the main issues of the election in Chapter I, their lack of definition has been pointed out. This lack of definition sometimes imposed upon the electors the problem of choosing between two liberal candidates who might both declare for 'religious equality', denominational education, and 'compensation for improvements with security of tenure'. In these cases some criterion had to be imposed. None of these

issues were readily definable: even a flat declaration for disestablishment and disendowment had little practical value if the candidate were to assist to power, at the opening of the new session, a Conservative administration which would never sponsor such a proposal. The introduction of the measure depended upon the return of a Gladstonian administration pledged to it; to many, then, the real election issue was, logically, the securing of sufficient seats to give Gladstone an opportunity of fulfilling his pledge of justice for Ireland. Cardinal Cullen commented:

It is fortunate that in the present election it is not necessary to discuss personal claims and the relative position of individual candidates..... a great fundamental principle on which rest our future hopes for the peace and happiness of Ireland is now at stake. (1)

In practice this meant that a greater degree than usual of uniformity with English Liberalism was exacted, where possible, by the disestablishment party from parliamentary candidates: the emphasis was on loyalty to, rather than independence of, the English Liberal party. As early as 21 July the Limerick Reporter summed up this attitude in an editorial which spoke for the feelings of the clerical-liberal party and which was full of ill-omen for independents. We know now who our friends are, it said, and the enemy is before us:

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1 Freeman's Journal, 16 Nov. 1868.

There is now, therefore, no excuse for the playing of the old game of Independent Opposition over again; or for repeating the fatal tactic of secession which upset the Liberal party some twenty years ago, and to a great extent undid the work of O'Connell. (1)

The implications of this attitude were most clearly worked out in the case of the Galway Borough election. The representatives of the borough at the dissolution were two young catholics, Sir Rowland Blennerhassett, a Kerry landowner, and George Morris, who had been elected in an uncontested by-election the previous year.(2) In his brief parliamentary career Morris had so far concerned himself largely with local matters, defending the borough against a threatened redistribution scheme. The Galway Vindicator praised his services in this regard and recommended his re-election as early as 1 July. On the church issue he had voted for Gladstone's resolutions.

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1 Limerick Reporter, 21 July 1868.  
2 He had been returned as a 'Liberal-Conservative' (Dod's Parliamentary Companion, 1868, p.263) following the retirement of his brother, who had been elected as a 'moderate liberal' (ibid., 1867, p.260) but took office as Solicitor-General and later Attorney-General in the Derby-Disraeli administration of 1866 (an appointment which greatly annoyed the Irish conservatives), was made a judge by the Conservatives and 'was a Conservative for the rest of his life' (G.E.C., Vol VII, p.246).

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1 Dublin Evening Post, 5 Aug. 1868.  
2 Galway Vindicator, 6, 12 Aug.

On 5 August the Dublin Evening Post devoted an editorial to those members of parliament who will vote for every principle of Mr Gladstone's Irish policy, but they will take care, meantime, that Mr Gladstone, so far as depends on their votes, shall never have an opportunity of reducing the principle to practice as a minister. There are but three civic constituencies at the outside - Dundalk, that is to say, and Youghal and Galway - in which the trick will be attempted, and but one, we should imagine - the last named - in which it has a chance of success. (1)

This attack provoked two editorials in reply in the Galway Vindicator repudiating the idea that the satisfaction of Irish needs was to be identified with the English Liberal party. It agreed that all other issues should give precedence to that of the church, but it prophesied that after the passage of disestablishment the Irish representatives would find themselves in immediate disagreement with the Liberal party upon the subject of education. The Irish electorate, it held, should return:

Independent representatives, who will ally themselves to no party; but who will labour first for the achievement of religious equality, and who will afterwards vote for any good measure for the advancement of Irish interests, no matter by what party or statesman proposed. (2)

Upon those who placed the disestablishment question above all else and equated its settlement with the return of Gladstone, this kind of argument made no impression; the Freeman's Journal announced tersely that enquiries were being made in Galway City 'with a view to starting a liberal

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1 Dublin Evening Post, 5 Aug. 1868.  
 2 Galway Vindicator, 8, 12 Aug.

...continued on additional page containing these points.

candidate',<sup>(1)</sup> and soon afterwards reported the formation, under the patronage of the bishop and clergy, of a 'Galway Independent Club', pledged 'to accept no candidate who will not pledge himself to adopt Mr Gladstone as his leader, and promise to hurl from power the present no-popery administration.'<sup>(2)</sup>

On 9 September Morris published his address. Pointing to his work on behalf of the city, he promised to continue 'entirely independent of every political party'; he made no specific reference to any of the major issues of the day. This kind of address, although far from unique from a sitting member, was scarcely tactful in the circumstances. Of Mr Morris's return, commented the Vindicator, there could not be the shadow of a doubt entertained. There was no need for him to state his views: he was known to be sound upon the three great issues.<sup>(3)</sup> But Morris soon realised his error, and augmented his address three days later with a letter repudiating 'misconstructions' of it; he had voted for Gladstone's resolutions, he declared, and would continue to support the same policy on the church; he was also in favour of tenant right and denominational education. All cavil and criticism was now silenced, said the Vindicator;<sup>(4)</sup> the

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1 Freeman's Journal, 3 Aug. 1868.  
 2 ibid., 27 Aug. The Galway Vindicator did not contain this report, nor did several other papers which normally carried Galway news.  
 3 Galway Vindicator, 9, 12 Sept.  
 4 ibid., 12 Sept. Henceforth advertisements of Morris's address carried an additional paragraph containing these points.

electorate would not be deceived, said the Freeman, by a second address produced as it was by 'the indignation of every elector in Galway'.<sup>(1)</sup>

The decisive pronouncement was made by Dr McEvilly and the Galway clergy. In a published advertisement on 19 September it was announced that the bishop and clergy had met and passed what became known as the 'College House resolutions', demanding pledges from the candidates on the topics of the church, the land, and education, and, most important of all, in the second resolution refusing to support any candidate

who will not pledge himself both to support Mr Gladstone's resolutions against the Irish establishment, as set forth by him in the last session of parliament, and to assist in hurling from office any, and every ministry, which will refuse to make the said resolutions cabinet measures. <sup>(2)</sup>

The Vindicator approved the other resolutions but deplored this one. Vainly it reminded the bishop of Gladstone's speeches on Italy, of Liberal unsoundness on education.<sup>(3)</sup>

The Freeman was delighted and called upon Morris to declare himself or withdraw from the representation;<sup>(4)</sup> its attack was placarded around Galway by unseen hands.<sup>(5)</sup> Then on

26 September there arrived, with what seemed to hostile

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1 Freeman's Journal, 14 Sept. 1868.

2 Galway Vindicator, 19 Sept.

3 Ibid.

4 Freeman's Journal, 22 Sept.

5 Galway Vindicator, 23 Sept.

77.

observers suggestively appropriate timing, a new candidate, John Bridge Aspinall, recorder of Liverpool, a staunch English Liberal and a catholic. His address was framed in such a way as to be quite obviously a personal criticism of Morris and proposal of himself as an alternative. Describing disestablishment as 'the first and greatest question', he declared that on this issue he was completely loyal to Gladstone, 'one of the greatest statesmen whom the world knows!'

We are like an army; we must have a LEADER, and we must trust and follow him with generous confidence until at least he has given us some reason to doubt him..... I need not add that I accede in every particular to the policy set forth in the resolutions recently put forward by your revered bishop and clergy. (1)

Although sent a copy of the College House resolutions by the bishop's secretary, Father Cullen, Morris made no public comment upon them; he later declared that he had not known that an answer was expected. (2) A 'conversion' would now be too late, wrote the Freeman on 29 September, and on 30 September it was announced that a second clerical meeting in the College House had resolved that the silence of Morris was equivalent to a refusal on his part to accept the resolutions, and that he was accordingly adjudged 'an unfit person to represent this catholic borough at the present juncture in parliament.' At the same meeting a letter from

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- 1 To this address was appended a letter of approval from Gladstone himself. (Galway Vindicator, 26 Sept.). It was a natural assumption that Aspinall had clerical approval of his candidature. Certainly Morris assumed so.
  - 2 Galway Vindicator, 10 Oct.



72.

Blennerhassett approving the resolutions was read. The meeting resolved to adjourn to 2 October, when they would 'hope to be able to select another candidate who will faithfully carry out the policy of our resolutions.'<sup>(1)</sup> On 5 October Morris withdrew from the contest.

The theoretical arguments continued unabated.

In an open letter to the catholics of Galway on 3 October, which was placarded about the town, Morris wrote:

As your representative and in accordance with my own opinions I voted on 7 May 1867 in favour of religious equality in this country, and during the last session I voted on every occasion in support of Mr Gladstone's resolutions.

As the dissolution approached, he continues, he communicated with the bishop among other electors. Dr McBvilly had replied:

I have no difficulty in saying that I have no fear whatever of your return for Galway, and anything that the clergy and I can do will be most cheerfully done for that end.

As late as 5 September, says Morris, the bishop informed him that he 'did not think Galway could be better represented'. He was surprised to read the College House resolutions, but receiving from Father Cullen a copy which, he says, did not contain the final resolution requesting candidates to reply, he thought no action on his part called for. 'I was elected to parliament by the people of Galway', he concludes, 'not by the College House.'<sup>(2)</sup>

The bishop announced Morris's withdrawal two days

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1 Freeman's Journal, 30 Sept. 1868.

2 Galway Vindicator, 3 Oct.

73.

after this address in a triumphant letter to Sir John Gray. (1)  
The Freeman acclaimed the victory which had been won despite  
Morris's 'impertinent appeal to the catholic people against  
their bishop'. (2)

Both Dr. McEvilly and his secretary  
published replies to Morris. The bishop chided him for  
quoting from a confidential letter 'written under completely  
different circumstances.' Morris, he said, had promised on  
5 September :

not only would he support the three great questions of the  
day, but that his first vote in the new parliament would be  
most probably against the conservative ministry, inasmuch as  
he was determined, if the question of a vote of confidence was  
raised, to vote against them if they persisted in their  
present views regarding the established church.

What inference could be drawn from Morris's first address,  
'better suited for an orange than for a catholic constituency',  
but 'that the promises made to me in private were not  
sincere?' (3)

Morris did not deny that he had told the bishop  
that his first vote would probably be against the Conservative  
administration:

I have no doubt I so stated to him, because I so stated to  
every one who spoke with me on the subject..... The bishop,  
I understood, left Galway the day after the 5th of September,  
and returned but the night before the College House Resolutions  
of the 18th September. What influences were at work during  
his absence to cause him to issue immediately on his return  
the "College House Resolutions" ostensibly aimed at me, and  
without any consultation with any of the laity, he best  
knows - the explanation he offered me I cannot divulge.

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1 Freeman's Journal, 7 Oct. 1868.

2 Ibid.

3 Galway Vindicator, 7 Oct.

without his permission. During his absence, his reverend secretary, to whom he refers, appeared in the Royal Institute of which I am a vice-president and freely offered odds that he would bring forward a person to oppose me successfully, his bets were taken; but on the well-known rules of betting, secret information invalidates the bet. The electioneering address of the only candidate who was personally offensive to me was posted on the parish chapel wall, which had never been previously desecrated by similar documents. The resolutions of 18th September were followed up by an announcement that the College House in conclave would select a candidate. I declined to swallow the "College House resolutions", I charged the bishop with ignoring the catholic laity in the most catholic town in the kingdom - I repeat it - where was he away from Galway consulting them from the 5th September, when he stated I was the best, to the 17th when I became an "unfit person"? Who are the laity he consulted and where did they meet? (1)

The conservatives deduced that Dr McEvilly had been compelled to abandon Morris in favour of a more reliable supporter of the Liberal party by the intervention of Cardinal Cullen himself. (2) The inference was logical. But fortunately there is clearer evidence of the influences which were at work. In the Monsell papers there is a letter from

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1 Galway Vindicator, 10 Oct. 1868.  
 2 Mayo Constitution, 8 Dec. The candidature of Aspinall was in fact immediately eclipsed by the entry into the contest of Viscount St. Lawrence, heir of the Earl of Howth, who brought with him the influence of his uncle, the Marquis of Clanricarde, the largest landowner in the borough. The Englishman retired, the support of the clergy and of the Galway Vindicator was extended to St. Lawrence, and, to the accompaniment of much pulpit oratory, the remaining liberal candidate who refused to leave the field, Martin O'Flaherty, was drummed out of the contest. (Galway Vindicator, 11 Nov.) St. Lawrence's published pledges, incidentally, were never more explicit than those of Morris. (Freeman's Journal, 12 Oct., Galway Vindicator, 10 Oct.)

Cardinal Cullen to Monsell, undated, but which from internal evidence can definitely be placed at some date early in the election campaign.<sup>(1)</sup> In the course of it the Cardinal says:

I will write to Dr McEvilly about Mr Morris - but I believe he has great influence in the town - I do not know how Sir R. Blennerhasset voted - I dare say he has no great support in the town.

It is an inescapable conclusion that once again the intermediacy of William Monsell had secured for Gladstone the decisive intervention of the catholic hierarchy.

But what was actually done in Galway, so far as that can be determined, is of less importance than the kind of argument which it generated, and the divisions which it revealed. It would probably be untrue to suggest that these were the issues that were plainly uppermost in the mind of the average parliamentary candidate, or that in the average constituency they were articulated in this manner. Nevertheless, in the Galway contest, it is possible to perceive, thrown into sharp relief, some of the most fundamental conflicts in

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1 MS 8317, in a folder with other letters from Cardinal Cullen to Monsell. He refers to news he has just heard that 'Mr D'Arcy, the great brewer, a very good man, will stand for Wexford, so perhaps Kavanagh may be put out, and two liberals returned.

In Dublin nothing can be done unless the franchise be lowered and the freemen set aside.

If there be any fair play, I hope the liberal party will be greatly increased in Ireland.'

Their party on the other hand which they will all -  
Appendix 74  
2. Chapter III, p. 47

the Irish politics of that period.

There is, firstly, the open issue itself. Two clearly opposed points of view are visible. One holds that proceeding primarily from the urgency and importance of disestablishment, and also from the hope of gaining the other Irish liberal demands from Gladstone, it is essential that the greatest possible majority of members pledged to support the English Liberal party should be returned in Ireland. (1)

Again one appreciates the shrewdness of Monsell's appeal to the bishops, quoted in Chapter III, not to be guilty of 'the folly of accepting a candidate who would vote against the Church (or any other measure of national importance to Ireland) and at the same time support the party who, as long as they are in office, will make it impossible to overthrow the Church.' (2)

Opposed to this is the advice of the Nation on 'How to vote'; it admits that 'ascendancy or religious equality is the question of the hour', but where there is a contest between two or more candidates who support disestablishment it advises that:

1 It is pertinent to remark that the rigidity of the tests imposed by the supporters of this point of view seems to have varied according to local circumstances, and their ability to enforce their ideas in a particular area. In Mayo and Clare Lord Bingham and Colonel Vandaleur were returned as conservatives without liberal opposition or clerical hostility on a simple pledge to vote against their party on the church issue (which they both did - Appendix V).

2 Chapter III, p.47.

The candidate to be preferred everywhere before all others is the Irish nationalist, independent of all British parties; who holds that "the best thing England can do for Ireland is to let Ireland do for herself", and who will not only thoroughly represent the national demands on the church, the land, education and the ballot, but will not shrink from opposing even a "Liberal" government if it palters with these demands.

As for English candidates for Irish seats, these should be viewed with 'suspicion and disfavour'. (1)

Next to the issue itself, the grouping of interests which it reveals is informative. Dedicated to the Gladstonian alliance we find, firstly, in most cases, the vast influence of the catholic church, secondly, the considerable influence of the Freeman's Journal and of the rest of the orthodox liberal press. When Butt launched the home rule movement less than two years later, it was these two forces which remained most notably aloof in the early stages. Equally revealing is the type of person singled out for attack by the pro-Gladstone party for unsoundness on the church issue: Morris in Galway, two one-time independent oppositionists in Sir George Bowyer (Dundalk) and Edward McEvoy (Meath), J. A. Blake in Waterford City and Sir Joseph McKenna in Youghal. Of these Morris, Bowyer, and McKenna, the three members who were attacked by the Dublin Evening Post, (2) all lost their seats to Gladstonian liberals in

this election, and all regained them as home rulers in 1874,

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1 Nation, 3 Oct. 1868.  
2 See above, p. 68.

while Blake was one of Butt's chief agents in the financial negotiations which preceded the launching of the parliamentary home rule campaign. The chief critic of the liberal alliance throughout this election was the Nation, which still clung to the memory of Young Ireland and of the independent opposition movement of Gavan Duffy, and which provided a forum for independent nationalist critics of the prevailing attitude such as John Martin and W.J. O'Neill Daunt. In Cork City opposition to the uncritical policy of the local liberal organisation was voiced by Joseph Ronayne; in Dungarvan the clerically sponsored liberal candidate was opposed by the influence of advanced nationalist feeling, in Limerick by an alliance of this element with a section of the conservatives. Instances of this kind of opposition could be multiplied at considerable length; some notable ones are discussed in the next chapter.

So on the whole, if this election is most noteworthy for the solidarity of the alliance between Irish and English liberalism, there is also a clearly discernible dissenting body of opinion, standing apart from and critical of this alliance, denying the principles upon which it is based, preserving intact the tradition of independent action, and ready to assume the main burden of sustaining the revival of that independent action after the liberal alliance had been put to the test and found incapable of satisfying the needs of the Irish people.

Chapter V

The Irish nationalists in the election: amnesty and repeal

The groups in the 1868 election who were dissatisfied with the prevalent emphasis on the agitation for disestablishment were very frequently the same people who were much more articulate than most of the liberals upon the topics of amnesty and repeal, besides, of course, agitating upon the superficially common policy of land reform. The fate of the incarcerated fenian leaders could not fail to excite interest and sympathy among the mass of the people who had so lately been stirred by the abortive insurrection and the publicity given to the state trials. The 'appeal to the women of Ireland' on behalf of the dependants of the political prisoners had been actively conducted for some time by a committee which included Mrs Luby and Miss Mulcahy,<sup>(1)</sup> and as early as 25 July, political agitation on behalf of the prisoners was urged by Thomas Neilson Underwood, who wrote to the Irishman enclosing at the same time a letter from his imprisoned kinsman, Charles Underwood O'Connell. In the course of his letter Underwood made some interesting suggestions on the subject of Irish election policy:

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1 Irishman, 5 Sept. 1868.



20.

If National Irishmen will interpose in parliamentary contests in Ireland, England, or Scotland, it ought to be in favour of that person or party who will declare their willingness to induce her majesty to remit the sentences so recently upheld by the House of Lords..... I think also it would be very proper and advisable to question all candidates for parliamentary honours upon this subject, and to act upon their answers to it irrespective of religion or party. I am disposed to place mercy in these cases before all other subjects..... Ward meetings are now being held in Dublin with the view of influencing the parliamentary election. Borough meetings are being held in various boroughs by rival candidates. I trust that this question will be at once brought under the consideration of such meetings, and that in every part of Ireland, and in several parts of England, Irishmen will be found who will decide their conduct in such struggles by the test this question of mercy supplies, and by no other. (1)

This letter was apparently the first public proposal of an amnesty agitation, but the idea was a natural and an obvious one, and there soon afterwards followed what may be regarded as the first move in the campaign for amnesty when on 3 August, in the Cork Corporation, Daniel O'Sullivan introduced a resolution calling for the release of the prisoners.<sup>(2)</sup> This course of action was imitated throughout the following months by many such Corporations and town councils. The popular agitation which was to reach such a pitch of activity in the following year was not, however, inaugurated until late in the campaign, too late, perhaps, for effective intervention in the election. A requisition was got up in Dublin City calling upon the Lord Mayor to convene a public assembly to discuss the question of amnesty; a meeting held in the European

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1 op. cit., 25 July 1868.

2 ibid., 8 Aug.

Hotel, with C. R. Mahony in the chair, decided that a deputation should wait upon the mayor with the requisition, and that Sir John Gray and Isaac Butt, with some other gentlemen, should be invited to accompany it: it was also agreed to sound the Dublin candidates upon the subject of amnesty. (1) From the successive adjournments of this meeting there grew, more or less informally, the Amnesty Committee, which, after the election, was in its turn to give way to the better known Amnesty Association. The Lord Mayor declined to comply with the committee's request, giving as his reason for refusal the fact that he had promised, when first elected, to remain aloof from party politics. (2) The committee then decided to ask Butt to convene a general meeting on behalf of the prisoners in the Mechanics Institute; it resolved also: That this test be presented to every candidate in Ireland at the approaching elections - "If a petition be brought forward in the new parliament that an address be presented to her Majesty praying that she may be graciously pleased to use her Royal clemency in granting an amnesty to all persons convicted of political offences in Great Britain and Ireland, will you vote for and support it?" (3)

The public meeting was held with Butt in the

1 It is interesting to note that C. R. Mahony, John McCorry, and P. J. Shanley, who were among the most active members of this committee, were also the main architects of the newly-formed Dublin Workingmen's Association, of which Butt had just agreed to become president, and to provide a code of rules for the new body. (Freeman's Journal, 7, 14, 30 Sept., 5 Nov. 1868.)

2 Another who refused to co-operate in the requisition was Cardinal Cullen. (Irishman, 14 Nov.)

3 Freeman's Journal, 11 Nov.

chair but with few of the leading liberals on the platform; A. M. Sullivan of the Nation and T. N. Underwood were present; Sir John Gray contributed a letter of approval. This meeting, like the previous ones, also resolved to test parliamentary candidates upon the issue of amnesty.

It proved, in fact, impossible to carry out this policy to its fullest extent; less than a fortnight remained before polling was to take place in the majority of the constituencies. Several candidates were, however, brought to express their approval of amnesty, and the issue was raised at a number of election meetings. One candidate, E. J. Synan in Limerick County, spontaneously incorporated the amnesty demand in his election address.<sup>(1)</sup> At the Dublin City nomination all four candidates hedged when questioned by the representatives of the committee; Pim declined to give an 'absolute pledge', pointing to his past behaviour as evidence of his 'kindly feelings towards persons who were in prison'; Corrigan, the other liberal candidate, 'would ever stretch out his hand to lift up any fallen creature in suffering or in pain', but questioned the wisdom of a parliamentary agitation upon the subject. Of the two conservatives, Guinness would have nothing to do with the pledge, Plunket promised to support any measure for amnesty which might be sponsored by any government, but refused to join in an agitation.<sup>(2)</sup> Somewhat

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1 Limerick Reporter, 23 Oct. 1868.  
 2 Freeman's Journal, 17 Nov.

unhappily, and after long debate, the committee decided to endorse the two liberal candidates.<sup>(1)</sup> In Clare, where the two candidates, the liberal Sir Colman O'Loughlin, and the pro-disestablishment conservative Crofton Moore Vandaleur, were enthusiastically heckled on a wide range of topics which included amnesty by the noted repealer, Father Quaid, P.P. O'Callaghan's Mills, similar pledges of support in principle, if not promises of active co-operation, were secured from both candidates.<sup>(2)</sup> In Tipperary one of the two liberal candidates, Captain White, promised to support a petition on the subject.<sup>(3)</sup> In Kilkenny County, in response to queries from the crowd at the nomination, G. L. Bryan also promised to vote for amnesty, on the one condition that 'foreigners' should have to go back to America and nevermore trouble 'the peace-loving people of this country'.<sup>(4)</sup> In Mayo Father Lavelle, another redoubtable repealer, called for cheers for the political prisoners, invoking the memory of Allen, Larkin, and O'Brien before an enthusiastic crowd at the nomination of G. H. Moore, who was wholeheartedly for amnesty.<sup>(5)</sup> Benjamin Whitworth in Drogheda

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1 Freeman's Journal, 18 Nov. 1868.

2 ibid., 25 Nov.; Clare Journal, 19 Nov.; Limerick Reporter, 24 Nov.

3 Freeman's Journal, 25 Nov.

4 ibid., 19 Nov.

5 Ballinrobe Chronicle, 28 Nov. Moore, emerging from a long retirement from politics, described Gladstone as 'glorifying himself for making use of the Irish questions that fenianism had extorted'; it made his blood run cold, he said, to read 'the expressions of self-satisfied cynicism with which his followers in this country simper over the sufferings of those gallant men... whose devotion and sacrifice have won the reforms which the Irish whigs, or liberals, whichever they choose to call themselves, have sold over and over again'. (Freeman's Journal, 10 Dec.)

and William Stacpoole in Ennis also promised their support.<sup>(1)</sup> In Galway City Sir Rowland Blennerhasset gave the required pledge without much persuasion, and Viscount St Lawrence, after invoking the anglican liturgy in an attempt to evade the issue, was compelled to do likewise.<sup>(2)</sup> The question also came up in the Limerick and Cork City contests. In Limerick, where Richard Pigott of the Irishman was put into nomination on rudimentary abstentionist principles by William Bolster, the Town Clerk John Ellard,<sup>(3)</sup> Councillor 'Dirty Larry' Kelly and the advanced party,<sup>(4)</sup> in an incongruous coalition with the conservative mayor Peter Tait, amnesty was naturally very much to the fore in the campaign against the 'clerical nominees',<sup>(5)</sup> Gavin and Russell. The latter was accused in an abusive placard of having refused to sign a petition for the release of William O'Sullivan, junior, of Kilmallock.<sup>(6)</sup> Gavin and Russell were elected, but amnesty pledges were obtained from both at the nomination.<sup>(7)</sup> In Cork City Daniel O'Sullivan raised the question at an aggregate liberal meeting

1 Freeman's Journal, 13, 19 Nov. 1868.  
 2 Galway Vindicator, 21 Nov.  
 3 Both of whom became home rulers and staunch allies of Butt; Tait also became a home ruler in the early stages of the movement.  
 4 Limerick Reporter, 27 Nov. This organ and the Freeman treated the opposition as a Tory plot, an interpretation which gained additional currency from the knighthood which the conservative administration conferred on Tait before it resigned. (Limerick Reporter, 4 Dec.)  
 5 Irishman, 14 Nov.  
 6 ibid. Son of W. H. O'Sullivan, home rule member for Limerick County, 1874-85.  
 7 Limerick Reporter, 20 Nov.

called to approve the candidature of the sitting members, J. F. Maguire and N. D. Murphy. Protesting against the motion of confidence, he said Maguire had done his duty, although he could have done more, while Murphy had kept silent both on the motion to suspend the habeas corpus act and on the Manchester executions. It was not the duty of Irish members 'to stand with their hands behind their backs and vote for Gladstone, and allow Mr Gladstone to concur in opinion with Disraeli, that those three Manchester men should be hanged,' (1)

The amnesty issue does not seem to have been to the fore in any other constituencies besides these, but it is unlikely that this was because of any popular indifference on the subject. The Freeman's Journal wrote after the election:

At the recent election candidates were earnestly solicited to interpose on their (the prisoners') behalf. In fact their pardon was uppermost in the popular mind, and liberal members in almost every case pledged themselves to comply with the popular wishes. Let us hope with the "Observer" that Mr Gladstone's generous nature requires no pressure. (2)

That the issue was not even more vigorously agitated was probably owing to the lack of time between the launching of the campaign and the actual election, and also to the popular belief, an echo of which is visible in the passage quoted above, that amnesty would form part of Gladstone's 'justice for Ireland'. In the words of Sir John Gray, when questioned

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1 Nation, 21 Nov. 1868. Ronayne and others also criticised the sitting members (see above, p. 78, and Freeman's Journal, 19 Aug.)  
 2 Freeman's Journal, 14 Dec.

on the subject at a liberal meeting in the Rotunda, 'the same success which will strike the chains off the whole nation will liberate from their fetters the political prisoners',<sup>(1)</sup> or as John O'Leary put it a trifle less rhetorically: 'The whigs will hardly dare to keep the Irish political prisoners in jail after their accession to office.'<sup>(2)</sup>

If the amnesty question had not yet come to the forefront of Irish politics as it was to do in 1869, even more so was the issue of self-legislation or repeal left in abeyance. A considerable number of years had elapsed since it had last been put forward as a major election issue; when D. J. Reardon, member for Athlone, endeavoured to raise it in the closing hours of the old parliament, his motion for leave to bring in a bill on the subject lapsed for want of a seconder, and his action passed virtually unnoticed in the Irish press.<sup>(3)</sup> Certain public figures remained associated with the idea of repeal. The most notable and widely respected of its adherents, John Martin, constantly urged the need for repeal in the flow of letters which, in the best tradition of neglected Irish prophets, he despatched from rustic semi-retirement. G. H. Moore was another who consistently spoke of repeal as inevitable.<sup>(4)</sup> In Tipperary

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1 Freeman's Journal, 9 Nov. 1868.  
 2 Irishman, 31 Oct.  
 3 Irishman, 8 Aug. The political disrepute into which the member for Athlone had fallen was some justification for this neglect of his motion.  
 4 Ballinrobe Chronicle, 31 Oct.

Peter Gill, editor of the advanced nationalist Tipperary Advocate, once again raised the standard of tenant right, repeal, and independent opposition, but had no more than his usual success against clerically-sponsored liberal orthodoxy in the persons of Charles Moore and Captain White. (1)

Such agitation as did occur on the subject of repeal was more often the work of particular figures like John Martin outside the ranks of parliamentary candidates. The issue was associated with several noted clergymen. Father Lavelle, the popular and well-known parish priest of Partry, county Mayo, was a fervent repealer, as indeed were most of the Mayo clergy, under the joint stimulus, no doubt, of the two veteran nationalists, Dr MacHale, and the candidate whom the archbishop enthusiastically favoured - G. H. Moore. The Mayo clergy went so far as to include repeal in the list of subjects upon which prospective candidates should be asked to pledge themselves: meeting under the chairmanship of Dr MacHale they resolved

only to support those candidates who will seek (a) the fullest measure of tenant right, (b) catholic denominational education, (c) disestablishment and disendowment of the protestant church, (d) and above all, the repeal of the legislative union. (2)

But Dr MacHale was always in the extreme nationalist wing of the catholic hierarchy. Another noted repeal priest who took

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1 He withdrew before the nomination.

2 Freeman's Journal, 8 Aug. 1868.



part in this election was Father Quaid, mentioned above in connection with the amnesty campaign,<sup>(1)</sup> who, at the Clare nomination, questioned the two unopposed candidates upon a list of topics which was notable both for its comprehensiveness and for its extreme nature; it comprised: (1) tenant right, (2) disestablishment, (3) the ballot, (4) repeal, and (5) amnesty.<sup>(2)</sup> There was also, of course, Dr O'Brien, the celebrated 'repeal dean' of Limerick, organiser, at the beginning of the year, of the 'Limerick Declaration', signed by sixteen hundred priests, which expressed the opinion that in the final analysis repeal must ultimately be granted to satisfy the Irish grievances. The Nation newspaper was also still sympathetic to the idea of repeal,<sup>(3)</sup> and at election meetings the subject was frequently mentioned by supporting speakers with, perhaps, more enthusiasm than purpose, or sometimes brought up by interrupters from the floor.

It is clear, however, that repeal was not, and indeed could not have been seriously agitated in this election. In the first place, neglected as it had been for many years, it lacked now a spearhead behind which a movement might come together, for the gap between, on the one hand, those who were prepared for the moment to trust Gladstone and were anxious not to embarrass his position, and, on the other, those who

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1 See above, p. 83.  
 2 Clare Journal, 19 Nov. 1868; Freeman's Journal, 25 Nov.  
 3 As also were papers like the Tipperary Advocate and Dundalk Democrat. The Irishman group were less certain allies for any constitutional project.

had forsworn all parliamentary agitation, was very real at this time and was not yet susceptible of even the partial bridging which was to be achieved by the many-sided personality of Butt. To give only one example of this: at the dinner given to Richard Pigott in the Rotunda in October, John Martin himself was hissed and shouted down when he demanded that the queen should come over to Dublin and call a free Irish parliament,<sup>(1)</sup> being greeted, according to the Irishman, with shouts of 'we are all republicans here..... too late for that.....a President and Congress.....no monarchy'.<sup>(2)</sup> It required a disillusionment with violence to grow on the one hand, a disillusionment with Gladstone on the other, and the emergence of a relatively untainted leader, to achieve even a superficial bridging of this most fundamental cleavage.

The preponderance of the disestablishment issue in this election, which has been remarked above, produced a corresponding neglect of repeal as it did of every other issue. Canon Rice of Queenstown wrote to Butt in February: the agitation of repeal at present would only alienate from Irish sympathies English Liberals and Radicals, and so indefinitely put off the overthrow of the establishment. <sup>(3)</sup> People who were sincerely dedicated to the capturing of this, the one great concession which had been unequivocally offered to their generation by an English party leader, were not now to

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1 Freeman's Journal, 21 Oct. 1868.

2 Irishman, 24 Oct.

3 Canon Rice to Butt, 2 Feb. 1868., Butt MSS.

be diverted into what seemed to them the cloud-cuckoo land of a demand with such a long record of fruitless agitation under much more favourable circumstances, even though they might concede the ultimate desirability of 'a parliament in College Green'. There must have been many who reasoned in this way, as distinct from those to whom the liberal programme of disestablishment, denominational education, and land reform appeared adequate both for today and for tomorrow. The practical dilemma of the theoretical repealer emerges very clearly from the friendly controversy which took place at this time between John Martin and Dean O'Brien in the columns of the Nation. Martin had written to the newspapers in July offering himself as a candidate to any Irish constituency which was prepared to return him upon his own terms and at its own expense. Repeal, he said, was being mistakenly put aside by Irish patriots in and out of the English parliament, 'lest Messrs Gladstone and Bright should be embarrassed or offended, while they are exerting themselves to disestablish the English church in Ireland..... I consider it to be as little practical as it is dignified'. If returned, he says, he would follow a completely independent course, would 'neither vote for nor against their laws', but would use his return 'for the purpose of telling the truth', and would 'do no act to encourage the hateful fiction that Ireland enjoys

both Martin and O'Brien. (See below, p. 15.)

constitutional rights and is a freely governed country'.<sup>(1)</sup>

'I do not expect any constituency in Ireland to invite me seriously, upon my own terms', he concludes sadly, 'and perhaps it will be so best'.<sup>(2)</sup> Martin's views on the place

of repeal in the election, and his opposition to Barry's candidature in Dungarvan,<sup>(3)</sup> drew replies from Dean O'Brien, also, it must be remembered, a celebrated repealer.

Agreeing that a national parliament was 'the only perfect solution of the Irish difficulty', he put forward five reasons why it should not be demanded in this election:

(1) Because 'the public mind is not prepared for such a course and would not adopt it.'

(2) Because 'many nationalists would be offended'; such an agitation would be 'imprudent and mischievous'.

(3) 'Because all who desire the settlement of the church question would oppose such a course; and should the Liberal party fail in the settlement of it, the nationalists would be blamed, whoever might be the cause of the miscarriage.'

(4) Because the Tories would use it to create

1 Martin's ambition to enter parliament even upon these novel terms drew down upon him the criticism of John Mitchel. (Tipperary Advocate, 29 Aug. 1868.)

2 Tipperary Advocate, 11 July. His doleful predictions were borne out, although his claims were pressed by the Nation and the Tipperary Advocate, and by the Dundalk Democrat, which in an article calling for repeal urged the return of both Martin and Butt. (Tipperary Advocate, 19 Sept.)

3 See below, p. 95.

confusion.

(5) 'Lastly - the Church question settled - one of the great obstacles to an Irish public opinion removed - we have a clear stage for the measure upon which the hearts of millions of Irishmen are set'. (1)

The crucial items in this list are obviously clauses three and five. The situation which is depicted in the third clause was expressed somewhat more bitterly by Peter Gill in Tipperary. 'We want men of tried and sterling patriotism', he had written at the outset of the campaign, not those who hide their whiggery under the specious cloak of voting for the disestablishment of the Irish church, but men whose sole principle is Ireland for the Irish.....the land question also offers a shelter, behind which a politician can take his station..... Then "repeal" is the only watchword by which the farmers of Tipperary can know their true friend.(2)

But towards the end of the campaign he complained:

very few nationalists have offered themselves as candidates at this election, and even those few we fear will be condemned because there is an attempt made to turn the election into a religious warfare, although every repealer is an advocate of religious equality.

The cries of 'Tory agent', 'vote-splitter', sprang readily to the lips of liberal candidates, who, in the midst of what seemed to them a crucial battle for disestablishment, found themselves challenged from their own side on the basis of other issues; this criticism was used against Gill in Tipperary, and against Pigott in Limerick, not to mention Mathews in

Carry, as one of the great propagators under the liberal

1 Nation, 20 Oct. 1868.  
2 Tipperary Advocate, 5 Sept. 1868; ibid., 20 Nov.  
3 ibid., 14 Nov. The phrase "these men" was first used by an editor in connection with this controversy on 1 Oct. 1868.

Dungarvan. (1) 'Because all who desire the settlement of the church issue would oppose such a course' - this was indeed the main barrier to the revival of an agitation for home government. As for Dean O'Brien's fifth reason, that the repeal demand could be more happily resumed after the passage of disestablishment, the logic of this proposition was unquestionable. The moment when Ireland was fundamentally divided upon a religious issue was indeed scarcely appropriate for the launching of a 'home rule' demand; with the permanent barrier to national unity of religious ascendancy removed, such a course might be adopted with more hope of success. It was scarcely surprising that for the moment Butt should decline nomination for parliament. (2)

This chapter has been mainly concerned with the views of the nationalists, those whose political ideas did not find sufficient outlet in the Irish liberal programme. It would be impossible to conclude such a survey without making some reference to the Dungarvan election. If Galway City saw the open conflict between the liberal alliance and the principle of independent opposition, Dungarvan, on the other hand, demonstrated the power of the advanced nationalist feeling which was latent behind the facade of liberal unanimity. The sitting member for Dungarvan, Serjeant C.R. Barry, as one of the crown prosecutors under the liberal

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1 Tipperary Advocate, 28 Nov. 1868; Irishman, 20 Nov. Nation, 22 Aug. The phrase "home rule" was first used by the Nation in connection with this controversy on 3 Oct. 1868.

government, had performed the task of laying the charges against Kicham, O'Leary, and the other fenian leaders before the preliminary hearing in Dublin Castle; it was he who had first drawn for press and public the official picture of fenianism as a conspiracy dedicated to massacre and socialism. His subsequent protestations that he had simply spoken from his brief, as he was bound to do, could not prevent his becoming a symbol of oppression. In the election he was opposed by an English catholic liberal-conservative, Henry Mathews, avowedly anti-whig, but pledged to the full three-tiered Irish liberal programme.<sup>(1)</sup> The personality of Mathews was, however, completely irrelevant; as he readily admitted himself, 'I know that it is because I give Dungarvan an opportunity of rejecting Mr Barry that I am welcome amongst you'.<sup>(2)</sup> The struggle produced a wonderfully vivid demarcation of the opposing sides. Among the press, all the leading liberal papers supported Barry, the Freeman's Journal, Cork Examiner, Limerick Reporter, and Dublin Evening Post; even the Nation, while in principle hostile to whig office-holders, reproved the 'scandalously unfair, false, and scurrilous manner' in which Barry was being attacked for having performed the duties of his office.<sup>(3)</sup>

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1 Freeman's Journal, 3 Sept. 1868.  
 2 Irishman, 14 Nov.  
 3 Nation, 19 Sept. Sullivan himself had unfairly suffered so much fenian abuse as a felon-setter that he probably could never approve its application to others.

Against Barry, on the other hand, was all the 'advanced nationalist' press, the Irishman, Flag of Ireland, Universal News, Dundalk Democrat, Tipperary Advocate, etc. (1)

'The catholic who votes for Mathews must be a renegade, an apostate', declared the Freeman. (2) 'A Tory before a traitor', pithily countered the Universal News. (3) The O'Donoghue came

over from Tralee to sustain Barry; the procession containing the two allies was greeted by counter-demonstrators bearing banners inscribed with such slogans as 'down with the moral assassin', and 'where is James O'Brien?'. (4) Police and soldiers were drafted in from the neighbourhood as the rival forces clashed in the streets. (5) While the O'Donoghue

endorsed Barry's candidature, John Martin wrote denouncing him: 'I think it will be a scandal in Irish politics if any free constituency in Ireland will elect Mr Barry.....There is a great opportunity for the free constituencies of Ireland at present', he adds, 'but the bishops and electoral politicians, unhappily for Ireland, are too Liberal to use the

opportunity.' (6) Anonymous advertisements appeared in the Irishman denouncing Barry for his speeches against fenianism,

1 Irishman, 28 Nov. 1868.  
2 Freeman's Journal, 16 Nov.  
3 Irishman, 26 Sept.  
4 Reference was to a young man from Dungarvan tried at Cork Commission for fenianism, sentenced to death, but transported.  
5 This picture is taken from a comparison of several reports.  
6 Irishman, 17 Oct.



and an outbreak of posters of the same nature spread from Dungarvan to Tralee with the intervention of the O'Donoghue.<sup>(1)</sup>

Most significant of all was the fruitlessness of all the clerical influence which was exerted on Barry's behalf. Father Vaughan, of Barefield, Ennis, attacked Barry, as did Father Lavelle, and Father Tom O'Shea of Mountrath, 'father of the Irish Tenant League',<sup>(2)</sup> and the head of the Augustinian House in Dungarvan, Father Anderson, was active in the cause of Mathews, but the full weight of official clerical influence was with Barry. The Bishop of Waterford, Dr O'Brien, endorsed him;<sup>(3)</sup> Dean O'Brien wrote from Limerick attacking Mathews' intrusion;<sup>(4)</sup> Dr Hally, the local parish priest, and his curates, campaigned for Barry with a vigour unmatched even in this election. At mass on Sunday, 16 September, before a congregation which included the objectionable interloper himself, Dr Hally 'made it tolerably plain that that gentleman had come over as the instrument of Disraeli, Stanley, and so to prevent the success of Gladstone in disendowing the church and doing justice to the Irish people'.<sup>(5)</sup> 'The effect of the doctor's speech was what might have been expected', wrote the Freeman approvingly of

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1 Freeman's Journal, 14 Sept. 1868.  
2 Irishman, 14 Nov.  
3 Freeman's Journal, 15 Oct.  
4 ibid., 15 Sept.  
5 ibid., 10 Sept. Mathews, in fact, voted for disestablishment in the new parliament. (Appendix V).

one of these sermons; (1) 'Oh God forgive him, this is awful', moaned one parishioner, according to the pro-Mathews Waterford Citizen. (2) In the closing stages of the campaign the bishop wrote a letter which was read at all masses:

I am surprised that any catholic, and much more a catholic professing devotion to St Augustine, should vote for Mathews..... such a catholic I look upon as a favourer of heretics, and an advocate of no-popery doctrine and protestant ascendancy. (3)

The letter, and the comments upon it from the pulpit, 'made a profound impression, and one regarded as deciding the election against the Tory candidate', wrote the correspondent of the Freeman. (4)

Nevertheless, despite these pronouncements, and despite the canvassing and speech-making of Dr Hally and his curates in company with their candidate, (5) Barry was defeated by a quite substantial majority. (6)

The fact of a candidate's defeat in a constituency of just over three hundred voters does not,

1 Freeman's Journal, 10 Sept. 1868.  
2 Irishman, 26 Sept.  
3 Freeman's Journal, 18 Nov.  
4 ibid.  
5 ibid., 17, 22 Sept, Irishman 14 Nov.  
6 'Serjeant Barry defeated in Dungarvan for no other reason than because he was counsel of the Crown at the Special Commissions' wrote S. L. Anderson of the Crown Solicitor's Office in his journal (20 Nov., MS 5965). The same hostility might in theory have extended to the other Liberal law-officers, Sullivan and Lawson (as Martin urged it should in Nation, 24 Oct.), but their constituencies did not provide the material for such conflict. Sullivan had no opposing candidate in Mallow; Lawson lost the tiny borough of Portarlinton, the smallest in the United Kingdom (134 voters), to the conservative Dawson Damer, who had held it up to 1865.

by itself, provide much basis for generalised deductions. But the bitterness of the campaign, the passions that it aroused, the divisions that it illustrated, and above all, the spectacle of such vigorous and successful opposition to a candidate who had the active support of the official spokesmen of the church and of what purported to be the popular party; all these things together combine to make the Dungarvan election one of exceptional importance in this campaign. It demonstrates, in terms of physical conflict, what has been suggested above in the abstract, that is to say, the existence of a wide gulf between much of popular nationalist feeling on the one hand, and the clerical-liberal programme of 1868 on the other; it reveals for a moment the essential impermanence of the standard of values upon which much of the Irish parliamentary policy of this period was based.

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1. See Appendices II, III, and IV. Classification of ...  
 2. ... in the ...  
 3. ... 3rd series, ...  
 4. ... 1914, ...

Chapter VI

Public opinion and the liberal administration

(November 1868 to February 1870)

The election resulted in a complete Liberal triumph in both Great Britain and Ireland. Sixty-five liberals were returned in Ireland, pledged to give their support to Gladstone's proposals for reform, a pledge which was tinged with a varying, but on the whole seldom very marked degree of independent scepticism.<sup>(1)</sup>

The new session of parliament opened on 16 February 1869. Expressing the belief that the condition of Ireland would justify parliament's being spared the 'painful necessity' of the renewal of the suspension of the Habeas Corpus Act, the queen's speech went on to foreshadow, amongst other measures the revision of the ecclesiastical arrangements of Ireland.<sup>(2)</sup> Gladstone lost no time in introducing this, the first of his promised reforms; the Established Church (Ireland) Bill received its first reading on 1 March.<sup>(3)</sup> It is not within the province of this study to consider the technical aspects of disestablishment. Two basic principles were at stake. The first, and by far the most important, was the ending for ever of the association between the Irish episcopalian church and the state which had existed since the act of union. It was upon

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1 See Appendices II, III, and IV, Classification of M.P.'s returned in the general election of 1868.  
 2 Hansard, 3rd series, cxciv, 23-6.  
 3 *ibid.*, 412-69.

this question that Liberal and Conservative proposals in the election had fundamentally diverged, and in his bill Gladstone made no concessions to the Conservative plans of ameliorative reform and concurrent endowment: the principle which he now put into operation was that which he had advocated in the election, the total separation of the state from the support of any religious denomination, and the perfect equality of all denominations before the law. This was the great Irish demand which had been expressed in the election in the cry of 'religious equality', and with relief the Irish representatives acknowledged Gladstone's complete satisfaction of it. Sir John Gray addressed Gladstone in the debate on the second reading of the bill as :

the leading statesman of the day - the man whom the world would recognise hereafter as the great statesman who gave peace and prosperity to Ireland and strength and liberty to the Empire by the just and wise Irish policy which he was originating - a policy which would identify his name with the first great effort during three centuries of English rule, to extend religious justice to the Irish people. (1)

The O'Donoghue, also praising the bill, expressed the position of the Irish liberal members very clearly:

There had been an infinity of bad legislation for Ireland, much abortive legislation, and a persistent disregard of the earnest appeals of Irishmen for justice. He was not the only person there who had staked his political career on the assertion that all this was about to be changed. (2)

The disestablishment bill received an equally enthusiastic welcome from the Irish liberal press. In later

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1 op.cit., 1834-5.  
 2 Ibid., 2053.

years, wrote the usually critical Nation, Gladstone would appear to posterity 'the happiest of English statesmen, as having led the party of progress in achieving the greatest victory ever won in the British parliament.'<sup>(1)</sup> The Freeman's Journal declared that all doubts as to the unanimity of the ministers on the great issue had been set at rest: 'the bill proves their sincerity. They have nobly fulfilled their duty.'<sup>(2)</sup>

Such criticism as the bill did arouse in Ireland was in relation to the secondary issue of the disposal of the surplus to be created by the disendowment proposals. Of the sixteen million pounds worth of property which the Irish church was estimated to possess, a surplus of approximately eight million was to remain after the payment of life interests, compensations of various kinds, and the lump payments to the catholic and presbyterian churches in compensation for the withdrawal of the Maynooth grant and the regium donum.<sup>(3)</sup> The proceeds of this sum Gladstone proposed to use for the better maintenance of asylums, infirmaries, and other similar institutions at present inadequately supported by the county cess payments of the burdened smallholders.<sup>(4)</sup> On the question of the disposal of this surplus a certain amount of controversy had taken place in Ireland during the period of the election, and suggestions had been made which ranged from its application to the relief of the poor rate to its expenditure upon

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1 Nation, 6 Mar. 1869.  
 2 Freeman's Journal, 3 Mar.  
 3 Ibid., 2 Mar.  
 4 Hansard, 3rd series, exciv, 458-9.

arterial drainage, the reclamation of wastes and bogs, and even the establishment of a tenant proprietary,<sup>(1)</sup> Gladstone's proposals were open to criticism upon two counts. In the first place, the restoration of so large a sum as he proposed to the protestant church might be criticised as excessive generosity, or even as abandonment of the principle of disendowment. When Fortescue had pleaded in December for generosity to the fallen church, G. H. Moore had denounced the suggestion as 'the first plaintive whine of a paltering policy on the hustings of Louth'<sup>(2)</sup> and the conservative Gathorne Hardy, speaking in the commons in the debate on the second reading of the bill, quoted Dr Moriarty, bishop of Kerry, as attacking the commutation scheme as a virtual re-endowment of the church and 'a wilful waste of a large portion of the national property'.<sup>(3)</sup> There were those, also, who felt keen disappointment at the proposed application of such surplus as had been created by the disendowment scheme. 'Why should this money not be employed in direct relief of real property, seeing that it is a tax raised out of real property? Is it improper to expend it for the purposes of those who pay for it?' asked John Martin.

To devote, and devote finally, nearly £200,000 a year of Irish money for the safe and comfortable keeping of poor lunatics, £30,000 of Irish money for the education of deaf and dumb, over £50,000 for infirmaries, £15,000 for trained nurses, and I know not how much for reformatories, is a grand scheme,

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1 Freeman's Journal, 3 Mar. 1869, etc.  
 2 ibid., 10 Dec. 1868.  
 3 Hansard, cxciv, 2084.

certainly, but in my judgment, a very extravagant, wasteful, and imprudent scheme for a poor country like ours, and in such social circumstances. (1)

O'Neill Daunt, who, like Martin, had urged during the election that any surplus created should be applied to the relief of the poor rate, was also critical of this part of the scheme. The bill, he held, was not taking away enough in reparation. Disendowment should be complete; once the present incumbents died the entire fund should pass to the relief of the rates. (2)

Whatever criticisms might be made, however, of this part of Gladstone's scheme, it could not be denied that in regard to the application of the surplus he had conceded the main principle involved - that the money should be applied for exclusively Irish purposes. (3) The Nation was expressing the general attitude when it concluded:

Mr Gladstone's measure, so far as it relates to disestablishment and disendowment, is a full, fair, and honest one. It comes thoroughly up to the expectations of the country; and for this Mr Gladstone is unquestionably entitled to the gratitude of the Irish people.... As to the application of the church funds, that is really a minor question; but Mr Gladstone's proposal is certainly not an un-national or a bad one. Taking the measure as a whole, we give it welcome, and our best wishes are for its speedy and successful passage through every stage until it becomes an act of parliament and the law of the land. (4)

It is superfluous to remark that the attitude of the protestant conservatives to the bill was one of bitter hostility. They could do little, however, but enter a token protest. One form which conservative reaction took has

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1 Nation, 6 Mar. 1869.  
2 Ibid., 20 Mar.  
3 Freeman's Journal, 2 Mar.  
4 Nation, 6 Mar.



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received much attention. The Dublin Evening Mail wrote in March:

The value of the union in protestant eyes lay in the protection it was supposed to afford to property, liberty, and life by the full extension to Ireland of the immunities and privileges of the British constitution. If the power of the imperial parliament be used only to suspend the constitution in the whole of Ireland, and to rob protestant Ireland, it may very well be questioned whether the model of a free legislature might not be advantageously borrowed, for Irish use, from protestant Canada. (1)

This view was re-echoed in many letters (mostly anonymous) to the Mail, the Daily Express, and the Irish Times. (2) The sincerity of these threats was obviously open to question. Even the Nation, which reprinted these expressions of 'protestant repeal' sentiment and placed much stress upon them, (3) had to concede:

It may be that the motives that have prompted the expressions contained in the letters of the protestant ecclesiastics who are now declaring for repeal may arise from disappointment and vexation, but whatever cause they spring from they are too important to be disregarded. (4)

A hostile critic might have gone further and suggested that they were only threats, designed to check the course of liberal reform. The Irish Times was probably the most sincere of those journals which gave expression to this new conservative attitude; the Nation differentiated between its comments and the 'threats' of other conservative journals - the Irish Times, it

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1 Dublin Evening Mail, 11 Mar. 1869.

2 Irish Times, 6, 10 Mar; Nation, 13 Mar.

3 Nation, 13, 20 Mar; 3 Apr.

4 ibid., 13 Mar. The letters referred to were also written over pseudonyms.

declared, advocated repeal as desirable in its own right.<sup>(1)</sup>

'It is impossible to deny' wrote the Irish Times,

that daily and almost hourly the conviction is growing stronger and deeper in the minds of all thoughtful Irishmen that if they are ever to entertain a hope for the prosperity of their country, that hope lies only in a native legislature meeting in the Irish metropolis, and disbursing Irish revenues on Irish objects.  
(2)

The extent of the influence of this kind of protestant feeling upon the development of home rule is a topic of considerable importance, but one that does not properly lie within the scope of this chapter.<sup>(3)</sup> But undoubtedly it had the effect of breaking down the sharply delineated party divisions which had been such a feature of the 1868 election, and in that way must, at the very least, be counted as one of the forces which helped to create a condition of public opinion more favourable to the revival of independent national action. Its permanent importance as a constructive force is more open to question, but when one correspondent in the Daily Express was moved by disestablishment to demand the foundation of 'a united national party, composed of orangemen and anti-ultramontane catholics',<sup>(4)</sup> he was expressing an attitude which formed to some of its participants and to many of its critics the theoretical basis of the early Home Government Association.

With the passage of disestablishment, the arguments of those who counselled loyalty to Gladstone and a renewal of confidence in the English parliament seemed even stronger than

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1 Nation, 3 Apr. 1869.

2 Irish Times, 10 Mar.

3 The subject is more fully discussed in Chapter VII.

4 Daily Express. 6 Mar.

they had done in the general election. The Irish liberals had asked three great reforms of Gladstone; the first, a bare five months from the opening of parliament, was already on the statute book. Their hopes seemed even more justifiable, their expectations even more likely to be realised. Only in the columns of the advanced nationalist press was the happy unanimity of the liberal journals broken. 'Rectors and vicars do not fling out poor families on the highway in winter'..... wrote John Mitchel in the Irishman:

nobody cares for them; but the landlords are an intolerable nuisance....ejecting landlords and agents in Ireland ought to be shot down like dogs. A few dozen of them justly executed at present would lend an additional interest to the debates which will shortly take place on disestablishment, to content the Irish people and make them "loyal", and place them on an equality with their fellow subjects of England and so forth.(1)

'The fenian plough has upset the establishment', said an editorial in another issue of this journal; but 'look with watchfulness at those who follow in the furrow.'(2) The basic divergence between much of Irish popular feeling and its liberal representation, which has been remarked in relation to the general election, and which betrays its presence again here, was soon, through the medium of the amnesty agitation, to emerge into the open to challenge the validity of the new policy and the sincerity of its advocates.

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1 Irishman, 20 Feb. 1869.  
 2 ibid., 6 Mar.

It has been noted how the Amnesty Committee was formed in the closing weeks of the election campaign, too late to have its full influence upon the contests throughout the country. This body developed its activities throughout the spring of 1869; a petition was circulated which, according to John Nolan, gained 250,000 signatures, (1) and in addition memorials were presented to the queen upon the subject of amnesty from most of the corporations and town councils in the southern part of the country. Funds were collected in all parts of the British Isles, ranging from some large subscriptions to a solid basis in the twopences, threepences, and sixpences of emigrant workmen in Britain. (2) A special St Patrick's day church collection produced varying returns, according to the degree of co-operation extended by the local clergy; in Dublin diocese any such co-operation was expressly forbidden by Cardinal Cullen. (3) In its endeavours to secure the support of the more prosperous classes, and in particular of the parliamentary representatives, the committee found itself

1 Nation, 13 Mar. 1869.  
 2 The committee published its weekly receipts in the Nation. Its average income in the period from the middle of January to the end of March was £40 per week. Its expenses were considerable - besides its organisational costs it made grants to the prisoners released in the spring, many of whom were in want and broken in health.  
 3 Nation, 20 Mar. The committee made the mistake of announcing its plans without prior consultation with the clergy. The Nation on 3 Apr. reported returns of £316.16.3 of which £266.11.11 was collected in the Limerick diocese - not without local clerical opposition.

confronted by the prevailing attitude of confidence in Gladstone; it was widely hoped that Gladstone would in fact urge clemency upon the queen without any pressure from Ireland.<sup>(1)</sup> Immediately upon the establishment of the liberal government, the new chief secretary for Ireland, Chichester Fortescue, sent a minute marked 'confidential and immediate' to the crown solicitor's office in Dublin requesting a return of all fenian convicts at present in custody, with a precis of each case.<sup>(2)</sup> But when, in February, the administration announced its intentions with regard to the prisoners, they proved sadly disappointing to Irish opinion. The Irish newspapers reported that of eighty-one prisoners only forty-nine were to be released, and of this number only Kickham of the more famous leaders was to be amnestied; Rossa, Devoy, and most of the other principals were to remain in custody.<sup>(3)</sup> A disappointed public read with growing anger the reports which appeared continually in the popular press of prison harshness to the captives, of their shattered physical, and in some cases mental, health. The Amnesty Committee continued its activities throughout March, and public meetings in support of the movement were held in London and Manchester,<sup>(4)</sup> but it was obvious that a stage in the agitation had been reached,

1 See above, pp. 85-6.  
 2 14 Dec. 1868, Anderson (C.S.O.) Diary, MS 5965.  
 3 Nation, 27 Feb. 1869. On the other hand, Butt refers to the release of 53 out of 105 prisoners in this batch. (Ireland's appeal for amnesty, 1870, p.36).  
 4 Nation, 13 Mar.

and that new and more vigorous efforts would be required in order to exact further concessions from the government. The more energetic section of the committee, which included the secretary John Nolan, urged the organisation of a series of monster public demonstrations in the open air; this plan was opposed by the more cautious element, including the chairman, Luke J. O'Shea of Kinsale, which believed that such a course would only antagonise the government and jeopardise the prisoners' chances of ever obtaining clemency. The division was a fundamental one, and the committee divided in mutual recrimination.<sup>(1)</sup> Butt, as the tacitly-accepted leader of the movement, had remained studiously aloof from these dissensions,<sup>(2)</sup> but when Nolan and his group formed the rival Amnesty Association at a public meeting in the Rotunda on 28 June, Butt was elected president. 'Bide your time', he told the meeting, 'the time is coming when we may have to say a great deal, and when, perhaps in this very room, we may re-enact scenes which, nearly a century ago, made this country famous.'<sup>(3)</sup>

The new association carried away all the popular support of the old. Its committee included, in addition to Butt and Nolan, Father Lavelle, John Martin, A.M. Sullivan, and Richard Pigott. A series of monster meetings was immediately inaugurated with a token protest on 29 June at Mallow, constituency of the attorney-general Edward Sullivan,

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1 The two groups analysed their differences in Nation, 5, 12 June and Freeman's Journal, 31 May. They remained bitter rivals, and in November a band of men whom the committee declared to have been members of the association broke up a meeting of the committee and removed its records. (Nation, 13 Nov.)

2 Nation, 5 June

3 Nation, 5 June

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who had inspired much resentment by his expression in the house of commons of his opinion that the fenians had nothing to complain of about their trials except that they were tried at all. More than forty such meetings followed all over the country, culminating in October in a great demonstration at Cabra, at which, according to the association's estimate, two hundred thousand people were present to hear Butt, G.H. Moore, and other speakers.<sup>(1)</sup> At this point the monster meetings were judiciously suspended by the association to give Gladstone an opportunity to consider the appeal of the Cabra meeting in an atmosphere free from compulsion on the part of the Irish.<sup>(2)</sup> Gladstone's reply was, however, unfavourable, and a partial resumption of the campaign was authorised by the association.<sup>(3)</sup> Meanwhile Butt worked upon the presentation in pamphlet form of the case for amnesty.<sup>(4)</sup> Writing of the period of the fenian trials, he summed up the attitude of the moderate sympathiser, whose feelings were emotional rather than revolutionary:

Gradually the conviction forced itself upon everyone, that the men whom they saw meet their fate with heroism and dignity, were not a mere band of assassins, actuated by base motives - but real and earnest patriots, moved by unselfish thoughts, and risking all in that which they believed to be their country's cause... "Speeches from the dock" became a portion of the national literature of Ireland... These I confess are the memories which haunted me, and which have stirred my heart, when I thought that men like these were sent to herd with the vilest and meanest criminals. (5)

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1 Butt, Ireland's appeal for amnesty, 1870, pp.39-40.

2 The decision appears to have had the general approval of the association, which was probably anxious to avoid the fate of O'Connell's agitation, J.F.X. O'Brien, who was one of the men released in 1869, wrote to Butt in November: 'I believe that an immediate cessation from agitation now would be more effective than the contrary course.' (O'Brien to Butt, 28 Nov. 1869. Butt MSS. )

3 Irishman, 30 Oct.

4 Butt, Ireland's appeal for amnesty, 1870, Glasgow.

5 ibid. pp.14-16.

The influence of the Amnesty Association cannot simply be measured in terms of its effect upon the policy of the government. The very refusal of the administration to consider the Irish plea for amnesty was a very important political influence in its own right. Here the government of Gladstone was subjected to its second major test, and its reputation did not on this occasion survive untarnished. "Justice for Ireland" was shown to be perhaps, after all, not a fundamentally novel approach to that country's grievances, but rather a variation upon the familiar theme of administering to Ireland the measures which English statesmen conceived to be good for her, rather than those which she desired for herself. In a positive sense, also, the association assisted the revival of an independent nationalist movement by providing a focus through which both advanced and constitutional nationalists could, for the first time, associate in constitutional action for a common object. The language used at the great amnesty meetings was often violent and inflammatory, and the response which they awoke in their audiences went much deeper than the simple desire for amnesty. From America John O'Mahony commented with more enthusiasm than discretion upon this aspect of the new movement:

We regard these amnesty meetings with something beyond ordinary favour, we regard them as meaning more than the release of the fenian prisoners. We look upon them as the resurrection of a nation from its deathlike torpor. England is menaced by them and England knows it. (1)

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1 Nation, 6 Nov. 1869.



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The association also increased the stature of its president, Isaac Butt, and the respect for his person, if not necessarily for his ideas, which his work in the state trials had engendered among the fenians. Possibly most important of all, it indicated to the advanced party the power which they might generate if their energies were harnessed to a constitutional movement. This most suggestive truth was to be spectacularly demonstrated in the Tipperary by-election in November.

Contemporaneously with the amnesty agitation, the tenant right movement was reaching a new level both of activity and of explicitness. It will be recalled how, in the general election, the demand for land reform was seldom expressed in more precise terms than a call for compensation for improvements and security of tenure against capricious or arbitrary eviction; on the really crucial issue, that is to say, precisely how this security could be achieved through legislation, the liberal representatives had no common policy. The preoccupation with the church issue in the election had not encouraged an inflexible expression of the tenant demand, or the implementation of Butt's scheme of a tenant league. With the safe passage of disestablishment, however, the main barrier to an intense concentration upon the land issue was removed. The Freeman's Journal took it up as 'the question of the hour',<sup>(1)</sup> and in a series of editorials on the subject urged without reservation the principle of fixity of tenure.

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1 Freeman's Journal, 18 Nov. 1869.

The Landlord, it declared,

must be tied down only to such an increase of rent as he would be justly entitled to from the rise in agricultural prices, the improvement in property from railway communication or other circumstances of a similar nature. (1)

Meetings in support of this principle were organised by the tenant farmers all over the country. In September a combined meeting of the Munster Farmers' Clubs in Cork resolved upon the establishment of a national Tenant League. At a subsequent meeting of the representatives of the clubs of the southern counties in Tipperary this organisation was formally established, with Butt as its president. It was intended to contain 'as many of the tenant farmers of Ireland as possible', and it was to be conducted upon the model of the Catholic Association and the Repeal Association. Its aims were to be based upon principles laid down at the Cork meeting, that is to say, perpetuity of tenure, based upon an initial assessment of rent, and periodic revaluation, by a specially constituted board of agriculture; this valuation was to be based upon average market values over the past twenty-one years, excluding the value of any improvements created by the tenant. The league also expressed a general welcome for the proposals of John Bright upon the establishment of a tenant proprietary. (2)

Thus at the end of 1869 two great issues were the subjects of organised agitation in Ireland, land reform and amnesty. But it would be wrong to imply that there was any unanimity or co-operation between the protagonists of the two

1 Freeman's Journal, 2 Nov. 1869.

2 Nation, 19 Sept., 2 and 16 Oct.

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causes. Even within the land reform movement, there were significant divisions. The active popular movement was based upon the Farmers' Clubs, and organised in the Tenant League, under the leadership of men like Butt, William Bolster, and Dean O'Brien, with the Nation as its mouthpiece. Sir John Gray was at the same time conducting a parallel and scarcely less radical campaign in the Freeman's Journal, with the result that on this issue that influential organ found itself for once in advance of the majority of the liberal spokesmen, whose confidence in Gladstone was so complete that they did not feel the necessity to exert any pressure upon him whatsoever. A correspondent in the Nation expressed this divergence well, comparing Gray with another influential liberal member of parliament and newspaper proprietor, J.F. Maguire, member for Cork City and owner of the Cork Examiner. Gray, commented this observer, had been giving 'the utmost aid to the spread of tenant-right principles', but Maguire, in the Examiner, had been continually suggesting that 'the great hero of the church measures may surely be with perfect safety left to his own unrestricted and unaided guidance on the land question.'<sup>(1)</sup>

In these circumstances, and given that so many of the tenant-right spokesmen had not shaken off their Gladstonian associations, it is less difficult to understand the distrust with which so many of the advanced nationalists

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1 Nation, 18 Sept. 1869.

regarded the entire land agitation. In the first place, they objected to the agitation for any other parliamentary concession to make Ireland contented so long as the political prisoners remained in English gaols; (1) in the second place, while they respected Butt himself both for his work in the state trials and as the leader of the amnesty movement, they distrusted the whig associations of some of his allies in the land agitation. They further doubted whether any genuine measure of land reform was in fact desired by these people, or, even if it were, could ever in practice be won from a British parliament. Many of the clergy and liberal leaders had incurred additional odium by their opposition to the active course taken by the amnesty agitation at the same time as they gave their blessing to the land movement. Considerable tension was generated between the two movements throughout the country. When efforts were made to introduce the land issue into amnesty meetings, or to hold combined meetings on the two subjects, the advanced party retaliated by breaking up land reform demonstrations. In a joint meeting in Kanturk, sections of the crowd interrupted land reform speeches with demands for amnesty; (2) in Limerick in

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1 Irishman, 30 Oct. 1869. 'John Daly's recollections of Fenianism', in Irish Freedom, Oct. 1912.

2 A correspondent in the Irishman of 16 Oct. described the Kanturk meeting: 'The attempts made by that old-womanish set, known as constitutional agitators, to convert the amnesty meetings into tenant-right meetings, reached its culmination in Kanturk on Sunday, when at the monster meeting expressly convened to show the wishes of the people of Duhallow with regard to their imprisoned brothers, all the speakers, lay and clerical, put this very subject (the one in which the people were most interested) in the background.' The speech of the chairman, Archdeacon O'Regan, he describes as 'bunkum', reporting him as telling the people to 'place confidence in Gladstone', that he was 'specially sent by God to remedy the evils of Ireland'. . . . Finally, he says, the protests of the people erupted 'like a volcano' with cries of 'we don't want your tenant-right, but the prisoners', hurrah for O'Donovan Rossa

November a tenant-right meeting was wrecked, and the platform broken down. The popular Father Quaid was given a hearing, but Fathers Shanahan and Fitzgerald were ejected from the market-place by a band estimated at two hundred strong. (1) The explanation given for this fracas was that the supporters of amnesty were exasperated by the bitter opposition of the bishop and clergy to the amnesty agitation in the teeth of which the St Patrick's day collection had been organised; the clergy were alleged to have denounced the opening meeting of the local Amnesty Association, only Father Quaid giving it his support. (2) Several more clashes of the same kind between amnesty and tenant-right supporters occurred in succeeding weeks. (3)

From the unique position which he held as leader of both movements, Butt remonstrated with the advanced men:

I believe the two objects, so far from being antagonistic, help each other....in the present circumstances of Ireland I can conceive no proceeding more mischievous than any attempt to sever the cause of the Irish tenantry from the cause of the Irish nation.... I am sure that such a course would defeat our hopes of securing that united national party upon which the best hopes of Ireland depend. (4)

It was against the background of this conflict that the by-election in Tipperary was fought. It had been widely canvassed, when the vacancy was first created by the death of

1 Irishman, 6 Nov. 1869. This was John Daly's 'battle of the markets'. (Recollections of fenianism, Irish Freedom, Sept. and Oct. 1912.)  
 2 Irishman, 6 Nov.  
 3 Freeman's Journal, 30 Nov.  
 4 Nation, 13 Nov.

Charles Moore, that Butt himself should be put into nomination, and notices in support of his candidature were posted around the constituency:

Butt for Tipperary. Butt for the release of the Political Prisoners. Butt for the Land Question. Butt for Education... Who defended the State Prisoners free of expense? - Butt. Who wrote the best pamphlet on the Land Question? - Butt. Who deserves the gratitude of Ireland most? - Butt. (1)

Butt, however, declined to accept nomination, declaring at a dinner in Cork which followed the inaugural meeting of the Tenant League that he believed himself to be of more use outside 'an alien parliament'. (2) The adjourned county meeting at which Butt's name had been originally proposed met again at the beginning of October. Butt's proposer having received, in the interval, formal notice of his refusal to accept nomination, the meeting unanimously selected Denis Caulfield Heron, a distinguished catholic barrister, who addressed the constituency in support of fixity of tenure, denominational education, and 'complete amnesty'. (3) His candidature had the full support of the local tenant-right party, and of the Freeman's Journal, which commended his pronouncement upon 'the great question now before the country'. (4) But the advanced party were dissatisfied at the proposed return of 'the last law-adviser of Gladstone's government' as a companion for Barry, Dowse, and Sullivan 'the viper', (5) on a platform which placed tenant right first and amnesty third. Almost at the last moment,

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1 Irishman, 16 Oct. 1869.      2 Nation, 25 Sept.  
3 Irishman, 30 Oct.  
4 Freeman's Journal, 3 Nov.  
5 Irishman. 30 Oct.

the advanced section, with the support of Peter Gill's Tipperary Advocate,<sup>(1)</sup> nominated, in opposition to Heron, Jeremiah O'Donovan Rossa, 'of Portland Prison, or Pentonville, England'.<sup>(2)</sup> For Rossa they could proclaim the simplest and most effective of slogans: 'Remember the record of his unparalleled sufferings - remember his thirty-five days torture with his hands manacled behind his back.'<sup>(3)</sup> The Amnesty Association did not officially endorse Rossa's candidature - with his associations in both parties Butt could scarcely have done so, although Nolan probably urged that he should,<sup>(4)</sup> and J.F.X. O'Brien wrote to Butt deploring the failure of the association to support Rossa's candidature as a great amnesty demonstration.<sup>(5)</sup> But even without this endorsement, the election was an unmistakable struggle for predominance between the fenian-amnesty and liberal-land reform parties. In a low poll, the fenian convict was elected.

The tremendous significance of this result was immediately recognised. 'Unquestionably the most remarkable event of the kind which has taken place in Ireland since the memorable contest for Clare in 1829', wrote the Nation.<sup>(6)</sup> 'One of the most remarkable events of this the most critical period of our history', was the immediate comment of the Freeman's Journal upon the news of the result.<sup>(7)</sup> The following day the

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1 See above, pp. 867.  
 2 Freeman's Journal, 23 Nov. 1869.  
 3 Irishman, 6 Nov.  
 4 J.F.X. O'Brien to Butt, 28 Nov. 1869, Butt MSS. *Butt had, in fact, sponsored Heron. (Heron to Butt, 22 Oct. 1867, Butt Add. MSS. 10415).*  
 5 *ibid.*  
 6 Nation, 27 Nov.  
 7 Freeman's Journal, 26 Nov.

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same organ attributed the result to the disappointed reaction of the Irish people to the denial of land reform, and their belief that Gladstone's government would not be permitted by the landed interest to introduce a genuine measure; it appealed to Gladstone and Bright to take the courageous step which lay in their power.<sup>(1)</sup> In the meanwhile a further demonstration of Irish reaction against the liberal alliance was given in the Longford by-election immediately afterwards, where a hasty decision was taken to nominate John Martin, who was absent in America at the time, upon the battle-cry of 'The glorious example of Tipperary',<sup>(2)</sup> in opposition to Reginald Greville-Nugent, son of the local liberal magnate Lord Greville, who had already been chosen by the local liberals and the clergy to fill the vacancy caused by the elevation to the peerage of his father. On this occasion Butt and the Amnesty Association openly endorsed Martin's candidature and his demand for Irish self-government.<sup>(3)</sup> The clergy were exceptionally active and determined in opposition to Martin, and when in January 1870 polling took place, the liberal was returned by a large majority, but the spectacle of determined independent nationalist opposition to the full force of clerical influence did not go unremarked.<sup>(4)</sup>

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1 Freeman's Journal, 27 Nov. 1869.

2 ibid., 1 Dec.

3 Nation, 4 Dec.

4 Greville-Nugent was subsequently unseated on the grounds of bribery and clerical intimidation. (Nation, 9 Apr. 1870.)



While this evidence of a resurgence of independent nationalist action was becoming visible, an effort was being made to reconcile the two great forces of agitation. A special meeting of the Irish Tenant League was convened by Butt for the afternoon of 14 December in the Rotunda, to be followed by an open meeting in the evening, in the hope that it might be possible to 'put an end to the unhappy dissensions which had so long distracted the national party in Ireland.'<sup>(1)</sup> Dean O'Brien wrote to Butt before the meeting:

It is essential that you be at the great Dublin demonstration and per fas aut nefas (by which I mean wanted or not) you must make your own of it. Your presence there will knit the meeting to the League and give the League all its (the meeting's) power - it will make the League meeting popular - whereas if you do not carry that meeting we shall wither in its shadow.<sup>(2)</sup>

The afternoon meeting was largely concerned with the technical aspects of land reform;<sup>(3)</sup> the evening meeting was obviously of a very different character, being opened to the accompaniment of cheers for 'Tipperary and Rossa'. Butt told the evening meeting that the clergy were preparing to take 'that bold step which is due to their position and their flocks'. When a voice interjected 'they did not take it in Tipperary', Butt urged the meeting to let bygones be bygones. He proposed a resolution to the effect that no reform would satisfy the people so long as the political prisoners remained in custody. The meeting then proceeded to consider another resolution in support of the Tenant League, but from the floor of the hall

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1 Nation, 18 Dec. 1869. There is a copy of a circular for the Tenant League meeting, signed by the secretary, John D. Fitzgerald, in the Butt MSS, 1869.

2 Dean O'Brien to Butt, Nov. 1869, Butt MSS.

3 It was marked by a notable admission from Butt that he had advanced from his old plan of fixity of tenure with 63 year leases to a belief in the necessity of perpetuity of tenure.

C. R. Mahony of the Amnesty Association tried to move an amendment:

That we support the League only while under the presidency of Isaac Butt, who sacrifices his time and his talents for the people, without wishing to make any political capital for his labours. (1)

Meanwhile the land issue was approaching its climacteric with the impending introduction of the government's land bill. In January 1870 Gray and five other M.P.'s, together with several prominent men outside parliament, circulated a requisition calling a land conference 'to confer as to the most effectual means of rooting the Irish people in the Irish soil.' (2) The proposal was regarded with some suspicion by the members of the Tenant League; Richard Lalor of the Queen's County Independent Club replied that he would not sign the requisition because upon glancing down the list of its sponsors, many of whom had in the past opposed the principle of fixity of tenure, he did not believe that the conference would truly represent the tenant farmers, and also because the circular seemed to ignore the work already done and the stand taken by the public meetings of the Tenant League. (3) William Bolster also refused declaring to Butt his determination to 'stick by the League'; he suggested, however, that Butt and Dean O'Brien should attend the conference to represent the views of the League:

You would be powerful advocates of the right policy and a sprinkling of honest democracy in the body of the hall might be the means of keeping matters in proper trim. (4)

1 Nation, 18 Dec. 1869.  
2 Bryan, Downing, Callan, D'Arcy, MacMahon; also the mayors of Dublin, Cork, Waterford, Wexford, Clonmel, Kilkenny and Drogheda, A.M. Sullivan, and P.P. McSwiney, chairman of the National Association. (Copy of requisition in Butt MSS, 1870.)  
3 Lalor to Michael Dwyer, Jan. 1870, Lalor MSS, 8566.  
4 Bolster to Butt, 9 Jan. 1870, Butt MSS.

Butt attended the conference, which was held on 2 and 3 January in the Mansion House, and he was largely responsible for the framing of the resolutions which it considered.<sup>(1)</sup> A respectable and representative assembly<sup>(2)</sup> heard him declare:

They were done with delusions - they were done with compensation for improvements - they were done with the sale of right of occupancy - they were done with the Landlord's Ulster tenant right - they were done with everything that could leave a loop-hole for escape, and fixity of tenure, with fair rents, was now the rallying-cry of Ireland.

Resolutions were passed demanding continuous right of occupancy, subject only to eviction for non-payment of rent or for sub-letting without the consent of the landlord, and valuation of rents, such valuation not to take into account the value of the tenant's right of occupancy. On the expiration of an existing lease, and in the event of disagreement as to the rent to be charged in future, independent valuation was to be arrived at by the local Land Tribunal.<sup>(3)</sup>

The decisions of this conference were of very considerable importance. They demonstrated the degree to which the land reform demand had advanced in clarity and in scope in the period between the election and the eve of the introduction of Gladstone's bill; they further demonstrated how the party of Gray and the Freeman's Journal had fallen in behind the radical proposals of fixity of tenure and valuation of rents. Lord Clanricarde wrote to G. H. Moore: 'I wonder no Tories or Nationalists have attacked the Freeman for the distrust of its

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1 Nation, 5 Feb. 1870.  
2 The O'Donoghue, M.P., Dean O'Brien, and Thomas Tighe of Ballinrobe were there in addition to those listed above.  
3 Nation, 5, 12 Feb.

pet, and be-praised administration, which the "Conference" it is labouring to get up implies - or rather expresses.'<sup>(1)</sup> There was little chance that Gladstone could, even if we wished, grant such a sweeping measure of reform as the conference demanded. John Martin had opposed the course of the land movement for this reason as raising false hopes in the English parliament,<sup>(2)</sup> and G. H. Moore had refused to attend the conference on the same grounds.<sup>(3)</sup> Looking back on the conference a month later, after the introduction of the land bill, J.A. Dease, an active pro-government liberal, wrote to William Monsell:

The manner in which the Land Bill has been accepted is very much what I expected. Two years ago - as you may truly say - such a bill would have been hailed as the greatest boon Ireland ever received.

Public expectations, he said, had been excited 'to an extent that was quite beyond the bounds of possibility to satisfy'.

It is clear to anyone following the writings of the Freeman's Journal that Gray would of late have "backed" if he could. This was clear enough at the Dublin Conference (which was a most truly melancholy exhibition of unreasoning violence) when Butt faced Gray and with the aid of men like Father Quaid made it plain to Gray that he would not be allowed to retreat from the extreme position he had led the country on to. (4)

But if Gray and his allies believed that they might, by countering in this way the pressure which the landed interest was believed to be continually exerting upon Gladstone induce him to grant a radical measure, it seems unlikely that Butt had any such illusions. He told the Tenant League meeting

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1 Clanricarde to Moore, 20 Jan. 1870, Moore MSS, Vol VII.  
 2 Nation, 11 Sept. 1869.  
 3 Limerick Reporter, 5, 12 Apr. 1870; Moore to Hardiman, - Feb., 17 Feb., 1870, Moore MSS, Vol. VII.  
 4 Dease to Monsell, 2 Mar. 1870, Monsell MSS, 8317.

in the Rotunda in December that 'he considered they would do as much service to Ireland by rejecting, in the name of the tenant farmers and people, an inefficient measure, as by accepting a good one',<sup>(1)</sup> and addressing the Amnesty Association at the end of October after Gladstone's negative reply to the address of the Cabra meeting, he had declared, in authorising a partial resumption of the agitation:

I have a plan in my mind...Bide your time.....Next session will prove the utter impotency of the English parliament to legislate for Ireland's people. (2)

The development of the amnesty and land reform movements had manoeuvred Gladstone into a position from which he could not extricate himself without either a decisive acceptance of the Irish popular demands or a dangerous disappointment of them. If ~~he~~ were to implement the principle of his "justice for Ireland" policy in the sense in which the phrase was interpreted in that country - the government of Ireland in accordance with the desires of her inhabitants, he would have to grant an unqualified measure of amnesty and some form of fixity of tenure. Gladstone's understanding of Irish problems, much as it had increased in recent years, till it far exceeded that of any other English statesman of comparable stature, was not yet complete, and he was probably quite sincerely unable to appreciate the absorption of Irish popular feeling in these two demands. 'Gladstone is on his trial'

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1 Nation, 18 Dec. 1869.  
 2 Irishman 30 Oct.

declared Joseph Ronayne at an amnesty meeting in Queenstown.<sup>(1)</sup>  
 The denial of amnesty struck the first blow at the great position which Gladstone had built up in Ireland in the 1868 election: symptomatic of the reaction of the amnesty agitators was the resolution of the Limerick association in November, which called upon Butt and G.H. Moore to convene a meeting in Dublin to work out a policy for the obtaining of a national parliament as the only way of securing justice for Ireland in the light of Gladstone's refusal to accede to the Cabra appeal.<sup>(2)</sup>  
 At the opening of 1870, with the culmination of the tenant movement in the Tenant League meeting in the Rotunda and the land conference in the Mansion House, the next great challenge was thrown down before Gladstone. In the months before the election of 1868, when Butt and Dean O'Brien and others were working quietly in preparation for the time when an opportunity would come to revive the demand for home government, the Dean had written to Butt:

In all cases it appears to me we ought to win; because the tendency to seek autonomy will grow equally by concession or disregard. It is wonderful that statesmen such as Gladstone and Bright think it possible by such things as disendowment to content the Irish people.... Very likely we shall have to wait the reformed parliament - so much is promised which we cannot take the responsibility of jeopardising, however much we may disbelieve it will ever be granted.... At any rate - every time - we are ready for our move. If we get too little we move; if we get much we move more strongly; if we get nothing we move instantly....<sup>(3)</sup>

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1 Irishman, 23 Oct. 1869.

2 ibid., 6 Nov.

3 Dean O'Brien to Butt, 1868 (undated), Butt MSS.

Now a crucial test was approaching, and Dean O'Brien wrote again to Butt:

It would be ruinous to speak of the Great Question now as the question. You would raise up all Ireland - unless one party - against you.... It is clear that win or lose in the next session - our gain shoots up. A settlement of the Land Question unites all Ireland; a suspension of the settlement will unite the Democracy. (1)

On 15 February Gladstone introduced his land bill in the house of commons. In his introductory survey he specifically rejected the scheme of fixity of tenure as 'virtual expropriation':

As I understand it, the scheme itself amounts to this - that each and every occupier, as long as he pays the rent that he is now paying, or else some rent to be fixed by a public tribunal charged with the duty of valuation, is to be secured, for himself and his heirs, in occupation of the land he holds, without limit of time.... the effect of that provision will be that the landlord will become a pensioner and rentchager upon what is now his own estate.

Even were such a settlement legitimate, its implementation would be attended by the greatest practical difficulties. (2)

Instead, Gladstone proposed a scheme, or rather four parallel schemes, for securing existing customs of different kinds, and, where no custom existed, establishing a sliding scale of compensation for disturbance, based upon the rental of the holding; thus, he hoped, would make capricious eviction so costly a process that the landlord would be

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1 O'Brien to Butt, Nov. 1869, Butt MSS.  
2 But a portent of the more drastic legislation he was later to introduce was contained in his admission that the state had a perfect right to do this if it wished, and his description of the evils of the present system as 'so great that I, for one, am prepared to say that I can hardly conceive of any alternative which would not be better than the continuance of the present state of things.'

effectively deterred from it. An important principle was accepted in the establishment of a court of arbitration with power to assess the damages to be paid for eviction, but the value of the scheme was largely negated by its complexity, which offered endless opportunities for litigation and loopholes for escape, and by its specific exclusion of tenants evicted for non-payment of rent from the right to claim damages for disturbance. (1)

The bill met with almost instant condemnation in Ireland. The Nation called it 'an elaborate and tremendous effort of tinkering'; (2) the first comment of the Freeman's Journal on Saturday 19 February was that the bill needed amendment - otherwise 'it will leave the old sore unhealed, the land question unsettled', but in the same issue the London correspondent of the paper wrote that 'the discontent is spreading rapidly and increasing as the bill is more closely examined', (3) and Monday's editorial declared: 'the more we examine the bill the more we see the hopelessness of making it satisfactory'. (4) Even a whig journal like the Limerick Reporter of Maurice Lenihan, which had initially welcomed the bill, sneering at those who talked of 'improbabilities' such as 'perpetuity, pure and simple', (5) was compelled, in the

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1 Gladstone's speech is in Hansard, 3rd series, cxcix, 333-90; Butt's critique of the bill in Freeman's Journal, 22 Feb. 1870; Gray on the bill in Hansard, cxcix, 1681-1703.  
 2 Nation, 19 Feb. 1870  
 3 Freeman's Journal, 19 Feb.  
 4 Ibid., 21 Feb.  
 5 Limerick Reporter, 18 Feb.



face of popular feeling, and in particular of the reaction of the Freeman's Journal, to make a complete volte-face and denounce it. The bill, it declared, 'has called forth an unmistakable expression of dissatisfaction entirely unconnected with party spirit'. Listing the objections of the Freeman's Journal, one of which was that the power of the landlord capriciously to increase the rent remained unimpaired, it insisted upon the principle of periodic valuation, with security of tenure so long as the rent was paid: 'less than this will not, and ought not, to satisfy us.'<sup>(1)</sup> In March it further commented that the passage of an unsatisfactory bill would inevitably strengthen the demand for a renewed repeal agitation.<sup>(2)</sup>

In the commons, the bulk of the Irish liberal members voted for the second reading; they expressed, however, serious reservations, and announced their intention to endeavour to amend the bill in committee. But Gray himself with George Bryan, M.P. for Kilkenny County, opposed the second reading, and ten Irish M.P.'s went into the lobby against it.<sup>(3)</sup>

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1 Limerick Reporter, 22 Feb. 1870.  
 2 ibid. 8 Mar.  
 3 Callan, D'Arcy, Dease (E.), Digby, Gray, Heron, O'Brien, Bryan, Sherlock, and White. G.H. Moore voted for the bill, saying that it might shatter 'the wretched delusion that they could obtain from the legislature that which, by the laws of the Empire, they were not entitled to'... (Hansard, 3rd series excix, 1522-8.) This choleric individual may have been influenced by the agrarian troubles on his own estate; an uncharitable rumour was that it was a furious outburst of anger caused by a threatening letter from "Rory" which in fact brought on the stroke that killed him. One of these threatening letters is in the Moore MSS, Vol VII; see also Moore to Fr. Lavelle, 4 Mar. 1870 and Moore to A.M. Sullivan, 22 Mar. 1870, in the same volume.

A deputation of Irish members and farmers' leaders which called on Gladstone on 5 March to urge that he should incorporate the principle of tenant right in the bill brought about no alteration in the measure, (1) and such amendments as were accepted on the committee stage of the bill were in the interests of the landlord rather than of the tenant. The most important amendment moved in committee by the tenant party was Sir John Gray's proposal of 'permissive parliamentary tenant-right', which sought to provide that a landlord and tenant might themselves by agreement adopt the principle of valuation and non-disturbance on payment of rent. This amendment was lost by 317 votes to 29. (2)

The bill passed into law rejected by the Irish popular leaders, not only by Butt and the Tenant League, but by Gray and the Freeman's Journal. Dean O'Brien, whose views on the importance of the impending land settlement in November 1869 have been quoted above, once again summed up the

1 The deputation included the M.P.'s O'Brien, Gray, Bryan, Johnston (the only Ulster member), Moore, Dease (E.), White O'Reilly, Downing, Maguire, D'Arcy, Gregory, Heron, Pim, Callan, Bagwell, and Synan; the representatives of the Tenant League; P.P. MacSwiney, Chairman National Association; Lord Bellew; and Rev. Professor Smyth, Moderator of the General Assembly, mentioned above (p. 35) in connection with the Londonderry City election. It defined tenant right as 'the right of continuous occupancy, subject to the payment of the rent to which the tenant is liable; that such change of rent shall be afterwards settled, from time to time, by fair valuation, the tenant to have the right to sell his interest to any solvent person to whom the landlord cannot make reasonable exception.' This was virtually the same as the definition by Butt which Bryan quoted in the commons when opposing the second reading. (Hansard, 3rd series, cxcix, 1373-7.)

2 See Appendix V.

situation in a letter to Butt:

I have been disappointed by "the bill" and in it. The bill is useless for any proximate good and too complicated to permit any certainty of remote benefit. We have yet to look for a solution of the "Irish difficulty" - for we have not yet seen anything which will make Irishmen fight for Ireland. Of course Mr Gladstone has closed the line of statesmen in whom I had any hope - a hope which ought not perhaps have been inspired by his legislation of last year which lost his class so little. English wisdom has failed to see the nature of the crisis - and Irish warning has spoken in vain. We stand on the brink of the future which the "Limerick Declaration" two years ago shadowed forth. A new land bill is impossible - in this generation; and the present bill is useless for the end it should have contemplated. Landlords and statesmen have only one chance of saving us from coming confusion, and that is to permit us to make our own laws. I cannot go on with a sham-battle - I am sure that many of my class share my opinions - these battles have lasted long enough. (1)

The validity of the principles upon which the Anglo-Irish liberal accord of the 1868 election had been based could now be seriously questioned, and that spirit of grateful confidence in Gladstone which had inhibited the raising of the home rule issue in the election had been seriously undermined. The way was now once again open for the revival of an independent Irish party.

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1. Dean O'Brien to Butt, 17 Feb. 1870, Butt MSS.

## CHAPTER VII

The launching of the Home Government Association.

(1) The conservatives, the liberals, and the fenians

In May 1870 a number of gentlemen met in Bilton's Hotel, Dublin, to consider the possibility of reviving the demand for a separate Irish legislature. Out of this meeting grew the Home Government Association, and ultimately the Home Rule League of Isaac Butt. A number of political developments had made it possible to revive an agitation which had lain dormant for twenty years; some of these have been considered in the last chapter. Before going on to consider the actual launching of the new movement, it is necessary at this point to analyse some of the motives which induced its founders to participate in it, and which were to have an important influence upon its later development.

(a) The conservatives.

To one of these motives in particular a very large share of the responsibility for the founding of the new movement has been ascribed. 'It may be doubted that there ever was a time since 1800 when Irish Protestants as a body believed that Irish affairs could be better understood and cared for in a London legislature than in an Irish Parliament,' wrote A. M. Sullivan in 1877; 'Concern for their rights, privileges, and possessions as a minority in the midst of a dangerous Catholic majority, was the real reason why they

supported the Union system.'<sup>(1)</sup> It was the contention of Sullivan and other writers on the period that the disestablishment of their church and the invasion of their privileged position on the land by the reforming measures of the Liberal administration of 1868 destroyed the compact of mutual self-interest between Irish protestantism and the English legislature, and that the movement which Butt founded in 1870 owed much of its strength to a recrudescence of Irish protestant nationalism. This view has gained so much currency among later historians of the period that it will be necessary to give it some particular attention.

As has been stated above, the 1868 election resulted in the return of a body of Irish representatives the majority of whom were possibly more cleared pledged to support of the English Liberal party than at any time since before the famine. In the eyes of the Irish electorate these representatives were bound to a programme of disestablishment, tenant right, and denominational education. In the space of a few months the Liberal administration had fulfilled its promise of disestablishment. There seemed, at that time, to Irish opinion every reason to hope, or to fear, that the other reforms would follow with equal expedition.

Among the Irish protestant conservatives, who had fought bitterly in the election against the threatened invasion of their hereditary privileges, resentment against Liberal policy took in some cases the extreme form of a sudden espousal of repeal principles. "A Protestant

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<sup>1</sup> A.M. Sullivan, New Ireland, (14th ed., Glasgow, 1882) p. 328

clergyman of the County of Meath" wrote to the conservative Daily Express on 3 March 1869: 'Dissolve the Article of Union between Church and State, and you will see how few Protestants will be loyal to the connection between England

and Ireland.' (1) At the same time "A Protestant Repealer" wrote urging the formation of 'a united national party, composed of Orangemen and anti-Ultramontane Roman Catholics'. (2)

A few days later another conservative journal, the Dublin Evening Mail, gave editorial expression to this new feeling:

The value of the Union in Protestant eyes lay in the protection which it was supposed to afford to property, liberty, and life by the full extension to Ireland of the immunities and privileges of the British constitution. If the power of the Imperial Parliament be used only to suspend the Constitution in the whole of Ireland, it may very well be questioned whether the model of a free Legislature might not be advantageously borrowed, for Irish use, from Protestant Canada. (3)

At the same time, the third great conservative journal, the Irish Times, at this time possibly the leading Irish daily, made an even more unequivocal pronouncement of repeal sympathies:

It is impossible to deny that daily and almost hourly the conviction is growing stronger and deeper in the minds of all thoughtful Irishmen that if they are ever to entertain a hope for the prosperity of their country, that hope lies only in a native legislature, meeting in the Irish metropolis, and disbursing Irish revenues upon Irish objects.....(4)

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1 Daily Express, 6 Mar. 1869.  
2 ibid., 2 Mar. 1869.  
3 Dublin Evening Mail, 11 Mar.  
4 Irish Times, 10 Mar.

Whatever the motives behind this attitude, its prevalence was beyond dispute. S. L. Anderson, of the Crown Solicitor's Office in Dublin Castle, noted in his diary in March:

'Repeal of the union commences to be agitated by conservatives and protestants', <sup>(1)</sup> and as the year drew on further expressions of quasi-nationalist sentiment were made by a number of <sup>(2)</sup> leading protestant conservatives.

The attitude of the Gladstonian liberals to this new feeling was one of undisguised contempt. 'Tory Repeal', wrote the Limerick Reporter, <sup>(3)</sup> 'is one of the most transparent of humbugs'. The nationalists, on the other hand, less happy in the close-knit liberal alliance of 1868, viewed these converts with more sympathy. The Nation wrote:

We are glad to hear the words of patriotism spoken by Irish Protestants, even though they are but hasty words, spoken in a fit of ill-humour. Who knows but some spark of the patriotic spirit contained in them may remain to less excited moments, and may spread, and glow, and kindle in the hearts of those men a flame of genuine and unselfish love for their native land. <sup>(4)</sup>

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1 Anderson Diary, 13 Mar., ~~National Library of Ireland~~, MS 5966.

2 Notable among these declarations for repeal were those of George F. Shaw, F.T.C.D., in January 1869; Archdeacon Gould of Raphoe in March 1869; by the North Dublin Union and by Alderman Manning and Mr. Erson in the Dublin Corporation in January 1870; by Major Knox of the Irish Times in the Mallow by-election in the same month; by John W. Switzer in February 1870 in connection with the Longford by-election; by the Reverend George McCutchan, Rector of Kenmare, in a lecture to the Limerick Young Men's Society in April 1870; and in the same month the candidature of E. R. King Harman on home rule principles in the second Longford by-election.

3 Limerick Reporter, 12 Apr. 1870.

4 Nation, 13 Mar. 1869.

1 Nation, 13 Nov. 1869

The nationalists had few illusions about the spurious nature of much of the new conservative repeal sentiment, but at the same time it remained for them a force to be exploited in the revival of the repeal agitation.

But before considering how the nationalists set about using this new sentiment, it is necessary to place it in its context. The object of Butt, stated in November 1869, was the creation of a 'united nationalist party'; <sup>(1)</sup> the conservative repealers were only one of the groups whom he hoped to bring into the new movement, and among the several forces leading to a revival of the repeal agitation, conservative nationalism was not by any means the most important.

(2) The liberals

So long as the liberal alliance of 1868 endured, the irreconcilable nationalist could be represented as a traitor to his religion and to the interests of the tenant class. It was obviously, then, an essential task of home rule to discredit this alliance and to replace liberalism as the spokesman of Irish grievances. The implications of this responsibility were to have a far-reaching effect upon the development of the movement.

In Chapter VI we have seen how the liberal position had already been seriously weakened by the refusal of

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1 Nation, 13 Nov. 1869



Gladstone to accede to the demand for amnesty and by the derisive reception accorded to the Liberal Land Act in Ireland. Writing in February 1871, a year after the introduction of the land bill, the conservative Standard drew great amusement from the unhappy position in which Irish liberals had been placed by the failure of Gladstone to fulfil their expectations:

No one knows where he stands, or what is expected from him. The new candidates for parliamentary seats carefully avoid, under the circumstances, declaring themselves supporters of the university; while the hack ministerialists of the representation begin to fear that Mr. Gladstone, turned old Whig again, will forfeit the favour of their constituents, and consequently must receive from them henceforth only a qualified allegiance. (2)

But this comment exaggerated the extent of Gladstone's reverses. His position in Ireland had been undermined, but it had been too strongly entrenched to be so easily destroyed. John Martin, writing to John O'Leary about the same time, gave a nationalist view of his position:

It was certainly Mr. Gladstone's scare at the Fenian protest that drove him to adopt his Church-disestablishment and Tenant-protection policy for Ireland; and it was the same scare that persuaded the majority of the English parliament to support his policy. By adopting that policy he succeeded in attaching to his government and to England the support of the Irish catholic bishops almost in a body and of the priests, whom the bishops are able in a great proportion to command politically. But the lay catholic people, always impatient under any anti-national policy, have at last rebelled against the Gladstonian bishops and clergy, and

Mr. Gladstone while shaken was not yet to be overthrown.

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1. Standard, 14 Feb. 1871, Larcom MSS, 7493.

1. Martin to O'Leary, 23 Feb. 1871, O'Leary MSS, 100.  
 2. An exposure, however, which led to the resignation of Mr. Gladstone in August 1871. The exposed Bill's intention to join the three hundred separate owners of the 'painful villages' of their property in the United Kingdom.

I think the compact that gives the whole influence of the Irish catholic church in support of English rule in Ireland is not likely to be lasting. (1)

Of the two observers, Martin was the more accurate. The great achievement of the Amnesty Association and of the land agitation had been to dispel from the Liberal leader the aura of semi-sanctity which had surrounded him in the election, and to create a situation in which the merits of a policy other than dependence upon English Liberalism could be rationally argued. Sir John Gray, for example, still refused to accept the necessity for a revived repeal agitation, but he could no longer use the Freeman to condemn almost as heresy opposition to Gladstone, since the land bill divisions had forced even him into the anti-government lobbies.

But Gladstone was not yet to be abandoned by his Irish followers. Men like Dean O'Brien, who had only accepted the alliance of 1868 under protest and as an experiment in conciliation, felt justified now in returning to their original conviction that self-government provided the only final solution to Irish problems. But as far as the catholic hierarchy was concerned, and with it that section of opinion most concerned with religious grievances, confidence in Gladstone while shaken was not yet to be withdrawn. In March 1870, in the middle of the Land Bill controversy, the

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1 Martin to O'Leary, 25 Feb. 1871, O'Leary MSS, 5926.  
2 An experience, however, which he seems to have regretted; in August 1870 he refused Butt's invitation to join the Home Government Association because of his 'painfull recollections' of their co-operation in the tenant-right campaign. (Cramer Butt 27 Aug. 1870, Butt Add. MSS, 10415.)

pastoral letter of Cardinal Cullen rejoiced in the passage of disestablishment and expressed continued confidence that the statesmen who had achieved this reform would yet grant redress of all the other Irish grievances. (1)

Above all, there remained still one perennial Irish grievance, that of education, upon which the administration had still to make its policy plain. Ever since the foundation of the Queen's Colleges this issue had been in the forefront of Irish politics. As recently as in the last months of the Conservative administration in 1868 the hierarchy had seemed near to gaining some measure of their claims from the negotiations with the Chief Secretary Lord Mayo, but no compromise could then be reached. (2) Until Gladstone committed himself upon this issue, clerical approval could be given to no movement which sought to embarrass him. Furthermore, if home rule was to replace liberalism as the representative of Irish opinion, it could not long remain untouched by the denominational controversy. It will be seen, then, that there were, broadly speaking, two motives for the rejection of English rule -

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1 Nation, 19 Mar.  
2 The Reverend Dr. Woodlock, rector of the Catholic University, had welcomed Lord Mayo's plan as involving 'the recognition of a great principle: viz, of the right of Catholics to a thoroughly Catholic education. It seems to me, in this respect and in others, much better than the scheme of our friend Mr. Monsell'.....  
(Woodlock to Aubrey de Vere, 21 Mar. 1868, de Vere MSS, PC 353.)

that of the conservative nationalists, who resented Gladstone's reforms because they were too radical, and that of the liberal nationalists, who abandoned the Liberal leader only as he proved himself in their eyes unwilling to concede the full popular programme. It was questionable whether any permanent alliance was possible between two such fundamentally conflicting motives.

(c) The fenians

Besides the conservatives and the liberals there remained one group whose attitude to the new movement could not be ignored. Unfortunately the relationship between the Home Government Association and the advanced party is not as clear as could be desired. The opposition of the fenians to constitutional activity of any kind was notorious, and the clashes referred to in Chapter VI between the rival agitators for amnesty and tenant right had shown that fenian susceptibilities had not been dulled by adversity. Butt must have viewed their reactions to the new venture with considerable trepidation, and it would be fascinating to have more precise knowledge of the exchanges that must have taken place between him and their leaders. In later years fenians like Charles Doran and Denis Dowling Mulcahy insisted that the neutrality of the advanced party was only secured upon the undertaking in writing by Butt that the home rule agitation should be allowed to operate for a trial period only, and then

B. O'Brien, Recollections, 1890-1891, p. 100.  
B. O'Brien to Butt, 15 Feb. 1872, B.O. 1872, 100.

(1)  
 if unsuccessful abandoned. This alleged "compact" is usually dated around 1873, but probably there was from the outset some such inference that the home rule movement was a last attempt at a peaceful solution. William O'Brien was present as a young reporter when Butt spoke at a banquet given in Dublin by the Amnesty Association to the first batch of amnestied fenians:

Butt's speech was almost wholly a plea to the released fenian leaders to give him a chance for trying other means. He was argumentative, pathetic, passionate by turns; but the passage that will always live in my memory was that in which, in language actually blazing with the divine fire of eloquence, he declared that, if the conciliatory methods he pleaded for failed, he would not only give way to those who would lead where all the nations of the earth had gone before them, but that, old as he was, his arm and his life would be at their service in the venture. (2)

Jeremiah Hodnett, an old ally of Butt's in his period as member for Youghal, wrote to O'Neill Daunt in March 1870:

'Mr. Butt says he will have Repeal in five years, or, if not, separation.' (3)

The experience of the Amnesty Association had shown the willingness of the fenians in one case to lend their energy to a constitutional agitation. It had demonstrated to them the influence which they might wield through such a movement, and it had accustomed revolutionary and constitutional nationalists to work in association. The fenians were in no position to raise armed revolt at any stage

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1 See Chapter X, pp. 258-9.  
 2 O'Brien, Recollections, (London 1905), p. 137. Unfortunately O'Brien destroyed his notes of this speech at Butt's request  
 3 Hodnett to Daunt, 16 Mar. 1870, Daunt MSS, 8046.

in the near future; John Daly, who took up organisational work again on his return to Ireland in the summer of 1869, recalled years later:

It was thoroughly understood that the organisation was formed for no immediate effort at insurrection. The men in the movement at the time realised that the best thing to do was to arm and hold themselves in readiness for any opportunity that may present itself of England being engaged in a war. (1)

Furthermore, the two men who were popularly designated as the leaders of any revived parliamentary agitation, Isaac Butt and G. H. Moore, both had associations with the advanced party. The fenians were notoriously hostile to the majority of the constitutional leaders; Gray of the Freeman they dismissed as a whig, Sullivan of the Nation they detested, probably unjustifiably, as a felon-setter. Butt, however, as counsel for the fenian prisoners in the state trials had won their gratitude; as president of the Amnesty Association he had commanded their loyalty. Probably at no time did he inspire more respect among the advanced party than in the years 1869-73. The position of Moore is more obscure. A veteran of Gavan Duffy's party and one of the few who had adhered to its original principles, he commanded widespread respect for his integrity and his oratorical powers, but had made many enemies by his incautiously stinging tongue. Returning to politics in 1868 after a long absence from parliament, he was possibly even

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1 Irish Freedom, September 1912.

closer than Butt to the fenians. According to John Daly, whose recollections are far from reliable, he was actually a member of the provisional council which at this time was endeavouring to reorganise the brotherhood. <sup>(1)</sup> Certainly he appears to have taken the fenian oath around this time; his son had the testimony both of Mrs. Moore and of John O'Leary to this effect. He remarks, in his life of his father:

Though he had sympathised with the objects of the Fenians, he had formerly refused to join them in a hopeless rebellion, under leaders in whom he had no confidence, and whose actions he could not influence. Now the leaders were scattered and

1 In his recollections, published in Irish Freedom forty years later, Daly is more than once mistaken over dates and facts; he places Butt's election for Limerick City as around the same time as his own return to Ireland and his clashes with the Tenant League which in fact occurred two years earlier, and he ascribes to 1873 a meeting with Parnell which could not have taken place until 1874 or later. Furthermore, he admits that he did not know the result of the election for a Munster representative on the supreme council, 'as the greatest possible care was taken to preserve the identity of the men elected'. He was not himself elected to the supreme council until around 1873, after the death of Moore. Consequently, his recollection of the composition of the council in 1869-70 cannot be accepted without considerable reservation. With Moore on the council, according to Daly, were John Nolan and Thomas Neilson Underwood, both associates of Butt in the amnesty movement, and John O'Connor Power and J. J. O'Kelly, both later members of parliament. Certainly, a policy which was influenced by men such as these might well have been more favourable to a parliamentary agitation than it later became under the influence of men like Kickham.

John Devoy (Recollections of an Irish rebel, 1929, p. 322) says Rossa's plans to swear in Moore in 1864 broke down through the hostility of Stephens, but he recalls J.J. O'Kelly's telling him that after the rising Moore was consulted so frequently by the reorganised supreme council that he was almost a member of it. M. MacDonagh (The home rule movement, 1920, pp 115-6) credits O'Connor Power with securing Moore's support for an earlier 'new departure' in 1868-9. MacDonagh could draw on Power private papers, which have since disappeared, but gives no reference for this agreement.

the rebellion suppressed, he hoped perhaps to guide the members in more reasonable ways..... (1)

Possibly Moore was able to influence the fenians to take a less critical view of the agitation than might otherwise have been the case. Whatever the cause, the new movement, while it did not actually commend the support of the advanced party, was able to proceed for the moment without fear of physical interruption. Several noted fenians or fenian sympathisers were to become early members of the Home Government Association, and Butt was able to promise the Bilton's Hotel meeting: 'As for the men whom misgovernment has driven into revolt I say for them that if they cannot aid you they will not thwart your experiment.' (2)

(2) The Bilton's Hotel Meeting

The failure of the land bill to satisfy the demands of the Irish tenantry provided a suitable opportunity for that revival of agitation which had evidently been in preparation for some time. The whole course of Butt's conduct over the past year - his strenuous advancement of the amnesty campaign and the skill with which he committed Gray and the whole tenant party to demands which he knew the government could not satisfy - suggests a deliberate plan to discredit the liberal alliance. In February

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1 M. Moore, An Irish gentleman, (London, 1913), p. 350.  
2 A. M. Sullivan, New Ireland (14th ed., Glasgow), p. 344. One of R. B. O'Brien's anonymous fenians recollected promising Butt the benevolent neutrality of his movement at this time. (Life of C. S. Parnell, 3rd ed., vol i, p. 65 note 1.)



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Sullivan wrote to Daunt that the time was rapidly approaching for the resumption of repeal agitation:

Mr. Martin will be home next month and I think it would be of vast importance for even a dozen of us to have a little consultation with him - hearing all he will have to report and conferring as to what we ought to do. (1)

Butt and Moore were unmistakably the principals. In April Moore gave notice in the House of Commons of his intention to move a resolution upon the subject of repeal on 3 May, and on his return to Dublin from Westminster his son records that he engaged in consultations with Sullivan and other nationalist leaders on the subject of his intended movement. (2) But on 19 April Moore suddenly died. Daunt recorded in his journal: 'A sad loss to the cause.....He was planning a tour through the south of Ireland to beat up recruits for the new repeal campaign.'

The death of Moore left Butt the uncontested leader of the new movement. On 8 April Daunt wrote to Smyth suggesting that he and Sullivan should arrange with Butt and Major Knox of the Irish Times to call a meeting in the Rotunda 'with as many names of weight - especially protestants - as could be obtained.' (3) At the same time Daunt wrote around to his friends urging the revival of the repeal

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- 1 Sullivan to Daunt, 22 Feb. 1870, Daunt MSS, 8048. Martin had been on an American visit.
  - 2 Moore, An Irish gentleman, p. 382. Also Butt's memorial address at Harold's Cross, 24 Apr. 1870 (Nation, 30 Apr.).
  - 3 Daunt to Smyth, 8 Apr. 1870, Daunt MSS, 8045.

(1) agitation. Martin took no part in the preliminary arrangements, only returning to Ireland from America on 9 May, and being prevented by a cold from seeing Butt and Sullivan in Dublin as he had intended on his way home. (2) Smyth wrote to Daunt expressing the hope that 'some practical steps will be taken towards a combined movement for the attainment of legislative independence'; he said there was a widespread feeling in favour of such a course, and suggested that the Irish Confederation should be taken as a model. (3)

The initial steps which were taken in May 1870 were probably very largely the work of Butt with the assistance of Sullivan. There had possibly been only one comparable outburst of conservative nationalism in the century - that which had occurred between the famine and the 1848 rebellion. Butt, as the only notable survivor from the earlier movement, was particularly anxious to exploit to the full the opportunities offered by the second. John Martin, as another survivor from earlier agitations, wrote in the same strain to O'Neill Daunt in 1869: 'Of course we should gladly accept the help of the new repealers whom spite has converted. We don't want to banish these persons, or anybody, from

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1 General F.P. Dunne to Daunt 11 Mar.; (Daunt MSS, 8045); J. Hodnett to Daunt, 10, 16, Apr., 16 Mar. (MS 8046); Maurice Lenihan to Daunt, 17 Feb. (MS 8046). J.G. McCarthy to Daunt, 14 Feb., 10 Mar. (MS 8047).  
 2 Martin to Daunt, 17 May, Daunt MSS, 8047.  
 3 Smyth to Daunt, undated, Daunt MSS, 8048.

Ireland if we had the country independent.' (1) Daunt himself had urged the circularisation of as many protestants as possible. (2) The Bilton's Hotel meeting was specifically orientated towards these new converts. Martin wrote to Butt that he believed that it was just as well that he was unable to get up to Dublin for the meeting, as his premature entry into the movement might frighten off 'many of the protestants now opening their minds to the consideration of the state of Ireland and of their own position in reference thereto'; (3) instead he wrote to the Nation 'to cheer on the protestants to join in the movement'. (4) To Daunt he described the movement in this initial phase as one of the protestant nationalists of Dublin. (5) P. J. Smyth was also absent from the meeting, being omitted, allegedly by an oversight, from the list of those who received invitations; writing to him a few days later to apologise for this error, Butt described the meeting as having consisted of 'principally protestants and conservatives', and 'all men of some mark and station - many of them of consideration in the mercantile world'. (6)

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1 Martin to Daunt, 9 June 1870, Daunt MSS, 8047.  
 2 Daunt to Smyth, 8 Apr., Daunt MSS, 8045.  
 3 Martin to Butt, 26 May, Butt MSS.  
 4 ibid., and Nation, 21 May.  
 5 Daunt Journal, 13 June, MS 3041.  
 6 Butt to Smyth, 23 May, Smyth MSS, 8215.

Forty-nine people attended the Bilton's Hotel meeting; 12 additional names, including those of Smyth and Martin, were subsequently added to form a committee of 61, <sup>(1)</sup> a list of which is preserved in A. M. Sullivan's New Ireland. <sup>(2)</sup> Of the 61 names listed, 28 were protestant conservatives; 10 were liberals, of whom 2 were protestants, 7 catholics, and one unknown; 17 were constitutional nationalists, of whom 5 were protestants and 12 catholics; and 6 were fenians or fenian associates, all catholics. Politically, the group divided into 28 conservatives and 33 liberals and nationalists, and by religion into 35 protestants and 25 catholics. <sup>(3)</sup> The conservative element was thus the largest single group, and although it did not actually predominate even at this early stage, it contained some significant adhesions to the home rule ranks. The proprietors of two influential conservative newspapers, Major Knox of the Irish Times, and Dr. Maunsell of the Dublin Evening Mail, were among the number, which also included the Lord Mayor of Dublin, Alderman Purdon, a previous Lord Mayor - Sir John Barrington, an ex-high sheriff of

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1 Butt to Smyth, 23 May, Smyth MSS, 8215.  
 2 14th ed., Glasgow, pp. 339-41.  
 3 Sullivan's classification of these people is, so far as I can ascertain, correct as to religion; his political classification I have amended in five cases.

Dublin, two fellows of Trinity College - Galbraith and Shaw, two members of the large conservative landowning family of King Harman, and Sir William Wilde. At the conclusion of Butt's address to the meeting, not one dissentient voice was raised to the proposition that the solution of Irish problems lay in the restoration of her domestic legislature, according to Sullivan. (1) But Galbraith recalled years later:

A great many speeches were made - some of a very foolish character - some stating that a royal residence was needed, and that if the Duke of Connaught were made a sort of perpetual viceroy or resident, all the evils of which they complained in Ireland would be removed. (2)

The sincerity, the proportionate influence, and the permanence of conservative participation in the home rule movement deserves closer examination than it has hitherto received.

In the first place, the proportions of the Bilton's Hotel meeting inevitably were not long maintained. The meeting resolved itself into a committee and arranged to assemble again the following Thursday. (3) Captain John Dunne, a close friend of Butt's and a kindred spirit, was appointed acting secretary. (4) After several meetings the committee had grown to number 359 members, and the first public move of the new association was taken in July with the publication of the full list of these members, together with the request

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1 New Ireland, 14th ed., p. 344.  
 2 Nation, 10 Feb. 1877.  
 3 Butt to Smyth, 23 May, Smyth MSS, 8215.  
 4 Dunne to Daunt, 4, 7 July, Daunt MSS, 8045.

that sympathisers should allow their names to be added. (1)  
 The original list of sixty-one had already included such leading figures of liberal and nationalist politics as Smyth, Martin, Butt, Sullivan, and William Shaw, liberal member of parliament for Bandon, together with such noted fenian sympathisers as John 'Amnesty' Nolan. Now to this nucleus were added nearly all the leading exponents of the liberal nationalist tradition; repeal priests in Dean O'Brien of Limerick, Father Lavelle of Partry, and Father Quaid of O'Callaghan's Mills; W. J. O'Neill Daunt, Richard Pigott of the Irishman, John George McCarthy, A. J. Kettle - a tenant-right agitator now making his first notable essay into nationalist politics; such advanced nationalists as Patrick Egan, John Denvir, and Joseph Ronayne; together with two more liberal nationalist members of parliament, Philip Callan, member for Dundalk, and George Ekins Browne, who had been elected for Mayo upon the death of G. H. Moore. With this broadening of the movement, and the entry into it of those who had possibly been deliberately held back in the early stages for fear of frightening the conservatives, (2) the importance of the original conservative element, which remained more or less static in number, began correspondingly to decline. William Shaw had written to Butt in April:

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1 Nation, 20 Aug. 1870.  
 2 e.g. Martin, quoted above, p. 146 ; and Dean O'Brien wrote to Butt urging that Father Lavelle should be kept in the background for the moment (26 Sept., Butt MSS).

The National Movement in its new shape must be launched and handled with great judgment. As regards the great body of the people I have no doubt of them going with the movement, but it will be essential to get the better class well into it. (1)

But the support of influential aristocratic conservatives was never really secured, and Shaw himself in June opposed the publication of the list of committee-members as giving the association 'too much the appearance of a Dublin shop-keeping movement'. (2)

As early as October 1870, at the first monthly meeting of the Home Government Association, Butt admitted that in point of religion the catholics had a small majority on the committee and that politically the liberals outnumbered the conservatives by three to two. (3) This shift in the composition of the association had its effect even in these early months; the Daily Express, which had welcomed the 'newborn feeling' in May as evidence that the power of the priests was on the wane, (4) withdrew all its approval from the movement and called instead for the formation of an anti-ultramontane Irish party. (5) Of the first public meeting of the association in September it commented that most of the protestants held aloof, and 'the audience was, for the most part, made up of the persons who

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1 Shaw to Butt, 23 Apr. 1870, Butt MSS.  
2 Shaw to Butt, 6 June, Butt MSS.  
3 Dublin Evening Mail, 6, 7 Oct.  
4 Daily Express, 18 May  
5 ibid., 12 Aug.

on divers occasions, such as funeral processions and amnesty meetings, are wont to appear in the character of "the people of Ireland".<sup>(1)</sup> Even the Irish Times, despite the fact that its editor was a founder member of the association, remained kind but non-committal, so much so that Butt wrote personally to Knox in November asking him to induce his newspaper to approach the association with greater cordiality.<sup>(2)</sup>

The enthusiastic publicity which the nationalists gave to the presence in the association of a conservative element did, however, have one considerable result in the field of practical politics - it provided the Gladstonian liberals with a strong pretext for declining to support it.<sup>(3)</sup> In this context there are some basic facts as to the role of the association which must always be borne in mind. The new body was never much more than a Dublin pressure group; it did not put forward candidates in by-elections, nor did it undertake any form of local organisation. Butt urged the formation of local home rule associations, but they were not formally affiliated to the original body and owed it no obedience other than deference to its seniority and to its federal programme. Looking back on the progress of the movement in October 1871, Butt declared:

It would be a mistake to think that the movement was intended to form a great popular organisation. What they intended to

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1 Daily Express, 12 Aug. 1870

2 Knox to Butt, 5 Nov., Butt MSS.

3 This attitude is more fully discussed in the next chapter.



do was to bring the question before the public mind... They never contemplated the raising of a great fund; their expenses were all defrayed by the ordinary one pound subscriptions of the members, and they had succeeded in bringing together more than eight hundred Irish gentlemen of different religious and political persuasions. (1)

These points must be emphasised because they illustrate how in practice from the very outset the Home Government Association was divorced from the main sources of Irish political energy; through its orange reputation, which discouraged the liberals and the catholic clergy from joining it, through its refusal to affiliate local branches, and through its reluctance to endorse parliamentary candidates, it left the practical advancement of the cause to the work of local agencies and in particular of local by-election struggles. It was through these that the character of the movement became significantly altered from that which its original protagonists had envisaged.

The new movement had one particular characteristic which Butt never tired of stressing - it was aimed exclusively at the attainment of home rule. In May 1871 he urged the local associations which had by then been formed upon the model of the parent body 'not to mix up abstract topics with the question', (2) and it was for fear of such excesses that he avoided any form of affiliation with them. By these tactics he hoped to win for home rule the support

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1 Nation, 18 Oct. 1871.  
2 ibid., 27 May 1871.

of men who totally differed upon every other subject of political controversy. In practice, this formula of Butt's for national unity was never feasible. Whig catholic papers such as the Dublin Evening Post and the Limerick Reporter were openly hostile to the new movement from its inception - 'a vile sham - a stalking horse to conceal Orange and Tory manoeuvres', wrote the Limerick Reporter,<sup>(1)</sup> in what was taken to be clerically-inspired comment.<sup>(2)</sup> Conservative participation in the home rule movement was never, even at the outset, as great as later historians have appeared to assume; it certainly did not represent the new departure which Butt had hoped to achieve. But it was sufficient to make the home government association permanently suspect in the eyes of the clergy and of the liberals.

### (3) Federalism and repeal

The reconciliation of protestant and conservative was not by any means the only problem which faced the association in these opening months. After the inaugural meeting of the new body in the Rotunda on 1 September, rooms were taken in Grafton Street, and a series of monthly meetings was begun.<sup>(3)</sup> In November an address was circulated, stating the basic aims of the association and appealing for

1 Limerick Reporter, 15 Apr. 1870

2 J. Hodnett to Daunt, 16 Apr., Daunt MSS, 8046.

3 Nation, 3 Sept., 15 Oct.

support. It was signed by the Reverend J. A. Galbraith, F.T.C.D., George Browne, M.P., and Laurence Waldron, as secretaries. (1) The recipient was asked to co-operate in the demand for 'the restoration to Ireland of that right of domestic legislation, without which Ireland can never enjoy real prosperity or peace'. But going further, the address declared:

We have also resolved to accompany this with a proposal of such a Federal Union between the three portions of the United Kingdom as may still combine them into one great Imperial State..... (2)

It was the adoption of this federal programme which was the great innovation of the revived agitation. It was not achieved without considerable heart-searching and misgiving among the older nationalists.

The opening pronouncement of the association did not elaborate upon the federal proposals which it envisaged.

This is not the time for offering the complete plan of such a federal union. That must come with the authority of a united Ireland. At present we invite the adhesion of all who are willing to co-operate in the general object of obtaining for Ireland a parliament of her own. When our association becomes strong enough to recommend such a step, we propose to invite our countrymen to meet in a general conference finally to settle on the details of a plan such as Ireland may present for acceptance to the English parliament and ministers. (3)

But in the same year Butt himself produced a pamphlet upon the subject of Irish federalism, and since this became at

1 November 1870, Butt MSS.

2 *ibid.*

3 *ibid.*

once generally accepted as the basis for the home rule demand, it is appropriate that some analysis of its proposals should be made at this point. (1)

'The outline I suggest is intended rather as a framework for suggestion and deliberation than as a complete plan', wrote Butt in introducing his proposals, and throughout the whole of his career as home rule leader he was to be adamant in his opposition to repeated suggestions that he should commit the home rule plan to the precise form of a parliamentary bill. He feared that if he did so he would be compelled to defend not the principle of home rule but the minutiae of its administration.

It is enough to say that I intend to propose a system under which England, Scotland, and Ireland, united as they are under one sovereign, should have a common executive and a common national council for all purposes necessary to constitute them, to other nations, as one state, while each of them should have its own domestic parliament for its internal affairs. I say each of them, because, although my immediate concern is only with Ireland, I do not suppose that if Irishmen obtain the separate management of Irish affairs it is at all likely that Englishmen or Scotchmen would consent to the management of their domestic concerns by a Parliament in which Irish members still had a voice. Whether England or Scotland would still desire to have the internal affairs of Great Britain managed by one common Parliament is a matter entirely for themselves to decide. (2)

Here at once one of the basic difficulties of the home rule proposal was already exposed - the question of the retention or non-retention of the Irish representatives in

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1 Butt, Home government for Ireland, Irish federalism! its meaning, its objects, and its hopes, Dublin 1870. Reference to this work which follow are to its fourth edition, Dublin, 1875.  
2 *ibid.*, pp. 15-16.

a British as opposed to an 'Imperial' parliament. Butt's proposal is typically on the grand scale: far more than simply an Anglo-Irish settlement, it looked ahead to an entire system of imperial devolution.

The Imperial Parliament ought plainly to be the great Council of the Empire, with which should rest the constitutional right of advising the sovereign on all questions of peace and war, and of the foreign relations of the country. It ought also to possess, in relation to these matters, all the constitutional checks which in practice Parliament possesses over the crown. There should be an Imperial Ministry responsible to the Imperial Parliament, and that Parliament should have the power of controlling the expenditure and supplies for Imperial purposes.

This is one way, says Butt, in which Ireland would be in a notably stronger position than before the act of union, when she possessed no representative influence whatever in imperial policy. The imperial crown should retain the great officers of state - the Secretaries for War, India, the Colonies, and Foreign Affairs, together with a Chancellor to hold the great seal of the United Kingdom and a Home Secretary, 'to manage the communications between the central authority and the national administrations.' These, together with a Treasurer and a Chancellor of the Exchequer should form an imperial cabinet.

The imperial parliament would vote men, money, and arms for defence. The money would be raised either by imperial taxation or by a national quota system for the army and navy. Ireland as a member of the imperial parliament would naturally have to bear her burden of imperial expenses.

(1)

The Federal arrangement which I contemplate is one which would preserve the Imperial Parliament in its present form. It would leave to that Parliament all its present control over everything that affected the Imperial Crown - its dominions, its colonies, and its dependencies - over the foreign relations of the Empire, and all questions of peace and war. It would leave it still the power of preventing any tampering with the permanent taxation, which is the security for the payment of the interest on the national debt, and the other charges on the revenue to which the faith of Crown and Parliament is pledged. It would leave it still the power of providing by Imperial taxation for Imperial necessities, including an army and a navy such as it judged necessary for the safety of the country, either in peace or war - imposing only a guarantee in the nature of the taxation that the levy should be one to which each member of the United Kingdom should contribute in proportion to its ability and its means. (1)

The reconstitution of the Irish parliament presented slightly more difficulty. It would be impossible, argued Butt, to restore it exactly as it was; many of the closed boroughs of the earlier period no longer existed, and many of the corporations and honorary bodies which formerly held voting rights were similarly defunct. His own preference would be for the summoning of an Irish assembly, elected upon the basis of household suffrage, to settle the constitution of the new parliament, but he fears this to be 'visionary' and impracticable, and that there is no alternative to the establishment of the local parliament by an act of the imperial body. (2)

Members of the Irish House of Commons, to number from two hundred and fifty to three hundred, should be chosen in a completely separate election from that for representatives

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1 op. cit., p. 33  
 2 ibid., p. 35.

in the imperial parliament. He suggests representation for the counties and for every town with a population of over three thousand. There must be an immediate redistribution of seats, but the question of franchise reform, though equally pressing, should not be mixed up with a home rule settlement - it could be dealt with later. An impartial commission could fix the constituency boundaries and resolve similar problems of detail.

Despite strong and persistent opposition from many of his followers, Butt was adamant in demanding the restoration of the Irish House of Lords as an integral part of the new parliament. He did this partly out of his desire to reproduce faithfully the tested institutions of Westminster, but also in order to reassure the Irish aristocracy against any fear of spoliation and to retain their loyalty and their services for a self-governing Ireland. 'There is no people on earth', he reminded them, 'less disposed to democracy than the Irish.'<sup>(1)</sup> He agreed, however, that there were many Irish peers who had earned no right to act as legislators in their native country. Absentee peers, and those whose titles had long since lost any connection with Ireland, and whose ancestors had never taken their seats in the Irish House of Lords,<sup>(2)</sup> should be excluded. The additional creations by the crown over future years should augment the number of those remaining; but in addition to this he suggests, again with

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1 op. cit., p. 39.  
 2 ibid., p. 36.

remarkable foresight, the creation of life peers from among such men distinguished in any field of intellectual achievement, as the Sovereign might think fit to associate with our hereditary nobility in the Upper House. (1)

As to the powers of the Irish parliament, he proposes:

The Irish Parliament, consisting, be it always remembered, of the Queen, Lords, and Commons of Ireland, would have supreme control in Ireland, except in those matters which the Federal Constitution might specifically reserve to the Imperial Assembly.

The queen would retain all her prerogatives; the Lord Lieutenant would remain as her representative, responsible to the imperial parliament, but acting through Irish ministers responsible to the Irish parliament in the same way as those of Canada and Australia. (2) Under these provisions, he reminds the inveterate repealers, Ireland would enjoy responsible cabinet government for the first time.

Legislation would have to be passed by both houses of the Irish parliament and receive the royal assent just as at present in the imperial parliament. (3)

The imperial parliament would continue to assemble in annual session, but could take its reduced volume of business in a leisurely and painstaking fashion.

In England - if the plan I propose were adopted in its integrity - the English members and the English peers would assemble in a separate Parliament for the transaction of all purely English affairs. Whether they would still form one Parliament with the Scotch members is a question with which Ireland would have nothing to do....

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1 op. cit., p. 36, p. 41.  
2 Much is made of the recently established federal constitution of Canada in this and all other works of home rule propagandists.  
3 ibid. p. 37.



That which is important is that Ireland would send, as we do now, 105 representatives to vote in an Imperial Parliament on all questions of Imperial concern, and in return we would submit, as we do now, to be taxed, but only for certain definite purposes and in a certain definite manner.

At home in Ireland we would have our own Parliament controlling all the affairs of our internal administration. (1)

Butt's scheme was obviously one of immense grandeur and imagination. Some of its drawbacks were no less obvious. It provided an excellent basis for a modernised and federated Empire, but it was less immediately suitable for resolving the relationship between Britain and Ireland, assuming the different parts of the United Kingdom to have no desire to be separated from each other. Were the Irish representatives to be allowed to continue to exercise that influence in English and Scottish affairs which they refused to permit reciprocally over their own? Or was the parliament at Westminster to assemble each year as a different body in two separate sessions simply for the convenience of the Irish? The question of police and legal administration in Ireland also presented difficulties. Such questions, said Butt, could be resolved by discussion and agreement; he suggested tentatively the adoption of the procedure followed in the United States of America in regard to the separate judicial powers of the states and the federal authority. But what course was to be adopted in relation to the crime of treason against the imperial constitution?

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1 op. cit., pp. 40-41.

his Journal For the moment, however, Butt was less concerned with hostile English reaction than with the winning over of the repealers and the advanced nationalists. To these he offered three main arguments. The federal arrangement would give Ireland a voice in imperial matters, and responsible cabinet government, neither of which she had possessed before 1800. It did not impair her separate existence, but at the same time it offered a solution which England might grant with honour, whereas she would never yield repeal, equated by many Englishmen with separation. Finally, and not least among his arguments, he reminded the nationalists that no man could legislate for eternity. Parliamentary and other reforms could follow upon the attainment of his constitution. Still more important, he conceded that separation from England might ultimately be the course which the Irish people would choose to take. Under a home rule settlement such a destiny could arrive peacefully which at present could be attained only by war and revolution. (1)

The federal scheme was nevertheless greeted with a considerable amount of hostility by the old repealers when it was first placed before them by the Home Government Association. When a revived agitation had been canvassed in 1869-70, it had generally been assumed that it would follow upon the O'Connellite plan. Gradually in 1870 disquieting reports reached men like Martin and Daunt. Daunt recorded in

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1 op. cit., p. 53.

his journal in June:

Martin says the protestant nationalists who for some weeks have been assembling in unreported meetings in Dublin, must intend something seriously good, as they have invited him to join their councils. I urged him - needlessly I am sure - to keep them up to the level of 1782. Less will not satisfy. (1)

When the federal programme of the association became public a controversy immediately started in the Nation upon the issue of federalism versus simple repeal. (2) Martin wrote several times to Dublin urging the members of the new group to adhere to simple repeal and not to confound and complicate the national question; only an Irish parliament, he argued, had the right to enter into a federal arrangement on behalf of the Irish people. Notified in June of his election to the committee of the association, without his consent, he replied to King Harman, one of the secretaries, that he had always sought repeal, and urged that the home rule demand should be left as wide as possible to include nationalists of all shades without tying them down too closely. (3) To Daunt he wrote of

his misgivings:

I observe, in the list received this morning, the names of several repealers as pronounced as myself - such as P. J. Smyth A. M. Sullivan, Alderman Plunkett. Also at least two names of vehement Fenian sympathisers and confidants. But I understand Federalism to be the present creed of the majority. (4)

In July he wrote to Daunt again in the same critical strain:

I am afraid we repealers are permitting this committee for a time to misrepresent the nationalist feeling of the country. Many of the names upon their list of members (yours, mine, and a dozen others I could pick out) are of men who would not give the English on any pretence, federalist or other, the smallest control over our affairs. (5)

1 Daunt Journal, 13 June 1870, MS 3041.  
2 Nation, 9, 16 July, etc.  
3 Martin to Daunt, 26 July, Daunt MSS, 8047; Martin to Daunt 16 June, Daunt MSS, 8047.  
4 ibid. 16 June. 5 Martin to Daunt 26 July, MS 8047.

As late as the end of August, when the association planned to launch its campaign with its first public meeting at the beginning of September, Martin wrote: 'I am not well inclined to go, being bothered by their federalist scheme. But I have not determined to stay away.'<sup>(1)</sup>

But a great victory for the new proposals was gained with the adherence to them at the beginning of July of Daunt himself, probably the most widely respected survivor of the O'Connellite agitation. Admittedly he joined with certain reservations:-

July 4. The Home Government Association have sent me a circular letter and prospectus. Sent them my subscription and a letter saying that I joined their movement on the clear understanding that I looked on their federal scheme as a provisional rather than a final arrangement of our relations with England, and that, if attained, it would help us to work out the rest. Nothing short of 1782 can or ought to satisfy Ireland.<sup>(2)</sup>

This interpretation was quite adequate for the association's purpose. 'It would be impossible to get together any large number of individuals holding hard and fast and identical opinions', replied the acting-secretary, Captain Dunne, thanking him for his adherence to the movement.<sup>(3)</sup> Other leading repealers joined with the same proviso. Father Quaid wrote to Butt in June:

I had some hesitation about joining at present as I am an advocate of an independent parliament such as we had in '82 however I have come to the resolve to join the present movement hoping it will lead to our ultimately obtaining an independent parliament.<sup>(4)</sup>

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1 Martin to Daunt, 28 Aug. 1870, Daunt MSS. 8047.  
2 4 July, Daunt Journal, MS 3041.  
3 Dunne to Daunt, 4 July, Daunt MSS, 8045.  
4 Father Quaid to Butt, 27 July, Butt MSS.

The difference between home rule and repeal was not in fact so great as to cause serious misgivings to the average person who was sympathetic towards the idea of a revived repeal agitation. Such people were for the most part willing to accept Butt's assurance that the home rule demand had greater possibilities of being accepted by the English and by the Irish protestants. P. J. Smyth's version of his own adherence to the movement, written in later years when it had become a matter of controversy, is of some interest. On his return from the Waterford City by-election in February 1870, he says, he began to work up a new repeal association;

Then I heard of a private meeting of federalists. Seeing that amongst those who took part in it were people heretofore conspicuous for their hostility to the Irish cause in every shape and form, and not without hope of their radical conversion, I deemed it my duty to put my own plan aside, and give to this movement what encouragement I could....(1)

Repeal remained the first love of many active home rulers, and catholic liberals like Alderman P. P. MacSwiney could argue that in abandoning it the Home Government Association had given yet another proof of the spuriousness of its kinship to the ancient tradition of Conciliation Hall. But Smyth alone caused serious embarrassment to the association by his reversion to repeal. Martin was finally induced to give his loyalty to the association by the example of his friends and by the possibility of winning the conservatives over to any kind of nationalist endeavour. In September he

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1 12 Nov. 1875, Hickey MSS, National Library.

came up on a visit to Dublin and subjected the association and its leading personalities to a first-hand scrutiny at the end of which he was completely won over to their experiment. He wrote to Daunt a long letter giving his impressions of what he had seen, and this picture of the new group in its first months of existence, sketched with insight by a veteran repealer, makes an appropriate conclusion to this survey of the launching of the Home Government Association.

I want to tell you my impressions about the men and the affair. I have had conversations with Dr. Shaw and Dr. Galbraith, Fellows of Trinity College, and members of the committee of 61. I have seen also, at the rooms of the association, Captain Dunne the secretary, Messrs. Erson, Graham Lemon, Vokes Mackey, Manning, and some others, and had chats with them. Besides, I was introduced to Mr. Edward King Harman (recently candidate for Dublin), Dr. Grattan, and several others. I sat through a committee meeting of over three hours, all occupied with mere committee details about appointment of honorary treasurers, honorary secretaries, sub-committees on organisation, of publication, of finance, etc. etc. It was irksome to me to see the men spend so much time and earnestness upon the petty formalities of agitation, while so little is done to really agitate the country. But it was very gratifying to see the men earnest in anything towards nationality and to think that nearly all these men - all persons of social importance in Ireland - were till lately enemies of nationality. I suppose you have got the list of the elected 61 of the first General Committee, and have remarked that not only yourself and myself but several more of the old notorious repeal nationalists are among the elected. P. J. Smyth, Father Quaid, Father Lavelle, A. M. and T. D. Sullivan are there. Also Thomas Ryan and James Cantwell and John Nolan and Thomas Begg, men understood to have strong pro-Fenian sympathies. In short the committee of 61 pretty fairly represents all sections of the nationalists, old and new. Mr. Butt was present at the meeting and took the lead in the business. Mr. Waldron, also, took a considerable part. It was settled that, till further notice, the association should hold regular meetings on the first Thursday of each month, open to the public. Mr. Butt wants to speak at the meeting next month and to get some prominent Catholic priests to speak. I observed that all the members present who were formerly attributed to the ascendancy faction were anxious to have a public (and real) union with the Catholics. Father Lavelle (who, like myself,

attended for the first time) was quite affectionately greeted by each person.

The dispositions of the new association are good - genuine feeling of the need of home government both on moral and material grounds, longing desire for concord of sects and classes, spirit of resentment against the nation which has made us subject, patriotic and prudent anxiety to avert revolution and anarchy. I am not sure that any men of great and striking ability have yet been produced in the new movement. Certainly Mr. Butt is a man of very high ability, and of qualities and accomplishments even more valuable for propogandism of our cause than even his ability. But his influence is much marred, when he is personally known, by his incorrigible habits of looseness about money matters. He seems to have grown callous to the shame of having bailiffs in his house. He makes arrangements with his creditors and breaks them wantonly. He keeps himself continually in trouble and want, through his extravagance and negligence. I am very fond of the man, else I might not speak so angrily of the defects of his character. I wonder have you seen his pamphlet on federalism. Probably not; and I shall therefore send you a copy by post. You will find it a treat to read. In knowledge of his subject, clearness and fulness of statement, elegance and easy dignity and style, persuasiveness of manner, kindness, and generous earnestness of spirit, he is unsurpassed. But this seems to me the best thing he has done - or rather the thing he has done best. As to the question itself I am still of the opinion that the proper and desirable course for Ireland is simple repeal and subsequently such federal arrangements as our parliament, self-reformed under the influence of free Irish opinion, may consent to make. And in my mind the less connection of a political (or of any other) kind between our country and England the better. (1)

In this summary may be detected suggestions of some of the underlying weaknesses of the new movement which

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1 Martin to Daunt 23 Sept. 1870, Daunt MSS, 8047. Erson, Lemon, Vokes Mackey, and Manning, were all prominent in Dublin municipal life, and former conservatives. Dr. Grattan was a descendant of Henry Grattan; very elderly and eccentric, he made repeated trouble at successive meetings, including the home rule conference of 1873, with his views upon repeal and the precise definition of home rule. Waldron was a former liberal candidate for Tipperary with slight tendencies to the conservative view of such subjects as education.

were to come to the surface in the future. It appears a little pretentious and pompous, over-preoccupied with the running of its little Dublin club. Butt has not so far attracted enough men of real fire and ability into the movement, and already he is waking up to the need to woo the catholic clergy into the association. His own notoriously improvident reputation weakens the authority to which his talents entitle him, and if he has managed to secure the support and the affection of men like Martin for him and his federal compromise, he has imparted to them none of his own enthusiasm for it as an imperial experiment in its own right. But these were weaknesses which were latent as yet, and as, after a summer of preparation, the association began to address itself to the general public, Butt could afford to congratulate himself cautiously upon the extent of his own and his colleagues' achievement. The bulk of the conservatives might remain aloof, but remarkable acquisitions had been made from the ranks of those formerly completely unsympathetic to the demand for self-government. The Daily Express might be hostile, but the Irish Times and the Dublin Evening Mail were not unsympathetic. Expanding from the basis of the Bilton's Hotel meeting, the association had succeeded in securing for the federal demand the support of the veteran nationalists whose aid it had not dared to solicit at the outset for fear of alienating the new supporters; now for the first time Smyth, Daunt, Martin, Father Lavelle, Father Quaid, Dean O'Brien, the Sullivans, were joined together with some



of the leading protestant conservatives of Dublin in a movement for home rule. The neutrality of the advanced party, and the loyalty of some of its most prominent supporters, had also been gained.

These were in themselves notable achievements. But as yet the influence of the movement was still largely confined to the city of Dublin. If Butt was to arrive at his goal of a united nationalist party, he would have to show not only that he could retain the support which he had so far won, but also that at the same time he could make such a public appeal to the ordinary liberal voters of the country and to the catholic clergy as would secure for the new movement the national support which was essential for its success.

Upon the great body of the catholic clergy the movement had as yet made no impression, nor had it won the approval of the leading Irish spokesmen in parliament such as Gray and J. J. Sugrue. The other notable defect in the list was that preponderance of Dublin middle-class men upon which Shaw had remarked.

The association held its first public meeting in the Rotunda on 1 September. Shaw, Galbraith, Lawrence Waldron, and George Browne, M.P., were the principal speakers. It is no stage did any sitting conservative member of parliament join

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1. Nation, 29 Aug. 1878.

CHAPTER VIII

Home rule in the constituencies, 1870-2.

Unfortunately for the growth of the new movement, the strenuous efforts which it had made to conciliate the protestant conservatives very quickly began to recoil upon it. The superficially impressive list of 359 supporters which was published by the association in August (1) had two notable deficiencies. While it included the names of 21 clergymen of the Church of Ireland, it contained only 12 catholic priests. 4 of these were well-known nationalists, and one, the Reverend Dr. Rice of Queenstown was a personal friend of Butt. Of the remaining 7, 4 came from Mayo, in the diocese of Archbishop MacHale, and one from Liverpool. Upon the great body of the catholic clergy the movement had as yet made no impression, nor had it won the approval of the leading Irish spokesmen in parliament such as Gray and J. F. Maguire. The other notable defect in the list was that preponderance of Dublin middle-class names upon which Shaw had remarked.

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1 Nation, 20 Aug. 1870. In judgment on the petition Shaw believed that the real agents during the election for Mr. Greville were the Catholic priests, and that expenditure on his behalf was 'at the rate of £115 a day for the time covered.' (Nation, 2 Apr. 1870.)

the association. Butt approached Sir Arthur Guinness, the conservative member for Dublin City, and David Plunkett, his colleague as candidate in 1868, but neither of them was prepared to countenance the agitation. (1) On 6 October the first monthly meeting of the association was held in its rooms in Grafton Street. A council of sixty-one was elected; Butt and Lord Mayor Purdon headed the poll, closely followed by A. M. Sullivan, Dean O'Brien, and Galbraith. (2)

In May, before the association had commenced its operations, the principle of home rule was subjected to a preliminary electoral test when E. R. King Harman, a founder member of the association and a protestant conservative by background, who was very typical of this phase of the movement, opposed the liberal George Greville-Nugent in Longford. This was the second by-election to be held in that county within a few months. It was caused by the unseating, on the grounds of improper clerical influence, of Reginald Greville-Nugent, younger brother of the new candidate, who had defeated John Martin by 1578 votes to 411. (3) Once again,

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1 Plunkett to Butt, 11 July 1870.  
 2 Nation, 15 Oct. At this meeting Father Thaddeus O'Malley, who had proposed the adoption of federalism in the old Repeal Association, became the thirteenth priest to join the Home Government Association.  
 3 In a celebrated struggle against clerical influence in which A.M.Sullivan took a leading part and upon the importance of which he devotes much emphasis in New Ireland. Judge Fitzgerald in his judgment on the petition said: 'He believed that the real agents during the election for Mr. Greville were the Catholic priests', and that expenditure on his behalf was 'at the rate of £115 a day for the time covered.' (Nation, 9 Apr. 1870.)

though not quite so blatantly, the clergy were active in support of the Greville interest, and upon this occasion their opponent was one the sincerity of whose nationalism was much more suspect than that of John Martin. It was the 'old Tory' and not his son the young 'Nationalist' who was standing against Greville-Nugent, wrote the Freeman's Journal on 14 April; on being apprised of its error it switched its attack to the 'sphinx-like riddles' and 'arrant humbug' of his election address. (1) Harman retaliated with a second address which appealed to the electors upon the basis of 'continuous occupancy at fair rents, independent of the caprice of either landlord or agent', together with legislation to make the granting of leases compulsory; denominational education; and the restoration of the national parliament - 'upon that platform - Home Rule - I boldly take my stand'. (2) But this declaration of principles was of no avail in allaying the suspicion of the liberals. Harman stood with the approval of the Nation (3) and of the Dublin Evening Mail, (4) and P. J. Smyth went down to Longford to campaign for him, (5) but the Freeman declared: 'We should hold fast to Mr. Gladstone, and not furnish followers to Mr. Disraeli', and urged the electors to repudiate 'the insidious attempt made to seduce them from their allegiance to their country and drag them into the mire of

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1 Freeman's Journal, 14, 15 Apr. 1870.  
 2 Nation 23 Apr.  
 3 ibid.  
 4 Dublin Evening Mail, 14, 19, Apr.  
 5 Nation, 21 May.

Toryism.' <sup>(1)</sup> The new protestant conservative home rule feeling sustained its first reverse at the poll by 1217 votes to 932, and the Dublin Evening Mail accused the nationalist press of <sup>(2)</sup> having given it only half-hearted support.

In August, after the launching of the Home Government Association and the publication of the federal programme, King Harman stood again on home rule principles in Dublin City, in opposition to the liberal candidate Sir Dominic Corrigan. Corrigan had stood for the city in 1868 when the pro-disestablishment forces were united in his behalf, and the situation was complicated in this by-election by the survival of old loyalties to him among the liberal nationalists. Corrigan addressed the electors in favour of a catholic university, denominational education, and the ballot; he had not taken part in the federalist movement, he said, because it was premature, and diverted public attention from more <sup>(3)</sup> immediately practicable reforms. Harman repeated his <sup>(4)</sup> Longford programme. At the nomination he was proposed by a veteran catholic repealer, Alderman Plunkett, and seconded by a lifelong conservative now a member of the Home Government Association, Alderman James Vokes Mackey, both of whom had <sup>(5)</sup> taken part in the Bilton's Hotel discussions. But once again the liberal candidate had the support of the catholic clergy

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1 Freeman's Journal, 5, 12 May 1870.  
 2 Dublin Evening Mail, 14 May. A few days earlier in Mallow Major Knox was defeated on a programme somewhat similar to Harman's but more equivocal. The contest in this small and not notably spotless borough aroused less interest.  
 3 Nation, 30 July  
 4 ibid, 6 Aug.  
 5 ibid., 20 Aug.

and of the liberal press, and the conservative home ruler was defeated. (1) The liberals distrusted him as a conservative; the conservatives looked upon him as a renegade. The Mail wrote:

As for those who call themselves conservatives, and who in that capacity supported the ultramontane English candidate, actively or passively, the twofold result of their choice seems to be - desertion by the democratic protestants of the north, if they should form an alliance with the nonconformists of England; and suppression into helplessness by the alien power in Ireland, united to, and sustained by, the whole power of England. The stand made at the Dublin election seems to indicate the possibility of an alternative. If the genteel section of the conservative electors had added their votes to the 3,444 independent Roman Catholics and protestants who supported Captain King-Harman - that is to say, if they threw in their lot with the mass of their countrymen - they might at least have some voice, and exercise some influence, in public affairs. Their present position is one of voluntary abdication. (2)

These were realistic arguments, shrewdly aimed at the conservative reader, but by the catholic liberal they might be interpreted as showing the cloven hoof. The nationalists of the Home Government Association were steadily urged towards the conclusion that the mixture of conservatism and liberalism which was Butt's formula for a united nationalist party contained too many parts of the first and too few of the second, and that the association's approach would have to be reorientated towards the catholic liberal position.

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1 Coorigan 4468, Harman 3444. It is only fair to add that when Harman was finally elected to parliament in 1877 his subservience to the conservative whip did much to justify the forebodings of his liberal opponents in 1870.  
2 Dublin Evening Mail, 23 Aug. 1870.

As early as July 1870 T. D. Sullivan wrote to Daunt expressing concern at the small number of priests who had so far joined the association.

I fancied they were keeping out of it for a while lest their presence in large numbers might frighten off the somewhat timid newcomers, most of whom have a certain amount of fear of "Catholic ascendancy". But the idea of their being frightened from it by the number of protestants who have joined it - I had almost said preposterous. (1)

But preposterous or not, Daunt, who was the most distinguished and unexceptionable catholic in the association, and its chief intermediary in this period with the catholic hierarchy, confirmed this judgment.

I suspect that the priests are kept back, as a certain parish priest tells me that he is, by the number of Tory names on the committee. (2)

In an effort to retrieve their position in relation to catholic opinion, Butt and Martin wrote to Daunt, making the first of what were subsequently continually repeated appeals that he should come up to Dublin and assume the secretaryship of the association. (3) When Daunt declined to leave his small

estate in county Cork, Captain Dunne wrote to him with the request that he should get in touch with as many members of the hierarchy as he knew personally to solicit their support for the movement; only two had signified their approval so far. (4)

Daunt wrote to Dr. O'Hea, bishop of Ross, and to the

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1 Sullivan to Daunt, 13 July 1870, Hickey MSS, PC 411, Folder 444.  
2 Daunt Journal, 15 July, MS 3041.  
3 *ibid.*, 3 Oct.  
4 *ibid.*, 14, 15 Nov. The two bishops were probably Dr. MacHale and Dr. Conaty, Bishop of Cavan (Conaty to Butt, 7 Sept. 1870, Butt MSS).

Reverend Dr. Leahy, Bishop of Cashel. He received from both courteous replies, holding out some hope of their eventual adhesion to the movement, but at the same time expressing a complete lack of confidence in its present leaders. (1)

Dr. O'Hea expressed his reluctance unaccompanied and unsustained by my brother prelates, to throw myself into the ranks of those who never manifested towards poor Ireland but slight and contempt. (2)

Of Dr. Leahy Daunt noted in his journal:

April 3rd. Letter from the archbishop of Cashel, assigning as a reason why some prelates are slow in joining the home rule movement, their want of confidence in the motives of some of the protestant leaders, who, his grace says, look on the movement as identical with a movement against Rome rule.... it is curious that while the orange party oppose home rule as being identical with Rome rule, the protestant Home Rulers are accused by certain stupid catholics as intending by their movement to upset Rome. (3)

The realists in the Home Government Association were not slow to perceive this reluctance and to urge that some concessions should be made to it. Father Lavelle wrote to Daunt in July that many catholics would shrink with 'not quite unnatural repugnance from immediately close contact, political or otherwise, with the orange faction', and Dean O'Brien wrote to Butt in November questioning the wisdom of having put King Harman in the chair at the last public meeting of the

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1 Leahy to Daunt, 7, 20 Dec. 1870, 14 Feb., 1 Apr. 1871, 3 Aug. 1872, Daunt MSS, 8046; O'Hea to Daunt, 18 Nov. 1870, Daunt MSS, 8047.  
2 O'Hea to Daunt, 18 Nov. 1870, Daunt MSS, 8047.  
3 15 Nov. 1870, Daunt Journal, MS 3041.  
4 Lavelle to Daunt, 27 July 1870, Daunt MSS, 8046.



association

in a case where the mass of the Irish nation, as yet, think the H.G.A. only a Tory dodge to break the ranks of the Liberals, and we want to show it is not such a dodge. (1)

If the lesson of these first months, that a greater identification of home rule with popular liberal attitudes, and a purging of conservative taints, would be necessary before any national success could be won, was not sufficiently clear, the course of the by-elections which were fought in the following year made such a re orientation inevitable. Home rule candidates contested fourteen by-elections (2) between the beginning of 1870 and the middle of 1873; of these they won nine, of which five were uncontested, and lost five. In each of the by-elections fought in 1870, the same trend was maintained: the contest was between a clerically-supported liberal candidate and a home ruler of conservative origins; in both cases the liberal was successful.

The by-elections which were fought in 1871 followed a significantly different course. The first of them occurred in Meath, where the nationalists took advantage of the vacancy created by the death of M. E. Corbally to put forward for a second time the veteran repealer John Martin. (3) The liberal candidate was the Honorable George Plunkett, a member of the ancient catholic family of Fingall. His candidature had been

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1 O'Brien to Butt, 23 Nov. 1870, Butt MSS.  
2 The first Longford by-election is not included in this list, as it occurred before the launching of the H.G.A. The Galway contest of 1872 is included among home rule victories, although the home rule candidate, Captain Nolan, was subsequently unseated on petition.  
3 Martin was not eager to stand; A. M. Sullivan, J. T. Hinds, and some others were the principal movers.

approved by the local clergy before the entry of Martin, but the clerical attitude on this occasion was notably different from that of the two Longford contests, insofar as while they preferred Plunkett, they exerted no such intense influence against Martin as they had done against the home rule candidate. (1) on those two occasions. The Freeman's Journal opposed Martin, on the grounds that no one knew what was best for the home rule cause as well as it did;

As advocates of home rule, we protest against such abortive efforts as Dublin and Longford; being hastily got up without organisation or public concert. Three defeats have already been courted for the people. A fourth is now challenged. The principles of local government will not be advanced by improvised raids against such men as the son of a Fingall - a Plunkett in whose veins flows the blood of martyrs in the cause of catholicity. (2)

But the candidature of a man like Martin, with the additional factor of clerical neutrality, provided no such an easy target for liberal polemic as that of a King Harman. The Mail welcomed the opportunity of providing:

an additional test for the sincerity of those who, like the Freeman's Journal, have made use of the nationalist ardour of the people for the accomplishment of purposes of their own, of a totally different character. (3)

An energetic campaign resulted in the return of Martin by 1028 votes to his opponent's 642.

The Meath result was the first indication that the new movement would have to be taken seriously. It came as a

1 Sullivan, New Ireland, 14th ed., p. 347.  
 2 Freeman's Journal, 2 Jan. 1871.  
 3 Dublin Evening Mail, 2 Jan.

complete surprise to the liberals. 'An event full of instruction', commented the English Daily News: 'the nationalists are more powerful than the ultramontanes'.<sup>(1)</sup> The result induced the Freeman to offer by far the most sympathetic comment upon the new movement that had yet appeared in its columns. Mr. Martin's victory, it said, was contrary to all expectations;

It can be accounted for in one way only. Mr. Martin is a sincere nationalist, an earnest repealer, and the Irish people have arrived at the conclusion that the policy of all English parties is to make such concessions only as may conduce to party power - to make none to the nation in deference to its will, and to stamp out the last vestiges of nationality. The Meath election is a great fact. It may eventuate in nothing important, but even should it be so, it is still a great fact. It may, however, prove to be the beginning of the end. <sup>(2)</sup>

The Nation expressed the same truth more brutally: 'Henceforth the spell-word of self-rule must be the open Sesame to the constituencies.'<sup>(3)</sup>

All these comments were fully justified. The Meath result had two lessons to offer. It had been possible to win it, while it had not been possible to win before, because the candidate was no new and suspect convert to nationality, but a respected repealer, holding opinions from which he had never deviated in a long career. Furthermore, it showed that however sceptical the liberals might be of the sincerity of the orange nationalists of the Home Government Association, the home rule demand as such was fully capable of capturing the imagination of the electorate. The first lesson suggested that the home rulers might be well advised to adopt a new approach to their choice of candidates; the second suggested to ambitious

1 Daily News, 9 Jan. 1871

2 Freeman's Journal, 6 Jan.

3 Nation, 14 Jan.

liberals and to priests fearful of losing all influence in their constituencies, that it might be necessary to adopt a more friendly attitude to home rule. Both conclusions pointed to a greater liberalisation of the movement.

Further evidence of the growing popularity of the home rule demand was soon forthcoming. In January the Farmers' Clubs of Munster declared for home rule, and the Queen's County Independent Club, after a long debate, followed suit, Father O'Keefe and Father O'Shea speaking for the movement despite the opposition of the Reverend Dr. Magee, P.P. Stradbally. (1) In February the great archbishop of Tuam, Dr. MacHale, publicly welcomed the Meath result. (2)

But all this support was for the principle of home rule, not for the Home Government Association. Kenelm Digby, M.P. for Queen's County, wrote to Richard Lalor, president of the Independent Club, concurring in the club's approval of home rule, but expressing at the same time his lack of confidence in the Home Government Association. (3)

Lalor agreed:

We had five or six C.C.'s but they took no very prominent part. As to the catholic clergy in this county, I think the case stands thus. The bishop and most of the parish priests of Kildare and Leighlin are not in favour of the agitation - but those of Ossory are - and the former must follow, not lead, their flocks in this matter. Your opinion of the "Home Rule Association" appears to agree with the majority of the people in this county - There is no confidence in many of its most prominent members. (4)

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1 Nation, 21 Jan. 1871. See Chapter III, pp. , for Dr. Magee's part in the 1868 election.  
2 ibid, 4 Feb.  
3 Digby to Lalor, 14 Jan., Lalor MSS, 8566.  
4 Lalor to Digby, 19 Jan., ibid.

He goes on to suggest the abandonment of the association and the establishment of a new body led by Digby, George Bryan, M.P. for Kilkenny County, Edmund Dease, M.P. for Queen's County, Lord Bellew, John Martin, Philip Callan, and others who might be able to command more general approval. In June a public controversy between Butt and P. J. Smyth developed on this theme. Smyth called for the abandonment of federalism in favour of a simple demand for legislative independence, and the establishment of a popular movement to which all who were prepared to pay the subscription would be admitted, without, as was necessary in the Home Government Association, the prior approval of the governing executive.<sup>(1)</sup> Butt replied that the association had never been intended to take the place of a popular organisation, the establishment of which it was premature to consider:

If the public voice or the exigencies of the national cause require, sooner or later, a reconstruction of the Home Government Association, there is not, I am sure, among its members a single one who will not cheerfully assent....<sup>(2)</sup>

This ambivalence between popular support for home rule and popular distrust for the reputed toryism of the association was to endure for the remainder of that body's life. But the liberalisation of the popular movement continued with each successive by-election. In February Mitchell Henry was returned unopposed for Galway County. The choice had lain between three candidates, Captain J. P. Nolan, Hyacinth D'Arcy, and Henry, all of whom had included some kind

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1 Nation, 10 June 1871.  
 2 ibid.

of endorsement of home rule in their election addresses. The other two were catholics, and of them Nolan had the greater degree of clerical support, but Henry had unrivalled claims as the economic benefactor of the whole Connemara region. (1) The fruits of home rule's increasing popularity were evident in this election; it was the first in which the contest was between candidates of otherwise orthodox liberality all of whom had found it necessary to incorporate home rule in their platforms. Henry, a former Liberal candidate for Manchester, whose candidature actually possessed the benevolent interest of William Monsell, (2) announced he was 'of liberal politics', and addressed the electors in support of denominational education, the maintenance inviolate of 'the dignity and independence of the Pope', and home legislation. The Freeman's Journal preferred Nolan, who demanded a charter for a catholic university and whose views on the Papal question were more decidedly for restoration; (3) the Irish Times preferred Henry, no doubt for the same reason. (4) The Dublin Evening Mail, significantly, disliked both candidates,

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1 Where he had built Kylemore Castle, spent vast amounts on land reclamation, schools, etc., and given employment and security to the peasantry. He was invited to stand by Father O'Malley of Westport as early as 1867 but declined because of his English election commitments (Henry to O'Malley, 23 Feb. 1867, J.F.X. O'Brien MSS). He was not, however, returned over Nolan without a certain amount of clerical reluctance; the Reverend Father Conway called for a basin of water and ceremonially washed his hands of the nomination proceedings. (Dublin Evening Mail, 22 Feb. 1871)

2 Dr. McEvilly to Monsell, 1 Mar. 1871, Monsell MSS, 8318.

3 Freeman's Journal, 10 Feb. 1871. The issue of the temporal power of the Papacy loomed quite large in Irish politics at this time.

4 ibid., 7, 14 Feb.; Nation, 18 Feb.

5 Irish Times, 11 Feb.

not for their acceptance of home rule, but for the unmistakably liberal character of their other pronouncements. In the end it welcomed the return of Henry as opposed to 'the ultramontane candidate'.<sup>(1)</sup>

If the Galway County election demonstrated how popular feeling was compelling an amalgamation of liberal policies with home rule on the hustings, the Westmeath contest in June showed how the same pressure was compelling the clergy similarly to rethink their position. Three candidates competed for the seat, P. J. Smyth, Sir John Ennis, and

J. A. Dease.<sup>(2)</sup> The nationalist was presented with a tremendous asset with the passage just before the election of a coercion act with special provisions for the pacification of Westmeath. The bishop, Dr. Nulty, and the clergy resolved to examine the prospective candidates and to select one of them for approval, in order to avoid the turmoil of a contest. Dease arrived in the county early in June, and immediately wrote to William Monsell that he had not 'a ghost of a chance', as 'the fenian element' had decided to start P. J. Smyth; as for the clergy, his own parish priest told him that they would be 'afraid not to go with the popular demand'.<sup>(3)</sup> The clergy held their examination on 13 June<sup>3</sup> in Mullingar. Dease described the

meeting to Monsell:

I was put through my catechism by Dr. Nulty in the presence of some 40 "sacreds"....I have reason to know that the Bishop was personally strongly in my favour, as were the real sympathies of all the P.P.'s and several of the C.C.'s as well. "Home

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1 Dublin Evening Mail, 22 Feb. 1871.

2 The last was a relative of Edmund Dease, MP for Queen's Co. He stood again in the celebrated Kerry by-election of 1872.

3 Dease to Monsell, 9 June 1871, Monsell MSS, 8317.

Rule" was the sole difficulty. Great efforts were made to induce me to swallow that pledge and I have some curious letters (that I may show you some time or other) from priests and from others in the clerical influence, urging me to declare for "Home Rule" (with any kind of mental reservation I pleased) and preferring as a reason for so doing that "the whole thing was a mere cry of the moment and would be forgotten before the next election.

A fierce debate, he believes, occurred at the end of the meeting, after the three candidates had been heard. Father Murray of Kilkenny attacked Smyth as a fenian; Smyth's close friend Father Barton replied sharply. 'There was a royal row; Murray refusing ever to sit at another conference with Barton unless he apologised - Eventually the Bishop made him do so.' The parish priests, according to Dease, took little part in the discussions, being mostly anti-Smyth.

Nothing could exceed the personal courtesy I met with from the whole meeting - but the result was a declaration that they would support Smyth. One thing I am sure of - that Dr. Nulty and many of the priests - tho' they concur in this course, do so with bitter shame. The bishop told me privately in so many words that "they were afraid to oppose the popular feeling that would be evoked".... "That in those parishes in Meath where the priests worked hard (and very few they were, by the way) for George Plunkett, an antagonism has arisen between the.....(priests and people). (1)

Allowing for Dease's probable desire to find excuses for his failure, his account of the clerical attitude in this election is still full of significance. In Longford and in Dublin they had been prepared to oppose the nationalist demand and sustain the liberal; in Meath they had remained

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1 The manuscript is incomplete. Dease to Monsell, 14 June 1871, and Dease to E. Dease, 15 June 1871, Monsell MSS, 8317



neutral; in Galway they had accepted one liberal home ruler more or less reluctantly over another; in Westmeath they endorsed the popular candidate. As Smyth had addressed the electors for denominational education and home rule the Freeman's Journal, too, renounced Dease and gave its support to the home ruler.<sup>(1)</sup> The changing character of the movement was obvious, and although the Irish Times and the Mail welcomed the return of Smyth over the liberal as a man 'at all events, Irish and honest',<sup>(2)</sup> the position of the conservative 'anti-ultramontane' home ruler was becoming increasingly anomalous.

But if the reputation of Smyth as a '48 man and as a staunch defender of catholic claims made it difficult for the liberal clergy and the Freeman's Journal to oppose him, the Monaghan by-election immediately afterwards demonstrated that their hostility to the conservative home ruler was unabated. This contest fell into three stages, each of which illustrated strikingly the divided loyalties of the movement. On the death of the conservative C. P. Leslie, who had represented the county for twenty-nine years, the suggestion that Butt himself should go forward was widely canvassed in the popular press. 'The claims of every candidate must stand second to Mr. Butt', wrote the Freeman.<sup>(3)</sup> On 10 July, however, the Mail carried the address of John Madden on home rule

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1 Though as much as a demonstration against the coercion act as for home rule. Freeman's Journal, 14 June 1871.  
 2 Dublin Evening Mail, 15 June; Irish Times, 19 June  
 3 Freeman's Journal, 30 June.

principles; appended to it was an appeal signed by Martin, Sullivan, and Galbraith, and a number of other home rulers, calling upon the protestants not to vote for the conservative candidate John Leslie, younger brother of the late member, and on the catholics not to vote for the liberal H. Owen Lewis, who had already addressed the constituency for the ballot, denominational education, and the defence of the Pope. (1)

The refusal of Butt to stand, and the emergence of Madden, Leslie, and Lewis as the rival candidates, produced an immediate realignment of interests. Madden, although, unlike either Henry or Smyth, a member of the Home Government Association, (2) was a well-known orangeman, and his candidature revived all the catholic liberal hostility which had marked the first home rule contests. The Mail called for the return of either Madden or Leslie; (3) the Irish Times was prepared to give the home ruler enthusiastic support against both the other candidates; (4) the Freeman, however, while declaring its support for the principle of home rule and its readiness to sustain the candidature of Butt, could not bring itself to endorse Madden. 'Pending the achievement of home rule', it wrote, 'he goes into parliament, or we are deceived, as a full-blooded Orangeman.' (5) Faced with the coldness of the local conservatives, and the hostility of the catholics, Madden withdrew.

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1 Freeman's Journal, 6 July 1871; Nation, 15 July  
 2 Henry did not actually join the association until March 1873. (George Fottrell to Butt, 17 Mar. 1873, Butt MSS)  
 3 Dublin Evening Mail, 10 July.  
 4 Irish Times, 13 July.  
 5 Freeman's Journal, 11 July

On the withdrawal of Madden, and rather than allow the election to go uncontested, Butt at the last minute allowed his name to be put forward, and thus caused a final reshuffle of the different home rule elements. <sup>(1)</sup> The clergy, the liberals, and the Freeman dropped Lewis and supported Butt; <sup>(2)</sup> the Mail, on the other hand, declined to take Butt's last-minute intervention seriously. <sup>(3)</sup> The conservative home rulers, rebuffed by the abandonment of Madden, noted with disapproval that in what seemed to them defiance of his own maxim that home rule should not be associated with other controversies, Butt chose to fight the election mainly upon the issue of tenant-right. <sup>(4)</sup> In the poll Leslie was victorious by 2538 votes to 1451. The result was not in the circumstances a severe setback for home rule, but the contest itself had shown up all too clearly the internal contradictions in the movement.

But if the conservatives were becoming more sceptical, the liberals continued to become less reluctant. In July the Dublin Corporation agreed to receive a deputation from the Home Government Association to explain its principles to a special meeting of the corporation. <sup>(5)</sup> The council of the association chose the deputation with a special eye to the importance of the occasion. Martin suggested the choice of

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1 Captain Dunne, secretary of the H.G.A., was Butt's agent in this election, and in his book, Here and there memories, (1896) pp. 365-6, written under the pseudonym HRN, he has some amusing recollections of this improvised campaign.  
 2 Freeman's Journal, 18, 20, 21 July. So also did Madden.  
 3 Dublin Evening Mail, 18 July  
 4 Irish Times, 5 Sept.  
 5 Nation, 8 July

one protestant and two catholics - one a priest. But in the end a 'religious shamrock'<sup>(1)</sup> was decided upon; Martin, as the representative of presbyterian nationalism, Daunt, as the most eminent catholic survivor from the Repeal Association, and Galbraith, as one of the former conservatives in the association. At this special meeting Alderman Peter Paul MacSwiney, as a diehard catholic liberal, moved that the corporation should postpone taking any decision upon the question for six months; the new agitation, he said, fell short of O'Connellite repeal, and at the present time could only have the effect of deferring the settlement of the education question. But by a large majority the corporation<sup>(2)</sup> voted for immediate endorsement of the home rule demand. The Irish Times was approving but cautious; home rule, it said, would also have to gain the support of the landlords<sup>(3)</sup> by proving that it was not subversive of property. The Freeman's Journal, on the other hand, was now full of praise, and while understanding MacSwiney's motives, rejoiced that his motion had gained no support whatsoever.<sup>(4)</sup> In August another great liberal newspaper threw in its lot with the movement when J. F. Maguire, M.P. for Cork City and proprietor and editor of the Cork Examiner, one of the most influential of the catholic liberal members of parliament, abandoned his early suspicion of the association and was

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1 Martin to Daunt, 3 July 1871, Daunt MSS, 8047.  
 2 Freeman's Journal, 19, 21 July  
 3 Irish Times, 21 July  
 4 Freeman's Journal, 21 July.

admitted to membership. (1)

The growing disquiet of the conservatives at these developments was enhanced by the circumstances in which the home rule leader himself was finally returned to parliament for Limerick City in September 1871. Butt, who agreed to stand on the invitation of Callan, took little part in the campaign, remaining most of the time in Blackheath suffering, he explained, from 'nervous exhaustion, and quite unable to go to Limerick'; (2) rumour ascribed his disappearance to the activity of his creditors. (3) The campaign was conducted in his absence by his son Robert. The dissociation of the Dublin association from these by-election contests is strikingly illustrated by the fact that not even here, where its own leader was standing, was the support of the association given to his candidature. Butt had strongly disapproved of the council's endorsement of Smyth in Westmeath in June; (4) and now he wrote to Sullivan:

I have as you know a very strong feeling that the Home Rule Association as a body ought not to interfere at present in any election. I would not wish them to do it for me. But an independent committee would I think be of use as showing an interest in the election.... if John Martin went down spontaneously or as if by accident his presence for one evening would be of use.... (5)

No doubt by this advice, as by the refusal to affiliate local

1 Nation, 26 Aug. 1871.  
 2 Butt to Sullivan, undated, Butt MSS, Vol II, MS 831.  
 3 Freeman's Journal, 8 Sept.  
 4 Alfred Webb to Butt, 14 June, Butt MSS.  
 5 Butt to Sullivan, undated, Butt MSS, Vol II, MS 831.

associations, Butt hoped to maintain the programme of the association distinct from the views of its supporters as individuals. In practice it simply meant that the movement took its character from the hustings declarations of its members.

The Limerick election was the most decisive in this regard. Butt's candidature aroused great popular enthusiasm; John Daly recalls refusing to aid it, <sup>(1)</sup> but the popular nationalist sentiment was with Butt. W. H. O'Sullivan was one notable figure from the advanced party who worked on Butt's election committee, and in the opinion of one catholic liberal observer, the fenians put in Butt against the priests. <sup>(2)</sup> Torchlight meetings were held nightly outside his committee rooms, and the rumoured efforts of William Monsell and the bishop of Limerick, Dr. Butler to start a government candidate foundered upon the rock of overwhelming popular sentiment. <sup>(3)</sup> 'Such a proceeding would not alone end in utter defeat, but would split up for ever the liberal party in Limerick', wrote the Freeman's Journal. <sup>(4)</sup>

But it was the programme under which Butt chose to appeal to the electors of Limerick which above all increased the disquiet of the conservative home rulers. At the meeting in Limerick which formally adopted him he called for the

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1 Irish Freedom, September 1912.  
2 J. A. Dease to Monsell, 29 Sept. 1871, Monsell MSS, 8317.  
3 Nation, 2 Sept.; Irish Times, 6 Sept.  
4 Freeman's Journal, 6 Sept.

establishment of a catholic university, religious equality, and denominational education, in addition to restating his well-known radical views on tenant-right. <sup>(1)</sup> The Irish Times accused him of neglecting home rule for other issues again as in Monaghan, and suggested that 'the most conspicuous member of the Home Rule Association distrusts that principle as a popular card to play'. <sup>(2)</sup> Butt's promise to vote for a charter for a catholic university, wrote the Cork Constitution, 'a declaration which Mr. Gladstone himself is afraid to make, has produced the desired effect. The priests will rush to his standard, and he will remain their very obedient servant.' <sup>(3)</sup>

The circumstances of Butt's return, as leader of the original movement, brought into the open at last the issues which had been latent in the preceding by-elections, and for the first time conservative home rulers openly accused the leadership of the movement of having abandoned the pure home rule principles upon which it had been launched. Urging the creation of an Irish imperial party, the Mail criticised 'the proclamation of ultramontane views in conjunction with home rule on the Limerick hustings':

Must every Irish candidate henceforth be an ultramontane; or like Mr. Butt, if a home ruler, a home ruler pledged specifically to every dogma of the ultramontane creed? Must home rule itself be, as a principle, adulterated and destroyed, here by an ultramontane, there by a fenian ally?<sup>(4)</sup>

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1 Irish Times, 5 sept. 1871.  
 2 ibid.  
 3 Quoted in Dublin Evening Mail, 9 Sept.  
 4 ibid., 12 sept.

'Federalism as a patriotic sentiment', it repeated a few days later. 'is a reaction from ultramontaniam, ...' but 'the attempt to mix up Home Rule with ultramontaniam is on foot already.' (1)

Meanwhile further affronts were offered to the conservatives. In Galway County a second by-election was impending; (2) the priests and the home rulers combined on this occasion to support Captain Nolan, who since the previous election had accepted an arbitration award restoring a number of his evicted tenants to their holdings. (3) He was regarded by the landlords as a symbol of agrarian revolution, and the struggle which followed was as much upon the issue of the application of the compensation principles of the land act as upon the subject of home rule. Whig and tory landlords, the Clanricardes and the Clancartys, combined to oppose the clerical, tenant-right - and home rule - candidate. (4) Lord Westmeath, one of the leading catholic peers in Ireland, wrote to Lord Creville:

Mr. Trench has been almost unanimously selected by the gentlemen, as we would rather see the Queen and Mr. Gladstone at the head of affairs than Odger, or Butt, or Martin. (5)

And in October, the Nation, which at this time was regarded as almost the official home rule journal, formally endorsed the declaration of the catholic hierarchy pledging themselves to oppose any candidate in future elections who would not promise to support the demand for denominational education. (6)

1 Dublin Evening Mail, 19 Sept. 1871  
2 To replace W.H. Gregory, who took place as Governor of Ceylon.  
3 He was compelled to do this to rehabilitate himself politically; his record as an evictor had weighed strongly against him in the previous Galway by-election.  
4 Nation, 7, 14 Oct.  
5 Westmeath to Creville, 23 Dec. 1871, Creville-Nugent MSS,  
6 Nation, 23 Oct., 4 Nov. 8239.



Conservative hostility to these developments was carried an important stage further with the defection from the movement in October 1871 of the Irish Times, whose proprietor, Major Knox, it will be remembered, had been one of the founders of the association, and in whose columns the new conservative nationalism had found its most coherent expression. Pointing to the remoteness of the association from the country it wrote:

It may seem like a paradox, but the fact is plain and palpable, that while home rule is in everybody's mouth, and while thinking men and sincere patriots in every part of the country are casting about in all directions to try and discover such a reconstitution of Ireland's relations with England as may be compatible with the welfare of both, that same Irish public takes hardly the most languid interest in the sayings and doings of the little home rule conclave in Great Brunswick Street. The subscriptions of its members hardly amount, we believe, to some £4 or £5 a week...its funds are so ill-replenished that it cannot afford to hire a good-sized room for its public meetings.

The explanation which the Irish Times gave for this state of affairs was quite simple; the movement had been 'appropriated by persons who for one reason or another were unable to command public confidence'.

We gladly admit that the original list of members contained a certain number of respectable names, but it is a matter of common observation that the attendance of these gentlemen on the public and committee meetings has always been small, and has steadily declined.... (1)

Butt replied vigorously to the charge that the association was declining. (2) But the conservative critics were right on one essential point: the character of the movement had radically changed in the eighteen months since it was first launched. It was not true that the movement had been

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1 Irish Times, 31 Oct. 1871; also 17 Oct., 6 Nov.  
 2 Nation, 28 Oct.

appropriated by persons unable to command the confidence of the country - if anything the reverse was the case: they were better able to command it than the conservative home rulers. But the idea of a united non-party home rule demand, completely dissociated from every other popular aspiration, was collapsing under the pressure of practical politics, and home rulers throughout the country were increasingly also the spokesmen of tenant-right and denominational education. Sir John Barrington was one of the conservative founders of the association who withdrew from it about this time, and in later years he recalled his motives for doing so in language that betrays the shallowness of much of that conservative nationalism:-

They, as honest Irishmen, and wishing for the benefit of the city of Dublin, and Ireland generally, thought that if there was a combined movement made at the time - combining parties of all politics, going for one common object - to check the great expenditure of money that took place in London, dragging their aristocracy over there, and their lawyers over there to carry bills, and, as it were, dragging the vitals out of the country, and if they could manage by any effort of theirs to induce any representative of the royal family to come over, and occupy a residence in Ireland, they thought they would be achieving a great object. He was thoroughly loyal in that, and adhered to those principles still. But what was the consequence? As soon as the Repeal party and the agitating party found that this question was taken up by a body of gentlemen, they said, "We will league ourselves with them and make capital out of it for our own ends." He watched the ship as it rocked upon the waves of fortune, and the principles of home rule of that day lasted one year and six months. After that he saw the element of discord coming in. He saw principles inculcated and disseminated at these meetings that no loyal man could subscribe to, and he at once, with a number of other gentlemen who had joined with him in supporting what they considered a moderate system, when they found that this was emasculated and turned into another system, they withdrew from it, and now there was not a single conservative but his honest friend, Mr. Galbraith, who belonged to that home rule. (1)

The following year, 1872, saw the continuance of these trends, with home rule drawing further away from the conservative position, but gaining steadily in popular support. Six by-elections were fought by home rule candidates, in Kerry, Galway County, Wexford Borough, Mallow, Londonderry City, and Cork City. Of these the Wexford election, in which W. A. Redmond was returned in place of R. J. Devereux, was the only one in which no contest took place. In each of the others there was a vigorous struggle, and each in its different way throws light upon the strength and the weaknesses of the home rule agitation.

The Kerry and Galway elections both took place in February of 1872, and these two bitterly fought home rule victories are usually classed together as signs of the progress of the movement. But while this similarity they certainly shared, and although the Home Government Association upon this occasion called upon both counties to sustain the home rule candidates, the two contests in reality represented totally different phases of the home rule struggle.

In Kerry the home rule candidate was a young protestant fresh from Oxford, Rowland Ponsonby Blennerhassett. Blennerhassett's candidature was bitterly denounced by the local bishop, Dr. Moriarty, who supported his catholic liberal opponent J. A. Dease, the same who had been rejected in Westmeath the previous June. In a letter published early in January, Dr. Moriarty condemned the home rule agitation as

'in the present circumstances of the country, one of the most mischievous movements to which you have been ever urged or excited.' The most convinced unionist among the hierarchy, he appealed to the electors to adhere to Gladstone and to reject the leaders of the Home Government Association.

Amongst them are some of those who, a few years ago, sought to plunge you into a rebellion, which ended in shame before it had time to end in slaughter. They are the men who would have become what the commune in Paris became.... They are now acting under cover - under the disguise of a constitutional agitation. Do not trust them.

A few of the leaders are favouring this agitation in order to embarrass the present government. They wish to take revenge for the disestablishment of the protestant church - for the equality to which Mr. Gladstone's government has raised you. As soon as a Tory government comes in there will be an end of "Home Rule" for them....

After going wrong for seven hundred years in its rule of Ireland, the imperial government for the first time goes right; and, no sooner does it begin to serve you with a will and a power, which without it you could not command, than you rise up and bid it stop, that you will have no more of it.

We would humbly pray you to wait a little - let us have a few more good measures from the imperial parliament before we part with it; before we try this future parliament of yours, of which we know neither the constitution nor the spirit.

He also expresses the specific fear which underlay much of the catholic liberal opposition to the home rule agitation that Gladstone might feel released by it from his responsibilities in reference to education. (1) The utmost exertions were made on both sides in the contest which followed. Dr. Moriarty put heavy pressure on the priests to sustain Dease's candidature, and the majority of the landlords were also active on his behalf, his chief financial backer, the

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1 Dublin Evening Mail, 11 Jan. 1872.

Earl of Kenmare, spending in the region of £6000 on the contest.<sup>(1)</sup> Blennerhassett, for his part, described his outlay as 'enormous',<sup>(2)</sup> and Sullivan, Galbraith, and John Blunden came down from Dublin to stump the county for home rule.<sup>(3)</sup>

In Kerry the issue was that of the first contests in 1870 - catholic whiggery versus home rule, or as one priest put it, 'A catholic and no souper for north Kerry'.<sup>(4)</sup>

Cardinal Cullen wrote to Moriarty endorsing his support for Dease.<sup>(5)</sup> The intervention of Moriarty also revived many of the qualms of the liberal home rulers. The Nation of course supported Blennerhassett,<sup>(6)</sup>

and the Irish Times and the Mail were sympathetic;<sup>(7)</sup> the Freeman, however, rediscovered the unwisdom of opposing the clergy. There was no doubt that the document expresses the sentiments of the vast body of the Irish prelates and clergy - nay, more, that it also embodies the views of a large and influential section of the Irish laity; a section which up to this has been the strength of Irish liberalism and to whose public spirit and energy Ireland owes many a much-needed reform.

But it reminded the clergy that unlike Martin, who advocated total abstention at Westminster upon all questions but home rule, Butt at least was prepared to work for and to accept

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1 S. de Vere to Monsell, 22 Feb. 1872, Monsell MSS, 8317.  
 2 Blennerhassett to Butt, 18 Jan. 1873, Butt MSS. £5000, according to Nation, 1 Feb. 1873.  
 3 Dublin Evening Mail, 26 Jan. 1872  
 4 Canon McDonnell to Moriarty, 7 Jan., Monsell MSS, 8629.  
 5 Cullen to Moriarty, 5 Jan., Monsell MSS, 8629.  
 6 Nation, 20 Jan.  
 7 Irish Times, 10 Feb.; Dublin Evening Mail, 10 Feb.

interim reforms. (1)

But the most striking thing about Dr. Moriarty's intervention in the Kerry contest was its failure not only to influence the result but even to carry with him the rest of the clergy. Dr. McEvilly, bishop of Galway, declined to intervene in the contest:

We have so much hard work on hands to keep out a tory of the deepest dye.... that nothing can induce me to write a word or do an act politically that has not reference to the Galway election in which we must not be beaten. (2)

Dr. Delany, bishop of Cork, could not accept Moriarty's view of the home rule movement:

The object of the present agitation differs from fenianism, it is not criminal in the eyes of religion as to its object or means.... I would not wonder if we obtained something, such as a national grand jury for Irish affairs. Mr. Gladstone seemed to me to intimate obscurely such a thing in his Glasgow speech. As far as I can understand the rational portion of the present nationalist men don't contemplate much more. We need not have or fear serious impiety. (3)

1 Freeman's Journal, 12 Jan. 1872. It was, of course, precisely this attitude of Butt's which alienated the conservatives: 'He goes to the House of Commons not to take the high position adopted once by Mr. Smith O'Brien and revived by Mr. Martin - of looking to nothing and for nothing but repeal. He will take, and seek for, instalments - such as the measure, for example, which the bishops propose, and which he assumes, without any sufficient warrant, that the Irish people approve and desire.' (Dublin Evening Mail, 11 Jan. 1872.)

2 MacEvilly to Moriarty, 19 Jan., Monsell MSS, 8319.

3 Delany to Moriarty, 10 Jan., Monsell MSS, 8319.

Moriarty to Delany, 10 Jan., Monsell MSS, 8319.

1 Delany to Moriarty, 10 Jan., Monsell MSS, 8319.

2 Moriarty to Delany, 7 Jan., Monsell MSS, 8319.

3 Delany to Moriarty, 10 Jan., Monsell MSS, 8319.

4 Moriarty to Delany, 10 Jan., Monsell MSS, 8319.

5 Moriarty to Delany, 10 Jan., Monsell MSS, 8319.

Even among the parish clergy of Kerry, the episcopal condemnation of home rule was by no means universally accepted. Father Bourke, P.P. Marher and Knockaure, wrote to Canon McDonnell, P.P. Listowel, one of the most active of the pro-Dease priests, declining to allow his name to be put on Dease's committee, 'as I could not go against the people here, who are all the other way.' His curate, Father Harrington, also refused. (1) 'If the Devil from Hell were to publish Blennerhassett's address he would adopt him', (2) declared another priest. Father McCarthy of Ballyheigue was reported as having told his parishioners 'that where a vote was concerned they were not to mind "landlord, priest, bishop, or even the Pope himself"'. (3) At the nomination Blennerhassett was proposed by the Reverend Father O'Donoghue, P.P. Ardfert, an act of defiance for which that priest was subsequently 'disciplined' by Dr. Moriarty. (4) The election was bitterly and violently fought; Dease was compelled to retire to bed for some days in the middle of the campaign to nurse the wounds inflicted upon him by the electors of Castleisland. (5) In the poll Blennerhassett was victorious by 2237 votes to 1398 for Dease. 'The revolutionists aided with most shameful activity by the Priests have scourged the party of order along the whole line in Kerry', wrote Canon McDonnell to Moriarty. (6)

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1 Bourke to MacDonnell, 6 Jan. 1872, Monsell MSS, 8319.  
 2 MacDonnell to Moriarty, 7 Jan., Monsell MSS, 8319.  
 3 James Cr... to Moriarty, 24 Jan., Monsell MSS, 8319.  
 4 Daunt Journal, 10, 24 Feb., MS 3041.  
 5 Dease to Knight of Kerry, 16 Jan., Knight of Kerry MSS, 5950.  
 6 MacDonnell to Moriarty, 15 Feb., Monsell MSS, 8319.

The Kerry victory more than any of the other by-elections revealed the strength of the popular desire for home rule, and forecast many more triumphs for home rule candidates, wrote the Irish Times;

The general election which must ensue on the ballot becoming law will certainly issue in the return of a number of home rulers sufficient, very possibly, to hold the balance of power in the house of commons.... (1)

'The most singular triumph yet achieved by the national cause', exclaimed the Freeman's Journal, hurriedly scrambling back on to the bandwaggon;

In Kerry, as in Galway, an unholy alliance was consummated between the liberal and tory landlords, which, we regret to say, received the sanction and active support of the venerable bishop of the diocese of Kerry....Galway, we always felt, would return Captain Nolan, the Home Ruler who fought under the banner inscribed "Restoration". But Kerry we trembled for, feared for, and hardly dared to hope for. (2)

The Freeman was never notable for its courage, but the accuracy of its observation in this instance cannot be faulted. Kerry was essentially the home rule victory, the greatest which the movement had yet won, Blennerhasset, young, protestant, untried and not particularly remarkable, had triumphed over a massive clerical-liberal alliance by the simple fact of popular feeling for home rule.

In Galway, on the other hand, Nolan was as much the symbol of tenant-right as of home rule, and he had for his opponent a conservative, E. le Poer Trench, instead of a catholic liberal. Clerical support in this contest was even

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1 Irish Times, 10 Feb. 1872.  
2 Freeman's Journal, 10 Feb.



more energetically and unanimously exerted on behalf of Nolan than it was for Dease in Kerry. The victory added little to home rule as such. But if Kerry was the more striking home rule victory, Galway had an individual significance of its own. The very success of Blennerhassett made the repetition of such head-on conflicts with the church increasingly unlikely, and Nolan is much more typical of the home rule member of the future. The association of home rule with victories such as that in Galway further widened the rift between the movement and the conservatives and identified it with the tenant and education parties. The result was followed by an immediate petition on the grounds of improper clerical influence, and at the end of May, after a lengthy trial, Judge Keogh in a celebrated judgment declared Nolan unseated. <sup>(1)</sup> The conservatives were jubilant, <sup>(2)</sup> and the justice of the decision was admitted by many liberal catholics.

J. A. Dease wrote to Monsell:

our difficulty was this - that we fully coincided in Keogh's opinion that the unseating of Nolan was just - as also was his reprobation of the violence of the clergy during the Election. <sup>(3)</sup>

Unfortunately Keogh took the opportunity to deliver an attack upon the catholic clergy, their manners, education, and morality, couched in language of such personal viciousness as to cast serious doubts upon the sanity of its author. Furious popular feeling forgot the merits of the election petition; the

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1 Dublin Evening Mail, 28 May 1872.  
 2 ibid.  
 3 Dease to Monsell, 25 Aug. 1872, Monsell MSS, 8317.

judge was burnt in effigy throughout Ireland, and local home rule branches joined in passing resolutions of condemnation. The O'Donoghue and other liberals gave notice of their intention to pursue the question in the house of commons, and rather than be swept aside by the popular feeling, Butt was compelled to undertake the leadership of the campaign in parliament. (1) When the judgment further resulted in the prosecution by the state of one bishop, Dr. Duggan of Clonfert, and twenty-three priests, Butt accepted the brief for the defence. The Keogh controversy aroused old religious animosities to a higher pitch of excitement than at any time since the disestablishment campaign, and upon the issue of the home rulers participation in the attack on Keogh, Laurence King Harman, another of the conservative founders of the movement, resigned from the Home Government Association. (2)

Home rule candidates had now contested eight by-elections since the beginning of 1871, and had won six of them. (3) With its original parliamentary supporters, Shaw, Callan, and Browne, and the support of other sitting members such as Gray and Maguire, the movement was beginning to accumulate a sizeable parliamentary force, and already the problem of parliamentary policy was coming to the fore. But before considering this question, some reference must be made to the three further by-elections which were contested by the

1 Henry to Butt, 7, 20 June 1872, Butt MSS. He did so with an extreme moderation which did not satisfy his more incensed supporters (Hansard 3rd Series, cccxi, 1763-83; Nation, 3 Aug.; Irish Times, 26 July.

2 Nation, 10 Aug.

3 But of these Nolan was unseated, and by a subsequent decision of the Court of common pleas, his opponent Trench was given the seat, although beaten by 2823 votes to 658. (Dublin Evening Mail, 11 June).

home rulers in 1872. None of these contests was as spectacular as those in Galway and Kerry, but each was of considerable importance within the association itself.

In the first of these by-elections, in Mallow in June, the home rule candidate, J. G. MacCarthy, was defeated by his wealthy liberal opponent, W. F. Munster, by a margin of 91 votes to 78. The actual result in this tiny borough was not of any great significance, but the contest showed up once again the futility and disunion of the Home Government Association. MacCarthy was a Cork solicitor who has written an able pamphlet in favour of home rule, <sup>(1)</sup> and who was warmly supported in Mallow by the local parish priest. <sup>(2)</sup> He was, however, intensely unpopular with the advanced party, among whom he had the reputation, apparently undeserved, of having given information against O'Donovan Rossa. <sup>(3)</sup> The Home Government Association had still not arrived at any permanent policy in regard to by-election contests. At first it endorsed MacCarthy's candidature and arranged to send a deputation to Mallow to support him. <sup>(4)</sup> Butt, however, was still reluctant to take part in such contests, and receiving reports of MacCarthy's unpopularity with the advanced party from his close friend D. A. Nagle, editor of the Cork Herald, a fierce critic of MacCarthy, <sup>(5)</sup> he appears to have reopened the

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1 A plea for the home government of Ireland, 2nd ed., Dublin, 1872.  
2 Nation, 1 June 1872.  
3 ibid. He seems to have been called as a witness to identify Rossa's handwriting.  
4 McCarthy to Daunt, 24 May, Daunt MSS, 8047.  
5 Who, in turn, regarded Nagle as a 'rascal': (McCarthy to Daunt, 1 Mar. 1873, Daunt MSS, 8047.)

question in the association. The council decided not to carry out its original resolution. (1) Galbraith, Martin, and Sullivan appear to have supported MacCarthy, (2) but reports of a deputation being sent from Cork to break up his meetings confirmed Butt in his reluctance to intervene. (3) Daunt supported MacCarthy's candidature in a letter to the press; Martin, Maguire, and Sullivan went down to Mallow to canvass for him; (4) the Nation and the Freeman's Journal also wrote on his behalf. (5) But Nagle wrote to Butt agreeing that the association had acted prematurely in the first instance, and that a reorganisation of it was overdue. (6)

If MacCarthy had the support of the middle-class home rulers and the hostility of the advanced party, the candidates in the other two by-elections which were fought later in the year represented precisely the opposite case. Yet each contest pointed to the same conclusion - the need for a more consistent and active central direction of the movement. These two by-elections, which occurred in Londonderry City and in Cork City, were remarkable in the first place as the first contests in Ireland conducted by secret ballot, and they were watched with especial interest on account of this novelty. The ballot had been variously estimated as likely to ensure the triumph of the nationalists by ending the power of the landlords, and,

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1 Nagle to Butt, 20 May, Butt MSS; McCarthy to Daunt, 20, 24 May, Daunt MSS, 8047.  
 2 McCarthy to Daunt, 20 May, Daunt MSS, 8047, Galbraith to Daunt, 31 May, Butt MSS, Vol iii, MS 832.  
 3 Nagle to Butt, 19, 20 May, Butt MSS.  
 4 Nation, 1 June  
 5 ibid.  
 6 Nagle to Butt, 20 May, Butt MSS.

conversely, as likely to ensure the triumph of conservatism by ending the rule of the priests and of the mob. In both constituencies home rule candidates were immediately put forward. In Londonderry J. G. Biggar, then president of the Belfast Home Rule Association, was early in the field, and secured the support of the local home rulers, who formally launched their own home rule organisation in September at a large meeting which was addressed by Martin, Galbraith, and Sullivan. (1) Conservatives hopes were centred upon C. E. Lewis, a London lawyer, who was not himself a strong candidate, but who could count on the full influence of the Hamilton's, eager to reverse the defeat which they had so unexpectedly sustained in the general election. (2) The vacancy had been created by the elevation to the bench of the attorney-general, Richard Dowse, and the liberal candidate was Dowse's newly appointed successor in that office, Christopher Palles. Upon Palles, himself a catholic, now devolved the duty of conducting the long-deferred clerical prosecutions consequent upon the Galway petition judgement, a circumstance which the nationalists exploited to the full in an effort to win catholic support away from the government. (3) The advanced party were naturally particularly active in the cause of Biggar; John Ferguson, one of their most vigorous spokesmen in the home rule movement, and

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1 Nation, 21 Sept. 1872.  
 2 Dublin Evening Mail, 25 Nov.  
 3 Nation, 16 Nov.

(1)

a member of the council of the Home Government Association, came over from Glasgow specially to organise his campaign. Three hundred electors had chosen Biggar, he wrote to Butt in August: five hundred and twenty were needed to elect him, and there were five hundred and ninety catholic voters. 'The Tories and the Whigs, Orange Hamiltonians and Gladstonian Presbyterians will divide nine hundred votes.' He appealed to Butt to attend the opening demonstration which the local home rulers were getting up: 'You know the association in Dublin is doing nothing and people begin to see it.'

(2)

Butt's answer was to explain, not for the last time, the difficulty which he found in devoting himself to home rule owing to the necessity to earn his living at the bar, and to threaten to withdraw from the leadership.

(3)

In October Ferguson again urged that the Home Government Association should take a more active part in constituency politics, and with the entry of Palles into the contest the appeals from Derry to Dublin became frantic, Ferguson expressing the belief that an address from Butt could ensure victory.

(4)

(5)

The determination of Palles to contest the vote altered the complexion of the contest:

We cannot win if he goes to the poll! Our hope is that as he has not the ghost of a chance he will retire.... We will fight hard but we must have some help from Dublin. The entire people are with us and a letter from you or from the Association would do good.

(6)

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1 Nation, 24 Aug. 1872.  
 2 Ferguson to Butt, 14 Aug., Butt MSS  
 3 Ferguson to Butt, 23 Aug., Butt MSS.  
 4 Ferguson to Butt, 2 Oct., Butt MSS.  
 5 Biggar to Butt, 26, 30 Oct.; Ferguson to Butt, 3 Nov. Butt MSS  
 6 Ferguson to Butt, 12 Nov., Butt MSS.

Any possibility of a home rule victory was finally destroyed in the last week of the campaign, when the bishop and clergy, who up to that time had remained neutral, threw their influence behind Palles. Catholic distrust of the Home Government Association, and fears for the fate of the education question, remained unallayed. In Dublin Cardinal Cullen was rumoured to be floating the idea of a Catholic Association as a rival to home rule; <sup>(1)</sup> asked at the outset of the campaign for his views on the education question, Biggar replied: 'The primary question at present is home rule. If you had home rule, Irishmen would then decide the question.' <sup>(2)</sup> The clergy swallowed their distaste for the prosecutor of the bishop of Clonfert, and rallied round the government candidate.

Ferguson wrote to Butt:   
 Derry. The priests have at last gone against us! If the bishop on Sunday helps them Palles may have a chance but Biggar will fight to keep him out. The game is changed we had it in our hands were you to charge on Monday we could win yet!.... I'm assured that you or even Sullivan could have the seat for home rule by going there even yet. <sup>(3)</sup>

Butt, however, was not to be precipitated into such a desperate enterprise. The poll resulted in a conservative victory and a humiliating defeat for home rule; Lewis gained 696 votes, Palles 522, and Biggar 89. Ferguson wrote to Butt:

But for the bishop and clergy 500 votes would have been for Biggar. The screw was put on for the last three days. The priests went from house to house and our very leaders had to give up Biggar and vote for "a good catholic".

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1 Nation, 28 Sept. 1872  
 2 Ibid. 31 Aug.  
 3 Ferguson to Butt, 14 Nov., Butt MSS. Also Daunt Journal, 23 Nov., MS 3041.

Ferguson also urged that the Home Government Association should pass a vote of thanks to the home rulers of Derry 'to turn aside the feeling against the "home rulers" for "losing the seat" as it is said, by showing that the best men in Ireland approve of the act!'

(1)

No such course seems to have been taken, and the Derry defeat left considerable dissatisfaction behind it among all parties in the movement. 'The Londonderry fiasco has had an injurious effect here', wrote Philip Callan, who had been watching events from the detachment of the Reform

(2)

Club. The Freeman, which had remained carefully aloof from the contest, reserved its main censure for the presbyterians who had refused to support a catholic liberal in Palles:

Biggar's hopeless candidature had only inflicted 'humiliation and injury' on the home rule cause. The Dublin Evening Mail,

(3)

probably with some justice, ascribed Palles's defeat to the refusal of the presbyterians to be associated with

(4)

denominational education; it might also have drawn a more significant conclusion from this contest - that home rule would achieve no success in Ulster except where it possessed a large body of catholic support. The presbyterians might vote liberal - they would not be induced to vote for home rule. Again the futility of Butt's efforts to woo protestant opinion seemed apparent. As for the advanced party, the election left them

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1 Ferguson to Butt, 25 Nov. 1872, Butt MSS.  
2 Callan to Butt, 12 Dec., Butt MSS.  
3 Freeman's Journal, 25 Nov.  
4 Dublin Evening Mail, 25 Nov.



with a feeling of having been let down, and long irritated by the eternal hesitancy of the Dublin association, they redoubled their demands for a thorough reorganisation of the movement.

But if the energy of the advanced men recoiled upon their heads in Derry in November, they were able to carry all before them in the contest which took place in Cork City immediately afterwards. The vacancy here was created by the death of J. F. Maguire, who it will be recalled had joined the Home Government Association in August of the previous year. A home rule victory was much more likely on paper than in Derry but the situation was complicated by the participation not only of a catholic liberal, J. C. Mathew, nephew of the famous temperance crusader,<sup>(1)</sup> but also of two rival home rule candidates, the mayor of Cork John Daly, who addressed the electors for home rule, denominational education, and amnesty, and Joseph Ronayne, 'the well-known nationalist, who makes no political professions, except that he is a believer in the undying right of Ireland to govern herself.'<sup>(2)</sup> Ronayne was a man of great ability and integrity, a distinguished engineer and the proprietor of the Cork-Macroon railway, a separatist rather than a federalist by instinct, who had championed amnesty against the whig programme in the 1868 election, and who possessed the enthusiastic support of the advanced party.

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1 Freeman's Journal, 5 Nov. 1872.

2 Nation, 9 Nov.

Daly was a liberal by background, and a more recent exponent of home rule principles, but he enjoyed the patronage of the clerical and liberal middle-class home rulers as against Ronayne's more popular following. The Nation supported Ronayne, but for men like whom, it reminded the electors, there would have been no nationalist movement for Daly to join; <sup>(1)</sup> the Freeman <sup>(2)</sup> favoured Daly. Daly was first in the field, and had strong claims for support, but it was remembered against him that he had declined to attend the amnesty demonstrations 'because he thought that these <sup>(3)</sup> assemblies were calculated to do more harm than good.' The farmers clubs and the artisans declared for Ronayne, and Daly was compelled to withdraw. Mathew having also withdrawn, the liberal home rulers and the clergy, faced with the alternative of a conservative victory, had to endorse Ronayne, a course in which they were followed by N. D. Murphy, the other sitting member for the city, who now for the first time gave in his support to home rule. Ronayne in return attested his loyalty to the principle of denominational <sup>(4)</sup> education. In the poll he defeated the conservative, J. E. Pim, by 1883 votes to 1110. But himself seems to have favoured Ronayne, with whom he was in constant communication, but the latter, unlike Ferguson in Derry, was sufficiently

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1 Nation, 16 Nov. 1872.  
 2 Freeman's Journal, 7, 12, 18 Nov.  
 3 ibid., 14 Nov.  
 4 ibid., 29 Nov.; Ronayne to Butt, 27, 29 Nov., Butt MSS.

confident of his position not to seek any public intervention by the association. <sup>(1)</sup> Mitchell Henry and Martin also welcomed Ronayne's return enthusiastically. <sup>(2)</sup> But the division in the home rule camp left its share of bitterness behind it, <sup>(3)</sup> a bitterness which was enhanced by a minor incident which followed upon the result. A banquet was arranged by Ronayne's committee in celebration of the victory, at which Butt was to have been the principal guest. Butt, however, was advised of the possibility that disorders might break out, and requested the cancellation of the function. The project was abandoned, but the advanced party resented <sup>(4)</sup> yet another apparent slight upon them.

The end of the year 1872 brought a period of stocktaking to the home rule movement. The Home Government Association had now been in existence for almost three years. Thirteen by-elections had been contested by home rule candidates, and of these eight had been won. With the seats thus gained, together with its supporters among the sitting members of parliament, home rule was already beginning to acquire an effective representation in the house of commons. But a number of serious deficiencies in its organisation had become increasingly apparent, and by the end of 1872 it was obvious that the time was fast arriving for that reconstruction

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1 Ronayne to Butt, 8 Nov. 1872, Butt MSS.  
 2 'We want vigorous educated men amongst us', wrote Henry to Butt, 9 Dec., Butt MSS; 'a man with the very character and qualities most needed in London for our cause', wrote Martin to Daunt, 16 Dec., Daunt MSS, 8047.  
 3 McCarthy to Daunt, 23 Nov., Daunt MSS, 8047.  
 4 J. Horgan to Butt, 16, 17, 19 Dec., Butt MSS.

of the Home Government Association so long envisaged by Butt and so long deferred. In Chapter X will be considered some of the causes which had rendered the association no longer equal to the task of directing the home rule movement, the crescendo of criticism which it had evoked from many of its leading supporters, the political circumstances which finally forced its abandonment, and the character of the organisation which was created in its place.

Initially possessed the support of three members of parliament: William Shaw, M.P. for Brandon, Philip Callan, M.P. for Londonderry, and George Skins Browne, M.P. for Mayo. This number was increased by each successive by-election victory and by the further recruitment of men like J. F. Hurwicz, M.P. for Cork City. There were also members of parliament like Sir John Omy, who although not members of the Home Government Association, might be expected to support the principle of home rule. But these members in no sense whatsoever comprised a separate party; they made no effort to adopt a common policy or line of action, and they entered the house of commons as individuals. John Martin was the most extreme example of this, advocating at that time what amounted to an abstentionist policy upon all issues but that of home rule; for the Irish M.P.'s, he felt, to co-operate with the English 'in matters of good, bad, or indifferent, for the governing of Ireland, positively retards and obstructs the national movement for

CHAPTER IX

Home rule in parliament - the Maguire-Butt incident of 1872.

Before considering the reorganisation of the home rule movement which took place in 1873, it is necessary to glance briefly at the one effort which was made before that time to raise the issue of Irish federalism at Westminster. It will be recalled that the Home Government Association had initially possessed the support of three members of parliament, William Shaw, M.P. for Bandon, Philip Callan, M.P. for Louth, and George Ekins Browne, M.P. for Mayo. This number was increased by each successive by-election victory and by the further recruitment of men like J. F. Maguire, M.P. for Cork City. There were also members of parliament like Sir John Gray, who although not members of the Home Government Association, might be expected to support the principle of home rule. But these members in no sense whatsoever comprised a separate party; they made no effort to adopt a common policy or line of action, and they entered the house of commons as individuals. John Martin was the most extreme example of this, advocating at that time what amounted to an abstentionist policy upon all issues but that of home rule; for the Irish M.P.'s, he felt, to co-operate with the English 'in making laws, good, bad, or indifferent, for the governing of Ireland, positively retards and obstructs the national movement for

Home-rule.' The policy which he favoured was one of  
 'ostentatious absenteeism'.<sup>(2)</sup> This view, moreover, he was fully  
 prepared to urge upon the nation in the public press.<sup>(3)</sup> Butt,  
 in complete contrast, was mainly preoccupied with endeavouring  
 to secure a redistribution of seats in Ireland.<sup>(4)</sup>

It was not, in any case, until 1872 that the home  
 rule movement had in practice a sufficient numerical  
 representation in parliament for the possibility to be  
 seriously considered of some united action to bring the Irish  
 demand before that assembly. Butt himself did not take his seat  
 until 20 March of that year, and then with the return of  
 Blennerhasset for Kerry, and the temporary tenure by Nolan  
 of the Galway seat, home rule could command the support of  
 from ten to fifteen members. Even then, however, Butt himself  
 was strongly averse to the invitation of such a crushing  
 defeat as would be inflicted upon a home rule motion  
 introduced by such a tiny parliamentary force. He urged  
 instead that a small number of Irish members, including some  
 like Pim who were not even home rulers, should assemble  
 informally and agree upon the parliamentary agitation of other  
 Irish grievances such as the reform of the franchise, state  
 purchase of the railways, land and grand jury reform, the  
 revival of the Irish fishing industry, and the repeal of the  
 convention act.<sup>(5)</sup> But it must be remembered that he spoke only  
 as president of the Home Government Association; he was not

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1 Martin to Daunt, 7 Apr. 1873, Daunt MSS, 8047.  
 2 Martin to John O'Leary, 23 June 1871, O'Leary MSS, 5926.  
 3 Nation, 16 Mar. 1872.  
 4 Ibid., 17 Aug., 1872.  
 5 Butt to Callan, 22 Nov. 1872, Butt MSS, Vol. i, MS 830.

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necessarily the leader of the home rule members in parliament or even of the movement as a whole in the country, and early in 1872 J. F. Maguire chose, in effect, to challenge Butt's right to decide upon this issue.

Maguire was a liberal by background, a onetime member of Gavan Duffy's Tenant League, and proprietor for many years of the Cork Examiner. During the 1868 election and for a considerable period afterwards this journal was one of Gladstone's most loyal supporters in Ireland; the foundation of the Home Government Association in 1870 it viewed with even less enthusiasm than the Freeman's Journal. In August 1871, however, Maguire joined the association, and at the end of the session he placed upon the order book of the house of commons a motion calling upon the house to go into committee, to take into consideration the expediency of instituting such a federal arrangement between the different portions of the United Kingdom as would enable Ireland, through an Irish parliament, to legislate upon all matters of a purely Irish nature, while reserving to the imperial parliament complete control over all questions of an imperial character. (1)

The placing of such a notice of motion upon the order book did not of course compel that it should be moved in the near future, if at all. But in March 1872 a report appeared in the Nation to the effect that 'the first step in the Parliamentary Home Rule campaign' had been taken with the convening on 6 March of a meeting of those home rule members who happened to be at Westminster at the time. Present were Martin, Henry, Smyth, Nolan, and R. P. Blennerhassett, all elected on the home rule platform, and three members elected as liberals in 1868, McCarthy Downing, M.P. for Cork County, Sir Rowland

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1 Nation, 26 Aug. 1871.

2 Ibid., 16 Mar. 1872.

Blennerhassett, M.P. for Galway City, and Maguire. This group decided to issue a circular calling another meeting on 9 April at the Westminster Palace Hotel to consider the expediency of bringing the home rule demand before parliament in that session. The names of eight members present at the first meeting, wrote the Nation, had been attached to the circular for the second, 'before the issue of which the signatures of Mr. Butt, Sir John Gray, Mr. Bryan, Mr. Callan, Mr. Browne, and several others will be added.'<sup>(1)</sup>

Butt, apparently, was not aware beforehand that this action was being taken. The prime mover in the plan was Maguire, and followers of Butt, sceptical of Maguire's sudden enthusiasm for home rule, were quick to question the sincerity of his motives. It was suggested that he sought to supplant Butt in the leadership of a reorganised and 'liberalised' agitation; it was even rumoured that he hoped to achieve some compromise local government settlement by direct negotiation with Gladstone.<sup>(2)</sup> But the actual suggestion of a home rule debate in parliament had a considerable amount of genuine support in the movement, and the association at one of its meetings had called for joint consultations upon the question among the home rule members.<sup>(3)</sup> Butt, however, remained implacably opposed to the project, and wrote at once to Maguire and the other home rule members deploring their precipitate action. Maguire defended himself vigorously:

All I know is this - that such members as happened to be in the house on the night in question met to consider what course it

1 Nation, 16 Mar. 1872.

2 Hugh Heinrich to Daunt, undated, Daunt MSS, 8046.

3 Nation, 20 Apr. 1872.



would be well to take in reference to the discussion or non-discussion of a Home Rule resolution during the present session. They did not intend to arrive themselves at any final decision, but intended that such decision should rest exclusively with the meeting to be hereafter convened. For nearly, or indeed fully two hours, the pros and cons of the matter were discussed, and at last it was resolved, on the motion of McCarthy Downing, that the meeting should be called by requisition - the requisition to be signed by as many favourable to home rule as could be conveniently come at. That requisition already has the following signatures, alphabetically arranged:

- Sir Rowland Blennerhassett,
- R. P. Blennerhassett,
- George Bryan,
- George Browne,
- McCarthy Downing,
- Mitchell Henry,
- J. F. Maguire,
- John Martin,
- Captain Nolan,
- Edward Synan,
- P. J. Smyth, and
- William Shaw.

This, you will see, is a very formidable list; and all these men sign as Home Rulers, and are in favour of discussion in the house this session. (1)

Maguire's list was certainly impressive, but is questionable how far the previously uncommitted members, Sir Rowland Blennerhassett, George Bryan, McCarthy Downing, and Edward Synan regarded themselves as bound to home rule. Blennerhassett was among those to whom Butt wrote at this time; he concurred in Butt's view that the decisions of the meeting and the steps which followed should not have been made public, and asked for more time to consider the question of his joining the Home

(2)  
Government Association. But many of the others were certainly sincere, Martin wrote to the press in April to urge

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1 Maguire to Butt, 14 Mar. 1872, Butt MSS. The two Blennerhassetts were cousins. (Dr. Moriarty to Monsell, 15 Jan. 1872, Monsell MSS, 831A.)  
 2 Blennerhassett to Butt, 14 Mar. 1872, Butt MSS.

(1)  
 the holding of a debate in parliament, and to Butt he expressed the opinion that Maguire was personally bound by his notice of motion to proceed even if not a single member were to follow him.

But I rather think that every member in London who has as yet adopted the home rule doctrine desires to have a debate. For one I feel that I have no business in Parliament at all except to advocate home rule and to denounce English rule. The constituencies, both those who have elected home rulers and those who have not yet had an opportunity to do so, desire a debate in parliament, will be encouraged by a debate, would be discouraged, disappointed, discontented, disgusted by our shrinking from a debate.... I don't know any argument at all on the other side. I trust you intend to have the debate. And as to the order of it, I hope you admit the wisdom of taking upon yourself the part of replying to Mr. Gladstone. Mr. Maguire having the notice of motion, and being right well qualified, may make the opening statement.... (2)

Richard Lalor of the Queen's County Independent Club wrote to Kenelm Digby, M.P. for Queen's County, expressing his satisfaction at the news of the projected meeting and the hope that a 'great Irish party' would be produced by it. (3) Even William Shaw, who was much less politically naive than Martin, and who was perfectly loyal to Butt's leadership, urged him to come over to Westminster and take some action to unite the home rule members.

Maguire and others have been at me several times about bringing on the home rule question before the House and he states he is urged to act by Martin and others on the other side of the water - some of whom threaten to denounce us to the country as betrayers of the cause if we don't bring it on. I agree generally with you that the subject will come with more effect before the house when the constituencies return a strong compact party pledged to the principles of federalism. Now we

1 Nation, 20 Apr. 1872.

2 Martin to Butt, 12 Apr., Butt MSS.

3 Lalor to Digby, 21 Mar., Lalor MSS, 8574.

are weak and divided... but this should be decided in some formal way and the decision and the grounds for it placed before the country. I wish you would think the matter over. Maguire was going to ballot for a place tomorrow but I have kept him back for a week. (1)

Butt, however, succeeded in getting his way. The projected meeting fell through, (2) and the Nation hastened to explain that while it still supported the principle of joint consultation among the home rule members, it could not approve of a meeting called 'we know not how or by whom', and clearly intended as a device to enable the sham home rulers to rescue their seats at the next election. (3) In May Judge Keogh ruled on the Galway petition, and the efforts to pass censure upon him in parliament took up the full energies of the Irish home rule members for the remainder of the session. In the beginning of November Maguire died, and so for a second time at a crucial stage in the agitation death opportunely removed a possible rival to Butt for the home rule leadership.

The incident of the home rule motion was thus largely sterile, but the mere fact that it could take place at all was an object lesson of the disunity and lack of direction of the home rule movement in this period, and the need for a complete reorganisation. It was a lesson complementary to those which had already been learnt in the constituencies. But it illustrates, as well, another important factor which must be borne in mind in considering the developments which followed

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1 Shaw to Butt, 16 Apr. 1872, Butt MSS.  
2 Kenelm Digby to Richard Lalor, 8 Apr., Lalor MSS, 8574.  
3 Nation, 20 Apr.

in the movement. There were, in 1872, both in parliament and throughout the country, important and influential Irish liberals who were coming to recognise, from motives of varying sincerity, the necessity of endorsing the home rule agitation which at first they had discountenanced, but who nevertheless still retained their original distrust of the Home Government Association and who owed no allegiance to its leader. Some of them had been driven to this new position by a genuine disillusionment with Gladstone; others were members of parliament elected in the Gladstonian landslide of 1868 eager for a new catchcry which would spirit them back to Westminster in the next election. Unless home rule was prepared to accept the responsibility of supplanting entirely the political generation of 1868 and the values which had given it power, a reconciliation with Irish liberalism would have to form a major part of any projected reorganisation of the Home Government Association.

CHAPTER X

The founding of the Home Rule League

The successive by-election victories which were won by the home rule candidates in the years 1871 and 1872 were striking demonstrations of the popularity of the home rule demand in the constituencies. But so far as the internal health of the movement was concerned, they demonstrated still more clearly the separation of the Home Government Association in Dublin from the spontaneous enthusiasm of the people. The home rule members who were returned in these by-elections went forward, canvassed, spoke, and were elected, as individuals. If they possessed the support of the home rule leaders, it too was given as the goodwill of individuals, not, as a rule, as endorsement by a formal organisation with the right to speak for the movement. Not all the candidates returned were even members of the association. As between rival candidates in any constituency it had no authority to intervene. Its attitude to the endorsement of candidates was incomprehensible even to its own supporters. <sup>(1)</sup> Here the cautious hand of Butt was the main influence at work. He succeeded, it will be recalled, in persuading the council of the association to abandon its endorsement of

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1 H. B. de Molines to Butt, 1 July 1872, Butt MSS.

MacCarthy in Mallow in June 1872; only his absence permitted the endorsement of Smyth in Westmeath in June 1871. 'I think very bad of your not approving of our resolution of Saturday:' wrote Alfred Webb, the treasurer of the association,

but the case was so plain and clear that if we are ever to aid a home rule candidate I think we should do it on this occasion.....Still, no matter how much my own reason approves it, I feel doubtful and uncomfortable in my mind when you think bad of it. (1)

The failure of the association to intervene in Mallow and in Derry in each case left a considerable legacy of bitterness behind it.

In fairness to Butt, however, it is proper to recall the strictly limited nature and aims of the original association. The association was launched at a time when constitutional nationalism had been dead in Ireland for many years, and Butt never ceased to remind its critics that its sole aim was to 'bring the question before the public mind', (2) and always he and his chief lieutenants recognised the ultimate necessity of a more ambitious reorganisation. (3)

But as the association went into its second and third year of life, and became increasingly an incubus rather than an inspiration upon the movement which it had created, the demands of its own supporters for such a

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1 Webb to Butt, 14 June 1871, Butt MSS.  
2 Nation, 28 Oct. 1871.  
3 ibid., 10 June 1871.

reorganisation became increasingly impatient. Branch associations were formed in different parts of the country, but only where the local people were moved themselves to undertake the task: there was no effort at national organisation until 1873. In Butt's own constituency of Limerick a home rule association was not founded until September 1872. <sup>(1)</sup> Moreover, these local associations were, as has been remarked above, connected in no formal way with the original body, which in its turn never seems to have got much past one thousand members. <sup>(2)</sup> The secretary of the association, Galbraith, made it clear that:

The Dublin Home Rule Association claims no authority, no precedence whatever, over the numerous Home Rule Associations which have sprung up in Ireland, England, and Scotland. The only precedence we ask for is that which naturally belongs to us - namely, that of seniority. <sup>(3)</sup>

In September 1871 Galbraith sought the advice of Butt and Daunt as to 'the best and legal course' to be permanently adopted towards these branches.

Some are for a grand central office here to receive money and govern all the local clubs and branches. I for my part think that that would be not only dangerous but impossible, the country is in a different condition from what it was in O'Connell's time and the people not so ready to submit, so much the better if they have sense enough to go on wisely. <sup>(4)</sup>

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1 Ellard to Butt, 4 Sept. 1872, Butt MSS.

2 Nation, 26 Oct. 1871. Its last meeting in December 1873 was attended by 1200 people, though it is not recorded if all of these were members (Galbraith to Daunt, 25 Dec. 1873, Butt MSS, Vol. iii, MS 832).

3 *ibid.*, 21 Sept. 1872.

4 Galbraith to Butt, 28 Sept. 1871, Butt MSS. Also Daunt Journal, 29 Sept., MS 3041, and T. M. Ray to Daunt, 30 Sept., Hickey MSS, PC 411.

People 111 The object of all this caution was, of course, the desire of Butt to preserve the home rule demand from contamination by popular excesses, and in this way to keep the support of sections of opinion, especially the landed aristocracy, who might be in violent opposition to the majority on every other political issue besides home rule. But in practice, as we have seen, this laudable ideal was never really achieved. Conservative participation in the movement, which was large at the outset only in proportion to the tiny scope of the association, not merely declined proportionately with the expansion of the movement, but was actually to a great extent withdrawn as the individual home rulers showed themselves even more dedicated than the original ogre of English Liberalism to the causes of land and educational reform. The main contribution of conservatism to home rule in this period seemed to many to be the alienation of the catholic majority.

It was in the light of this realisation that demands for the reorganisation of the association were strongly put forward as early as 1871. The lack of publicity and the parsimony of the association were criticised; <sup>(1)</sup> 'the smallness of support we are receiving is very discouraging', wrote Alfred Webb to Daunt, 'but we must only hold on and not let the people know we are discouraged.

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1 J. Ingoldsby to Butt, 4 Oct. 1871, Butt MSS.



People will agree with us to any extent but they do not appear to care to join'.<sup>(1)</sup>.... The distrust of the hierarchy remarked on before had not yet abated, however the lower ranks of the clergy may have felt. Daunt renewed his pleas to Dr. Leahy, bishop of Cashel, to join the association in 1871, and received the usual reply. In April he told Daunt that he had, as requested, sounded his colleagues upon the question: they too shared his distrust of the protestant leaders of the association.<sup>(2)</sup> In

August 1872 he again refused to be moved:

I cannot now, any more than months ago, see my way to the open advocacy of home rule by joining your association. I am a repealer - always have been since O'Connell's agitation for repeal. But I am not willing to join the Home Rule Association.

Gladstone's reluctance to deal with the education question would, he said, drive many people into home rule. 'Bad as it is, it is not to me a reason strong enough to make me relinquish my wait-and-see policy and position.'<sup>(3)</sup>

John Martin and T. D. Sullivan were particularly anxious that the association should accept a wider responsibility towards the people who shared Dr. Leahy's attitude. Sullivan wrote to Daunt:

1 Webb to Daunt, 12 Apr. 1871, Daunt MSS, 8048. Webb, however, was very mercurial, depending apparently on the company he kept. (Webb to Daunt, 14 Aug. 1871, Daunt MSS, 8048.)  
 2 Leahy to Daunt, 1 Apr. 1871, Daunt MSS, 8046.  
 3 Leahy to Daunt, 3 Aug. 1872, Daunt MSS, 8046.

It has been proposed in the Council of the Home Government Association that we should get up a requisition - largely and influentially signed - calling a conference of the friends of home rule, to be held in Dublin. There are in the country a large number of gentlemen who claim to be the friends of the movement, but who do not choose to join the existing association, because it is a self-formed one, because it is composed, for the most part, of conservative gentlemen who are newcomers to the national ranks, and whose sincerity, they think, is not to be depended on. Many of these men say they would join an association founded by a public meeting in response to a call coming from representative men of all creeds and classes, but they will not step in and join our little body. Now as the association must do something to extend itself and push on the agitation, do you think we should try to get up such a requisition for such a conference? Can you ascertain for us whether any of the southern bishops would attach their names to such a requisition? I wrote to Father Ulick Bourke, secretary to his grace the archbishop of Tuam on the subject, and I have learned from him that his grace highly approves of the idea of a conference, but would not attach his name to the requisition because he would not wish to take any part in calling a meeting to be held in a place under the jurisdiction of another bishop. Father Bourke says of his grace:- "He heart and soul joins in the movement; still he must work as one approving and counselling rather than as one in the ranks".....

I may add that Mr. Butt does not favour the idea of such a conference. He thinks it would be a failure and that we could not get up, at present, such a requisition as we ought to have. He would prefer that the association should "go to the country" and hold a series of great public meetings in the chief towns in Ireland. This would be an excellent - it would probably be the best plan, but the association cannot carry it out for want of men and money. What is to be done under these circumstances? The association must do something, or it will die of inanition, and so dying will do great injury to the cause. (1)

Lack of funds was the greatest barrier to such a reorganisation. Martin wrote to Daunt also favouring

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1 T. D. Sullivan to Daunt, 6 May 1871, Hickey MSS, PC 411.

Such a national conference, and the appointment of a paid organising secretary.

But in the actual state of the association, I am afraid it has no funds to pay a proper salary. I know nothing about the financial affairs of the association. But there has been no good accession of members of late. And how can it have funds? (1)

The expansion of the home rule movement into England added a new and particularly vocal group to the critics of the association. The home rule movement, which drew its support largely from the immigrant Irish among the labouring classes, was notable from the first for its advanced sympathies and for the energy and practicality with which it applied itself to the task of organisation. By the end of 1872 home rule associations had been set up in London, Leeds, Glasgow, Wolverhampton, Newcastle, Manchester, Nottingham, Bolton, Barrhead, Rotherhithe, Bradford, Batley, Leicester, Dundee, Liverpool, and

Wednesbury. (2) The English home rulers, moreover, were convinced of the necessity for a nationally unified organisation long before it became apparent to the Home Government Association. In October 1872 the Leeds association urged the holding of an annual meeting of the English home rulers, to be presided over by Butt, (3) and

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1 Martin to Daunt, 19 Feb. 1871, Daunt MSS, 8047.  
2 Nation, 14 Oct., 4, 18, and 25 Nov. 1871;  
1 Jan., 10, 17 and 31 Aug., 7 and 21 Sept., 7 and 28 Dec. 1872.  
3 Nation, 26 Oct. 1872.

in December 1872 the Manchester association invited delegates from other branches to a joint conference to consider the future of the movement. (1) The chief spokesmen of the English movement in its dealings with the Dublin association were John Ferguson of the Glasgow branch and John Barry of Manchester. Ferguson, who became a member of the council of the Home Government Association in August 1872, (2) was a publisher whose business took him frequently to Ireland, especially to Ulster. His criticisms of the inaction of the Home Government Association in connection with the Derry election have been quoted above. In October 1872 he urged Butt to lead the association into more active participation in the popular struggles:

an active agency is required to find out the popular opinion where it has defined itself and where it has not to give it direction. Without this agency the first general election will find an enthusiastic and willing people talking about what should be done but for want of direction or leaders left at the mercy of the two English parties once more.

I would not have taken the liberty of giving my views to the association or to you but that I am asked to help on a convention to meet in Liverpool to urge the association to action. I want to avoid this as it would look like dissension. (3)

But these criticisms appear only to have depressed and dispirited the home rule leader. He opened the year 'in splendid health and spirits', (4) but by the autumn

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1 - to Butt, 27 Dec. 1872, Butt MSS.  
 2 Nation, 24 Aug. 1872.  
 3 Ferguson to Butt, 2 Oct. 1872, Butt MSS.  
 4 Martin to Daunt, 1 Jan. 1872, Daunt MSS, 8047.

he was 'desponding', (1) and threatening to retire from the leadership owing to the pressure of his own professional work. (2)

In 1872 the criticisms of the clergy, the liberals, and the advanced men were all combining to bring about the reorganisation. The final compulsion which made it a matter of immediate urgency was the sudden disintegration of Gladstone's secure majority. It has already been remarked above that the belief in an imminent settlement of the education issue had been perhaps the chief inhibition to Irish catholics, and in particular the hierarchy, from any countenancing of the home rule movement. As time went on without any overt move upon Gladstone's part to deal with this most complicated of Irish grievances, the security of his hold upon the loyalty of Irish catholicism had progressively weakened, and the anti-denominational speeches of some of his ministers, notably that of Hartington at Knighton in 1872, (3) had done much to undermine their hopes of a settlement favourable to their interests. In April 1872 the support of sections of the Conservatives and of the Liberals for Henry Fawcett's private

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1 M. Barnett to Butt, 11 Sept. 1872, Butt MSS.  
2 Ferguson to Butt, 23 Aug., Butt MSS.  
3 Freeman's Journal, 6 Jan. 1872; Hartington to Monsell, 11 Jan., Monsell MSS, 8319.

1 Daily News, 22 April 1872.  
2 Daily News, 9 Dec. 1871.

university bill, which aimed chiefly at the abolition of religious tests in Trinity College and the reconstruction of its governing body, almost brought about the downfall of the ministry: Gladstone was able to avert disaster only by the publication of a semi-official 'manifesto' in the Daily News making it quite clear that the government intended to treat its opposition to certain provisions of the bill as a matter of confidence. <sup>(1)</sup> By the end of 1872 Gladstone's administration had held office for four years; a general election could not be very far off, and judging by the increasing unpopularity of the government in Ireland, and the ominous pronouncements of the Liberal ministry upon the subject of denominational education, such an election would scarcely be fought upon the terms of that of 1868.

As the year drew on this circumstance had two principal effects. In the first place, it threw into ever sharper relief the glaring inability of the Home Government Association to undertake the responsibility of influencing the course of a general election. As early as December 1871 Butt had called for the return of eighty home rule members in the next election, <sup>(2)</sup> and his entire policy, his unwillingness to test home rule with its present tiny parliamentary force, and his belief in the need of a strong

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1 Daily News, 22 April 1872.

2 Nation, 9 Dec. 1871.

and united party, turned upon the achievement of some such electoral success. But little was done in 1872 in preparation for such a task, and in November Ferguson was still strenuously urging the holding of a national convention to raise funds to organise the registry all over Ireland. (1)

The progressive disintegration of Gladstone's position offered a second and no less pressing challenge to the Home Government Association. Always, as we have remarked, there had been those liberals who were turning more and more to home rule but who could not be prevailed upon to enter the ranks of the association. The incident of the abortive home rule debate in April 1872 showed that even inside parliament home rule was winning new allies, but the same distrust of the association still survived. It will be recalled that in January 1871 Richard Lalor and Kenelm Digby, M.P., had urged the abandonment of the association and its replacement by one which would command the support of the liberals and the clergy, (2) and that T.D. Sullivan, Martin, and even Butt himself had been prepared to make concessions to this attitude. Now again in September 1872 the suggestion was made by a liberal of

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1 Ferguson to Butt, 12 Nov. 1872, Butt MSS.

2 See above, pp. 179-80.

a reconstruction of the association, this time by McCarthy Downing, M.P. for Cork County, and one of those who the previous March had signed the requisition for an assembly of home rule members of parliament: he was ready to join a home rule party: it 'must be distinct from any association, by whatever name it may be called, representing the Irish people, holding its meetings in Dublin', but he believed the creation of such a body 'really representing the feelings and wishes of the Irish people', to be 'an absolute necessity'. He urged the establishment of a new home rule organisation in which members of the old Home Government Association would be invited to participate. (1)

Tactfully the same issue of the Nation joined in the plea for action:

Mr. Butt is correct when he states that had the project been thought well of, home rule demonstrations might ere now have been held far and wide, in city, town, and village, throughout the island. But without entering more deeply into the subject, we may say that whatever might have been the nature of the causes that intervened, the time is past when their operation could be beneficial, and the hour has come when open speaking and energetic action, firing every heart, nerving every arm, and wrapping the whole country in the folds of their influence, must mark the cause of the lovers of Ireland. (2)

At the end of 1872 it was obvious even to Butt himself that this action could no longer be deferred. (1) On

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1 Nation, 21 Sept. 1872.  
2 ibid.



13 December a special meeting of the council of the Home Government Association was held 'to consider what steps the Association might take to provide for the home rule interest in the next General Election'. A. M. Sullivan, who was present at this meeting, wrote 'a glowing account' of it to Martin, who in turn described it to W. J. O'Neill Daunt: -

A sum of £1000 was voted to the council for use in the next twelve months in providing for registration, etc. And, though nobody was warned that a subscription might be entered into, £500 was put down on the spot. Mr. Sullivan adds that the spirit and practical earnestness were such that it was agreed to try again to persuade you to come to Dublin and undertake the work of first minister of the association. He thinks that in a single year wonders may be done for the cause if the man can be got to direct and do it: and you are the man. He begs me to write to you....it would be but right to make sure, before accepting office, of such payment as would enable you to leave Kilcascan - if it be practicable for you to leave it, even for a year. (2)

'I am too old to retain much mental and physical energy', wrote Daunt in his journal; 'I should not like to leave home.' (3) In January he received letters from Martin, Galbraith, A. M. Sullivan and Butt renewing their pleas. (4) But the pleas of his friends overcame his reluctance. In January 1873 W. J. O'Neill Daunt was appointed secretary to

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- 1 Butt to Callan, 31 Aug. 1872, Butt MSS, Vol. 1, MS 830.
  - 2 Martin to Daunt, 16 Dec. 1872, Daunt MSS, 8047.
  - 3 Daunt Journal, 22 Dec. 1872, MS 3041.
  - 4 *ibid.*, 12 Jan. 1873.

the association at a salary of £400 a year. (1) At the same time the association took 'really handsome and central offices in Westmoreland Street', (2) and, in addition to the permanent assistant secretary J. McAlister, who had already held office for some time, it appointed a new travelling secretary, Hugh Heinrich, formerly a commission agent and ~~leader~~-writer of the Nation, who was immediately despatched on an organisational tour, first of the industrial towns of Britain, and then around Ireland.

The appointment of Daunt as secretary of the association was a decisive step forward in the development of the movement. It was not so much that he was an exceptionally vigorous organiser; an amiable hypochondriac in his sixty-sixth year, he was if anything scarcely suited to the more active duties of an organising secretary. Nor did he induce the association, by the power of his personality, radically to modify its programme. His significance was more as a symbol; just at the time when the association was being compelled to recognise the necessity of making a new approach to the liberals and the clergy, and just when events were moving towards a

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1 Sullivan to Daunt, undated (1873), Daunt MSS, 8048.  
 2 *ibid.* There was no need for any guarantee of his salary, wrote Martin; there was enough cash in the bank to cover it for the first year at any rate.  
 (Martin to Daunt, 29 Jan. 1873, MS 8047.)

situation in which home rule would have a better chance than ever before of succeeding in such an approach, Daunt, symbolic of Irish catholic nationalism, succumbed to the pleas of the home rule leaders to lend the authority of his name to just such a new offer. At once he commenced the attack. In January he proposed the idea of a circular to the catholic clergy; (1) in February he drafted an address to the people of Ireland which was approved by the council of the association with some minor alterations. (2) But he devoted much of his energy to the making of personal contacts with the clergy, whose lukewarmness he bitterly reprobated in his diary. Cardinal Cullen, he wrote, not only does not help, but actually thwarts the home rulers. Not a priest in his diocese except two has ventured to join our association up to this time; and of these two, one has withdrawn his adhesion. (3)

On 1 March he met the bishop of Clonfert, Dr. Duggan; (4) 4 March he wrote to the bishop of Cloyne, Dr. Keane, and several priests, on behalf of the movement; (5) on 10 March he wrote the bishop of Meath, Dr. Nulty, to the same effect. (6)

At the same time the association began to make some effort

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1 Martin to Daunt, 16 Jan. 1873, Daunt MSS, 8047  
 2 Daunt Journal, MS 3041; ~~Feb~~ 13, 17, ~~Feb~~.  
 3 ibid., 28 July.  
 4 ibid., 1 Mar.  
 5 ibid., 4 Mar.  
 6 ibid., 10 Mar.

to get down to what Martin regarded as the most urgent task before it, the organising of the constituencies with a view to the next general election, <sup>(1)</sup> and in January Butt, speaking at Manchester, forecast the return of eighty home rule M.P.'s. <sup>(2)</sup> But the council was not always unanimous upon the extent to which it should widen its responsibilities; in February Daunt was involved in differences with A. M. Sullivan, and in April was expressing himself to Martin as thoroughly discontented with his position on the council. <sup>(3)</sup>

But if there were some in the association who were still reluctant to commit themselves to a full-scale reorganisation of the movement, the political crisis which was produced in February and March of that year by the introduction of Gladstone's university bill precipitated them willy-nilly into action.

It has been remarked above that it was the tenaciously-held hope of the clergy for the concession of denominational education to the Irish catholics which more than any other single cause had served to hold them to their allegiance to Gladstone. It has also been noted how the anti-denominational pronouncements of leading English liberals had caused that hope progressively to wane.

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1 Martin to Daunt, 14 Feb. 1873, Daunt MSS, 8047.

2 Nation, 11 Jan. 1873.

3 Martin to Daunt, 21 Feb., 7 Apr., Daunt MSS, 8047.

4 Standard, 31 December 1873.

Looking back upon the education struggle in 1877, after reading Pope Pius IX's letter to the French bishops upon the same subject, the bishop of Limerick, Dr. Butler, reflected:-

had he written so to us, we could have acted differently from what we have done in our struggle for catholic education. But the Holy Father would not make concessions to us which the "hardness of our hearts" did not seem to require. He thought that under the principles of our constitution, we - the vast majority of the Irish people, could claim and obtain something better than the French people looked for, or the French legislature of that day would think of conceding. (1)

But the Irish catholics were not conceded the right of a majority upon this question; their claims had to be balanced against English Liberal and above all nonconformist opinion, and in retrospect it seems obvious that any attempt by Gladstone to endow sectarian education in Ireland would have shattered the English Liberal party.

Gladstone appears to have made no effort to ascertain the feelings of the bishops in regard to his proposals before publishing them, although the wisdom of such a course had been pointed out to Monsell; (2) indeed, in his dealings with the English Liberals, Gladstone rather (3) seems to have boasted of his neglect of the hierarchy's views. In November 1871 J. A. Dease had conveyed to Lord Spencer, as the very least that the bishops would accept, a draft

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1 Butler to Monsell, 2 Nov. 1877, Monsell MSS, 8317.  
2 P. J. Keenan to Monsell, 25 Dec. 1872, Monsell MSS, 8317.  
3 Standard, 31 December 1873.

university scheme originated by Monsell himself and approved by 'episcopal authority',<sup>(1)</sup> but the following January, when Monsell had occasion to take Hartington to task for his anti-denominational pronouncements, the latter had replied:-

I must confess that the speeches which have lately been delivered at public meetings on this question, and the requirements of the Roman Catholic bishops (as I understand them) do appear to me to demand an amount of control on their part over the system of state education which I do not think the government or parliament would be justified in conceding.<sup>(2)</sup>

(2)

In February 1873, three years after the introduction of the land bill, Gladstone finally made clear his intentions upon the subject of education. It is not within the scope of this study to penetrate deeply the tangled history of the Irish university question. The bill provided, amongst other things, for the establishment of a national university, to consist of five constituent colleges - Trinity College, Dublin, Queen's College, Cork, Queen's College, Belfast, Magee University College, Londonderry, and the Catholic University of Dublin.<sup>(3)</sup> The council of the new university was to be nominated in the first instance by the crown, and thereafter to be chosen by the constituent colleges. It was to have no chair of theology, philosophy or modern history; these subjects were

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- 1 J. A. Dease to Monsell, 29 Nov. 1871, Monsell MSS, 8317.
  - 2 Hartington to Monsell, 11 Jan. 1872, Monsell MSS, 8319.
  - 3 The Queen's College at Galway was to be abolished.

to form no part of the compulsory curriculum, nor were they to be eligible for study for prizes or emoluments. Trinity College was to lose its status as a university, and its privilege of returning two members to parliament, which was to be transferred to the new university; its religious tests were to be abolished, and its divinity school was to be detached from it and transferred to the Representative Church Body.

Lectures were not to be compulsory in the new university, and its teaching duties were to be limited. It was to be endowed by the sum of £500,000 <sup>£50,000 of which £15,000 was to be</sup> taken from Trinity College; the cost of providing buildings would be subsidised out of the church surplus. The constituent colleges were to continue except as above mentioned to manage their own affairs as before. Anticipating the criticism that this would leave Trinity College still in a much stronger position than the other constituent colleges, Gladstone reminded the House that it alone had voluntarily renounced its denominational safeguards, and which proposes to make the whole of its emoluments and offices accessible to all Irishmen who may be its members, entirely irrespective of religious distinctions. Parliament has adopted for many years in its policy the principle that these are the colleges to which alone endowments shall be given.

(A)  
The bill was not at once received unfavourably.

The Dublin Evening Post remarked on 14 February that it

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1 Hansard, 3rd Series, cciv, 378-426. See also T. W. Moody, The Irish university question of the nineteenth century, in History, vol. XLIII, No. 148, June 1958.

could place the Catholic University in a position of equality with the other colleges, 'and with this advantage, to begin with, we should be able to accomplish a great deal more for ourselves.' (1)

But soon it became evident that the catholic bishops were bitterly disappointed. P. J. Keenan, commissioner of National Education, wrote to

Monsell on 15 February in reply to his request for news of the Irish reaction to the bill:-

(1) Bishops and clergy. I have as yet met only Dr. Butler, Dr. Woodlock, and a few priests.

You know, I suppose, Dr. Butler's opinion already - great disappointment, a conviction that there is no equality in the measure etc., but at the same time a resolve to accept the bill.

Poor Woodlock is awfully down-hearted - but whether he goes in for the bill or not I could not make out. The teaching function of the new university he particularly objects to, making the new institution, he affirms, a new Queen's College.

The few priests I have met are dead against the bill - the want of grist to the mill in Stephen's Green being the great defect ....

Acceptance I think is on the tongue of nearly every catholic layman. (1)

Very Reverend C. W. Russell of Maynooth commended the bill as 'a most able and ingenious one', which seemed to provide every possible safeguard against unsound teaching. (2)

On 15 February Dr. Woodlock went down to Meath to see Cardinal Cullen, who declined to express any opinion

1 Keenan to Monsell, 15 Feb. 1873, Monsell MSS, 8317.  
Dr. Woodlock was rector of the Catholic University.  
2 Russell to Monsell, 15 Feb. 1873, Monsell MSS, 8317.



on the bill until he had time to consider all its aspects and to consult with the bishops and other interested parties.

(1)

Immediately he summoned a meeting of the hierarchy for 27 February.

(2)

From Queen's County Edmund Dease reported that it was only 'the personal confidence the bishops and clergy have in Mr. Gladstone' which had

(3)

prevented an outburst of public opinion against the bill. But as early as 15 February the Dublin Evening Post had

drawn critical attention to the disparity between the resources of the constituent colleges, and in the week

(4)

which followed it repeated its criticisms. 'I see that the Evening Post - which I suppose is the organ of the Priests

and the Cardinal - is down upon the proposals,' wrote Mitchell Henry to Butt;

(5)

'John of Tuam furious at the education bill and preparing a pastoral', he added on 22 February.

(6)

Dr. MacHale did not even wait for the decision of the hierarchy before publishing his condemnation.

(7)

The bishops met on 27 February, but their verdict was never in much doubt. The day before the

The bishops met on 27 February, but their verdict was never in much doubt. The day before the

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- 1 John Canon Farrell, P.P., to J. A. Dease, 20 Feb. 1873, Monsell MSS, 8318.
  - 2 Cullen to Moriarty 23 Feb., Monsell MSS, 8629.
  - 3 E. Dease to J. A. Dease, 22 Feb. 1873, Monsell MSS, 8318.
  - 4 Dublin Evening Post, 16, 21 Feb.
  - 5 Henry to Butt, 17 Feb., Butt MSS.
  - 6 Henry to Butt, 22 Feb., Butt MSS.
  - 7 Nation, 1 Mar.

meeting took place Cardinal Cullen told Monsell of his disappointment at the bill, which left the Catholic University without endowment or subsidy to oppose the entrenched battalions of mixed education. <sup>(1)</sup> The hierarchical meeting resulted in a series of resolutions condemning the measure as 'being framed on the principle of mixed and purely secular education'. <sup>(2)</sup> The hard-pressed Monsell asked P. J. Keenan to explain the wishes of the bishops.

- (a) Endowment of their college in Stephen's Green .....  
Endowment is their sine qua non .....  
 (b) Trinity College not to be opened ....  
 (c) The professional part of the University is also an object of their execration - simply on the ground that it favours "mixed education". <sup>(3)</sup>

But the proclamation of the bishops went much further than simple disapproval of the bill; it called on 'the catholic clergy and laity of Ireland' to use all constitutional means to oppose the passing of this bill in its present form, and to call on their parliamentary representatives to give it their most energetic opposition. <sup>(4)</sup>

This summons to the attack was the final and most decisive blow delivered upon the liberal alliance of 1868. The English Liberals were furious. The Spectator was prepared to admit that every concession, and every act of conciliation by Gladstone, had been directed towards the

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1 Cullen to Monsell, 26 Feb. 1873, Monsell MSS, 8317.  
 2 Nation, 1 Mar.  
 3 Keenan to Monsell, 2 Mar., Monsell MSS, 8317.  
 4 Nation, 1 Mar.

radical critics of the bill in England, <sup>(1)</sup> but to the majority of the Liberals, who had detested the bill from the outset as a totally unwarranted concession to ultramontanism, the conduct of the hierarchy was inexplicable. The Times bitterly attacked Cardinal Cullen, whom it held responsible for

the migration to the opposition of the ultramontane partisans, who persuaded themselves, by some inexplicable process of reasoning, that better terms than were offered then might be obtained hereafter. <sup>(2)</sup>

Gladstone was 'the very Lear of statesmen, turned out of doors by his favourite children, the Irish priest and tenant.' <sup>(3)</sup>

There were also some among the Irish catholic laity who deplored the attitude of the hierarchy. 'The bishops want a seminary or rather a number of diocesan seminaries under their absolute control', wrote Professor Sullivan of the Catholic University. <sup>(4)</sup> But the nationalists were jubilant for the first time for many years over the political conduct of their pastors. 'A thrill of joy and thankful/ness will run through the hearts of the catholics of Ireland on reading the series of resolutions adopted by the bishops at their recent meeting', wrote the Nation. <sup>(5)</sup> They appreciated the political significance of the decision.

1 Spectator, 15 Mar. 1873.

2 Times, 15 Mar.

3 Ibid., 18 Mar.

4 W. K. Sullivan to Monsell, 15 May, Parliamentary Papers, 8318.

5 Nation, 1 Mar. 1873.

'Gladstone's education bill unsatisfactory to the bishops -  
 "Serve 'em right"<sup>(1)</sup>', wrote Daunt in his diary. 'A fine  
 reward'....., said Martin, 'for giving their political support  
 to MM. Gladstone & Co.'<sup>(2)</sup> In the crisis the home rulers  
 threw all their forces behind rejection of the bill. Butt  
 prepared a memorandum which materially aided the bishops in  
 reaching their decision, and for which he was offered an  
 honorarium which he declined to accept.<sup>(3)</sup> J. G. McCarthy  
 wrote to Daunt that he hoped the bill would 'throw the  
 clergy frankly into our ranks'.<sup>(4)</sup> Others to whom this  
 prospect was less welcome were equally as quick to recognise  
 it. As early as 22 February Edmund Dease prophesied to his  
 cousin that the fiasco would throw the prelates into home  
 rule.<sup>(5)</sup> 'I foresee uneasy times before us and a melancholy  
 strengthening of the hands of the home rulers', lamented  
 J. A. Dease in turn to Monsell;<sup>(6)</sup> what was to become of  
 the catholic members of the government, asked Dr. Delany,  
 of St. Stanislaus College, Tullamore: 'Against priests  
 and Home Rulers they would have little chance indeed  
 of re-election. As it is, if there were a dissolution it

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1 Daunt Journal, 15 Feb. 1873, MS 3041.  
 2 Martin to Daunt, 21 Feb., Daunt MSS, 8047.  
 3 Dr. Woodlock to Butt, 1 and 3 Mar., Butt MSS; Nation,  
 8 Mar.  
 4 McCarthy to Daunt, 1 Mar. 1873, Daunt MSS, 8047.  
 5 E. Dease to J. A. Dease, 22 Feb. 1873, Monsell MSS, 8318.  
 6 J. A. Dease to Monsell, 2 Mar. 1873, Monsell MSS, 8317.

would need every effort to hold the seats of many.' (1)

But worse was to follow. The directive of the bishops placed the Irish liberals in a most embarrassing position, which the parliamentary correspondent of the Nation described with obvious delight:

'twas absolutely pitiable to note their agony of uncertainty last week. They were in a fever to know what the bishops would say and do. "Any news from Dublin yet? Any idea what the bishops are to do - eh?" Soberly have the said bishops disappointed them; for I can tell you the strong hope and full expectation was that their lordships would "accept the bill as an instalment" - "under protest, you know, under protest," said a sleek catholic liberal M.P. to me, with a fine glow of political virtue and religious virtue in his spare eye (the other is always fixed on the government whip). (2)

A meeting of thirty-two Irish liberal members was called by requisition and decided inevitably to oppose the bill. The division on the second reading took place on 11 March. Of the Irish liberals and home rulers, twelve protestants and five catholics followed the government whip; twelve protestants and twenty-seven catholics went into the opposition lobbies. Nine home rulers voted against the bill and none for it, with the possible exception of Sir Rowland Blennerhasset, always a doubtful home ruler, who voted with the government. (3) The thirty-five Irish conservatives who voted naturally opposed the bill. But

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1 Delany to Dease, 1 Mar. 1873, Monsell MSS, 8317.  
2 Nation, 8 Mar.  
3 Two home rulers were absent, Butt himself, and Martin, who made a point of not voting except on home rule.

at the same time a large number of English Liberals who could not tolerate what seemed to them so large a concession to denominationalism, notably H. Fawcett (Brighton), E. P. Bouverie (Kilmarnock) and McCullagh Torrens (Paisley) ignored their own whip. The government was defeated by 287 votes to 284. (1)

The ministerial defeat produced a parliamentary crisis. Gladstone's resignation was believed to be imminent, but the conservatives were apparently reluctant to undertake minority government. (2) After several days' confusion Gladstone resumed office and abandoned the bill. He had suffered 'all the disaster of a moral as well as a political check', wrote the Spectator, and must dissolve parliament upon his very next defeat; (3) the Freeman's Journal expected an early dissolution, and reported that (4) Monsell was anxious to resign from the administration. (5) At the latest a dissolution was expected in the autumn.

This was the background against which the national conference was held and the Home Rule League founded. It was obviously a situation full of opportunities for home rule. The 'obvious inference' of the university

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1 <sup>Indicates</sup> Hansard, cciv, 1864-8.  
 2 Nation, 15 Mar. 1873; Standard, 14 Mar.; Express, 15 and 17 Mar.  
 3 Spectator, 22 Mar.  
 4 Freeman's Journal, 18 Mar.  
 5 Henry to Butt, 15 Mar., Butt MSS.

fiasco, declared Dr. Donnelly, Bishop of Clogher, in his Lenten pastoral, was that

it is time to proclaim that we have had enough of legislation from a parliament that cares neither to understand nor remedy our grievances, a parliament that confessedly loathes our religion and loathes ourselves because of our religion. (1)

'The bishops will come in, in good time'.... wrote Father R. O'Reilly, P.P. Kingscourt, to Daunt: 'if they are not satisfied now that there is no hope from an English parliament, then I say, they are alone in Ireland', (2) and the president of Maynooth, Dr. Russell, told A. M. Sullivan that even Cardinal Cullen was turning to home rule in his disappointment. (3)

The reaction against Gladstone, coinciding with the new energy of the Home Government Association, provided Daunt with a ready-made audience for his appeals for a broadening of the movement. The address of the association to the people of Ireland was published in March; it reminded them that the next election would revolve upon the issue of home rule and urged them to prepare for it. (4) Typical of the new feeling was the letter of George Fottrell giving in his adhesion to the association; he had delayed doing so until Gladstone

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1 Nation, 8 Mar. 1873.  
2 O'Reilly to Daunt, 6 May 1873, Daunt MSS, 8047.  
3 Daunt Journal, 15 May, MS 3041.  
4 Nation, 22 Mar.

had dealt with the three points in his programme: he had now made his policy clear on education, and the time was ripe for home rule. (1) 'See how the priests are coming in', (2) wrote Martin to Daunt in April.

But if the university bill fiasco was home rule's opportunity, it was also for the movement a challenge full of peril. It has already been remarked that in 1872 there were many prominent liberals, both inside and outside parliament, who were turning towards the principle of home rule, but who were not members of the Home Government Association. The fiasco of the university bill, the ministerial crisis, and the prospect of an imminent general election, multiplied the number of these people many times over. Some, like Fottrell, took the course of a belated entry into the Home Government Association. In April the clergy of the Clifden deanery sent in their support to the association; (3) in May the deaneries of Castlebar and Achonry followed suit; (4) in June thirteen catholic clergymen were admitted to membership. (5) In September Sir Joseph McKenna, former M.P. for Youghal, joined the association. (6) But others were still reluctant to join a

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1 Nation, 22 Mar. 1873.  
2 Martin to Daunt, 19 Apr., Daunt MSS, 8047.  
3 Nation, 26 Apr.  
4 Nation, 10 May.  
5 ibid., 7 June.  
6 Nation, 20 Sept.



still small group which they had condemned at the outset as conservative and in which they would have to take a very junior position. Sir John Gray, for example, still hedged, on the grounds that 'he was with us but that he would not come in till the bishops would lead',<sup>(1)</sup> and Heinrick, the association's travelling secretary, found his efforts to organise Kilkenny hampered by the Gray interest.<sup>(2)</sup> As late as 12 November Dr. Duggan, Bishop of Clonfert, would not accede to the requests of Butt and Daunt that he should give public expression to his support for the association.<sup>(3)</sup> The Dublin Evening Post was appealing to the Irish Catholics not to abandon a leader who had given them so much because of a single reverse.<sup>(4)</sup> J. G. MacCarthy wrote to Daunt in April:

Why don't the priests join? Because the bishops don't begin.

And why don't the bishops? Because they are always cautious, and because they don't trust B, and because they think the Fenians dominate you, and that the Internationalists are allied to you ....<sup>(5)</sup>

But the most immediate problem was that of the liberal members of parliament, facing a general election without either a leader or a *raison d'etre* of any kind. As early as the beginning of March the Saturday Review had prophesied that with the failure of the university bill many

1 Heinrick to Butt, 27 June 1873, Butt MSS.

2 Heinrick to Butt, 25 June, Butt MSS.

3 Duggan to Butt, 12 Nov., Butt MSS.

4 Dublin Evening Post, 11, 12 Mar.

5 MacCarthy to Daunt, 4 Apr. 1873, Daunt MSS, 8047.

Irish catholics who then sat as liberals would come back to parliament as home rulers. (1) There were two possible attitudes which the association could adopt towards such people. The Nation represented one. There were, it remarked in March, five classes of sitting M.P.'s:-

1. Declared Home Rulers; men who have given service to the cause.
2. Men who are probably Home Rulers, but who have made no sign of the faith that is in them.
3. Whigs who will "swallow" Home Rule in the hope of being re-elected.
4. Whigs, who will try to get elected without swallowing it, by saying they "go farther", or "don't go so far", or that they "don't understand it", or that it has not been "defined", or by being seized with a sudden spasm of gushing love for our holy religion, or for the Pope, or for our persecuted nuns, or for the Fenian prisoners, or for anything else in the wide earth that they think will help them to bamboozle the "free and independent" electors.
5. Tories .... (2)

And again in July it warned the electors to be on their guard against 'sham' home rulers, prophesying at best the return of a home rule party of 50-60 of whom half would be genuine. (3)

But that was essentially the attitude of the ideological nationalist, who had been almost suffocated by the liberal alliance in 1868 and who had little time now for its former champions. There were many who looked with more sympathy upon the liberal position. Shaw wrote to

1 Saturday Review, 8 Mar. 1873.  
 2 Nation, 22 Mar.  
 3 Ibid., 26 July.

Daunt in September:

I still think that in the early winter as soon as any government announcement comes out somewhere in October, we should have some representative gathering in Dublin to allow those who are outside to have a fair public opportunity of joining the movement. We must in such a moment as this make allowance for the weakness of human nature of men who while they are as sincere home rulers as ourselves are influenced by pride, vanity, and selfishness. We must work them into the cause - better have them for than against us. Our cause must be presented to the constituencies not as a small association in Dublin but if possible as a great national movement. If we go to a general election without in some way uniting all sections of the national liberal party and without stirring up the enthusiasm of the people we cannot succeed. (1)

The conference idea had, as we have seen, long been urged by many sincere nationalists in the association who were tired of its futility and vacillation. As late as July the inconsistency of the association's attitude to by-election candidates monotonously reproduced another home rule fiasco in Waterford County, where H. W. Villiers Stuart, son of Lord Decies, was permitted by Butt, amid a welter of conflicting advice, to pass uncontested into parliament upon the flimsiest of home rule innuendoes. His aristocratic lineage earned him this easy triumph; it was no guarantee of his honour. Elected, he repudiated his nationalist utterances, and was introduced into the house of commons by Hartington. (2) Philip Callan wrote to Butt:

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1 Shaw to Daunt, 2 Sept. 1873, Daunt MSS, 8047.  
 2 J. A. Blake to Butt, 30 June, 7 July; J. Fisher to Butt, 2, 3 and 5 July; H. J. Slattery to Butt, 4 July; Butt MSS. Nation, 5, 12 July.

What think you of Waterford. More of O'Hagan-Monsell intrigues .... Rely on it that unless we reconstitute the H.R.A. many similar moves will be made and successfully carried out against us. (1)

In July Henry drew up a draft plan for a home rule conference. (2) The advanced nationalists in the movement, especially those of Great Britain, were also, it will be recalled, pressing for reorganisation, and in January, at a conference in Manchester under the chairmanship of Butt, plans were initiated for a national English home rule

organisation. (3) A second conference was held in Birmingham, and finally in Newcastle in August the reorganisation of the Irish movement was anticipated with the ratification of the decision of these previous conferences, and the formal election of a national executive for the Home Rule Confederation of Great Britain, (4) with John Barry as its secretary. (5)

Yet despite the fact that the plan commanded so many supporters, the acceptance by the association of the conference project was above all else a triumph for the liberal interest and a final defeat for the inbred conservatism of the original movement. The association had long been debating the proposal, when what was probably the

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- 1 Callan to Butt, ? July 1873, Butt MSS.
  - 2 Butt to Callan, 12 July 1873, Butt MSS, vol. 11, MS 831.
  - 3 Nation, 11 Jan.
  - 4 ibid. 30 Aug.
  - 5 ibid., 27 Sept.

decisive influence was exerted upon them in September. Dr. Keane, bishop of Cloyne, and the clergy of his diocese, in this month publicly announced their adhesion to the programme of the association, but at the same time called for the holding of an aggregate meeting in Dublin of the representatives of all interested in this great question - and they are the entire people, without distinction of creed or class - for the purpose of placing, by constitutional means, on a broad and definite basis, the nation's demand for the restoration of its plundered rights. (1)

In the same issue of the Nation in which this address was published, the editorial described it with understandable hyperbole as 'by far the most important event in Irish politics since the close of the repeal agitation'. As for the plan it proposed:-

Even before that recommendation came before them the leaders of the Home Government Association had recognised the advantages which such a step would confer, and had themselves suggested the necessity of enlisting in the Home Rule cause the whole strength of the country through the medium of a grand national conference. The time has come when the people in one grand combination must take up the work heretofore carried out by the Home Government Association. That body has never claimed for itself the character or powers of a great national organisation. It was established by a number of patriotic gentlemen to disseminate and support the doctrines and principles of Home Rule, but it eschewed anything like a representative character, and it recognised from the outset the fact that it was nothing more than a precursor society .... Let us not be mistaken. We believe that no political body was ever more successful in propagating its principles, in sowing the seeds of action, in kindling the energies and

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1 Nation, 20 Sept. 1875

uniting the hearts of a nation than the Home Government Association .... but it is not, and it was never intended to be, such an association as is called for by the circumstances of the present time. We want something broader, larger, stronger, and greater. We want an organisation which will embrace the whole manhood and intellect of the national party, which will include every honest home ruler within its fold, and which will strike its roots deep in the population of every barony and every parish. The time is come for it. The imminence of the general election throws a responsibility and an amount of work upon the country which can only be satisfactorily dealt with through some such gigantic agency. (1)

The idea of the conference was taken up at once throughout the country, and at the quarterly meeting of the association in the Rotunda the following week, Butt took great pains to deny the suggestion of the London Standard that it was a new departure, and that in getting up the conference he himself was being 'laid aside':

so far from this notion of a conference being a new idea, the propriety of holding such a conference had been repeatedly pressed by individual members. Two years ago the majority of the council were of opinion that the time had then come for such a conference, but he dissented from that view, and the other members yielded their opinions to his, so that if the conference should have been held earlier he must take the responsibility .... A committee was then appointed to enquire how far it would be prudent to call a conference and report as soon as they judged it expedient .... He believed that the time had now come when they should ask those who shared their feelings on the subject of national self-government to come forward and take counsel with them as to the best means of forwarding it. (2)

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1 Nation, 20 Sept. 1873.  
 2 ibid., 27 Sept.

Yet despite Butt's protestations he had in private had misgivings about the conference. (1) He seems to have suspected that the Cloyne resolutions had been engineered by McCarthy Downing, M.P. for Cork County, of whom Butt had a great distrust, in an effort to separate the conference idea from the Home Government Association. (2) Dr. O'Hea, bishop of Ross, certainly leaned heavily upon Downing's advice. (3) No doubt he feared an effort on the part of the liberals to sweep away the existing leadership of the movement. William Shaw wrote to Henry at the beginning of November: 'You may be quite sure the Irish M.P.'s will not give Butt any leadership on general questions in the House, whilst they may be quite willing to follow his lead on the Irish question', (4) and the Roscommon Messenger remarked ominously that while Butt was at present the leader of the home rule movement, it was quite sure he would return to the ranks if he felt it was better for the unanimity of the movement. (5)

But the insecurity of the Liberal administration was the decisive factor; obviously the imminence of a general election compelled the association to risk the consequences

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1 Butt to Daunt, 18 Oct. 1873, Butt MSS, vol 11, MS 831.  
 Butt to Henry, 1 Dec. 1873, Butt MSS, vol. 111, MS 832.  
 2 Butt to Callan, 16 Sept. 1873, Butt MSS, vol. 11, MS 831.  
 3 O'Hea to Daunt, 21 Dec. 1874, Daunt MSS, 8047.  
 4 Shaw to Henry, 2 Nov. 1873, Butt MSS, vol. 111, MS 832.  
 5 Quoted in Nation, 27 Sept. 1873.

of an appeal to the country. The form which it decided to adopt was the circularisation of a requisition calling for a conference to discuss the best means of forwarding the home rule demand, since it was obvious that a simple invitation from the existing association would prejudice the success of the plan from the outset. <sup>(1)</sup> The circular asking for support was prepared at the end of September, <sup>(2)</sup> and issued on 11 October, bearing the signatures of Shaw, King Harman, Callan, and Daunt. <sup>(3)</sup> At the same time an intensive campaign was undertaken to secure the signatures of as many representatives as possible of the catholic hierarchy. Dr. MacHale was at first reluctant to anticipate his colleagues by signing such a proposal, sending instead a letter of support for publication in the press, <sup>(4)</sup> but with the public launching of the requisition plan his signature and that of Dr. O'Hea, bishop of Ross, were the first to be secured. <sup>(5)</sup> Following upon this, Butt wrote to Dr. Duggan, bishop of Clonfert, and Dr. Dorrian, bishop of Down and Connor, A. M. Sullivan to Dr. Keane, bishop of Cloyne, Callan to Dr. Donnelly, bishop of Clogher, and Daunt to the primate, Dr. McGettigan, Dr. McEvilly, bishop of Galway, Dr. Conroy, bishop of Ardagh, Dr. Butler, bishop

1 Nation, 27 Sept. 1873.

2 ibid., 4 Oct.

3 Daunt Journal, 11 Oct., MS 3041.

4 Daunt Journal, 7, 25 Sept., MS 3041.

5 Nation, 15 Nov.



of Limerick, Dr. Conaty, bishop of Kilmore, and Dr. Nulty, bishop of Meath. (1) Of these ten, Dr. Donnelly declined (2) to sign, though friendly to the cause, (3) as did Dr. Dorrian, and Dr. Duggan. (4) The replies of the others have not survived, but Dr. Keane's signature was attached to the requisition. (5)

The conference, which met in the Rotunda on 18, 19, 20, and 21 November 1873, was the most important event which had yet taken place in the agitation. In it the movement was established in the form in which it is generally remembered, and many of the characteristics and deficiencies which marked it in later years owed their origin to the decisions of this assembly.

The requisition for the conference expressed the conviction of the signatories of the necessity for the restoration of a domestic parliament; it further pledged them to the adoption of a federal arrangement. Some 18,000 signatures were obtained, but William Shaw as chairman of the conference stressed the point that no effort had been made to secure a monster response, the requisition being only circulated among selected categories and not canvassed among the general public. (6) Twenty-five

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1 Butt to Daunt, 5 Nov. 1873, Butt MSS, vol. 11, MS 832; Daunt to Butt, 11 Nov., Butt MSS.  
 2 Butt to Daunt, 5 Nov., cited above.  
 3 Dorrian to Butt, 8 Oct., Butt MSS.  
 4 Duggan to Butt, 12 Nov., Butt MSS.  
 5 Nation, 15 Nov.  
 6 Proceedings of the home rule conference, Dublin, 1874, pp. 69-70. Hereafter referred to as conference proceedings. Sullivan (New Ireland, 14th ed., p. 382.) says the requisition gained 25,000 signatures.

liberal or home rule M.P.'s held tickets for the conference and gave to its programme a varying degree of loyalty.

J. P. McAlister, assistant secretary of the association, wrote to Daunt before the conference: 'Several Whig M.P.'s have favoured the movement with their august approbation'.<sup>(1)</sup> Nearly fifty catholic priests and not more than ten protestant clergymen were also among the ticketholders.

The central figure at the conference was undoubtedly Butt, who was responsible for its agenda;<sup>(2)</sup> he need have feared no effort on the part of the liberals to oust him from the leadership.<sup>(3)</sup> But there were, in the attitudes of the liberals, and especially in their clashes with the representatives of the advanced wing upon the issue of party discipline, ominous signs that to the speakers at the conference participation in the movement carried a responsibility which was the subject of widely differing interpretations.

The neutrality of the advanced men seems to have been secured, as in 1870, before the opening of the public

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- 1 McAlister to Daunt, 13 Oct. 1873, Daunt MSS 8047. The members of parliament who held tickets were:- Butt, Bryan, Browne, Blennerhassett, Brady, Callan, Downing, D'Arcy, Dease, Digby, Delahunty, French, Gray, Henry, Martin, Murphy, O'Reilly, D.M. O'Conor, O'Conor Don, O'Brien, Redmond, ~~Roxayne~~, Synan, Smyth, and Shaw. H. Matthews signed the requisition but did not attend the conference (Nation, 27 Dec. 1873)
- 2 Butt to Sullivan, 16 Nov. 1873, Butt MSS, vol ii, MS 831.
- 3 'Butt escaped from Dublin to Kingstown two days before the conference to prepare his speech undisturbed by visitors. He told me he did not sleep one moment the night previous to its delivery.' (Daunt Journal, 22 Nov., MS 3041).

Proceedings. According to William O'Brien, he was present upon the night before the conference at a private consultation on the subject between the leading men, who had come up from the country to deliberate whether there ought to be any truce with parliamentary agitation.

There can be no harm in saying now that the most influential men among them were Mr. Joe Ronayne (the never-to-be-forgotten member for Cork); Mr. C. G. Doran, of Queenstown; Mr. Mat. Harris, of Ballinasloe; Mr. O'Connor Power, and Mr. John Walsh, of Middlesboro. I cannot at this moment recall whether Mr. J. F. X. O'Brien was of the party on that particular occasion, although I am quite sure that he was one of the most determined that, within certain limits, Mr. Butt's projects should have fair play .... Mr. Butt assented readily to the qualifications with which his movement was to have free fling, and when Mr. O'Connor Power got up in Mr. Butt's support the next day from the midst of the little group who represented the Extreme Left of the conference, a sigh of relief went through the "cognoscenti", who knew what a cloud hung over the birth of the movement.<sup>(1)</sup>

He does not, unfortunately, specify the nature of the 'qualifications', but in later years certain of the fenians who abandoned Butt insisted that he had been permitted to go ahead with the agitation only upon the guarantee that if unsuccessful after three years he would retire and

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1 O'Brien, Personal Reminiscences of Isaac Butt, in Butt MSS, vol i, MS 830.

make way for less constitutional methods. (1)

The conference opened with two resolutions

1 There is no proof that this compact was ever made, but too many references to it survive for it to have been a complete fabrication. According to John Daly's recollections Butt was informed just before the conference that Barry of Manchester and other delegates from Northern England 'had a set of resolutions to propose which were so strong as to embarrass him or compel him to resign'. Butt and these men had a consultation, 'the result of which was that in order to buy them off, Butt entered into an agreement that they should withdraw their resolutions from the Convention, and he signed a paper pledging himself that if the English parliament did not grant him a Home Rule Bill inside of 3 years - that was by the year 1876 - he would come back to Dublin and submit himself to the Fenian Party - Charles Doran, of the Cove of Cork, told me since I came out of prison that he had that paper signed "Isaac Butt". Where it is, or what became of it, God knows.' (Irish Freedom, April 1913).

It is hard to believe that so astute a lawyer as Butt would have signed so unequivocal a pledge; perhaps he bound himself to place his policy before the decision of a second and thoroughly popular national conference. At any rate, the three-year period does seem to have had some especial significance. In 1876 Doran, Daly, Denis Dowling Mulcahy, and their followers, hitherto quiescent, began to break up and interrupt home rule meetings, especially those of their former associate O'Connor Power. Doran wrote to P. J. Smyth in January 1877 enclosing some document which 'could be used with advantage' soon against the home rulers. (Doran to Smyth, 24 Jan. 1877, Smyth MSS, 8215.) Was this perhaps the famous pledge? Ronayne in the conference said that the Irish people had reserved the right 'to seek redress by other means' if home rule was not honestly carried out by its leaders and fairly granted by England, and Mitchel Henry told Alfred Webb that home rule would be carried in three years or not at all. (Webb to Henry, 6 Dec. 1873, Butt MSS, vol. iii, MS 832.)

The proceedings upon the second day opened at 11.30 AM with the introduction of the fourth and is

declaring the inalienable right of Ireland to self-government and affirming that the time had arrived to seek restoration of it. Neither aroused much controversy, but N. D. Murphy, M.P., one of the doubtfully-reliable whigs, took occasion to explain that he had declined to sign the requisition as federalism in the abstract was only possible between equal states coming together voluntarily. This fine point aroused no censure; there was no real distinction, said Butt, and no need for the conference to rule upon the issue. (1)

The tempo of the conference quickened slightly with the introduction of the third resolution, which demanded a parliament 'composed of the Sovereign, the Lords, and the Commons.' Another liberal, Kenelm Digby, member for Queen's County, found himself in advance of the movement in democratic zeal: he objected to the restoration of the House of Lords. His criticism found some support among the advanced men, and D. A. Nagle and C. G. Doran urged that the composition of the proposed parliament should be left unspecified. Their amendment was, however, withdrawn, and the original motion carried. The conference then adjourned at 5.30 p.m. until 11 o'clock on the following morning.

The proceedings upon the second day opened at 11.30 am. with the introduction of the fourth and in

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1 Conference proceedings, p. 45.

A. M. Sullivan's words the crucial resolution, defining the national demands in the federalist terms already stated by the Home Government Association. This provoked a long debate. The O'Conor Don, member for Roscommon, who had recently achieved the feat of speaking for two hours at a home rule meeting in Roscommon without telling his audience if he was a home ruler, <sup>(1)</sup> rose to make a further personal explanation; he thought the resolution too precise:

There are some of them, perhaps, drawn up in a form which if submitted to me for my individual signature for approval I would not be able to give it. But am I on that account to get up and raise dissension here? No, certainly not. I look beyond the mere form and terms that appear in the resolution. They will be forgotten in a very short time; but the principle that this great national conference met here today to affirm - the principle that some form of self-government for Ireland is demanded - that principle will remain .... I am in favour of any scheme which will secure to my countrymen a more extended power over the laws which regulate their own affairs, any system that will secure that further control - consistently, of course, as we all here admit, with the preservation of law and order, the rights and security of property. (2)

Major O'Reilly, liberal M.P. for Longford, supported this plea for an avoidance of any rigid commitment on 'details'. (3)

This issue was crucial, and Sullivan at least was quick to perceive the dangers inherent in the O'Conor Don's attitude:-

1 Nation, 18 Oct. 1873.  
 2 Conference Proceedings, pp. 81-4  
 3 ibid., p. 92.

let no man in this hall think that it is permitted to him, after this resolution passes without his honest, outspoken, manly dissent, to think that he has reserved to himself, by any ambiguous speech, the right to go outside this meeting and take up a dubious attitude towards the national aim of the country. (1)

Doubtful representatives should make way for those who would reflect popular feeling, said Ferguson on behalf of the advanced party: 'The people's day had come, and they would find the people's men'. If some binding pledge had been exacted at this point, much later dissension might have been avoided. But there were enough liberals and repealers present to make such a step dangerously controversial; Martin found the O'Conor's Don's explanation 'entirely satisfactory' and Smyth also deprecated a rigid pledge on federalism. Butt personally strongly deprecated the O'Conor Don's ambiguity, but after the entire day had been devoted to the issue the discussion was allowed to drop, and the resolution to pass without any official ruling upon its implied responsibilities. (2)

A third meeting proving necessary, the chairman William Shaw reopened the conference the following morning with a request to the delegates to endeavour to conclude its business that day. (3) The fifth resolution, which stressed the moderation of the home rule proposal, was moved by

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1 Conference Proceedings, pp. 87-91  
2 ibid., pp. 93-106.  
3 ibid., p. 107.

Sir Joseph McKenna, M.P., and seconded by McCarthy Downing, M.P., who took advantage of this opportunity to defend the attitude of the O'Connor Don on the previous day. At this point John Ferguson endeavoured to introduce a motion upon the subject of parliamentary action but was ruled out of order by Shaw, <sup>(1)</sup> who admitted the importance of the issue, but urged that it be left to the new league. These were apparently Butt's wishes. <sup>(2)</sup> But after the passage of the 6th, 7th, and 8th resolutions, which called for responsible cabinet government, expressed the belief that a federal arrangement would strengthen the empire, and declared a willingness to incorporate guarantees against religious ascendancy into any such settlement, the issue arose four-square upon the ninth resolution, which was proposed by Doran and seconded by O'Connor Power:

That this conference cannot separate without calling on the Irish constituencies at the next general election to return men earnestly and truly devoted to the great cause which this conference has been called on to promote, and who, in any emergency that may arise, will be ready to take counsel with a great National Conference to be called in such a manner as to represent the opinions and feelings of the Irish

on cit., p. 107-14.

- 1 According to the Irishman a resolution had been in contemplation binding the Irish members to withdraw from Parliament in the event of the refusal of Home Rule. (Irishman, 22 Nov. 1873.) Perhaps this was the one which Ferguson sought to introduce, or possibly it was one of those withdrawn by the advanced men in response to Butt's pleading.
- 2 Conference Proceedings, p. 137.



nation, and that with a view to rendering members of parliament and their constituencies more in accord on all questions affecting the welfare of their country, it is recommended by this conference that at the close of each session of parliament the representatives should render to their constituents an account of their stewardship. (1)

O'Connor Power, in seconding this resolution, admitted that it might not go far enough to satisfy everyone in binding the members of parliament; nor did it. Michael Cahill of the Queen's County Independent Club proposed, and Joseph Biggar seconded, an amendment:

That, to render the Irish vote effective, we recommend that the Irish members shall form themselves into a permanent committee for the discussion of every ministerial and other proposal which affects the interests of Ireland, that no individual shall introduce any bill, or give notice of any motion of importance, unless his proceeding shall be sanctioned and supported by such committee; and finally, that the Irish members shall always vote in a body, or abstain from voting on all party questions, as the majority may decide. (2).

At this point the hour of 5.30 p.m. was reached, and the conference adjourned. A fourth and final day would be needed to debate this crucial issue.

At 11.30 a.m. on Friday, 21 November, the conference re-assembled and Cahill rose to propose his amendment, which he said would merely involve the adoption of the majority rule already followed in the English parties. But it was Biggar who stated the case for the amendment most strongly:

the most important part of the business of the Conference had now been reached .... he considered the amendment

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1 op. cit., pp. 145-6.  
2 ibid., p. 149.

preferable to the resolution. The only objection he had to it was that it did not go far enough, and that there should have been a clause introduced calling upon candidates for parliamentary honours to give written pledges .... It recommended organised action on the part of the home rule members, and if there was that organisation they could carry whatever they pleased in the British house of commons. It also recommended voting and abstaining from voting on party divisions. What did they care about whig or tory, or whether Gladstone or Disraeli was in power if they could only get accomplished the object they had in view for the benefit of the country? One great objection raised at the conference was that the land question and the education question were not to be brought before them. These things had been kept very fairly in the background. Their one great object was to gain home rule for Ireland, and the only way to get home rule from the English Parliament was for the Irish members to keep compactly and honestly together. (1)

This attitude was completely opposed to Butt's method of seeking interim concessions, in addition to his view of the individual freedom necessary for members of parliament. Even John Ferguson preferred the original resolution as 'more in accord with the spirit of their leaders - Messrs. Butt, Martin, and others'. (2) King Harman attacked the amendment even more vigorously, ridiculing it in language ironically prophetic:

Let them give their members but one pledge; that pledge should be Home Rule, and nothing but Home Rule. Let them vote freely and in accordance with their conscience on every question, but let the constituents see before they send them in that their common sense and conscience point to Home Rule. If they bind their members more he would say - "Establish a fund; pay your representatives and dismiss them after a week's warning as you would any other servant".... (3)

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- 1 Conference Proceedings, p. 155. This speech, and Biggar's name, were entirely omitted from the report of the proceedings in the Nation, 29 Nov. 1873.
- 2 *ibid.*, p. 157.
- 3 *ibid.*, pp 159-60.

The point that such a pledge bound a member only to vote for an annual home rule motion and otherwise to act exactly as he pleased no doubt occurred to Biggar; he got little opportunity to raise it. One after another the sitting members ridiculed the amendment. Martin would not enter parliament under such a pledge; (1) Synan thought the 1852 pledge 'was intended as a substitute for character and produced the perjury'; he also considered the pledge of a conference in the original resolution absurd. (2) Henry supported the resolution; (3) Downing also urged the omission of the conference proposal from it; as for the amendment, it was 'perfectly monstrous'; (4) Gray disagreed 'toto caelo' with Cahill's amendment; <sup>and</sup> men of strength and character to parliament, he said, and all will be well. (5) On the other side Mayor John Daly of Cork urged that members of parliament should be bound to a 'plain creed' otherwise 'there would be some members who would not accept leadership who would say home rule was to be obtained this way or that way'; (6) and a Mr. P. McGowan, P.L.G., of Leitrim warned the conference that the ordinary people were saying 'the members of parliament must pledge themselves to a certain programme of the cause or they would never fight again for

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1 Conference Proceedings, p. 161.  
 2 *ibid.*, pp. 163-4.  
 3 *ibid.*, p. 179.  
 4 *ibid.*, pp. 182-3.  
 5 *ibid.*, p. 185.  
 6 *ibid.*, p. 182.

them, as they had been received so frequently before (~~Hear,~~  
Hear, and applause).<sup>(1)</sup>

But the decisive intervention was that of Butt, who in a long and vigorous speech 'strongly opposed' the amendment. As this was, in effect, the first statement of the parliamentary policy which he was to follow in the next five years, it merits some detailed consideration. He supported the resolution on the assumption that it simply meant 'that when any great emergency arose the men elected should be willing to take counsel with a conference like this of the Irish nation.' The time was not ripe to 'lay down by hard and fast lines any plan to which they should expect the representatives in the house of commons to adhere'.

If independent opposition meant:

a system of indiscriminate voting against every ministry upon every occasion that could turn them out ..... then that policy was one which he could not adopt, and if he were asked to pledge himself to vote on every occasion against every ministry which did not make home rule a cabinet question, he would not accept a seat in parliament on condition of accepting such a pledge. To bind himself to such a pledge would destroy every particle of moral influence which any action of his would have in the house of commons .....

So the idea of 'moral influence' was first articulated. Going on, Butt made quite clear his reverence for the institution of parliament:

Extreme cases might justify a policy of obstruction. If they ever did, the obstruction would probably be carried on in other and more decisive ways than

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1 Nation, 29 Nov. 1873. The report in Conference Proceedings p. 186 is slightly different.

that of voting on all mere party questions with the opposition. But if such a policy were adopted and avowed as the ordinary purpose and policy of any party in the House of Commons it would fail. The truth was, it was opposed to all free parliamentary action. If eighty men by such means could carry home rule, eighty men could carry the Permissive Bill or the Inspection of Nunneries, or any other measure which they would conspire to force upon parliament in the same way.

.... Mr. Cahill asked him, by the amendment, to surrender his convictions and his judgment into the hands of a number of men who were not yet elected, of whom he knew nothing .... He believed that he would betray his own principles, his dignity, his personal honour and personal honesty, if he now gave a pledge that he would ~~not~~ submit his future conduct to the absolute control of any tribunal on earth, except his own conscience, and that higher tribunal, his responsibility to God. However desirable it might be that the members should act together, however valuable it might be to lay down a distinct and plain line of conduct, from which no one could deviate without dishonour, he thought they would find every high-minded man would shrink from pledging himself to act in accordance with the decision of a majority, no matter what that decision might be.

What Butt did concede, in a passage which was remembered against him in later years, was that it might be wise 'to lay down a rule that henceforth they would have no political intercourse with ministers or ministerial officials except across the table of the house of commons.' But a pledge such as Cahill's would 'put up the Irish representation to a sort of competition by auction, in which the hardest swearer will be the highest bidder .....

Were he himself as an elector to choose a man to represent a constituency of which he was a member, he would prefer a

1. Conference Report, pp. 107-7  
2. Ibid., p. 108.

thousand times the honest and manly hesitation of the O'Connor Don to the strongest pledge ever swallowed, and yet to be swallowed by many a political trafficker who would seek to displace him. (1)

Cahill's amendment was withdrawn and Doran's resolution passed unanimously. The importance of this debate can scarcely be overestimated. It is clear that the great majority of those at the conference were not ready to accept a firm pledge, and consequently the defeat of the proposal can scarcely be regarded as a decisive event in the home rule movement. But the exhibition which it provoked of the parliamentary policy envisaged by the home rule leaders was in a sense a turning-point in the movement. Many of the catastrophes which followed originated in the fatal weakness which it revealed. The implacable realism of Biggar stood already in 1873 in stark contrast to the gentlemanly deportment of the parliamentary leaders.

The conference reassembled for the last time in the afternoon. All the resolutions on policy had now been passed, and in quick succession the conference passed a second series dealing with organisation. On the motion of George Bryan, M.P., seconded by Callan, a new association was set up, to be known as the "Irish Home Rule League", and to have as its aims the resolutions of the conference. (2)

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1 Conference Proceedings, pp. 167-79

2 ibid., p. 188.

A committee of sixteen was then appointed. A special fund, in addition to the regular income of the league from subscriptions, was established to promote the organisation in Great Britain and Ireland, and fifteen (1) trustees appointed, whose sanction would be required for any expenditure from this fund. Guarantees for contributions to this fund totalling £1475 were at once handed in. (2) A resolution was also passed that an appeal should be made to Irishmen all over the world; it was proposed by O'Connor Power, who envisaged the sending of deputations to America and other parts of the world. (3) The thirteenth resolution fixed the annual subscription of the association at £1, and recommended that 'steps should also be taken to enrol the great mass of the people in the league'. (4) The membership of the league was to consist in the first place of all members of the old association together with such of those present and those who had signed the requisition for the conference who might pay their subscriptions before 1 December, after which date admission to membership was to be regulated by the rules of the league, to be drawn up by

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1 Conference Proceedings, p. 192. The trustees were R. P. Blennerhassett, Digby, Henry, Martin, Ronayne, and Shaw, members of parliament; Dr. MacHale, Daunt, Alfred Webb, Galbraith, John Ferguson, Father Tom O'Shea, Laurence Waldron, P. McCabe Fay, and Bernard McAnulty. MacHale subsequently declined to act as a trustee. (Resolutions of the national conference, Dublin, 1873, p. 2)

2 *ibid.*, pp. 194-5. Some of the larger subscriptions guaranteed were:  
Henry £300, Shaw £300, Bryan £300, McKenna £100, McCabe Fay £60, Ronayne, Browne, and Digby £50 each.

3 *ibid.*, p. 194.

4 *ibid.*, p. 195.

a committee of sixteen which was then appointed,<sup>(1)</sup> and to be submitted to a meeting of the league on 2 December which would also elect the first officers. A vote of thanks to Shaw as chairman was then passed, and the conference was closed by Butt and Martin.

The conference had had all the external signs of success. The Irishman commended it warmly;<sup>(2)</sup> the Irish Times admitted its representative character and the 'dignity, moderation, and ..... rare ability' with which its principles had been expressed.<sup>(3)</sup> The Dublin Evening Post welcomed the abandonment of the old body:

eclectic in party colour, mixed in creed, varied in race, and holding but one article of faith or union - namely, home rule ..... we have no doubt that the catholic episcopacy and clergy, the liberal gentry, and the masses of the people, will now look, without apprehension, on the future, whether they formally join the new league or not. <sup>(4)</sup>

But this same liberalisation of the movement which gave so much pleasure to the Post was equally obvious to the conservatives. The Mail commended Butt for having kept the clerical programme in the background. But it professed to have no illusions over the sincerity of the liberal members

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1 Butt, John Barry, Biggar, Blunden, Daunt, Digby, Callan, Ferguson, Galbraith, King Harman, Henry, Rev. Mr. W. Malone, Ronayne, Shaw, A. M. Sullivan, and Webb.  
2 Irishman, 22, 29 Nov. 1873  
3 Irish Times, 22 Nov.  
4 Dublin Evening Post, 21 Nov.

1 Dublin Evening Post, 22 Nov. 1873  
2 Irishman, 29 Nov.



of parliament: 'There will be a large demand for Federal rhetoric on the hustings in 1874, and it will not fail of its effect - in returning Liberal Members to Parliament.'<sup>(1)</sup>

The Daily Express wrote of the new converts:-

They have not the least intention of going into opposition unless Mr. Gladstone alters his policy, and Mr. Butt is far too wise to ask them to do so. On a direct vote for home rule most of them would walk into the same lobby with Mr. Butt, and the rest would absent themselves; but with this act, and possibly a tiresome speech, their advocacy of federalism will begin and end.<sup>(2)</sup>

These comments were not merely the expression of party spite. The conference had gained the approval of twenty-six sitting members of parliament, of whom only eight, Butt, Blennerhassett, French, Henry, Martin, Redmond, Ronayne, and Smyth, had been elected since the inception of the home rule movement. So far these men were bound only to vote for home rule in parliament. Could their support be consolidated into a real home rule party? Should they be relied upon in the election which must come at some time in 1874?

Nor was this the only problem which faced the new league. So far, its organisation existed only on paper. Johnston Russell, an active Limerick home ruler and tenant right agitator, summed up the situation concisely in a letter to Butt:-

The Home Rule Association which I think you yourself described as "a private Association of Gentlemen", has been changed into "a League of the People", as far as merely passing a

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1 Dublin Evening Mail, 22 Nov. 1873  
2 Daily Express, 19 Nov.

resolution at the Conference could effect the change. But how, he asks, is this to be done in practice, by separate branches or by a monolithic organisation. He suggests the branch officers should be ex-officio members of the Dublin Council; he further objects to the old rule of the association which made one member who paid a pound equal to twenty associates who paid a shilling each; if the subscription is kept at a pound the league will remain a private body like the association:

Which would be best for Home Rule, 10,000 leaguers at £1 each, or 200,000 at 1/6 each ..... unless we have 200,000 Leaguers Home Rule will never be obtained, and unless the subscription is small we shall not get the people to join it. (1)

The committee appointed by the fifteenth resolution of the conference met and drew up rules and by-laws. These were amended, approved, and adopted at a meeting of the league called for the purpose on 2 December 1873. (2) The resolutions of the conference were restated as the aims of the league, and the co-operation was invited of 'all persons who are willing to join in seeking for Ireland a federal arrangement based upon these general principles'. The league would forward this aim by using all legitimate means of influencing public sentiment, both in Ireland and Great Britain, by taking all opportunities

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1 Russell to Butt, 1 Dec. 1873, Butt MSS.

2 A report on the foundation of the League is bound into Conference proceedings, and comprises pp. 203 to the end of the volume.

of instructing and informing public opinion, and by seeking to unite Irishmen of all creeds and classes in one national movement in support of the great national object hereby contemplated.

Last among its general principles, the league revived Butt's old formula for national unity:

It is declared to be an essential principle of the league, that while every member is understood by joining in it to concur in its general object and plan of action, no person so joining is committed to any political opinion, except the advisability of seeking for Ireland the amount of self-government contemplated in the objects of the league.

The laws of the new body deserve some attention, as they were to be of some importance in less fraternal times. The annual subscription was fixed at one pound, although members might give more. No person could be proposed for membership at a meeting of the league until after his name had been approved by the council and his subscription paid. Members could be expelled from the League on the recommendation of the council. The council was also empowered to recommend a plan 'to devise means of adding to this constitution an organisation to comprise all classes of the Irish people'.

The league was to be run by a council and executive committee, four honorary secretaries, and a treasurer. The council was to consist of fifty members elected by postal ballot in January each year, together with fifty more elected at the first meeting of the council in



meeting, and the laws of the league could only be altered at monthly meetings on notice given at the previous meeting.

From the recital of these rules and regulations a number of salient points emerge. The league had plumped for the single, monolithic method of organisation; the local branches continued and might increase, and even enjoy representative status at national conferences such as that envisaged in the ninth resolution of the Rotunda conference, but they enjoyed no representation in the league. The league consisted of a body of people who were able to pay a subscription of at least one pound a year, and its monthly management furthermore devolved upon those who were able to attend in Dublin. The provision for the addition of fifty members of the council to those elected by ballot ensured total supremacy for the party elected to even the barest authority. Divisions such as these lay in the future, but it was questionable whether the league at any time represented a sufficient step away from the old association and towards a national movement.

In December 1873 the old association held its last meeting and was formally wound up. <sup>(1)</sup> Immediately after the conference Daunt retired to his beloved Kilcascan, and no inducements being able to prevail upon him to return to Dublin, the new organisation found itself at the outset without a

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1 Galbraith to Daunt, 25 Dec. 1873, Butt MSS, vol. iii, MS 832.

secretary. For a time the council debated the merits of  
 twenty applicants for the position,<sup>(1)</sup> but in January 1874  
 Butt wrote to Henry: 'You have heard I suppose that John  
 Martin has expressed a wish for the secretaryship. All here  
 are agreed we must take him .....'<sup>(2)</sup> The choice thus made  
 was probably not the best; Martin was neither a young man nor  
 in good health, and his parliamentary duties interfered with  
 his organisational work for the league. With typical honesty  
 he refused to accept more than two-thirds of the appointed  
 salary in 1874, and at the beginning of 1875 resigned the  
 office altogether.<sup>(3)</sup> But the most pressing need was for a  
 thorough organisation of the country. 'We must lose no time  
 in looking at the constituencies', wrote Shaw to Henry; 'I  
 suppose a General Election is certain next year'.<sup>(4)</sup> Henry  
 foresaw an election in May, and urged Butt to hurry on his  
 plans for widening the basis of the league.<sup>(5)</sup> On the basis  
 of the generally-held expectation that the dissolution would  
 take place in the summer, Butt produced an elaborate plan of  
 campaign which was circulated among the leading parliamentary

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- 1 Webb to Henry, 19 Dec. 1873, Butt MSS, vol. iii, MS 832; Fottrell to Henry, 29 Dec. 1873, *ibid.*
  - 2 Butt to Henry, 13 Jan. 1874, *ibid.*
  - 3 Martin to Daunt, 21 Feb. 1875, Daunt MSS, 8047.
  - 4 Shaw to Henry, 20 Dec. 1873, Butt MSS, vol. iii, MS 832.
  - 5 Henry to Butt, 12 Jan. 1874, Butt MSS.

Representatives of the movement in December 1873. The conference, he wrote, had achieved a tremendous amount;

But it has done little in the way either of placing funds at our disposal or adding to our numerical strength. These things can only be done by attracting public attention to our proceedings and keeping that attention fixed.

To do this would require constant public meetings and efficient staff and organisation:

We may take two dates as landmarks - the first meeting of the league is fixed for the 13th of January: its annual meeting for the third of February. Before the 13th Jan. the council will have commenced weekly meetings on each Friday ..... On the 13th I have undertaken to propose the enrollment (sic) of all home rulers on a National Roll - each paying a shilling for enrollment ..... I entertain the most confident expectation that this will, if properly and vigorously managed, give us in a very short time 100,000 men and £5,000 ..... no pains ought to be spared ..... It ought to emanate from a very influential meeting, at which men of rank and station should sign the roll and pay down their shilling. After this the plan could be managed from the office in Dublin .....

Our annual meeting ought to be almost a miniature reproduction of the conference. It ought to be a very full meeting and very influentially attended. It would be very desirable if we could celebrate this occasion by a dinner.

Probably our members will come up to attend the Levee and remain for the Castle State entertainments. They might remain for our annual meeting and dinner on the way to the meeting of Parliament.

Immediately after enrolling our associates we ought to take steps to form them in every locality into associations .....

If possible, while this process is going on, the spirit of the country ought to be kept up by constant meetings of the league. While I am in Dublin I will engage to attend and speak at one every week .....

I should hope we might be able to carry out

movements in England from which great good would result. The English Confederation wish to place themselves a little more under our control. We ought if possible to provide for this. But if we have funds we ought to imitate the practice of the Anti-Corn Law Leagues and send lecturers and agents into different parts of England .....

Side by side with this plan, Butt held that a programme of parliamentary activity would be necessary to maintain the morals of the country. His suggestions were eight in number. A bill to restore to Ireland, possibly in Kingstown and Queenstown, the two seats lost in the disfranchisement of Cashel and Sligo, and one to assimilate the borough franchise of Ireland to that of England, he believed could both be carried. He proposed also a bill to assimilate the municipal franchise of the two islands, a bill to give Irish municipal corporations the privileges of their English counterparts, a bill to establish representative county councils to undertake the fiscal responsibilities of the grand juries, a bill to establish a fishery board on the Scottish model, 'a bill to secure the Ulster Tenant Right and generally to amend the Land Act', and finally 'Mr. Smyth's bill' to repeal the convention act. The land question he regarded as the most important; the Ulster tenant right proposal he hoped would have the effect of winning the support of the Ulster tenant associations which were due to meet in conference in the near future. It was also, he believed, essential that a motion should be



brought in early in the session condemning the whole system of Irish government. 'There is also the risk of the session coming abruptly to an end. I do not anticipate this, but we ought to secure such a discussion before the dissolution, and I therefore propose to give up my notice to someone else .....

He could manage to get over to Westminster for the three days of the debate but otherwise his attendance could not be relied upon before April.

He concluded:-

As I believe that a great deal of the future of Ireland will depend upon the use we make of the next six months, I hope the friends to whom this paper is sent may be able to meet together to consult on our course about the time of the first meeting of the league on the 13th January.

If we then determine upon a parliamentary movement such as I have suggested the home rule members who would come up to the first annual meeting on the 3rd of February might meet beforehand and arrange their parliamentary plan. (1)

This was bold and comprehensive planning. But how quickly could it be put on foot? In three letters written to Mitchel Henry between December 1873 and January 1874 Alfred Webb, treasurer of the new body as he had been of the old, painted a most gloomy picture of the actual position of the league:

(6 December 1873.) Subscriptions are coming in miserably. We have only about £130 for league and £520 special fund - besides £160 to be paid over by the old

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1 Dec. 1873, Butt MSS, vol 1, MS 830 (2 copies).

association. Our liabilities are about £350 - chiefly advertising. I made out a list of our liabilities today. I have been deterred from advertising our subscription list for very shame on account of its small amount.

(19 December 1873.) If you are rather in despair about our prospects; I am about completely in despair. (Bear in mind, however, that I generally look at the black side of things). On the trust fund, we have £755 in bank. On the league funds, we are, counting all our engagements, about £400 in debt. The funds are coming in miserably; and unless there is some turn in things in the course of a fortnight, I will insist upon our not going further into debt ..... We are sending out circulars to people asking them to join and subscribe, but the responses are wretched.

As to branch and local associations, I don't see how the league can galvanise the country into action unless there is some spontaneity throughout the country. I hoped that the conference would have roused the country to some spontaneity of effort. I see none of it.

(1 January 1874.) Mr. Butt is building the most brilliant castles in the air - I do trust they are not castles in the air - but I fear they are ..... (1)

Even allowing for the pessimism of Webb's character, one point emerges beyond all doubt: a new national organisation for home rule had indeed been founded, but at the beginning of 1874 it existed only on paper, and the practical state of the movement throughout the country was still as it had been under the old Home Government Association. Butt was enthusiastic about his plan of a 'National Roll'; perhaps in time it might have given the movement the popular support it had always lacked. But no such opportunity was to be granted to home rule. Scarcely had the league been founded, when in the midst of the confusion which surrounded its birth,

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1 Shaw to Henry, 6, 19 Dec. 1873; 1 Jan. 1874.  
Butt MSS, vol. iii, MS 832.

it was immediately called upon to face the challenge for which it was only then planning to prepare itself. On 24 January 1874 Gladstone announced that parliament was to be dissolved at once and a general election held in less than three weeks' time. So the six years of Liberal promise came to an abrupt and discreditable end. For home rule they had been good years, years of preparation and of mounting hope. The years that followed upon them were to bring only disillusionment and anticlimax.

