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HISTORY

OF THE

IRISH PEOPLE.

BY

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VOLUME II.

THE PERIOD FROM 1829 TO THE LAND ACT OF 1881.

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P R E F A C E .

As the Author has nowhere definitely expressed his views on Home Rule in this History, he gives the following letter from a dear and valued friend, with whom he has spoken and corresponded during several years on this and kindred subjects, as fairly representing his own opinions :—

August 17, 1886.

DEAR MR. O'CONNOR,—Knowing, as you do, that the sad state of your native land has long engaged my anxious thoughts, it is the less wonderful to me that you request of me some expression concerning the present crisis. You must excuse abruptness and any appearance of undue confidence, else I might be unendurably lengthy.

If I were an Irishman, I believe that I should, as vehemently as your Nationalists, desire law to be under Irish control. Looking to the past, I cannot blame any Irishman for desiring a total separation from English rule. As an Englishman, I think entire separation better for us, as well as for you, than *a future like to the past.* Even from a military point of view, a disaffected Ireland is worse to us than if she were as independent as the United States. Yet if we consent to a wisely-tempered Home Rule, which does not involve a double Executive, this, I believe, will be better for us, and to Ireland both safer and better.

Not only so; but I fully believe that Ireland herself would very quickly so judge, if for a little moment she had full *freedom* (as Scotland had) *to refuse* legislative union. Scotland made her own terms with us: Ireland was conquered, and her annexation, whether less or more complete, was always compulsory. No wonder that our yoke has always been irksome. Suspected disaffection, even since 1829, has led to a treatment of Irish legislators widely different from that of Scottish. But all this would at once be changed if Ireland joined us by her own free act. Then her upper classes would reflect, what would Wellesley and Wellington have been, if Ireland had been separate from England; also, what proportion of the English high Executive have the Scots attained. In little communities like Holland, Belgium, or Greece, small is the range of action to an aristocracy, by the side of greater powers! Able and aspiring men would naturally desire a larger field. Next, the mass of the community would not be slow to understand that, if really separated from us, they could not avoid the great burden of military and naval defence; which in the present day, when armaments are costly in the extreme, could not be efficient without a taxation crippling to Ireland, stripped and peeled as she is. At least 50 years of rest and just laws and prosperity, and healing of religious enmities, are needed before Ireland could desire total isolation. I much regret that the bugbear of separation has been paraded in this argument.

To me it seems that, with a view to real conciliation, a frank public discussion of details is essential. Mr. Parnell having started the cry of "No Rent" in reply to a suspension of laws at once illogical and tyrannical, English landholders are alarmed, lest an Irish legislature would desire this crude extreme; and if it had control of the police, would effect it simply by forbidding evictions. Opinion may not be worth much; but my opinion is, that patriotic Irish landlords would not be hooted out of power, and would have adequate influence to prevent any act of sweeping injustice; and that local tribunals, such as Home Rule would originate and sustain, would carefully discriminate between rent which had been arbitrarily raised, especially by agents of absentees, and the rent of honourable and just landlords. An English Parliament, by the fallacy of striking *an average*, is almost certain to do injustice to humane

landlords, and yield wrongful advantage to the worst class of commercial grabbers. Again, it is feared lest, with a view to raise native industries, English manufactures be heavily taxed, as in some of our colonies. Certainly we should deserve this, and ought to take our chance of such retaliation, and allow the battle to be fought out in Ireland. But I understand these are just the matters which, with taxation, Mr. Gladstone's proposed measure carefully *withdrew from Irish control*. Therefore his scheme seems to me deceptive and certain to disappoint. No living man is competent to engage that an Irish parliament, once established, will not presently avow, with Grattan, that no power outside of Ireland, except the personal sovereign of England, has a right to any control over Irish law; and if the Irish parliament think it wiser to temporise, and not assert the principle too quickly, it seems to me certain that they will in their hearts foster it, and resent the English doctrine which makes them *subordinate* to our organs. They, like Grattan, will see the Queen or King as their sole superior, out of which a new growth of royal power may ensue. For English interests, *I greatly prefer that Ireland be separated from us entirely*. I regard it as certain that an Irish parliament will insist (and perhaps it ought to insist) that the Irish executive shall be responsible to it, as is the Canadian Executive to the Canadian Parliament; and if we expect it to give us soldiers and sailors, and contribute to the expense of our wars, we must calculate that they will claim a voice in our *foreign policy*. While I should rejoice in anything that checks us in aggressive war, I am not able to desire two Foreign Offices.

Therefore with me Home Rule does not mean *a single legislature* in Ireland, nor an ejecting of Irish representatives from our Westminster Parliament, but *such* Home Rule as for a quarter of a century I have maintained to be urgently needed in England, Wales, and Scotland. We *all* need provincial legislatures, subordinate to our Parliament, yet not yielding any omnipotence to a parliamentary veto. The business of Parliament has long been mischievously vast; even for British interests our first need is that its domestic action be limited to a minimum. In the American Union the matters which concern the whole Union are named, and the competence of Congress is confined to them. Something like this is needed by Great Britain, and the establishment of it, alike in this island and in Ireland, would give to us all a legitimate, limited, and beneficial Home Rule. The state of Ireland is widely different morally now and a century ago. The suppression of Grattan's Parliament I lament and condemn, but we cannot replace things just as they were, and in the effort to heal old wounds we must sedulously avoid to tear open new ones.

I am, faithfully yours,

F. W. NEWMAN.

For any errors of style or arrangement in the closing part of this volume, the Author pleads sudden and disabling illness. For the statements of facts and principles he makes no apology.

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