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NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY

CLERICAL INFLUENCES

AN ESSAY ON IRISH SECTARIANISM
AND ENGLISH GOVERNMENT.

BY W. E. H. LECKY.

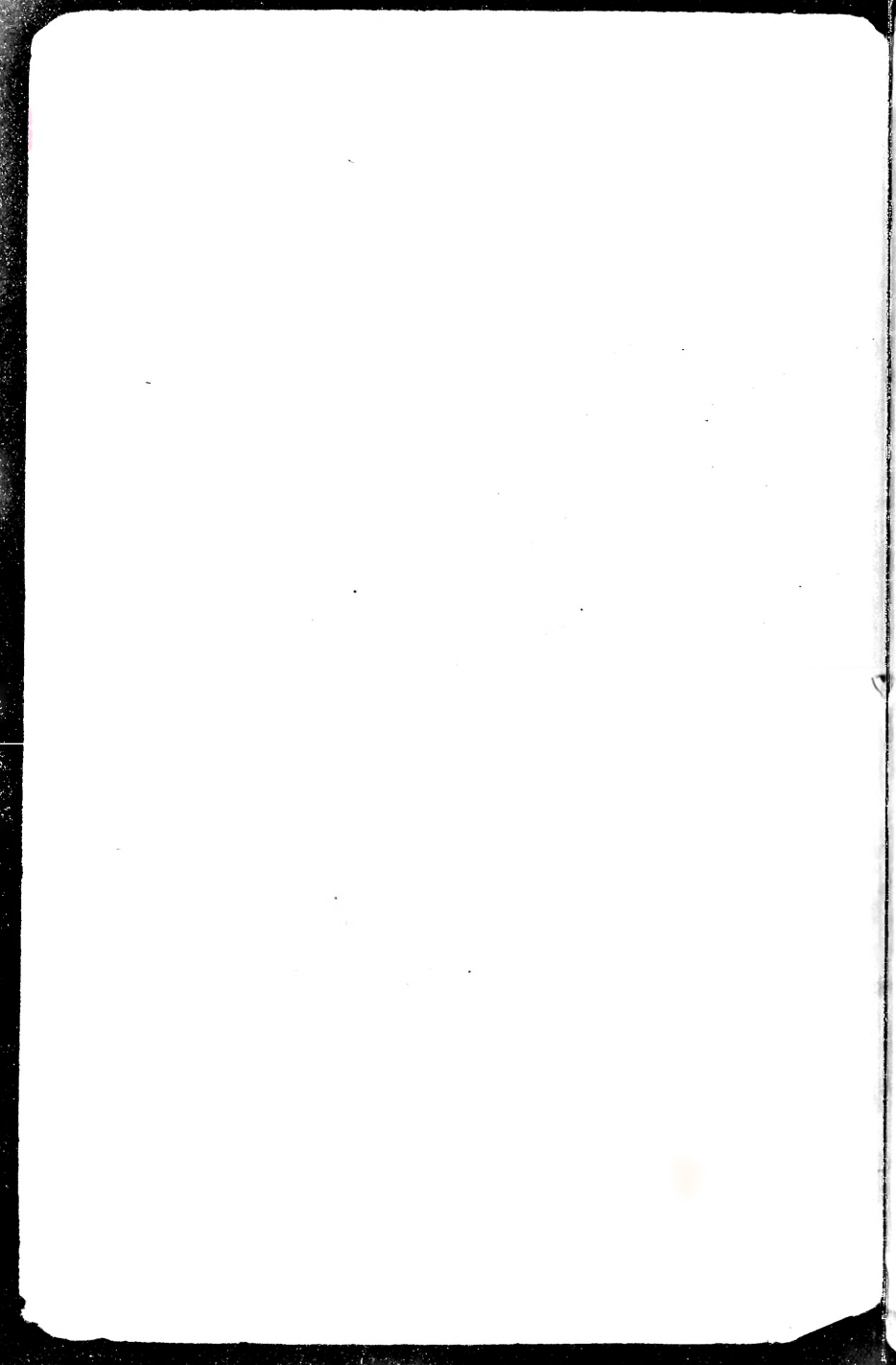
Edited with an Introduction

By W. E. G. LLOYD and

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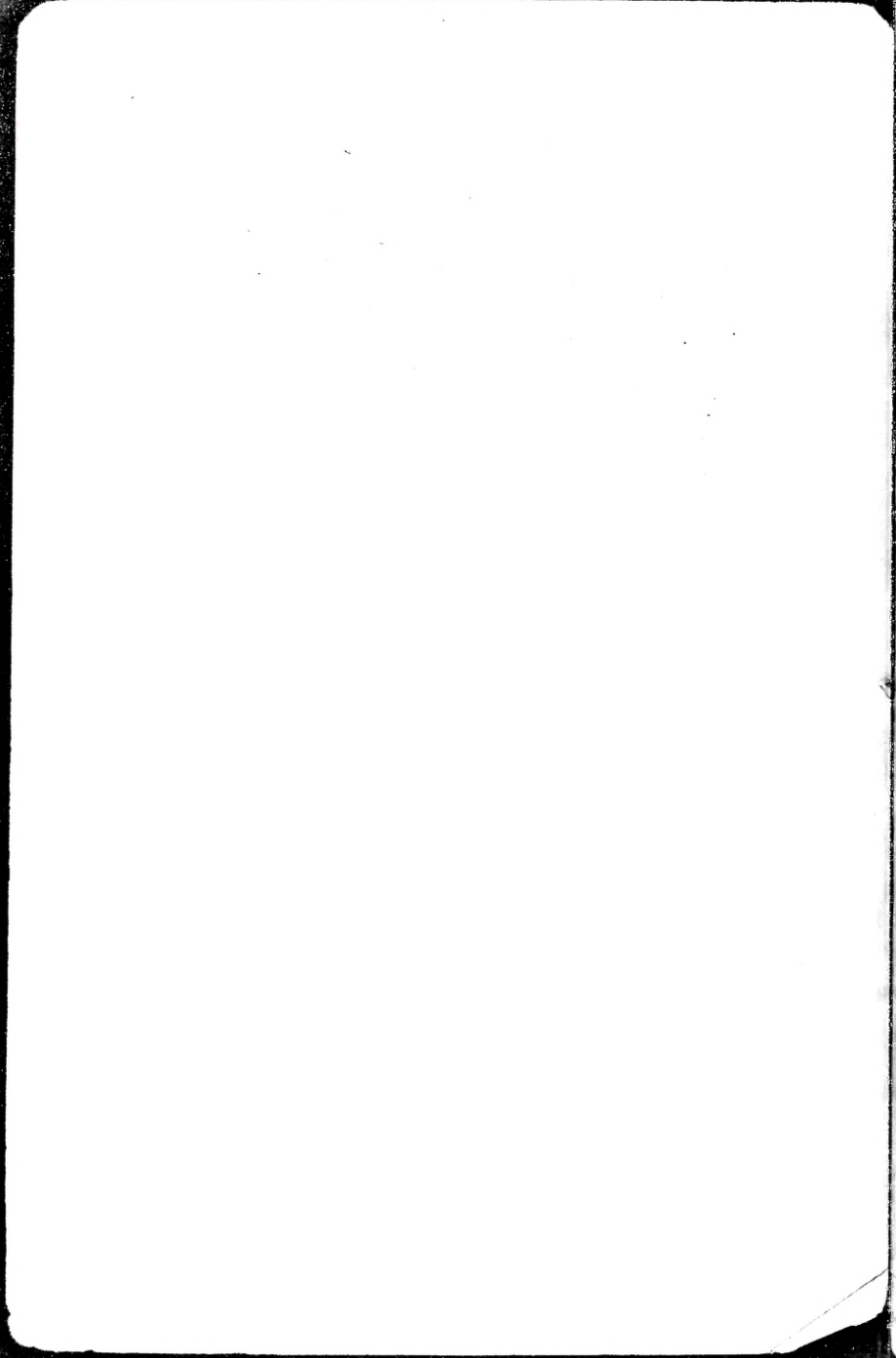


NOTE.

The First Edition of "Clerical Influences" was published in 1861 in *Leaders of Public Opinion*, 1st edition.

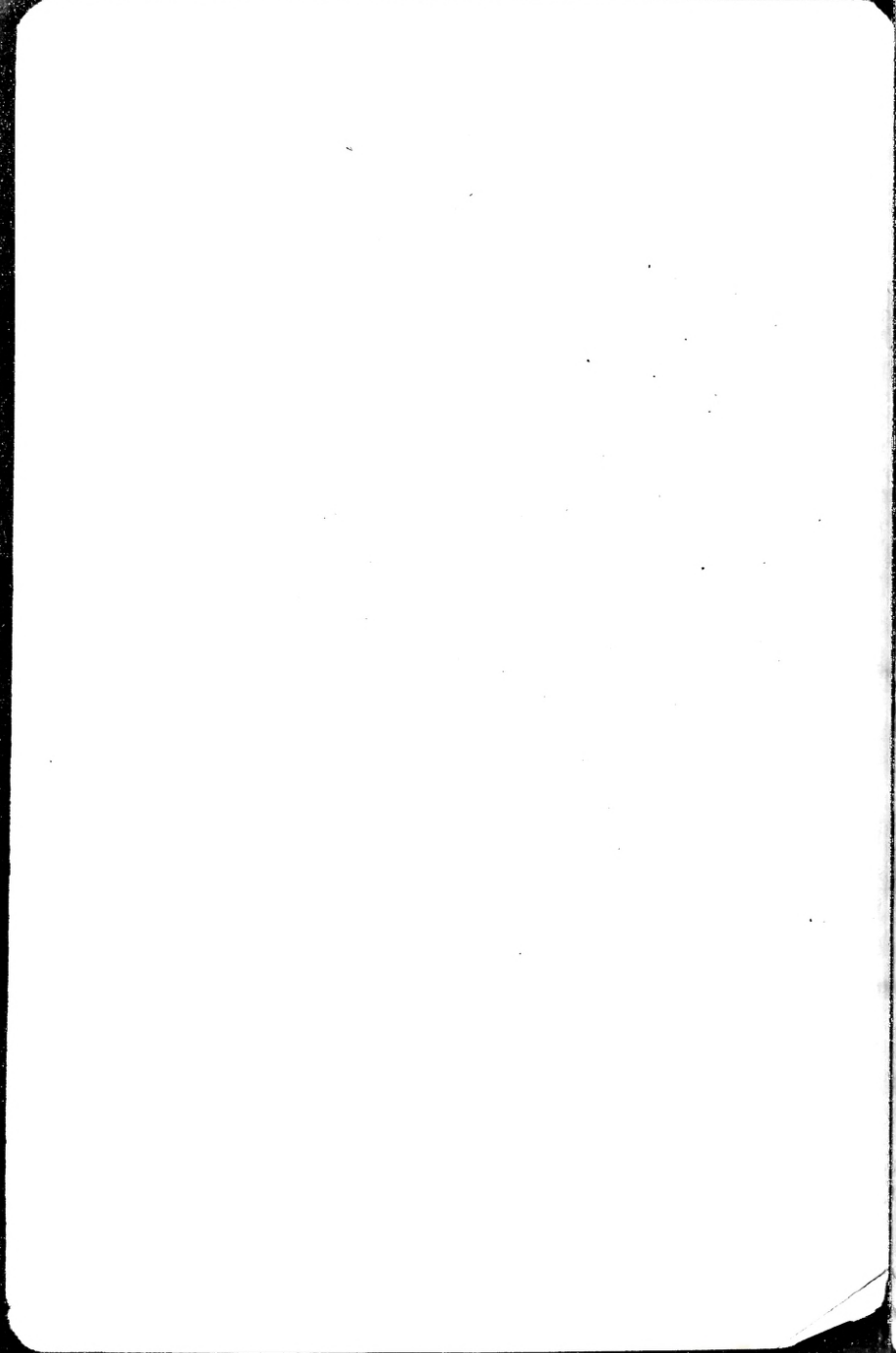
Only thirty-four copies of the first edition were sold (*vide* Lecky's letter to Mr. Booth, Jan. 24th, 1872).

In the 2nd edition of *Leaders of Public Opinion*, 1871, Lecky revised his biographies and left out the Essay on "Clerical Influences." The Essay was also omitted from the subsequent edition, 1903..



CONTENTS

	Page
Introduction	I
Clerical Influences	17



INTRODUCTION

IN venturing to bring what is now an almost forgotten Essay of Lecky before the notice of the public, we think it right at the outset to explain our object. We have not undertaken to publish the Essay simply as one of the earliest efforts of Lecky's genius, and because it has now become a literary curiosity. While we recognise that it is of the first importance to students of Lecky's work that this Essay should be republished, our aim in bringing it to light has not been a merely literary one. We feel that the argument of the book, and the spacious principles, so characteristic of the author, which underlie it, possess in the political considerations of our time a value, scarcely, if at all, affected by the fact that the book was written nearly half a century ago. We bring it before the public because of that special value, and in the belief that the dispassionate character of Lecky's reasoning, and his application of broad principles to the political phenomena of his time, may serve as a guide to many in the Ireland of our day who are confused by the conflicting social and political problems which meet them at every turn. The many who find in the existence, or the fear of, sectarianism in Ireland, their strongest argument against the establishment of a national government in Ireland,^s will be interested in the grounds on which Lecky advances what is practically the converse theory.

But although our object has been more a political than a literary one, we hope that we have approached our task in a reverent spirit. With the exception of one change, the Essay stands exactly as Lecky published it. The change which we have made—in adding a sub-title—has been made not without some hesitation. We consider that the title “Clerical Influences” which Lecky himself adopted, does not sufficiently describe, at all events for present-day readers, either the Essay itself or the spirit which animates it. We felt that by retaining it alone, we might convey to that section of the public to which Lecky is unfamiliar, an erroneous conception of the subject matter of the Essay, and perhaps a misleading conception even to many to whom his work is not unfamiliar. For these reasons, we have felt that we should not be accused of taking an unwarranted liberty if we added to the title the descriptive sub-title “Irish Sectarianism and English Government,” a title which we hope will be found neither a prejudiced nor an inaccurate one.

The Essay first appeared in 1861 as part of Lecky's earliest memorable book, the first edition of “Leaders of Public Opinion in Ireland.” Lecky's own rather slighting criticism of the book is of interest. It is from the final (1903) edition of the “Leaders of Public Opinion”: he says:—

“Public opinion on Irish History at that time hardly existed. Scarcely anything of real value on the subject had recently appeared, and my own little book showed only too clearly the crudity and

exaggeration of a writer in his twenty-third year. At all events it fell absolutely dead."

In this judgment Lecky was most probably prejudiced by the fact that the book, from the publishers' point of view, was a failure, and also to some extent by that diffidence which was always one of his marked characteristics. We venture to think that the Essay which we republish deserves, notwithstanding, to rank with much of the best of Lecky's work. The allusion to the crudity and exaggeration of a writer in his twenty-third year will be more than discounted when it is remembered that within one year of the appearance of "Leaders of Public Opinion," he had commenced, and within four years he had completed, his famous history of the "Rise and Influence of Rationalism in Europe."

On these grounds we have taken upon ourselves the task of republication, and we are of opinion that history will yet vindicate all, as indeed it has already vindicated many, of the views elaborated in this Essay.

An analysis of the change that took place in Lecky's political opinions affords an interesting study. This change is more apparent than real, but to be in a position to appreciate it, it is necessary shortly to review the history of Ireland since 1860. The political life of Ireland in 1860 was as stagnant as the Sargasso Sea, but this was only the calm that preceded the coming storm. Within a few years the country experienced the attempted upheaval of Fenianism, which, however unsuccessful from a revolutionary point of view, left an indelible mark on the political history of the nation.

Within ten years of the date of the Essay, the Established Church had ceased to exist, and with the fall of the Establishment, political life began once more to quicken in the land. The Protestant gentry, smarting under what they considered the gross betrayal of their Church, turned their eyes again to the ideal of National Self-Government, and out of the political ferment caused by Disestablishment arose the Home Rule Movement under Isaac Butt. This fast became strong and vigorous, and had it maintained its original character, that of a movement under aristocratic leadership, it is more than probable that Lecky's ultimate political views would have been more strongly tinged with national sentiment.

But the Land Question, for years a source of discontent, became more and more acute, and came to a crisis in the partial famine of the year '79. It is now admitted that the system of land tenure, formerly prevailing in this country, was a singularly uneconomic and oppressive one, forced on an unwilling country and never properly assimilated to national thought and national character. Under the peculiar condition of Ireland the Land War was inevitable, and was destined to be of a peculiarly bitter nature.

In our opinion, the rise of the Land League and the influence of the more vigorous, but also more democratic, Parnell Movement was responsible for Lecky's change of view. Of the argument he uses in his Essay we can find no repudiation in his later works. We do find a condemnation of Home Rule,

or rather of Repeal of the Union, but this condemnation rests on an entirely different basis, and is supported by quite a different set of arguments from those that would be required in a refutation of the Essay. Lecky has, so far as we can find, never recanted his views as to the causes of sectarian feeling in Ireland; nor will there be found in his later writings anything to displace his sound analysis of the evil effects of a political system that robs the public spirit and activities of large numbers of the best Irishmen, of the powerful inspiration to be derived from a well-grounded national sentiment and tradition.

Furthermore, it has to be remembered that Lecky's attitude towards democracy in general influenced his judgment of the political tendencies manifested in Ireland during the last forty years of his life. He deplures, in the last chapter of Vol. V. of his History of Ireland, the growth of democratic institutions, and the fact that they had also been extended to Ireland; but he reluctantly admits that "The Union has not made Ireland either a loyal or a united country," and he acknowledges the fallacy of the prophecy that the Union would take Ireland out of the domain of party factions. But, while thus admitting many of the evil results which have followed from the Union, he is of opinion that, great as these evils are, they would be outweighed by the dangers to be expected from a change in the legislative system of government. In his own words, "The lessons which may be drawn from the Irish failure are many and valuable. Perhaps the most conspicuous is the folly

of conferring power where it is certain to be misused, and of weakening, in the interests of any political theory, those great pillars of social order on which all true liberty and all real progress ultimately depend."* The "great pillars" of the old social order in Ireland are now, however, by the policy of the Conservative party to which Lecky ultimately gave his adhesion, being removed, and the problem in the Ireland of to-day is to evoke in a democracy based on peasant ownership those moral and civic qualities that will provide a substitute. It is in its bearing upon this problem that the Essay of fifty years ago has its lesson for to-day.

The argument falls under two heads, first the relation of a healthy public opinion to national government, and secondly, the relation of sectarianism to public opinion. Lecky sets out to show that a real national life, the parent of a sound public opinion, does not exist (except in the doubtful instance of France), independently of a free government. He goes on to argue that when public opinion is diseased, when there is no national life in a country, sectarianism, which languishes when there is a public spirit to absorb it, flourishes unchecked. That, briefly put, is the thesis of the Essay.

But it is in the application of these principles to the concrete case of Ireland that the Essay is of most value, and the author most stimulating. Lecky takes, as his first test, the influence of the Government of England on the public mind. He shows that whatever defects there may be in the English

* Hist. Ireland, Vol. V., p. 494.

system, it cannot be disputed that it fosters and keeps robust and healthy, a vigorous national life and a sound public opinion. "Everywhere" he says, "is exhibited a steady, habitual interest and confidence in the proceedings of Government." He then turns to Ireland, and finds exactly the opposite state of things. In the free play of a genuine public spirit in England, the ill-feelings and suspicions of the people find, as he points out, their natural outlet. But in Ireland where there is no such free government, the ill-feelings and suspicions of the people—"the humours of society," as Grattan called them—find no such vent. And the reason, as Lecky tersely puts it, is that "public opinion is diseased—diseased to the very core."

To this disease of public opinion Lecky attributes the attitude of the Irish people towards politics, which he considers a tissue of inconsistencies—"a perpetual vacillation on all points but one—antipathy to the existing system." His analysis of the "perpetual vacillation" is interesting, but we cannot but think that it is not carried far enough. To give one instance of what we mean, we would draw attention to what Lecky says of the inconsistency of the Irish people on the Italian question. He points out that the Irish people departed from the very principle which they hold—the principle that the public opinion of a nation should determine its form of government—to support the Papal Government at a time when it was "maintained only by a foreign power" and when it had "avowedly identified itself with the cause of despotism in Italy." It seems to

us that this inconsistency is not to be attributed wholly to the sectarianism which follows upon the disease of public opinion. It was due in as great measure to the inconsistency of the English people, which manifested itself on the other side. England at the time when the Italian question—happily now become a matter of history—was at its height, professed herself simultaneously the champion of national government in Italy, and the enemy of national government in Ireland. In that inconsistency, which seemed to the Irish mind suspiciously akin to hypocrisy, lies one of the causes of the Irish inconsistency which Lecky censures. And it is worthy of note that the same English inconsistency may be seen in our day in a section of the English Press, which at one and the same time protests against the concession of national government to Ireland, and against its denial to Finland. It is manifested also in the fact that while England strains at the Irish gnat, she has made bold to swallow the South African camel.

In dealing with the characteristics of the Irish sectarianism of his day, Lecky prefaces everything he has to say by declaring that the existence of ill feeling between the Catholics and the Protestants is the direct consequence of the Act of Union. He lays down the principle that "if purely political feeling be eliminated from a people who possess a representative system, and who are separated by rival creeds, the result [that is, the growth of sectarian bitterness] is inevitable." Whatever may be said as to whether Lecky overstates his case

on either side, he cannot, we think, be accused of acquitting the Protestants while convicting the Catholics. But we think that he has attached rather too much importance to the action of the clergy of both sides as being mainly responsible for fostering sectarianism. He blames the Protestant clergy for being anti-national, and for making opposition to the Catholics the main object of their policy, and he blames the Catholic clergy for endeavouring to make the political strength of their country "a weapon in the service of the Vatican" and for labouring to widen every breach between the Catholics and the Protestants. No doubt at the time the facts of the case lent themselves to the interpretation which Lecky put upon them. When he wrote, the "Brass Band" was fresh in the minds of everyone, and the Italian question was agitating the public mind. But Lecky erred, in our judgment, by regarding the phenomena of sectarianism which he describes, as solely the result of clerical influence and as charged with purely a sectarian meaning. There were political causes at work which tended to keep alive sectarian fires, quite apart from clerical influence on either side. The democratic tendencies of the O'Connell movement, and the linking together of the Catholic agitation for Emancipation and the national movement for Repeal of the Union had no doubt their effect in alienating the feelings of the Protestant gentry, and that alienation reacted upon the National party who were Catholics, and who more and more identified the Protestant religion with the anti-national party, and directed their re-

sentment against the Protestantism as well as the Unionism of their opponents. This coincidence of the lines of political with the lines of religious cleavage has unfortunately left a confusion in the minds of both sides which has lasted, though not in all its strength, to the present day. Thus, even in our day we find the Catholic peasantry using the term Protestant as a political term and a synonym for Unionist. And with the terms reversed, the same is true of a great many Orangemen in Ulster. But while sectarianism is unhappily still with us, no serious student of the history of the country during the last fifty years can deny that it has lost much of its force and nearly all its bitterness. Outstanding differences of a semi-religious and political nature which formerly existed between Catholics and Protestants have been settled; the Irish Church, freed from the political shackles of the Establishment, is no longer looked upon by the Catholics as an institution devised primarily to foster English influences. What the Church has lost in prestige, she has more than gained by that infusion of energy and vigour, and of that democratic spirit which was impossible for her under the Establishment. The University question, which was such a burning one in the sixties, has since been settled in a friendly and amicable spirit. Even the Land question, which in its essence was secular and economic rather than religious, had still within it the germ of sectarianism, owing to the fact that a large and preponderating majority of the Irish Landlords were members of the Protestant religion, while the Irish peasantry are

mainly Roman Catholic. The land question is now happily almost settled and another cause of friction is removed. Such incidents as the popular rejoicing in the South of Ireland on the elevation of an esteemed Protestant clergyman to the Episcopal Bench, and the action of the Irish Protestants in welcoming and assisting the change in the Royal Accession Declaration, are evidences whose significance is not to be denied, of a new era of mutual goodwill and respect.

While we have endeavoured to trace the undoubted decay of sectarianism, we do not deny that sectarianism still exists in Ireland. We do not wish to emulate that unfortunately rather numerous class of people who, because they do not wish to face the disagreeable truths of life, have an ostrich-like habit of putting their heads in the sand. We think that while the tendency has been, on the Protestant and Unionist side, to accentuate and draw public attention to every remaining aspect of sectarianism, the Catholic and Nationalist is sometimes too prone to ignore its existence completely, or at all events only to admit it to the disadvantage of his Protestant fellow-countryman.

We think that the explanation of this attitude is to be found in the history of the two religions in this country. The Protestant, for centuries the ruling caste, the upholder of existing institutions, is prone to see in the increasing social and political power of the Catholic a sinister attempt to dislodge him from positions of public trust; and to attribute religious motives to a natural political evolution. The

Catholic is apt to seize upon the newly found political power with a zest which may, and indeed sometimes does, amount to injustice. It would be well if each party would sometimes admit the possibility of sectarianism on its own side, rather than attribute it solely to the rival creed.

In our opinion, the sectarianism that exists in Ireland at the present day is more rife in Ulster than in the other provinces, and the cause is precisely that on which Lecky lays stress in his Essay: national feeling is almost non-existent amongst the Protestants of the North, and hence they are thrown back on religion as the motive of political action. This creates the sectarian spirit which is encouraged and exploited by the political party opposed to the demand for National Self-Government, in order to keep alive the feeling against Nationalism.

On the Catholic side, the growth of a large organisation, such as the Ancient Order of Hibernians, which within the last few years has spread throughout the country with singular rapidity, deserves careful attention. The conception of religious benefit and philanthropic societies is an admirable one, and as such, the Ancient Order of Hibernians deserves a generous tribute. But there is another aspect to the society which is more open to criticism, and is viewed with alarm by many, Protestants and Catholics alike. The Ancient Order of Hibernians, besides being a benefit society, is a frankly political organisation. It has spread with such rapidity of late years throughout Ireland, and has obtained such influence in Irish politics that it endangers the unsectarian

character of the national movement. It has been said "that there should be no politics in religion, and very little religion in politics," and the evil of a purely sectarian society, such as the Ancient Order of Hibernians, becoming a factor in Irish public life, lies in the apprehension it creates of the establishment of a Catholic Ascendancy.

We do not anticipate any deliberate attempt to establish such an ascendancy in this enlightened age, and if such an attempt were made it would be sternly suppressed and reprobated by public opinion, both Catholic and Protestant: we believe that Irishmen will soon recognise that one is the complement of the other, and that upon the ashes of past ascendancies may be kindled the fire of a true Nationality.

That the establishment of National Self-Government in Ireland is the surest means of destroying sectarian ill-feeling can hardly be doubted by anyone who weighs impartially the arguments put forward in the Essay. We have endeavoured to show that political and historic causes lie at the root of the evil, and that already, since Lecky wrote, much of the bitterness which existed in his day has been removed. A national government, by creating an Irish public opinion irrespective of religious differences, and by bringing together, in the administration of the country, people who now belong to the Unionist minority, most of which is Protestant, and people who belong to the Nationalist majority, most of which is Catholic, will obliterate the line upon which politics and religion coincide in Ireland. Instead of Protestant Unionists and Catholic Nationa-

lists, the division of a diseased nation, we shall have the natural and healthy divisions of a nation which is no longer diseased. And in each of these divisions, Conservative and Liberal, Individualist and Socialist, or whatever they may be, we shall find members, not of one religion, but of all religions. That is the experience of all normal states, and we see no reason whatever to believe that Ireland alone in Europe will, in this respect, disprove the experience of the civilised world. On the contrary, there is every reason to believe from the history of the national struggle during the last century and a half, and from the character of the people, that Ireland is likely to behave, when she is entrusted with her own affairs, precisely as other European States in which there exists a difference of creed.

We do not think that the majority of Irish Protestants would find much to differ with in this view, so far as the Catholic laity is concerned. But it is idle to disguise from ourselves the fact that they fear that clerical influence might assert itself as a retarding, if not a destroying, force in the working out of harmonious relations between the two creeds. There can be little doubt that the influence of the Catholic clergy in Ireland has been exaggerated by many people, but still every impartial inquirer will readily allow that it does exist in a somewhat excessive degree. This is to be attributed more to historical causes, and to the politico-religious character of Irish division than to any peculiar readiness of the Irish Catholic laity to accept it, or of the priesthood to exercise it. The Irish priests became the

political leaders of the Catholics in Ireland at a time—the time of the Penal enactments—when the people were bereft of any other guides, and we would direct attention to the well-deserved tribute which Lecky pays them in this connection. That the spiritual and the political leadership of the priests should have become intermingled in the minds both of the priests themselves and of the people, was natural and perhaps inevitable. Nor is it to be wondered at that the connection once established, and the memories of the past borne in mind, the priesthood should be loth to relinquish the double power, any more than it is to be wondered at that some of them should have abused the influence. To the calm and dispassionate mind, these things are in the natural order, and are seen in their due proportion. They have their source in an abnormal condition of affairs, and they will just as certainly have an end when affairs are normal. We do not share the view that would deny to clergymen the common right of taking that part in politics, which is the privilege of every citizen. But every serious student of politics, whether clerical or lay, will agree that the dangers of the political leadership of the clergy are great, if for no other reason than that there is a tendency to confuse the purely spiritual authority with the purely secular influence, and that what should be merely an opinion tends to be regarded as a jurisdiction.

Already there are not wanting indications that whatever undue clerical influence there is in Irish politics tends, either through the action of the people

in resisting it, or in the action of the priests in relinquishing it, to disappear. And there are very few, if indeed there be any, instances in which even the undue influence that exists is being exerted to widen the breach between Catholics and Protestants. In the healthy public opinion which is bound to follow on the attainment of self-government, the influence of the clergy in politics will be precisely the same as that of educated laymen, with no more and no less weight. That is the conclusion to which all the evidence points, and it is one which will be acquiesced in by patriotic priests as well as by patriotic laymen. An influence which is abnormal and which has its basis, not in the needs of the present, but in the exigencies of the past, cannot last for ever.

In conclusion, we commend this work of Lecky's to the serious and unprejudiced attention of all Irishmen and of all well-wishers of Ireland, whether they be Catholic or Protestant, clerical or lay, Unionist or Nationalist, in the hope that the considerations which it advances, and the principles which it applies, will help them to a better understanding of this country, and will inspire their love of Ireland with a deeper and a richer meaning.

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CLERICAL INFLUENCES.

ONE of the principal objects of a good Government should be to attach the affections of the people to itself. That lively interest in public affairs, that healthy action of public opinion which we call the national sentiment, is the true essence of all national prosperity. Geographical position, material wealth, military resources, and intellectual pre-eminence, are all of secondary importance. Wherever this national life exists in robust energy, prosperity may be fairly expected. Wherever it is wanting calamity will inevitably ensue. No truth is more clearly established in history than that the political decline of a nation is never an isolated fact. When public opinion is most vigorous, and the political condition of a country most satisfactory, the moral and intellectual development of the people will be highest. When public opinion grows faint, when patriotism dies, and factious or personal motives sway the state, a corresponding decadence will be exhibited in every branch. Departments of intellect that appear entirely unconnected with politics begin to languish; classes that seem far removed from Court influences visibly deteriorate. The analogy between the individual and the nation holds good in its details. The disease that has infected the head pervades and emasculates the members.

In one European nation a strong national life seems to exist independently of the Government. This rare privilege France owes partly to the division of the soil among the entire people, and, we think, still more to her military system. Her army is so large that it includes a representative of almost every family, so open that its highest positions may be attained by any Frenchman, so popular that it is the constant centre of the attentions of the nation. It thus discharges one of the principal functions of a government. It is the visible type and representative of the people, the embodiment of their feelings, and the chief object of their affections.

In other countries national life depends chiefly upon the Government; and it is one of the principal advantages of free Governments that they, beyond all others, foster the public opinion which is the essence of that life. The neglect of this portion of the functions of a Government forms, I think, the great error of Carlyle and of his school. A Government is not merely an agent appointed to discharge certain business (in the ordinary sense of the word) in the most economical and efficient manner. It is also a great system of political education, and a great representative of popular feelings. It is perhaps not too much to say, that its adaptation to the character and the wishes of the people is a more important subject of consideration than its intrinsic merits.

It is especially needful to dwell upon the importance of the national sentiment in the present day, for, in addition to those we have noticed, there are

many who virtually deny it by making wealth the one test of national prosperity. This school may be said to rise chiefly from a perversion of political economy. Political economy is simply the science of wealth. It teaches the laws that regulate it, and the relation it bears to other elements of national prosperity. But, while retaining its limited scope, it has unfortunately been regarded by many inaccurate thinkers as the science of politics; and thus, by an easy transition, wealth is made the acme of political greatness. Nor was this confusion as unnatural as might be supposed; for political economy, in pursuing its appropriate object, touches incidentally upon nearly all political subjects. The system of credit is intimately connected with questions about the comparative merits of despotic and constitutional Governments; the luxurious tastes produced by wealth have an important influence upon the increase of population; the moral character of the people and their material prosperity act and react upon each other. But while political economy regards these things, it regards them merely in their relation to the main object of the science. It represents them all as subordinate to the great aim it proposes to itself—the development and increase of wealth.

This view, though perfectly just, if adopted by the political economist when considering merely his own science, is eminently false if adopted by the statesman when surveying the whole field of politics. The first condition of true national prosperity is the harmony of the Government with the wishes and the

character of the people. When this harmony is replaced by discontent or indifference, material and other prosperity invariably prove illusive. Wealth becomes but a dangerous plethora; the extension of territory only multiplies the elements of discord and of dissolution; military prowess serves merely to invest a dying system with a transient and an unsubstantial beauty.

“Government,” to adopt a fine saying of Kossuth, “is an organism and not a mechanism.” It should grow out of the character and the traditions of the people. It should present a continuous, though ever-developing, existence, connecting the present of the nation with its past. The statesman should be merely the representative of his age, accomplishing those changes which time and public opinion had prepared. The mechanical system, which regards only the intrinsic excellence of a political arrangement, irrespectively of the antecedents and the public opinion of the people, proves the invariable source of national calamity. Sometimes it produces vast and heterogeneous empires, disunited in feeling in proportion as they are centralised in government; exhibiting a legislative system almost perfect in compactness, symmetry, and harmony, and a people smouldering in continual half-suppressed rebellion. Sometimes, as in Ireland, it exhibits the strange spectacle of a free Government almost neutralised in its action by the discontent of the people, and failing in the most glaring manner to discharge its functions as the organ of their feelings and of their opinions.

There is, perhaps, no Government in the world that

succeeds so admirably in eliciting, sustaining, and directing public opinion, as that of England. It does not, it is true, escape much adverse criticism among the people. A system so complex, and, in some respects, so anomalous, presents numerous points of attack, and the transparent element of publicity that invests all political matters in England, renders its defects peculiarly apparent. Its very perfections betray its faults, for, as Bacon says, "the best governments are always subject to be like the fairest crystals, where every icicle and grain is seen, which in a fouler stone is never perceived." But in one respect its excellence is indisputable. No intelligent foreigner, we believe, could land upon the English coast without being struck with the intensity of the political life prevailing every class of the community. It permeates every pore; it thrills and vibrates along every fibre of the political body; it diffuses its action through the remotest village; it differs equally from the dull torpor of most continental nations in time of calm, and from their feverish and spasmodic excitement in time of commotion. Every where is exhibited a steady, habitual interest and confidence in the proceedings of Government. The decision of Parliament, if not instantly accepted, is never without its influence on the public mind. The ill-feeling, the suspicions, the apprehensions, the peccant humours that agitate the people, find there their vent, their resolution, and their end.

Little or nothing of this kind is to be found in Ireland. Severed from their ancient traditions, and ruled by a Legislature imposed on them contrary to

their will; differing essentially in character and in temperament from the nation with whom they are thus associated; humiliated by the circumstances of their defeat and by the ceaseless ridicule poured on them through every organ of the press, and through every channel of literature, the Irish people seem to have lost all interest in English politics. Parliament can make their laws, but it cannot control or influence their feelings. It can revolutionise the whole system of government, but it cannot allay one discontent, or quell one passion. Public opinion is diseased—diseased to the very core. Instead of circulating in healthy action through the land, it stagnates, it coagulates, it corrupts. The disease manifests itself in sullen discontent, in class warfare, in secret societies, in almost puerile paroxysms of hatred against England, in a perpetual vacillation on all points but one—antipathy to the existing system. Sometimes we have a eulogy of the Sepoys, sometimes an enthusiastic movement in favour of the government of the Pope. At one time doctrines are urged concerning the tenure of land which can only be justified on the principle of Prudhon, that “property is robbery;” at another, the sympathies of the people are directed towards Austria, the political representative of the Middle Ages. Admiration for Italian Revolutionists is stigmatized as grossly irreligious, yet agrarian murders are not unfrequently extenuated till they are almost justified.* The mass

* Let any one who thinks this an exaggeration, turn to the articles in the ‘Nation,’ upon the attempted murder of Mr. Nixon, in the county of Donegal, a year or two ago.

of the people seem to have no intelligible principles and no settled sympathies. Two-thirds of the population—the portion that is most distinctively and characteristically Irish—the classes who form the foundation of the political system, and who must ever rise in wealth and importance, seem to follow implicitly the guidance of the priests, and, like them, to be thoroughly alienated from England. Those who examine the popular press, or who attend the popular meetings* in Ireland, will easily appreciate the extent of this antipathy. During the few years that followed the famine it was supposed to have passed away, but the Russian war, the Indian rebellion, and the Italian question dispelled the illusion; and the journals that once dilated most eloquently on the tranquillity of Ireland have since confessed that the people are at heart as discontented as ever.

Grattan, in one of his speeches against the Union, described by implication the effect of destroying the Parliament, in language which has almost the weight of prophecy. "The object of the minister," he said, "seems to be to get rid of the Parliament in order to get rid of the opposition—a shallow and a senseless

* We remember once hearing a lecture upon India, delivered in Dublin, by one of the most popular of the Irish priests, before an immense audience—chiefly, we should say, of the middle classes. In the course of his observations, the lecturer expressed his opinion, that England would sooner or later lose India. The prophecy, one would fancy, was not very startling, or very novel, and it was delivered in a simple conversational tone, without any of those rhetorical artifices that are employed to excite enthusiasm. It was responded to by a burst of the most impassioned and unanimous applause, and it was some time before the lecturer could resume. We believe that those who attend popular meetings in Ireland will recognise this as a fair specimen of the prevailing feeling. These things are not trivial, for they indicate an intense and a deep-rooted aversion to England.

thought! What! when you banish the Parliament, do you banish the people? Do you extinguish the sentiment? Do you extinguish the soul? Do you put out the spirit of liberty when you destroy that organ, constitutional and capacious, through which the spirit may be safely and discreetly conveyed? What is the excellence of our constitution? Not that it performs prodigies and prevents the birth of vices that are inherent to human nature, but that it provides an organ in which those vices may play and evaporate, and through which the humours of society may pass without preying on the vitals. Parliament is that body, where the whole intellect of the country may be collected, and where the spirit of patriotism, of liberty, and of ambition, may all act under the control of that intellect and under the check of publicity and observation."

The gravity of the facts we have mentioned is sufficiently evident, yet, if these were all, the evil would most probably be but temporary—a discontent which was purely retrospective would hardly prove permanent. Ill feeling would grow fainter every year, as the memory of the past faded from the minds of the people, and the existence of a free press necessitating *some* public opinion would gradually identify the public mind with that of England. Unfortunately, however, there exists in Ireland a topic that effectually prevents discontent from languishing, or the sentiments of the two nations from coalescing. Sectarian animosity has completely taken the place of purely political feeling, and paralyses all the energies of the people. This is indeed the master

curse of Ireland—the canker that corrodes all that is noble and patriotic in the country, and, we maintain, the direct and inevitable consequence of the Union. Much has been said of the terrific force with which it would rage were the Irish Parliament restored. We maintain, on the other hand, that no truth is more clearly stamped upon the page of history, and more distinctly deducible from the constitution of the human mind, than that a national feeling is the only effectual check to sectarian passions. Nothing can be more clear than that the logical consequences of many of the doctrines of the Church of Rome would be fatal to an independent and patriotic policy in any land—nothing is more clear than that in every land, where a healthy national feeling exists, Roman Catholic politicians are both independent and patriotic.

But, putting this case for a moment aside, consider that of an evangelical Protestant. If the power of government be placed in the hands of a man who has a vivid, realising, and ever-present conviction that every idolater who dies in his belief is doomed to a future of wretchedness, compared with which the greatest earthly calamity is absolutely inappreciable; that the doctrinal differences between the members of a church whose patronage he administers really influence the eternal welfare of mankind; that this visible world, with all its pomp and power, with all its intellectual and political greatness, is but as a gilded cloud floating across the unchanging soul, and that the political advantages of the acquisition of an empire would be dearly purchased by the death of

a single soldier who died unrepentant, and who would have repented had he lived;—we ask any candid man to consider what sort of a governor such a person would prove himself. Is it not self-evident that anyone who was thoroughly penetrated with a belief in these doctrines, who habitually and systematically observed in his actions and his feelings the proportion of religious to temporal things which he recognises in his creed, would govern almost exclusively with a view to the former? Possessing enormous power that might be employed in the service of his church, he would sacrifice every other consideration—the dignity, the stability, the traditional alliances, the future greatness, of the nation—to this single object. His policy would dislocate the whole mechanism of government. It would at least place an insuperable barrier to the future prosperity of his country. And if men who believe these doctrines do not act in the manner we have described, the reason is very obvious. Just as in everyday life, the man who has persuaded himself of the nothingness of human things finds his conviction so diluted and dimmed by other feelings that he takes an interest in common business, such as he could not take if he realised what he believed; so the politician finds the national and patriotic spirit that pervades the atmosphere in which he moves a sufficient corrective of his theological views. These latter give a tincture and bias to his political feeling, but they do not supplant it. They blend with it, and form an amalgam, not perhaps quite defensible in theory, but exceedingly excellent in practice. The nation which is

actuated by the same mixed motives always selects for power men who are thus moderate and unimpassioned in their views, and it is deeply sensible of the fact that no greater political calamity can befall a land than to be governed by religious enthusiasts.

Now the application of what we have said to the case of the Irish Roman Catholics is evident. The Roman Catholic doctrines concerning the nature of heresy, the duty of combating it, and the authority of the Pope in every land can be easily shown to be in many conceivable cases incompatible with a patriotic discharge of the duties of a representative, especially in a Protestant country. The opponents of emancipation dilated continually on this fact, and they argued that the Roman Catholic members would never assimilate with the Protestants, that they would never really seek the welfare of the country, that they would remain an isolated and, in some respects, a hostile body, drawing their real inspiration from the Vatican. The advocates of the measure replied by pointing to the numerous instances in which Roman Catholic politicians in other countries discharged their duties as patriots, in defiance of the exertions of the priests and of the wishes of the Pope. With scarcely any exception, the greatest men of both countries adopted the views of the supporters of the measure, yet we suppose most persons will now admit that the predictions of Dr. Duigenan have been more fully verified than those of Grattan or of Plunket. I do not mean to imply that Emancipation should not have been accorded in 1829. To pass over many other reasons, it seems plain that it

could not have been for ever withheld, and the longer it was delayed the greater was the ill-feeling created by the contest. But at the same time most persons, we think, will allow that the predicted assimilation of the Roman Catholic with the Protestant members has not taken place, that the sectarian feelings of the former have not been neutralised or materially modified by other sentiments, and that their chief interests are attached to Rome and to the priests. The explanation of this fact seems to be that the tenets we have adverted to have these dangerous tendencies when their force is undiluted and unimpaired. In most countries a purely political and patriotic feeling exists to counteract them—in Ireland it does not exist. The people of Ireland do not sympathise in the proceedings of the Imperial Parliament, and they have no national legislature to foster and to reflect the national sentiment. If purely political feeling be eliminated from a people who possess a representative system, and who are separated by rival creeds, the result is inevitable. The people and their representatives will be divided into those who are actuated by personal and those who are actuated by sectarian motives. We greatly doubt whether any conceivable alteration of religious endowments or of the other semi-religious matters so much complained of would effectually check the sectarian character of Irish politics. The evil has a deeper source, and must be met by a deeper remedy.

If the characteristic mark of a healthy Christianity be to unite its members by a bond of fraternity and love, there is no country in the world in which

Christianity has more completely failed than in Ireland, and the failure is distinctly and directly attributable to the exertions of the clergy. With the religious aspect of this subject we have now no concern, but its political importance is of the most overwhelming and appalling magnitude.

It is a lamentable but, we fear, an undoubted fact that if the whole people of Ireland were converted to Mohammedanism nine-tenths of the present obstacles to the prosperity of the country would be removed. The great evil that meets us on every side, that palsies every political effort, and dwarfs the growth of every secular movement, is—that the repulsion of sectarianism is stronger than the attraction of patriotism. The nation is divided into two classes who are engaged in virulent, unceasing, and uncompromising strife. Differences of race, that would otherwise have long since been effaced, are stereotyped by being associated with differences of belief. Rancour, that would naturally have passed into the domain of history, exhibits a perpetual and undiminished energy; for of all methods of making hatred permanent and virulent, perhaps the most effectual is to infuse a little theology into it. The representatives of the Protestants scarcely disguise their anti-national feelings. They have cut themselves off from all the traditions of Swift, of Grattan, and of Curran. They have adopted a system of theology the most extreme, the most aggressive, and the most unattractive. They have made opposition to the Roman Catholics the grand object of their policy, and denunciation of the

Maynooth Grant (which they stigmatise as sinful) the most prominent exhibition of that policy. There is scarcely an article that appears in *The Times* newspaper, ridiculing Ireland and the Irish, that is not reproduced with applause by a large section of the Protestant journals.

It is an observation of Burke's that "when the clergy say their church is in danger they speak broad, and mean that their emoluments are in danger;" and perhaps upon this principle the policy of the Protestant clergy may be considered advantageous to Protestantism in Ireland. In every other respect there can be little question that it is not merely detrimental—that it is absolutely ruinous to it. Religion is the empire of the sympathies, and a Church that is in habitual opposition to the sympathies, the wishes, and the hopes of the mass of the people—a Church which is identified in their minds only with a recollection of bygone persecutions and of the defeat of a great popular movement—a Church which has cast aside its nationality, and associated itself with all that is unpatriotic, will never progress among the people. Persecution has sometimes caused such a church to triumph; by argument and eloquence it never can. The experience of three hundred years has sufficiently demonstrated the fallacy of the old theory of the "expansive character" of Protestantism, and of the irresistible force of truth. Simple, unmingled reasoning never converts a people. When the taint of selfishness is on a preacher, his arguments are as empty wind. It would be impossible to conceive a

more invidious position than that which the Protestant Church now occupies in Ireland, in spite of the numerous and the immense advantages it possesses. Historically the Protestant can show that in the time of her national independence Ireland was unconnected with Rome—that it was England that introduced and fostered the Roman Church in Ireland; that most of those illustrious men whose eloquence furnishes even now the precepts and the expositions of patriotism were Protestants and were Liberals; and that even when the Protestants as a body were opposed to the national cause there were never wanting men of intellect and of energy who left the ranks to join it, and who not unfrequently proved that “the gleanings of the grapes of Ephraim is better than the vintage of Abiezer.” He can show that the landlords, who are chiefly Protestants, are obviously the natural leaders of the people. He can prove that Protestantism is eminently adapted, from its character, to coalesce with every form of Liberalism; that “the Reformation was the dawn of the government of public opinion”;* that every subsequent step towards the emancipation of mankind may be distinctly traced to its influence; and that the Church of Rome has associated herself indissolubly with the despotic theory of government. When Gregory poured forth insults on the brave Poles who were struggling to disenthral their crushed and dismembered land—when in his condemnation of Lamennais he authoritatively and in detail denounced the principles on which modern Liberalism rests,

* Mills.

he but confirmed the antagonism which the French Revolution had begun—an antagonism of which the Church is now reaping the fruit, not only in the destruction of the temporal power of the Pope, but in the alienation of the sympathies of a vast section of its members.*

Yet notwithstanding all these advantages—notwithstanding the zeal, the piety, and the learning to be found among the Protestant clergy—notwithstanding the eloquence which they exhibit to a greater extent than any other class of their fellow-countrymen, the Protestant Church seems doomed to a hopeless unpopularity in Ireland. Its position is so obviously a false one—its estrangement from the people is so patent that mere arguments avail little in its behalf. Its opposition to the national cause reacts fatally upon itself. The Church that has sold the birthright will never receive the blessing.

Of the political attitude of the Roman Catholic priests it is not necessary to say much. No generous mind can withhold a tribute of admiration from the fidelity, the zeal, and the disinterestedness they have manifested as religious teachers under obstacles of almost unparalleled magnitude. No sincere Liberal can deny that their political leadership has been ruinous to nationality in Ireland. Since the death of O'Connell their continual object has been to make the political strength of their country a weapon in the service of the Vatican. They have

* We have a new and very striking illustration of this antagonism in the Allocution in which the present Pope recently denounced "modern civilization"—the admission of persons of various creeds to public offices.

exerted their whole influence to prevent that harmony and assimilation of classes which is the only hope of their country. They have laboured most constantly and most effectively to widen every breach, to increase every cause of division, and to prevent in every way in their power the Roman Catholics from mingling with the Protestants. No one, we think, can deny this who has followed their policy on the educational question, who has observed the tone of their organs in the press, or who has perused those dreary semi-political pastorals which their prelates are continually publishing, as if to illustrate the wisdom of the saying of an early Father, "the more a bishop keeps silence, the more let him be respected." But they have gone further than this. The very essence of the policy of O'Connell and of his predecessors was, that the public opinion of a nation should determine its form of government. Of this principle—the only principle upon which the policy of O'Connell was defensible—the Irish Roman Catholics, guided by their priests, are now the bitterest opponents. They have come forward more prominently than any other people as the supporters of the Papal Government at a time when that Government is maintained only by foreign power, and when it has avowedly identified itself with the cause of despotism in Italy.*

* We would lay special stress upon the fact that the Papal Government makes itself the representative of the old principles of government, because there is another ground on which it might be consistently defended, even by Liberals. It might be argued that the temporal power was essential to the welfare of the Catholic Church—that the interests of religion were higher

They have in their hostility to this principle in a great measure abandoned the Liberal party, to which they owe almost every privilege they possess, to identify themselves with the party which has been the unwavering opponent of all religious equality. In other words, they have connected themselves with those who, according to their own principles, have ever been the curse of Ireland, in hopes of thus making themselves the curse of Italy. The only two possible solutions of the present discontents of Ireland are the complete fusion of the people of Ireland with the people of England, or else the creation of a healthy national feeling in Ireland, uniting its various classes, and giving a definite character to its policy. Since the death of O'Connell the Roman Catholic priests have been an insuperable obstacle to either solution.

Among the Roman Catholics the priests seem almost omnipotent. Among the Protestants, though the clergy do not exercise by any means the same sway, they have nevertheless succeeded in giving a completely sectarian character to politics. The Protestant press is thoroughly sectarian in its tone. The great questions on the hustings are semi-religious, the Maynooth Grant, the Educational system, the proportion of Protestants and Roman Catholics appointed to office by the Government.

It is thus that Ireland, being deprived of that than those of liberty, and that, therefore, in case of collision, a liberal Catholic might consistently prefer the former. This, however, is not the ground adopted. The Pope has placed the question upon another issue. He has made his cause one with that of the old dynasty in Naples—with that of despotism against revolution.

legislature which has hitherto proved the only effectual organ of national feeling, has come completely under the influence of sectarian passions: class against class, creed against creed, nation against nation; a spectacle of perpetual disunion, of virulent and unabating rancour. All the various elements of dissension of the present and of the past are flung into the alembic of sectarianism, and there fused and blended into an intense, a relentless, and, as it would seem, an increasing hatred. During the lifetime of O'Connell there was a kind of reversionary loyalty among the people. They looked forward to the restoration of the Irish Parliament as the termination of all agitation. Their leader endeavoured earnestly to conciliate the different sections of the people. He placed patriotism before sectarianism, and adopted intelligible principles of policy. While he held the reins of power we should never have heard a eulogy of the Sepoys, or seen the people identifying themselves with foreign despotism; but since he has passed away national feeling seems to have almost perished in the land, and sectarianism to have become more unmitigated and undiluted than in any former period. With the exception of the upper orders, who are in every country somewhat cosmopolitan in their sympathies, and who always readily adapt themselves to any political arrangement, the alienation of the people from English politics seems as absolute and as fixed as ever.

There is something inexpressibly melancholy in such a condition. Political decline, whatever may

be the symptom it manifests, must ever be a touching sight to men of feeling and sensibility. Few such persons could gaze unmoved upon the gorgeous palaces of Venice, as they lie mouldering in their loveliness upon the wave, or could contemplate without a feeling of irrepressible awe the subversion of that Papal throne which is shadowed by the glories of so many centuries. Yet there is a spectacle more deeply mournful than the destruction of any city, however lovely, or any throne, however ancient. It is the perversion of a nation's character, it is the paralysis of a nation's energies, it is the corruption and decay that ensue when the spirit of patriotism is extinguished, and when sectarianism and fanaticism rage unchecked. The lamp of genius burns low, the pulse of life beats with an ever fainter throb; the nation, in spite of natural advantages and material prosperity, becomes but a cypher and a laughing-stock in the world.

We have spoken of the evil effect of this state of things upon the Irish character. Its evil effects upon England, if not so serious, are nevertheless very real.

In the first place it implies a great loss of character. One of the most conspicuous of living English statesmen has again and again declared, in language as explicit as any that can be conceived, that every nation has a right to a form of government in accordance with its will, and should alone judge what is expedient for itself. This doctrine has been continually applauded by Parliament. It has been accepted by almost the whole of the British press. It has been represented as a complete justi-

fication of recent events in Italy. The universal suffrage by which the sentiments of the people of that country have been determined has been the subject of almost unmingled eulogy, yet the present form of government in Ireland is retained in distinct defiance of the principle so emphatically enunciated. It was imposed in 1800 contrary to the wish of the people, and notwithstanding the exertions of all the intellect of the land. It was reaffirmed when the mass of the people, guided by the two greatest Irish politicians of the century, were denouncing it. It is retained to the present day, though the amount of discontent, if tested only by universal suffrage, would probably be found to be as great as exists in the Papal States, notwithstanding the contagion of surrounding revolution. We do not deny that these facts may be in some degree attenuated, but that they are directly inconsistent with the liberal professions of England is a position so self-evident that no special-pleading can evade it. The condition of Ireland and of the Ionian Islands may attract little notice in England, for they are subjects on which the British press is usually remarkably silent; but they are constant topics in every foreign newspaper that is hostile to England. It is inconsistencies of this kind that make foreigners regard England as the Pharisee of nations, enunciating high principles for others which she never thinks of applying to herself. Perhaps no great nation ranks so high in the moral scale if measured only by her acts. Perhaps no great nation ranks so low if measured by the relation of her acts to her professions.

Another important consideration is the influence of Irish emigration upon the public opinion of America and of the Colonies. "Nations," as Grattan once finely said, "have neither a parent's nor a child's affection. Like the eagle, they throw off their young and know them no longer;" but though they cannot reckon upon the tie of gratitude and affection, they can usually count to a considerable extent on that of community of race, of language, and of sentiment. No nation can afford to despise the opinion of its neighbours; and the maintenance of the "empire of ideas" is almost as important as the preservation of the territory actually subject to the sovereign. The two nations that do most to spread their influence beyond their borders are the French and the English. The former owes its success chiefly to the character of its literature, the fascination of its manners, and the spirit of political proselytism that characterises it; the latter, to the genius of colonisation that it possesses to a greater degree than any other nation. Yet everywhere, side by side with the extension of English influence, the Nemesis of Ireland appears. The Irish people, so inexhaustibly prolific, scatter themselves through every land, and leaven every political assembly. Their spirit of enterprise, their versatility, their popular manners, have everywhere made them prominent, and have given them an influence of the most formidable character. In Australia we have seen a Ministry presided over by an Irishman, and reckoning among its leading members the former editor of *The Nation*. In America Irishmen occupy

a foremost place in almost every department; and their political importance is so great that an American party was formed in the vain hope of counteracting it. Everywhere they bring with them their separate religion, and that extraordinary tenacity of old opinions for which they are so remarkable. Everywhere they labour with unwearied and most fruitful zeal to kindle a feeling of hostility against England.

Nor should we omit from our calculations the possibility of future rebellion in Ireland. There is a tendency in nations that are guided chiefly by a daily press to overlook such distant eventualities, and to concentrate attention exclusively on the present. In time of prosperity and peace the existence of a deep-seated discontent in Ireland may not seriously affect the interests of England, but who can fail to perceive how difficult it might be if calamity was goading that discontent into desperation, and an invading army directing and sustaining it? In the present day, when the conditions of warfare are so entirely altered—when there are so many great Powers in the world, and when military operations are conducted with such startling rapidity—the supremacy of a great nation rests on the most precarious basis. There was a time when the naval strength of England enabled her to defy the entire world, but that time has passed for ever. A coalition of great Powers—a single unsuccessful battle—a scientific discovery monopolised by her opponents, might destroy her empire of the seas, and leave her coasts open to invasion. If this were to

occur it would not be forgotten that the greatest military genius the world has ever known, when reviewing his career at St. Helena, declared that the capital mistake of his life had been the omission of an expedition to Ireland. That rebellion would be disastrous to Ireland if unsuccessful, and still more disastrous if triumphant—that it would imply civil war of the worst character, and private suffering to an almost incalculable extent—may be readily admitted. But, if calamitous to Ireland, there can be no doubt that it would be also most calamitous to England. These things may one day come to pass, for every year shows more clearly that the goal to which Europe is tending, is the universal recognition of the rights of nationalities.

Another and more pressing danger arises from the position of the Irish members in Parliament. The British constitution, though in some respects exceedingly strong, is, in other respects, one of the most fragile in the world. It remains unshaken amid storms of public opinion that would shatter any other Government; but it is essential to its very existence that all its component parts should be pervaded by a strong spirit of patriotism. It is so complex in its character, and represents so many opposing interests, that if it were not for the perpetual sacrifice of party and provincial feelings to patriotism, and for the spirit of mutual forbearance displayed by all shades of politicians, it would long since have perished. Under these circumstances the presence in Parliament of a body of men acting together, inspired by a different feeling from attachment to

the empire must always be a danger, and more especially at present. The disintegration of parties in England seems tending dangerously towards a Government by clap-trap. There are so many small sections of politicians, and so many independent members, that the most transient unpopularity, the slightest deviation from the opinions of the hour, may produce a combination that would destroy the strongest Ministry. Hence a perpetual weakness of Government, and an antipathy to any line of consistent and profound policy. An Irish party, skilfully guided, and availing itself of this state of things, might now turn the balance of power. Nor is the evil likely to stop here. If we put aside occasional periods of political lassitude, or of conservative reaction, and consider the general tendency of politics, it will scarcely, we suppose, be denied that it is towards the ascendancy of democracy. If we put aside those exceptional circumstances under which the Irish priests coalesce with the Conservatives on questions of foreign policy, it will scarcely be denied that the political influence of Ireland weighs strongly and unmistakably in the democratical scale. A poor and populous country is indeed naturally democratic. Should another great step be taken in the democratical direction, two results may be confidently predicted. In the first place, the Italian party would be greatly strengthened, for the power of the priests is strongest in the lower strata of society. In the second place, the evil of such a party would be far greater than it is now, for the dangers of collision between the different sections of the constitution would

be much increased. The best reason for entrusting political power chiefly to the upper orders, in a constitution like that of England, is not because they are better educated or more thoroughly patriotic than others, or because they have a greater stake in the country, or pay a larger proportion of the taxation, but because they, of all classes, are most skilled in compromise. The refinements of good society, which mould and form their entire natures, are all but an education in compromises. They teach how to conceal disagreeable thoughts—how to yield with grace—how to avoid every jar, and control every passion—how to acquire a pliant and acquiescent manner. The lower classes feel more intensely in political matters—they express their feelings more emphatically—they pursue their course with a more absorbing vehemence. A democratical assembly may govern with energy and wisdom, but it is scarcely possible that it can continue to govern in harmony with another assembly of a different shade of politics. Should further reforms render the House of Commons thoroughly democratical in feeling, the present constitution of England would, doubtless, be much endangered, and the evil of a party whose primary wishes are not attached to the interests of the empire proportionately increased.*

* Another striking tendency of parliamentary government in England is to decline in its efficiency on account of the overwhelming and ever-increasing amount of business to be discharged. The evil is likely to be a growing one, and it seems as though, sooner or later, some measure must be adopted to remove a considerable portion of this business from the jurisdiction of the parliament at Westminster.

And, under any circumstances, dissension between two nations that are so nearly associated must be in itself an evil. Seven hundred years, if they have multiplied causes of dissension, have also multiplied ties of connection. The two nations seem naturally designed for each other, and each without the other is imperfect. Each possesses many of the attributes of greatness, but each is deficient in some qualities for which the other is distinguished. In both nations we find an almost perfect courage and an almost boundless spirit of enterprise; but Englishmen exhibit that steady perseverance, that uniform ascendancy of reason over passion, which we so seldom find in Ireland; while Irishmen possess the popularity of manners and the versatility of disposition in which Englishmen are lamentably deficient. Ireland, if contented, would be the complement of England; while hostile, it continues a constant source of danger.

Is this state of things likely to continue? We confess we are not as sanguine as some persons seem to be about the effect of time in assimilating the character of the two nations, and banishing the existing animosity. The discontent in Ireland differs, we think, in kind from that of the twenty years preceding the Union. Then it arose from the imperfections of the national organ of public opinion, now it arises from the want of any such organ; then it diminished every year, while at present political feeling seems to fade more and more into sectarianism. The evil at present is not a torpor of the public mind, but a substitution of a semi-religious

for a purely political public opinion. We see few symptoms of this evil abating. The Government, indeed, labours with evident earnestness and considerable success to steer evenly between the two creeds, but the super-abundant theological energies of the English people are constantly welling over upon Ireland. England is consequently but a synonym for Protestantism with the people, and is therefore the object of an undiminishing sectarian antipathy. The very attachment of a large section of the Irish Protestants to England is sufficient to repel the Roman Catholics, for that attachment is more sectarian than political. It is as the Bible-loving land, the bulwark of Protestantism, the terror of Popery. The Established Church serves also to foster the sectarian spirit, which, under all these circumstances, possesses an astonishing vitality. It has been observed, too, that the Roman Catholic system being essentially traditional, has a tendency to petrify and to preserve all traditional feelings. We sometimes find Roman Catholic nations changing greatly, but it is generally when their Church has lost its hold upon their characters. The difference between the two religions is much more than a difference of doctrines. The Roman Catholic system forms a type of character wholly different from that of the Protestants, with different virtues and vices, with different modes of thought and feeling. There is so little affinity between the two types, that the Roman Catholics can go on year by year within their own sphere, thinking, acting, writing, speaking, and progressing without being in any very great

degree affected by Protestant thought, without losing their distinctive tendencies or sentiments. Much has been said of the effect of the spread of education in destroying sectarianism. A system of education that would attack the religious policy of the Roman Catholics would be, of course, absolutely out of the question; and, in a country like Ireland, where the people are intensely religious in their feelings, we believe the education of the priest must ever prove stronger than the education of the schoolmaster. Nor should we forget that there seems at present a strong probability of national education becoming separate, and consequently thoroughly sectarian. While the bulk of the clergy of both religions denounce the only system of mixed education that appears practicable, it becomes a grave question how long such a system can be maintained.

One thing, however, seems certain—that no system of education that directs the attention of the people to the history of their own land can fail to quicken the national feeling among them. The great obstacle to every liberal party in Ireland, has been the prevailing ignorance of Irish history. The great engine by which the Repeal movement progressed was the diffusion of historical treatises and of the speeches of the leading orators of the past. There are, perhaps, few better means of conjecturing the future of a nation, than to examine in what direction its enthusiasm is likely to act. In Ireland there can scarcely be a question upon the subject. Ever since the dawn of public opinion, there has been a party which has maintained that the goal to which Irish

patriots should tend, is the recognition of their country as a distinct and independent nationality, connected with England by the Crown; that in such a condition alone it could retain a healthy political life, and could act in cordial co-operation with England; that every other system would be transient in its duration, and humiliating and disastrous while it lasted. To this party all the genius of Ireland has ever belonged. It is scarcely possible to cite two Irish politicians of real eminence who have not, more or less, assisted it. Swift and Molyneux originated the conception; Burke aided it when he wrote in approval of the movement of '82, and denounced the Penal Laws and the trade restrictions that shackled the energies of Ireland; Sheridan, when he exerted all his eloquence to oppose the Union; Flood, when he formed the national Party in Parliament; Grattan, when he led that party in its triumph and in its fall. The enthusiasm which springs from the memory of the past will ever sustain it; the patriotic passion, which makes the independence of the land its primary object, will foster and inspire it. This passion is too deeply imbedded in human nature to be eradicated by any material considerations. Like the domestic affection, it is one of the first instincts of humanity. As long as the nation retains its distinct character and its history, the enthusiasts of the land will ever struggle against a form of government which was tyrannically imposed, and which has destroyed the national feeling among the people. Statesmen may regard that enthusiasm as irrational, but they must

acknowledge its existence as a fact. He who eliminates from his calculations the opinions of fools, proves that he is himself worthy of being enrolled under that denomination.

Another important element of dissension is the tone habitually adopted by English writers towards Ireland. Reasoning *à priori* we might have imagined that common decency would have rendered that tone guarded and conciliatory; for, if England has sometimes had cause to complain of Ireland, Ireland has had incomparably more cause to complain of England. For seven hundred years England has ruled over a nation which has exhibited more than average intellect at home, and far more than average success abroad—a nation which, though its faults are doubtless many and serious, is certainly neither unamiable, ungrateful, nor intractable—and she has left it one of the most discontented and degraded in Europe. She has ruled over a country which seemed designed by Providence to be one of the most flourishing in the world: indented with the noblest harbours—placed between two continents as if to reap the advantage of both—possessing a temperate and salubrious climate and a soil of more than common fertility—and she has left it one of the poorest, one of the most wretched on earth. A fatal blast seems to rest upon it and to counteract all the advantages of Nature. The most superficial traveller is struck with the anomaly. His first inquiry is: What tyranny has so thwarted the designs of Providence? He finds that, according to the confessions of English writers for the six hundred and fifty years that

elapsed between the Conquest and the emancipation of the Catholics, the English government of Ireland was one long series of oppressions—that massacres and banishments, confiscations and disqualifications, compulsory ignorance and trade restrictions, were all resorted to; that the industry of the country was so paralysed that it has never recovered its elasticity; that the various classes of the people were so divided that they have never regained their unity; that the character of the nation was so formed and moulded in the die of sorrow, that almost every prominent vice ingrained in the national character may be distinctly traced to the influences of bygone tyranny; and that, when the age of disqualifications had passed, a legislative system was still retained in defiance of the wish of the people, by the nation which proclaims itself the most emphatic asserter of the rights of nationalities.

Such is the past of English government of Ireland—a tissue of brutality and hypocrisy, scarcely surpassed in history. Who would not have imagined that in a more enlightened age the tone of the British press towards Ireland would have been at least moderate friendly, and conciliatory? Let any candid man judge whether it is so. Let him observe the prominence given to every crime that is committed in Ireland, to every absurdity that can be culled from the Irish press, to every failure of an Irish movement. Let him observe the ceaseless ridicule, the unwavering contempt, the studied depreciation of the Irish character and intellect habitual in the English newspapers. Let him observe their per-

sistent refusal to regard Irish affairs in any light but the ridiculous, and then answer the question for himself. We believe impartial Englishmen will scarcely deny what foreign observers unanimously declare, that the object of the most influential section of the English press is to discredit the Irish intellect and the Irish character before England and before Europe. "The tone of the British press towards Ireland," said a writer in the *Revue des Deux Mondes*, when urging the Irish people to give up the dream of nationality, "is detestable." "It would be about as reasonable," remarked a recent German tourist, "to judge of the Irish character from English writers as to take an Austrian estimate of Italian affairs." As long as this tone continues, the two nations never can amalgamate, or assimilate, or cordially co-operate. A war of recriminations is an evil, but it is a greater evil for a nation tranquilly to suffer its character to be frittered away by calumny veiled in sarcasm, and by a contemptuous suppression of all facts but those which tell against itself. As long as Englishmen adopt a tone of habitual depreciation in speaking of the present of Ireland, Irishmen would betray their country were they to suffer the curtain to fall upon its past.

In considering the future of public opinion in Ireland, there is one measure which may some day be carried into effect that would probably have a very great influence, though in what direction it is exceedingly difficult to determine—I mean the dis-endowment of the Established Church. I waive altogether the discussion of the justice of such a

measure, and confine myself to the results that might follow it. There is scarcely any Irish question more perplexing, or on which authorities are more divided. Plunket predicted that the destruction of the Establishment would be the death blow of the connection; Macaulay, that it would be the only effectual means of pacifying Ireland. If we regard the question in the light of the past, it seems evident that the Establishment has hitherto been the strongest bulwark of the Union. O'Connell could scarcely have failed if the bulk of the Protestants had not held aloof from him. A very large section at least of those Protestants opposed him simply through love of the Establishment, which they argued could not continue to exist under an Irish Parliament. To the present day we believe that a considerable proportion of the Protestants are attached to the Union on this ground alone. Whether, in the event of a disendowment of the Establishment, their alienation would be compensated for by any permanent attachment of the Roman Catholics, is a matter of opinion on which it is impossible to pronounce with any certainty.

While, however, I regard the pictures drawn by some writers of the future content of Ireland as absurdly overcharged, I am far from wishing to paint the prospects of the country in colours of unmingled gloom. I do not believe that mere material prosperity or the increase of education will necessarily reclaim public opinion, but I do not overlook the fact that the general tone of thought and feeling in England and on the Continent must modify it

greatly. One of the most prominent characteristics of the spirit of the age is its tendency to disassociate politics from religion, and to diminish the extraordinary stress once laid upon dogmatic theology. A strong party spirit is the best index expurgatorius, and the new principles penetrate but slowly amid the fierce passions that still convulse the Irish people; but penetrate, I doubt not, they will. The habitual sacrifice of the spirit of Christianity to sectarian dogmas is now happily an anachronism, and there are very few countries in the world in which it would be possible. The liberality of sentiment pervading the literature of the century will sooner or later do its work, and should any man of transcendent intellect arise in Ireland, he will find that the public mind has been gradually preparing to receive him. There is, perhaps, no country in the world that would respond to the touch of genius so readily as Ireland in the present day. All the elements of a great movement exist among the people—a restless, nervous consciousness of the evil of their present condition, a deep disgust at the cant and the imbecility that are dominant, a keen and intense perception of the charm of genius. Irishmen sometimes forget their great men when they are dead, but they never fail to recognise them when they are living. That acute sense of the power of intellect, and especially of eloquence, which sectarianism has never been able to destroy, which has again and again caused assemblies of the most violent Roman Catholics to hang with breathless admiration on the lips of the most violent Orange-

men, is, we think, the most encouraging symptom of recovery. Should a political leader arise whose character was above suspicion, and whose intellect was above cavil, who was neither a lawyer nor a lay preacher, who could read the signs of the times, and make his eloquence a power in Europe, his influence with the people would be unbounded. The selfishness, and bigotry, and imbecility, that have so long reigned, would make the resplendency of his genius but the more conspicuous; the waves of sectarian strife would sink to silence at his voice; the aspirations and the patriotism of Ireland would recognise him as the prophet of the future.

We look forward with unshaken confidence to the advent of such a leader. The mantle of Grattan is not destined to be for ever unclaimed. The soil of Ireland has ever proved fertile in genius, and in no other country in Europe has genius so uniformly taken the direction of politics. Meantime the task of Irish writers is a simple, if not a very hopeful one. It is to defend the character of the nation, aspersed and ridiculed as it is by the writers of England, and still more injured by the vulgarity, the inconsistencies, and the virulence of a large section of those of Ireland. It is to endeavour to lead back public opinion to those liberal and progressive principles from which, under priestly guidance, it has so lamentably aberrated. It is, above all, to labour with unwearied zeal to allay that theological fever which is raging through the land; to pursue this work courageously and unflinchingly amid unpopularity and clamour and reproach; "to sit by the sick

bed of their delirious country, and for the love they bear that honoured name to endure all the insults and all the rebuffs they receive from their frantic mother." * A thankless but not an ignoble task ! The Irishman who makes a friend of a fellow-countryman of a different religion to his own is a benefactor to Ireland. As long as the frenzy of sectarianism continues ; as long as blind hatred is the actuating principle of the people, Ireland never can rise to a position of dignity or prosperity. She never can act in harmony with other sections of the empire ; she never can find content at home or become respected and honoured abroad. Her power would be at once an evil to herself and to England. Her independence would be the dismemberment of the empire. The greatest of all our wants is a lay public opinion. When a healthy national feeling shall have been produced, uniting the different sections of the people by the bond of patriotism and shattering the political ascendancy of the clergy, the prosperity of Ireland will have been secured. Whether the public mind may then tend to the ideal of Grattan or the ideal of Pitt, to a distinct Parliament or to a complete fusion with England, I do not venture to predict ; but I doubt not that, in whatever direction it may act, it will eventually triumph.

In our age, and under our Government, the coercion of a nation is only possible by its divisions ; and next to the omnipotence of God is the will of a united people.

* Burke.

