Gladstone, the Irish Home Rule Question, and Its Effect on the Liberal Party

Kenneth John Van Dellen

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/masters_theses

Part of the History Commons

Recommended Citation
https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/masters_theses/3816
GLADSTONE, THE IRISH HOME RULE QUESTION, AND ITS EFFECT ON THE LIBERAL PARTY

A THESIS
PRESENTED TO
THE FACULTY OF SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES
WESTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE
MASTER OF ARTS

by
Kenneth John Van Dellen
Kalamazoo, Michigan
October, 1960
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Grateful acknowledgment is made to Dr. Nicholas Hamner, Professor of History, Western Michigan University, for the encouragement, assistance, and counsel he contributed in the preparation of this thesis.

Sincere appreciation is also expressed to Carol Van Dellen for her help and patience during the writing of this thesis.

Kenneth John Van Dellen
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acknowledgements</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## CHAPTER

### I. THE INTRODUCTION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Purpose</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Method</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Brief History of Anglo-Irish Relations</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### II. GLADSTONE'S CONVERSION TO HOME RULE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gladstone's Early Life and Personal Characteristics</th>
<th>12</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Irish Measures During Gladstone's First Ministry</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charles Parnell and Irish Agitation for Home Rule</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gladstone's Conversion to the Principle of Home Rule</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### III. HOME RULE AND THE LIBERAL PARTY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gladstone's Ideas and the Effect</th>
<th>39</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Hartington Faction</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Chamberlain Faction</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### IV. GLADSTONE'S HOME RULE BILLS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gladstone's First Home Rule Bill</th>
<th>70</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Conservative Interlude</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gladstone's Second Home Rule Bill</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

|                                                    | 83   |
CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Purpose

The Victorian Age of English history produced many great political leaders. Among the best known are Chamberlain, Disraeli, Palmerston, Salisbury, and Gladstone. These politicians were able to pacify many dissatisfied groups and produce many reforms. Yet one of the biggest problems they had to face was left unsolved throughout the Victorian period, and the later Edwardian period as well. This problem was Ireland.

This research project will deal with the man who made one of the most persistent efforts of the nineteenth century to solve the Irish problem. It will attempt to show how William Ewart Gladstone became one of the first English statesmen to give serious consideration to the demands of Home Rule for Ireland. The purpose of this paper is to present an account of the change in the attitude of Gladstone toward Irish Home Rule, and the effect it had on the Liberal party; thereby showing the direction of the Irish Home Rule question to which his later life was so clearly bound.

Even though Gladstone headed the Liberal party during the later part of the nineteenth century, there were other dominant personalities who did not always agree with his
decisions. The most serious breach in the party came when he publicly accepted the principle of Home Rule for Ireland. Joseph Chamberlain and his Radical followers veered off in one direction and Lord Hartington led his Whig aristocrats in still another. Gladstone thus, had to face two groups of "Liberals" beside the Conservative party in his battle for Home Rule.

In order to achieve the purpose of this paper a discussion of the two Home Rule bills, as they were introduced by Gladstone, is necessary. Though these bills had both strong and weak points, even as the man who originated them, the parliamentary battles carried on by Gladstone show his personal prestige, as well as his mental and physical capacities.

Method

In completing this study the method used was to analyze the biographies of Gladstone and the other leading figures in British politics in the late nineteenth century as well as general histories and other materials. As the Victorians are noted for their political correspondence and political magazines, much of this material has also been consulted. Whenever possible, letters have been used to point out an individual's views. These were a valuable source for an accurate and intensive picture of English politics from 1880 to 1894. General Irish histories have been studied in order
to portray the background information necessary to understand the needs of the Irish people. The speeches and articles in *The Annual Register* and *The Parliamentary Debates* were included to show the ideas on Home Rule held by the statesmen of the nineteenth century. Finally, books and periodicals which give opposing views on the problem, were investigated as well. In this manner the various sources served to counter-balance each other. The materials for this study were obtained from the three university libraries in Michigan as well as the college and municipal libraries in the Kalamazoo area.

A Brief History of Anglo-Irish Relations

From the time of the conquest of Ireland, England had governed a people she knew very little about. Prior to the reign of the Tudors, the English kings had made little effort to understand the problems of this nation. With the exception of a few trips to Ireland by these early rulers there had been little interference in Irish affairs. During the Wars of the Roses, the Duke of York had brought to Ireland a plan of open rebellion against the crown which was readily supported due to the neglect of the House of Lancaster. In 1460 the Duke had held a parliament at which the independence of the Irish legislature had been proclaimed.

During the reign of Henry VII, Ireland became
antagonistic to England because he decided to re-establish Ireland in a position of dependence on England. According to Dunlop, however, the primary cause was Henry's perennial inability to provide for the defense of the colony.¹ A second cause lay in the fact that English officials ruled Ireland for their own gain and to the detriment of the Irish people.² In 1494, Sir Edward Poynings was sent to Ireland as a deputy over Irish affairs. The next year, Sir Edward pushed legislation through the Irish parliament which was designed to put a bridle on its own powers. Poynings's Law stated that no parliament should be summoned in Ireland without the King's knowledge and previous consent, and that no measures could be discussed in this parliament until they had first been approved by the King and Council in England. Poynings's legislation passed in the Irish parliament primarily because the Irish did not understand the loss of legislative power they sustained, and furthermore, the parliament was controlled by Protestants who were loyal to English rule.³ At the same time this legislation would

²Ibid., p. 58.
³Ibid.
protect the parliament against such scheming viceroys as the Earl of Kildare, who managed the government in Ireland from 1469 to 1477.

During the next three centuries, relations between the two countries became utterly chaotic. Henry VIII was given the titles of "Supreme Head of the Irish Church" and "King of Ireland" by the Irish parliament. The attempts on the part of the English to impose the Protestant creed and colonization on the Catholic Irish continued. Johnston states that:

Edward VI tried to enforce the doctrine of the Reformation; also inflicting upon the Irish the abuses of colonization and the tithe system. There was a short respite during Queen Mary's reign, followed by a period of persecution under Elizabeth, 1558-1603, when the teachings of the Reformation were enforced by stricter measures.¹

Just prior to Elizabeth's death a rebellion broke out against the Irish government in the name of freedom and tolerance for Catholics. Led by the O'Neill clan, the movement received aid from Spain. Due to Spanish-Irish inefficiency and the strength of the English, however, it proved unsuccessful. By 1641, discontent again became so strong in Ireland that another member of the O'Neill clan

led a revolt and devastated Ulster. As Oliver Cromwell had established himself in England at this time, both England and Ireland were torn by civil war. Since the execution of Charles I had been looked upon with disfavor by the majority in Ireland, the Commonwealth was determined to subdue the country. The Protestants gained revenge for Ulster when Cromwell put almost three thousand Catholics to the sword at Drogheda. Cromwell's complete incorporation of Ireland under English rule ushered in a period of great suffering for the Catholics.1

The events of 1688 greatly affected Irish affairs. James II held the allegiance of all Ireland except Ulster. In the spring of 1690, William, who reigned over England as a result of the revolution of 1688, went to Ireland and defeated James' attempt to regain his throne. The battles of this war took a heavy toll in Irish lives. Because the war reached a stalemate, and William's position in England was insecure, both sides agreed to end hostilities in 1691. The resulting Treaty of Limerick was quite lenient toward the Catholics. Johnston states that:

The terms of this treaty provided for the security of the Catholics, requiring them to

1Ibid., p. 212.
take only the oath of allegiance. Their estates were to remain intact. The Parliament of 1692, however, violated the first of these conditions, and another great confiscation of land followed, making the fulfillment of the second impossible.¹

The eighteenth century found the Protestant minority again dominating Irish affairs. The Penal Laws, which discriminated against the Catholics, were passed by the Protestant-controlled Irish parliament. The most severe legislation, however, was passed at Westminster. By these laws family relations of the Catholics were strictly regulated, Catholic landowners were oppressed, and one law even required Catholics to tear down the steeples and belfries of their churches.² To oppose this unjust persecution, many secret societies were formed; but nothing permanent was affected by them owing to their lack of law and discipline. The Irish Protestants soon began to resent the despotic English influence imposed upon them and feared a Catholic uprising less. Finally, after a full century of agitation, the result was the partial repeal of penal laws followed by the Act of Repeal in 1782, and the Act of Renunciation in 1783, which gave legislative freedom to Ireland.

¹Ibid., p. 238.
²Ibid., p. 241.
Although Ireland had gained legislative independence, its parliament was so corrupt that little benefit resulted.\(^1\) Nor was it truly representative; for Catholics, which made up four-fifths of the total population of the country, were excluded; and many of the representatives answered to the will of England. Riots were frequent, and finally a rebellion was planned. In 1796, the French, who were at war with England, attempted to invade Ireland and the Irish were willing supporters but a bad storm intervened.\(^2\)

Theobold Wolfe Tone, a young Irish leader who founded the Protestant-dominated Society of United Irishmen, even traveled to France to help arrange a plan for the invasion.\(^3\)

Two years after this attempted invasion a severe Catholic uprising took place in Wexford County which required the British army to defeat it. Finally, in 1799, the Act of Union was passed by the English government. Under this act, the Irish legislature was abolished and Ireland was to be represented in the English parliament with four spiritual and twenty-eight temporal peers in the House of Lords and one hundred members in the lower house. The Irish Established Church was united with the Church of England.

---

\(^1\)Ibid., p. 281.

\(^2\)Dunlop, op. cit., p. 153.

\(^3\)Ibid., p. 153.
The quarter of a century that followed the Act of Union was one of the dreariest periods in the whole of Irish history. The Act merely transferred the Irish parliament to Westminster. Daniel O'Connell, the brilliant Irish agitator, however, cast the one bright spot on the horizon of Irish affairs. He led the early nineteenth century battle for Catholic Emancipation and for the rights of the Irish peasant. In 1829, O'Connell won religious equality for the Catholics from the Peel government. A few years later, he led a movement for the repeal of the Act of Union which ended in failure, in 1843.

During the 1840's, the Irish nation was ravaged by a severe famine which caused a steady tide of emigration. According to the Austrian minister, Prince von Metternich:

Ireland is passing forth. It is wending its way to the North American States ... to ask for an empty space of ground.

Dunlop states that "between 1846 and 1851 more than one million persons died of hunger and more than one million quitted the country." As a result of the economic distress,

---

3Dunlop, op. cit., p. 174.
a great many revolutionary societies sprang up, the foremost of which was the Fenian Brotherhood. The Fenians led an uprising in 1865-68, which ended with the imprisonment of their leaders. The stronghold of the movement had been in the United States among the Irish who had migrated there.

The Irish land problem caused as much discontent as the political affairs. Since most of the land was controlled either by the Church of England or by English landlords, very little consideration was given to the Catholic peasant majority. The British believed that overpopulation was a primary cause of Irish unrest; therefore, they allowed a great deal of emigration. Because many landlords were members of parliament, Ireland was governed in favor of these owners to the detriment of the tenant.¹ Sir Robert Peel's government, during the famine of 1847, had actually subsidized Irish newspapers so that they would print articles favorable to the policy. A special Proclamation Fund had also been set aside to keep Irish papers from printing articles criticizing English rule.² It was with this background that Gladstone took up

the cudgel to redress the wrongs England had committed in Ireland.
CHAPTER II

GLADSTONE'S CONVERSION TO HOME RULE

Gladstone's Early Life and Personal Characteristics

William Ewart Gladstone was born in 1809 in Liverpool of Scotch parents. At an early age he was noted for his great intellectual capacity and his hard labors. Little did he realize, while a young scholar at Eton, that he would exert so much of his energy for the pacification of the Irish nation. Nevertheless, it is interesting that one of his early contributions to his brother's scrapbook was a stanza of poetry written by the Irish rebel, Lord Edward Fitzgerald, on the night of his arrest:

O Ireland, my country, the hour
Of thy pride and thy splendor has passed,
And the chain that was spurned in thy moment of power,
Hangs heavy around thee at last.

This is not an indication, however, that he determined to enter politics in order to aid Ireland. Gladstone was more interested in a religious career. At Oxford he took a classical course and learned to love Homer. Some of his opponents criticized him later as prime minister for spending too much time reading the works of the Greek writers.

Though he eventually turned to politics, Gladstone never lost his interest in religion. He was a strict

---

evangelical and high churchman. Since he was a friend of both Manning and Newman, two of the Anglican churchmen who led the Oxford Movement, he was influenced by their thinking; but not to the point of leaving the Church of England as did his two friends. Therefore, though he tended to look upon the Roman Catholic church with favor, his religion differed from the Catholic majority in Ireland. To Gladstone, political life was only part of his religious life. He was always reminded that no job ought to be undertaken without a religious sense of "mission." The problem of Ireland became his "mission" during the height of his political career. Henry Labouchere, the Radical friend of the Liberals, cynically summed up the religious character of Gladstone's politics thus: "Like every politician he always has a card up his sleeve; but unlike the others, he thinks the Lord put it there."

Gladstone's personal characteristics contributed to his influence. He was an excellent orator. To him, statesmanship was of the strictly parliamentary type; his gaze was too closely concentrated upon tactics.

---


2 Morley, II, op. cit., p. 252.


often became excited over minor details, while on big issues he was completely calm. His prejudices were strong, especially against the conservative point of view, for "in 1886, he used to show some impatience and even irascibility, and used to provoke the Conservatives to resentment by jeers and laughter."¹ The powers of an original mind gave Gladstone an individual position in his politics. He found the origin and vitality of his ideas in sources strange, if not alien, to most Liberal minds.

Gladstone, therefore, with his strong sense of the value of self-respect in the life of a people, saw the whole Irish question through very different eyes than his contemporaries. Yet in several respects Gladstone showed less insight into Irish problems than others. According to Hammond:

Mill understood the agrarian problem better; Chamberlain the problem of the development of Irish resources, the brothers Balfour, the problem of the congested districts. But what distinguished [Gladstone] was that from first to last he thought of the Irish as a people.²

Gladstone became the idol of the working class. Gilbert Murray, the eminent classical scholar states:

I found one of the working men in the village, I think it was the cobbler, who had the practice

²Hammond, op. cit., p. 721.
of standing on the bridge every Saturday evening to challenge all comers who dared to criticize or condemn anything in Mr. Gladstone.¹

Both the Irish and the working class sensed this interest Gladstone had in them and idolized him. Gladstone's opponents regarded him as squeezable, meaning thereby that he would make extreme concessions if such were demanded by a sufficiently large body of his followers; and they thought that he was too much inclined to follow the guidance of public opinion instead of applying his vast experience, authority and personal weight to the formation of that opinion.²

The future prime minister's personal make-up was not conducive to the successful management of cabinets. Gladstone could not always get along with his colleagues. Hammond describes his relations with the two most important leaders with whom he had to work:

He was himself an island, and he supposed that all men were islands. There was, however, one bridge by which he could cross to other minds: the bridge of ancient culture. But there was no such bridge between him and the two men who were ultimately to wreck the main purpose of his life; the aristocrat Hartington, and the Radical Chamberlain.³

Yet, it was not only Gladstone's great intellectual power plus a real reverence for parliament and public duty that caused his personal prestige. His rapport with the Irish

²Temple, op. cit., p. 105.
³Hammond, op. cit., p. 171.
and the working class was also due to the legislation which he and the Liberals pushed through the House of Commons.

Irish Measures During Gladstone's First Ministry

Young William Gladstone began his political career as a Tory. As an undergraduate at Oxford, he had been caught up in the political excitement of the day. In 1831, he spoke against the Reform Bill and attracted the attention of the conservative Duke of Newcastle. A year later the Duke invited him to contest successfully the pocket borough of Newark which the former controlled. Just ten years after Gladstone won this seat in parliament, Sir Robert Peel gave the young man a place in his cabinet. Gladstone, however, resigned before the question of the Corn Law repeal split the Tory party. While Sir Robert's stand on the Corn Laws caused many members of parliament to change their party allegiance, Gladstone remained loyal.

He described himself in 1852 as preferring to be on the liberal side of a Conservative Party rather than on the conservative side of a Liberal Party;¹

He later served in the governments of Lord John Russell and Lord Aberdeen, two Liberal prime ministers; but as late as 1858, it was generally expected that he would join Lord Derby's new Conservative government.²

¹Ibid., p. 54.
²Ibid., p. 1.
It was in 1859 that Gladstone first became a Liberal in any sense of the word, primarily because he agreed with the Italian policy of Palmerston, the Liberal prime minister. Consequently, Gladstone joined the Palmerston government as Chancellor of the Exchequer. He gained prominence when he publicized the problem of Italian unification. However, at this time he and Palmerston were at odds on almost all domestic issues. There were several factors which thrust Gladstone in the direction of the Liberal party. Williams correctly states that "we plot the graph of Liberalism, through three cardinal points: public economy, reform, and the Irish problem."\(^1\) Gladstone's great Budget of 1853, which was based on economy, was conceived in the highest spirit of Peel's constructive finance and laid the cornerstone of modern Liberal policy.\(^2\) His attitudes on reform and the widening of the franchise endeared him to the Liberal reformers and the lower classes, who were soon to become a political power.

Gladstone was more advanced in his thinking than his Liberal colleagues on several questions of reform. He made


occasional political blunders; for example, he favored the South in the American Civil War while Palmerston believed England should play the role of mediator. He suffered as well because he lacked personal knowledge of, and contact with, his colleagues.\footnote{G. T. Garratt, \textit{The Two Mr. Gladstone's}, (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1936), p. 108.} It is small wonder that Williams points out that:

Three strains run through the criticism of his contemporaries: they could not understand him; they never knew what he would do next; they had misgivings whether he would ever make a leader.\footnote{Williams, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 10.}

Though the Liberals in the House of Commons, because of their mistrust, had little liking for him, Gladstone found his way to first place in the party by making himself indispensable. After the retirement of Russell at Christmas of 1867, he was generally recognized as the leader of the party. But he remained an isolated figure, the object of suspicion and speculation, for his adherents in parliament did not forget the blunders he had previously made.

When Gladstone headed a government for the first time in the following year, he was committed to a policy of reform for Ireland. During the election campaign Benjamin Disraeli, the Conservative leader, had favored a new
university in Dublin for Catholics, but Gladstone had decided to speak for the immediate disestablishment and disendowment of the Irish church. Disraeli called the campaign Gladstone's most brilliant and successful stroke as a party leader.  

1 Another author has stated:

In tracing the rise of Gladstone to the leadership of the Liberal Party, we reach in his policy towards the Irish Church the last stage of development and the first stage of maturity.  

Actually, he hoped not only to disestablish the Irish church, and settle the Irish land question, but also provide for the educational needs of the Irish people. The first Irish bill which was passed by the new prime minister provided for the severance of the Irish Protestant Episcopal Church from the Established Church of England. The next proposal was the Land Act of 1870. By this legislation, which passed by a small majority, the tenant "was entitled to demand compensation for improvements which he had affected during the period of his lease."  

3 Though it favored the tenant at the expense of the landlord, the tenant

---


2 Williams, op. cit., p. 158.

was more interested in security against eviction than compensation when he was forced to leave his holdings. The third Irish measure of this ministry cost Gladstone his majority. It was a bill designed to create a non-denomina­tional college. The Protestants already had their own Trinity College which was not opened to Catholics. This proposal would have enabled Catholics to attend college for the first time, but it was defeated by a narrow margin.¹

Several aspects of his first ministry are important in order to understand Gladstone's later career. First of all, he was unsuccessful in his attempt to pacify Ireland because his land measure did not get to the heart of the problem. It was only a weak step in the right direction. Secondly, the effect of the Irish church struggle was to loosen his many ties with the Church of England, as well as encourage a wider religious outlook, and a far closer connection with Liberal nonconformists in the north.² Thirdly, Gladstone's cabinet was made up of Radicals, Bright and Trevalyan, and Whigs, Hartington and Granville. Therefore, moderation was of necessity used by him to cement both groups in his government. Yet, he continued to alienate the support of

¹Hammond and Foot, op. cit., p. 123.
²Garratt, op. cit., p. 104.
his mixed following due to his Irish policies. 1 Finally, after 1872, the Queen's attitude of reserve toward him increased, and his sense of awe toward her became oppressive. When Gladstone, in continuation of his policy of reconciling Ireland to the Union, had, in December, 1870, released a number of Fenians convicted of treason on condition of their expatriating themselves, Queen Victoria remarked "that no expression of regret of contrition had been heard." 2

In 1874, when his government fell, Gladstone decided to retire from the leadership of the Liberal party. Lord Hartington, the Whig aristocrat, assumed command. Gladstone was already sixty-five years old and had suffered several illnesses in spite of his appearance of having great strength. Hammond strongly emphasizes the health factor:

After 1870 he was impatient, wilful, tactless, betraying faults of judgement and temper that affected both his politics and his relations with his colleagues. He was a sick man with all a sick man's petulance and obstinacy. 3

While the author would not emphasize this point so strongly, it is important to keep in mind that Gladstone was an old man when he dealt with the Irish Question.

---


3 Hammond, op. cit., p. 110.
Charles Farnell and Irish Agitation For Home Rule

The Home Rule movement in English politics began several years before Gladstone introduced his legislation. According to Ensor:

The phrase 'Home Rule' had been invented by Isaac Butt, as a more positive and less offensive version of the old demand for 'Repeal' of the union. The movement was launched under his inspiration at a Dublin meeting in 1870; and in 1874 it carried some 59 seats at the general election.1

These Irish Nationals formed a separate parliamentary organization and soon their weight was thrown more in favor of the Conservatives than the Liberals. They helped the Conservatives gain power in 1874. The support of the former was due to the unhappiness of those who had capitalized on the abuses in Ireland which Gladstone's government had removed. This feeling was stronger than that of the general public which was to be benefited. The measures which Gladstone had pushed through parliament had not completely solved the difficulties the Irish nation was facing.

In the 1870's, the Irishman who was to play a part in Irish politics second only to Gladstone, entered the House

---

1R. C. K. Ensor, England, 1870-1914, (London: Oxford University Press, 1936), p. 55. Repeal of the Union was an idea begun in the 1830's by Daniel O'Connell who intended to use the Catholic Emancipation, obtained in 1829, for this purpose.
Commons. This man, Charles Stewart Parnell, was sponsored by a political organization in Ireland which was called the Home Rule League. At first Parnell's lack of knowledge pertaining to parliamentary procedure kept him in the background. In a short time, however, he concluded that Isaac Butt was far too conciliatory as the parliamentary leader of the Irish party. Parnell believed that the latter was only exposing the Irish party to ridicule. Early in his career he became a close friend of Joseph Biggar, a Fenian who had little respect for the English legislative processes. Together they were to introduce a new parliamentary maneuver destined to bring the Irish question to a head.

On April 12, 1877, Parnell and Biggar first employed obstruction; a method which could be used to hold up government bills indefinitely through procedural delays and long speeches. Butt immediately placed himself in opposition to the use of such tactics. Parnell, however, was acclaimed as a hero throughout Ireland for his fight in the House of Commons, and for standing before the English people in defiance of public opinion. Often the sessions would last until all hours of the night, causing the older and less

---

physically fit members great fatigue. As Parnell was not socially minded, his evening meal would take only ten minutes. On the other hand, his English colleagues, not wishing to miss important parliamentary business, were much annoyed at being unable to attend their usual dinner parties.1

In 1879 Micheal Davitt, the powerful leader of the Irish Land League, induced Parnell to combine the movements for land reform and Home Rule, and to accept the aid of the revolutionary faction.2 The Land League was a peasant organization which aimed at bringing pressure to bear on Irish landlords by agitation. Money to support the League came from all over Ireland as well as from the Irish immigrants in America. The organization, which was ruled by a central committee, had branches extending throughout the country. Because it was based on popular suffrage, the League was said to be stronger than the proper English authorities who derived their power from the police. At this time Parnell was not yet allied with either of the English political parties.

Several tactics were used by the Irish to gain their ends. The landlords insisted on collecting their rents

---


which remained high even though there was depression at the
time. Their agents mercilessly evicted the many farmers who
were unable to pay. Through the system of rack-renting a
landlord could put his land up for rent to the highest
bidder, and force the original tenant to make way for the
new one. Hence, the tenants refused to improve their land.
During this period there were boycotts and agrarian outrages
committed by the renters in spite of the fact that the Land
League advocated moral suasion and not force. Parnell urged
the Land League to pursue the following course:

When a man takes a farm from which another has
been evicted, you must show him on the roadside
when you meet him, you must show him in the
streets of the town, you must show him at the
shopcounter, you must show him in the fair and
in the market-place, and even in the house of
worship, by leaving him severely alone, by put­
ting him in moral coventry. You must show him
your detestation of the crime he has commit ted,
and you may depend on it there will be no man
so full of avarice, so lost to shame, as to dare
the public opinion of all the right thinking men
and to transgress your unwritten code of laws.1

The efforts of the Irish to gain reforms were co-ordinated
between Davitt's leading a social revolution and Parnell
leading the fight with his obstructionist tactics in
parliament. The peaceful means sponsored at first by the
Land League soon deteriorated into cattle maiming, arson,
and assassination, however.

1R. B. O'Brien, op. cit., p. 186.
Gladstone's Conversion to the Principle of Home Rule

There are several factors that caused Gladstone to be converted to a policy of Home Rule for Ireland. During his years in opposition after 1874, relations between Ireland and the home government were being transformed. Because Disraeli did nothing, the Irish members, who had been elected to parliament largely as a result of the Liberal Ballot Act of 1872, forced English attention to their grievances by making it impossible for the House of Commons to transact business. Gladstone was constantly reminded that he also had failed to solve the Irish problem during his first ministry. The land issue was still pressing. But above all it was becoming very apparent that violence needed to be stopped. Certainly James Bryce is correct in stating that "one of [Gladstone's] strongest motives for taking up the cause of Irish Home Rule was his horror at the atrocities which had been perpetrated in Ireland."¹

One has only to survey Gladstone's second ministry, 1880-1885, to find examples of his frustration in attempting to pacify Irish discontent. In 1879, Gladstone had stood for parliament in the traditionally Tory Midlothian district, a constituency near Edinburgh. As he had campaigned, his journey had taken the nature of a triumphal procession, and

crowds of people had followed his carriage everywhere. In this manner, the aging former prime minister had been again thrust into the national limelight. In his speeches in Midlothian, he had successfully aroused public opinion against the foreign policy of Disraeli. Gladstone had been elected and the Liberal party had gained a majority in the lower house. The Queen first asked Lord Hartington, the Commons leader of the Liberals, to form a government but he refused. Then Victoria summoned the Liberal leader in the House of Lords, Lord Granville, who also refused. McCarthy states correctly that "Lord Granville and Lord Hartington perfectly well knew that neither of them had led the Liberal Party to victory."\(^1\) Gladstone had already made it clear that he would not serve under anyone in a Liberal government. As no one was strong enough to set up a government without him, he formed his second ministry in 1880.

At the time, Gladstone still favored a policy of stricter coercion enforced by William E. Forster, the Irish secretary; and concession in the form of land legislation.\(^2\) To put a halt to the many agrarian uprisings a strong policy of repression was tried. Forster introduced a coercion bill


\(^2\)Garratt, op. cit., p. 196.
which "enabled the viceroy to lock up anybody he pleases." Gladstone sponsored a land act which aimed at establishing fair rents and fixed tenure for the Irish tenants. Both bills were successfully passed. Neither the tenants nor the landlords favored the land act, as it stripped the latter of some of their privileges, and did not allow the farmers to purchase their own farms. Yet it tended to divide the Parnellite movement in the same way that repression had united it; because, in spite of the fact that Parnell and the more radical members of the Irish party agreed to abstain, several did eventually vote in favor of the bill. The act was passed largely through Gladstone's personal effort without consulting either his radical colleague, Joseph Chamberlain, or Parnell. These two men wielded much political power and consultation might have led to their closer cooperation in the Home Rule struggle that was to follow.

Thus, the unpopularity of Gladstone's land and coercion measures, along with Parnell's obstruction tactics in parliament, and the internal disorder of Ireland, defeated the prime minister's above-mentioned attempts to pacify the Irish nation. It was these frustrations that caused him to

\[1\text{Morley, III, op. cit., p. 481.}\]
begin to think in terms of Home Rule.¹ He continued to alienate the Irish during this ministry in spite of his pro-Irish attitude. In 1881, Parnell had been put in jail because of a vicious attack on Gladstone and his violation of the coercion act. The Irishman was soon released under unusual circumstances, as the result of an arrangement which has been called the "Kilmarnham Treaty," as he had been held in the Kilmarnham jail. An understanding was negotiated between Chamberlain, who represented Gladstone's cabinet, and Parnell through two channels: Justin McCarthy and Captain O'Shea. In return for an end to coercion, Parnell agreed to cooperate in checking crime.²

It is at this point that two individuals, of whom a great deal of fiction has been written, entered the picture. They were Captain and Mrs. William O'Shea, Irish agitators who knew several leaders in the government and who served as intermediaries between Parnell and men such as Gladstone and Chamberlain. Ideas were exchanged through the O'Sheas because it would have been unwise politically for Parnell and Gladstone to be seen together. At the time of Parnell's imprisonment, Mrs. O'Shea wrote several letters to Gladstone

¹Hammond and Foot, op. cit., p. 168.

asking him for his release on the grounds that he would support Gladstone's government rather than obstruct it.

Lord Eversley states that:

At the Cabinet the case of the release of Parnell was presented by Chamberlain, who had been in personal communication with Mr. O'Shea.¹

It was soon found that the O'Shea's twisted the statements of each correspondent resulting in the illusion that all were in complete agreement. The Captain hoped to gain riches or a position in the government, while his wife hoped to aid Parnell. The prime minister's son Herbert remarked that "Mrs. O'Shea detested politics and in her communications with Mr. Gladstone acted under the direction of Parnell."²

When the Irish leader was released, Lord Eversley stated that one can only infer that the release of Parnell was a part of an agreement.³ The facts seem to bear this out as Gladstone did not have a close connection with Mrs. O'Shea and he seemed to believe that it would be best for the government if Parnell were released. The agrarian outrages


had been spreading at an appalling rate. In jail the restraint, which Parnell had been able to maintain by paying personal visits to the districts where evictions were prevalent and advising resistance by constitutional methods, was removed. Parnell was released a bitter man who never forgave Gladstone and Forster. It has been stated that when he found himself in the prison yard at Kilmainham he said, in a sort of soliloquy, "I shall live yet to dance upon those two old men's graves."

Parnell's release was followed by an unfortunate event that further led to Irish antagonism toward Gladstone. Forster had resigned from Gladstone's cabinet because he opposed the release of the Irish leader and was also anxious to get out from under the cares of his Irish position. The new Irish Secretary, Lord Frederick Cavendish, had just arrived in Dublin when he was murdered along with Thomas Burke, the permanent undersecretary, while the two were walking in Phoenix Park. They were killed with surgical knives by the "Invincibles," a fanatical group that resorted to violence to bring about better conditions in Ireland. This was a personal blow to Gladstone as Cavendish was not only related to his wife but also to Lord Hartington. This assassination put an end to any chance of immediate Irish settlement and forced the prime minister to introduce a strong coercion act which was eagerly passed by parliament.

---

The reaction produced by the murders made perserverance in a milder form impossible in the face of English public opinion.

The last important bill passed by Gladstone in his second ministry was the Reform Act of 1884, which extended the franchise to householders in the country. Ireland was included and her electorate was trebled. This was an important reform for Gladstone because he intended to find out if all the Irish population desired Home Rule.¹ Prior to 1884, the majority of the Irish members did not support the plan. The Conservatives, led by Lord Salisbury, dropped coercion at this time and Parnell deserted the Liberal fold. As a result, Gladstone's ministry was defeated in June, 1885, over a clause in the budget of that year. According to Marriott, the cause was "the disastrous policy of the Government in Egypt, partly also by failure of their successive and contradictory policies in Ireland."²

As a result of the general election held in 1885, Home Rule became a burning national issue. Not a single Liberal was returned from the whole of Ireland. Out of eighty-nine contests, Parnell's men won no fewer than eighty-five. The Liberals won a majority over the Conservatives, but the Irish

¹McCarthj, op. cit., p. 260.
assisted the latter because Parnell believed that he could obtain their support for Home Rule.\(^1\) Thus, Parnell was in a position to decide which party would be in power. Morley calls this election:

> the vehement protest of one of the three kingdoms against the whole system of its government, and the strenuous demand for its reconstruction on new foundations.\(^2\)

It is small wonder that the experience of this ministry led Gladstone to formulate a new Irish policy along Home Rule lines.

As there is a great deal of controversy over the exact time when Gladstone accepted a policy of Home Rule, one cannot merely enumerate the reasons for this change without discussing the actual steps he took toward it. Mr. Gladstone's political opponents made much of the suddenness of his conversion. The imputation is that he became a convert to this principle when he saw that the Irish Nationalist members would hold the balance between the two English parties in parliament. Henry Labouchere, the Radical friend of Joseph Chamberlain, called Gladstone's conversion a passion for power.\(^3\) On the other hand, Hammond believes:

---

\(^1\) Hammond and Foot, *op. cit.*, p. 170.


that suspicion that his actions in the autumn and winter of 1885 were ruled or influenced by the desire for office was absolutely without basis.

In reality his conversion was of slow growth and not occasioned by one event. Such a change usually evolves over a long period of time; and one must beware when an author arbitrarily establishes a conclusive time of the transformation. The idea seems to have been in the back of Gladstone's mind for years. Lord Acton states that there is "not a little truth in O'Leary's remark that Gladstone's conversion to Home Rule dates from the attack on Clerkenwell gaol in the same year." This was in 1867. It is the earliest date suggested for serious thoughts on the subject by the prime minister. Hammond makes the statement that "as early as the seventies Gladstone's chief colleagues were aware that his mind was moving toward Home Rule." Justin McCarthy supports Hammond:

So long ago as 1879, shortly after I first became a member of the House of Commons, Mr. Gladstone showed himself inclined, not indeed to favor, but to consider the question of Home Rule.

---

1Hammond, op. cit., p. ix.
2R. Dunlop, "Ireland and the Home Rule Movement," The Cambridge Modern History, XII (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1910), p. 65. This was an attack on an Irish jail by three men who hoped to release their comrades. All three were caught and shot, but their courage was admired by Parnell. Gladstone was also influenced by this event.
3Hammond, op. cit., p. ix.
4McCarthy, op. cit., p. 358.
Gladstone asked McCarthy to write a series of articles in The Nineteenth Century about Home Rule at this time. He wanted the English public to become acquainted with the idea. He wondered, however, if a scheme could be shaped which would give the Irish the management of their domestic affairs without disturbing the balance of imperial control. Herbert Gladstone states that Forster's resignation played an important role in leading his father toward Home Rule.¹

Forster was a capable man, but it was his failure as Irish Secretary that led Gladstone to a personal examination of the form, method, and nature of the Irish administration. In February, 1882, in the House of Commons, he indicated a leaning in the direction of Home Rule when he stated that he would hail with satisfaction and delight any measure of local government for Ireland which would, at the same time, maintain the supremacy of the imperial parliament.² When Herbert Gladstone pressed, in 1883, for a definite statement of the matter, his father replied, "I am ready to give to Ireland everything which I am prepared to give to Scotland."³ It is most interesting to read Gladstone's own explanation of the development of the principle of Home

¹Herbert Gladstone, op. cit., p. 269.
²Lord Eversley, op. cit., p. 188.
³Herbert Gladstone, op. cit., p. 280.
Rule in his speech introducing his first bill in 1886. He explained first, how all his early methods had failed to pacify Ireland. Next, he told of his ill-fated attempts to alleviate Irish problems through land reform, and indicated he had felt that agrarian crime was more a symptom than a cause of unrest. Finally, he expressed the belief that "the two questions of land reform and of Irish government are, . . . closely and inseparably connected." This statement seems to show that Gladstone began certainly to think seriously of Home Rule soon after the failure of his Land Act of 1881. He answered his Conservative critics when he stated that:

"it was no consequence from my not having condemned Home Rule, that I had either not considered it, or had adopted it. What is true is that I had not publicly and in principle condemned it, and also that I had mentally considered it."²

On December 17, 1885, Gladstone's decision to support a parliament for Ireland was announced in the press. The public mind was thrown into an extraordinary commotion. Herbert Gladstone, who had already become an ardent Home


Ruler, was responsible for the announcement as the result of an informal meeting with several newspaper friends in which he had revealed his own opinions of his father's thinking. John Morley, Gladstone's biographer and friend, believes that the younger Gladstone released this news because he had a strong impression that the party might be drifting toward a split due to the lack of guidance on the Irish question.\(^1\) Gladstone has been criticized for his remaining silent at this time about his conversion to Home Rule. Because he did little to get the support of his colleagues, the Liberal Party was injured when the project was introduced. In view of later developments this is a valid criticism. However, at the time Gladstone had good reasons for not discussing it.

He concluded therefore that the best hope for an Irish settlement was that it should be worked out between the Irish and the Conservative leaders, preferably in private; the last thing he wanted was for it to become a matter of day-to-day political strife between parties.\(^2\)

Therefore, in 1885, he would not compete for Irish votes because he believed that the Irish members would not act

---

\(^1\) Morley, III, *op. cit.*, p. 265.

\(^2\) Hammond and Foot, *op. cit.*, p. 169.
with the Conservative party unless they felt that Home Rule might result from the cooperation.

Salisbury, while prime minister, had appointed Lord Carnarvon Irish viceroy. The knowledge that his lordship was moving in the direction of Home Rule, and was meeting with Parnell, did not shake Salisbury's confidence in him. Gladstone offered through Arthur Balfour, the Irish Secretary and nephew of Salisbury, to support a Conservative project of Home Rule, but the prime minister turned him down because of principle and expediency.¹ Later in 1885, Gladstone made a speech pledging himself to deal with the Irish problem. On November 21, 1885, a manifesto was issued by the leaders of the Irish party handing over the entire Irish vote in parliament to Gladstone. Now Gladstone was publicly committed. In the meanwhile, conciliation was not solving the Irish problems; hence, on January 26, 1886, the Salisbury government introduced a new coercion bill. On this bill the Conservatives were defeated; and in February Gladstone formed his third ministry definitely pledged to the principle of Home Rule.

¹Ibid., p. 176.
During Gladstone's third ministry, a serious breach developed within the Liberal party; but signs of fission had appeared much earlier. Garratt states that the Radicals led by Chamberlain and his friends, Sir Charles Dilke and John Morley, severely crippled Gladstone's first ministry.¹ The primary cause of this trouble was the feeling that the prime minister had collected a cabinet predominantly Whig. The Whigs, members of the old aristocracy of England, were led by Lord Hartington, the eldest son of the Duke of Devonshire, head of the Cavendish family. When compared with the Radical wing of the party, the Whigs were conservative. Gladstone had traditionally sided with the latter section because he had close ties with the old ruling classes through his wife; and he had received a great deal of political training from Sir Robert Peel, who had also favored the old established Whig families. Gladstone, in all his cabinets had to deal with both of these groups.

The younger members of the Radical wing were growing restive waiting for Gladstone to retire. This is especially

true of Chamberlain and Labouchere, two leading Radicals along with Trevalyan and Bright, who wished to play a more important role in the English government. In the 1870's, Gladstone had temporarily stepped down and played the role of the elder statesman. He had not stayed in the background very long however. In the early 1880's he again assumed command. Gladstone was soundly criticized by his opponents within the party who believed that the Liberals were being destroyed because they refused to be the instrument of his personal ambition. One author states that:

If he were to retire from political life as during the last twenty years and more he has at intervals talked of doing, the great majority of Gladstonians with various excuses, according to their various natures, would revert to the convictions of Liberalism, as they were understood until after the general election of 1885. But we can scarcely hope for such a return on Mr. Gladstone's part to a sounder mind, and it is impossible for him to stand still.¹

Labouchere, Chamberlain and Dilke became more bitter as each rumor of retirement was proven false. The Queen also interfered with his relations with his left wing colleagues and caused him great difficulty in his cabinet appointments. Victoria especially complained about Chamberlain, Dilke and

Labouchere.

The Liberal party in the early Eighties was a very badly disciplined organization. The Whig faction owed its strength to its experience and tradition. It also had a fairly strong following among the moderate elements in the party. The Radicals suffered from divided enthusiasm and contradicting platforms. Gladstone could manage mobs better than men; he did not rule his cabinets with the authority he should have.\footnote{Osbert Burdett, W. E. Gladstone, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1927).} Because of this, the prime minister's hardest task in 1886 was in leading his colleagues.

The divisions in the Liberal party were very extensive, partly due to the above-mentioned weaknesses and partly due to Home Rule. Yet Gladstone's personal prestige and the strength of the Irish Nationals enabled him to form two ministries after his plans for Ireland were publicized. When he organized his ministry in 1886, several of his Whig friends, led by Hartington, refused to serve in it. Chamberlain and Sir George Trevalyan, though accepting office for a short time, made it clear that they committed themselves on Ireland no further than an examination of proposed legislation.

The entire first month and a half of Gladstone's government was one of busy committee work on the Home Rule
problem. Finally, the plan was submitted to the cabinet in the second week of March, 1886. At this time, according to Gretton:

The public speculated on the possibility of Mr. Gladstone's resignation, and the construction of a new Liberal Cabinet under Lord Hartington, with Lord Wolseley as Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, to carry out a policy of severe repression with local government to follow. Then on 26 March 1886 Mr. Chamberlain and Sir George Trevelyan resigned; Mr. Gladstone remained in office, and the nation knew that it would have to consider a full Home Rule proposal.¹

Trevelyan withdrew because he did not favor the removal of law and order in Ireland from direct British authority; Chamberlain raised objections to granting the Irish full rights of taxation. Thus these two ministers were not ready to go as far as Mr. Gladstone and the rest of the members of the government.

The two sections which split from the Liberal party, one led by Hartington, and the other led by Chamberlain, contained two of the most able debaters in parliament. While the political strength of the former and the Whigs could largely be discounted in the Commons, they did have a great deal of power in the House of Lords. Joseph Chamberlain was very popular throughout the country and had a large personal following. His political power and abilities were largely

underestimated by Gladstone. The prime minister refused to meet with him to obtain the younger man's views on Home Rule at this time. He also refused to give the latter a prominent role in his government which would serve to challenge him. The split widened as time passed. A Conservative was led to write that "a new faction had been called into being by the Home Rule movement since 1886, both inside and outside Parliament." This faction became the Liberal Unionists who were eventually to vote with the Conservatives in order to defeat Home Rule; but at this early date were not ready to completely cast off their ties with the Liberal party. Though the Conservatives were ready to welcome them, they were to be always wary of them. It was felt at the time that if the Home Rule question were cleared up the Unionists would rejoin the Liberal party. This was not to be the case, however, and in deference to the Liberal Unionists the Conservative party temporarily was to be called the Unionist party during the early part of the twentieth century.

Before the attitudes of the Whigs and the Radicals are

---


discussed, it is important to understand the basic position
Gladstone took on Home Rule; because only then will the rival
stands be comprehensible.

'The fault of the administrative system of
Ireland,' said Gladstone, 'is simply this --
that its spring and source of action is
English and not Irish ... without having
an Irish Parliament, I want to know how you
will bring about this result, that your
administrative system shall be Irish and
not English.'

When Gladstone had sought out those men whom he wished to
include in his cabinet, he had read them a short memorandum
that explained the platform of his new government.

Chamberlain and Trevalyan had agreed to join even after
they had seen it. Gladstone had stated his ideas as follows:

I propose to examine whether it is or is not
practicable to comply with the desire widely
prevalent in Ireland, and testified by the
return of eighty-five out of one hundred and
three representatives, for the establishment
by statute of a legislative body to sit in
Dublin, and to deal with Irish as distinguished
from imperial affairs; in such a manner as
would be just to each of the three kingdoms,
equitable with reference to every class of the
people of Ireland, conducive to the social
order and harmony of that country, and calcu-
lated to support and consolidate the unity of
the empire on the continued basis of imperial
authority and mutual attachment. 2

1W. Lyon Blease, A Short History of English Liberalism,

2John Morley, The Life of William Ewart Gladstone,
In this manner no definite arrangement was advocated, but the government was committed to the duty of seeking a plan. Therefore, it was primarily the rumor of Gladstone's readiness to offer a large measure of Home Rule that produced the symptoms of a breach in the Liberal party. Lord Hartington and his Whig friend, G. J. Goschen, were credited with a determination to give no countenance to any proposal which, either directly or by implication, conceded the principle of Home Rule because they intended to maintain the ascendancy of the landlords in Ireland. To them Home Rule would violate this aim. On the other hand, the advancedRadicals under the leadership of Chamberlain, threatening to create a break on the reform of the land laws, also repudiated any measure which pointed towards a repeal of the Union.\(^1\) Hence the rival sections of the party broke with Gladstone even though he went no further than to pledge himself to the examination of a new policy toward Ireland.

The Hartington Faction

It is quite easy to trace the controversy that arose between Gladstone and Lord Hartington over the Irish Home Rule question because of the amount of correspondence between the two, as well as the speeches they made in order

to clarify their respective views. Though early in his career Gladstone had favored the Whigs, he gradually had turned more toward political reform and the pacification of Ireland. By 1874, Lord Hartington was leading the right-wing Liberals who dissented from Gladstone's version of Liberalism. Though the party was not organized, the Whigs were joined by the Radicals to oppose Gladstone.

The early Radical-Whig alliance was an uneasy one at best for the two leaders, Lord Hartington and Chamberlain, were soon at loggerheads over an army bill. In the ensuing fight, Chamberlain did not believe that enough concessions had been wrung out of the Conservatives, who were in power at the time. Hartington, not understanding the advanced forces of Liberalism, counselled Chamberlain, in a speech in the House of Commons, to have more patience with the government. According to Garvin:

Then he left the House, not realizing that something significant had happened and that the heavily aristocratic tone of Whig instruction would never again prevail in the Liberal Party.  

The advice was ignored in the house. Chamberlain, in characteristic manner, repudiated Hartington with the words, "It is rather inconvenient that we should have so little of the presence of the noble Lord, lately the leader of the Opposition, but now the leader of a section only."  

\[1\] Ibid., I, p. 271.  
\[2\] Ibid., p. 272.
Though there was not yet a complete break, Gladstone and Lord Hartington also had differences during the latter's brief leadership of the party. He once explained his difficulties with Gladstone in a single sentence when he stated that the latter "was a Peelite and I was a Palmerstonian." This was the main cause of the trouble at the time, as the prime minister strongly advocated political reform and his lordship remained cool to the idea. By 1880, it was evident that a strong Liberal leader would be needed if the party was to gain a majority. This position was ably filled by Gladstone.

In the 1870's, Lord Hartington had stated his views toward Ireland in a reply to a letter from Lord Granville.

I have not the remotest idea what Mr. Gladstone's views about it are; and I should doubt very much whether he goes further than I should like to go, if he saw his way. I should like to see County Boards take the place of the Government and Parliament to a great extent in Sanitary, Police, Educational matters, Inspection of Mines and Factories, perhaps to some extent Railway Legislation, and many other matters. But I don't see how this can be done except very gradually; and I have no idea that anything of this sort would in the least satisfy the Home Rulers. Of course, I should want Parliament to remain supreme, and only to delegate its powers, whereas the Home Rulers want it to give up all its powers in relation to Irish domestic questions. However, it would be most interesting to know what Mr. Gladstone's views on Local Government are and what bearing he thinks they would have on the Home Rule question. After

---

we were beaten on the Irish University Bill, I put the whole question, which I always detested, entirely out of my head; and I should have great difficulty in getting it in again.¹

Thus he opposed any basic changes in the relationship between England and Ireland. If changes were needed, they should be most gradual. Furthermore, it is apparent that Hartington would not make the slightest concession in the direction of granting the demands of the Home Rulers. According to McCarthy, the later secession of Hartington from the Liberal party is easy to understand, as he had never shown the slightest sympathy with genuine Liberalism or with any really progressive movement.² His greatest ambition in life seemed to be a desire to be left alone so that he could devote more time to his hobby of raising a successful string of race horses.

The second ministry of Gladstone was particularly stormy for Lord Hartington. Constantly he faced the opposition of the other members of the cabinet and of the prime minister. He supported the Irish Secretary, William Forster, whose policy was strict coercion, because he wanted to insure the security of the land he owned in Ireland. For


this reason he disliked the principles of the land legislation almost as much as the Radicals of the cabinet disliked coercion.\textsuperscript{1} He keenly felt the hesitation of the government to take restrictive action against Ireland. Then, after the Phoenix Park murders, he believed that the air had cleared and at last the beginning of better relations between the English and the Irish was at hand, on the grounds that now stricter measures to guarantee law and order could be passed.\textsuperscript{2} Other members of the government were not so optimistic, however. Actually the murders put an end to any immediate settlement.\textsuperscript{3} Hartington continuously opposed land legislation. In his correspondence on the subject with the prime minister, he admitted supporting an association which had been set up to aid those who were boycotted in Ireland. The Whig leader spoke out against extended self-government. He favored the maintenance of public order through coercive and other measures necessary to restore peace. On the other hand, Chamberlain compared Ireland under English rule to Poland under Russian control. The difference between the Whig position of coercion and the Radical position of land reform was thus brought before the public view. In the

\textsuperscript{1}Ibid., p. 333.

\textsuperscript{2}Ibid., p. 353.

House of Commons, Lord Randolph Churchill predicted Hartington's union with the Conservatives in 1883 when he said:

the noble Marquis is more closely connected with Ireland than almost any man in this House. He is connected with that country by the vast estates which are the appanage of his house; he is connected with it by the bitter memory of an irreparable loss. The noble Marquis is one of the few, perhaps the only, statesman in whom the people of this country are prepared to repose a large and generous measure of confidence.¹

It was now evident to the nation that the two most important members of Gladstone's cabinet held divergent points of view on the Irish problem. Chamberlain and Hartington, though they held minor posts in the government, were important because they led powerful sections within the Liberal party. Lord Granville was used more and more to mediate between Gladstone and the Whig faction. Usually the two men would communicate their views on certain problems to Granville and he would then relay the ideas on to one or the other of the antagonists. During the battle over the Reform Bill of 1884, relations between Gladstone and Lord Hartington reached the breaking point. It was only the latter's hesitation to break up the party that kept him from resigning from the cabinet.² In the last two years of the second

¹Holland, I, op. cit., p. 384.
²Ibid., p. 404.
ministry, Lord Hartington was Secretary of State for War. The Khartoum affair, in which he had opposed the prime minister and advocated immediate relief for General Gordon in the Sudan, caused additional difficulty in their relationship.

With this background, it is easy to predict what happened when Gladstone took office again in 1886, committed to a study of a new plan for Ireland. Hartington believed that examination and inquiry must mean a proposal.¹ Before Gladstone formed his ministry, the leader of the Whigs asked for clarification on the point.

Of course, I know that you are, and have long been, in favour of granting to Ireland a larger measure of self-government than I think I could ever agree to. The knowledge that you do hold such opinions, and of the immense weight which they are likely to carry with them in the next Parliament, must be a source of anxiety to me.²

Gladstone, in his reply, attempted to soothe Hartington. Later, after several pro-Irish speeches by the prime minister, his lordship wrote his faithful friend, Mr. John Fell of Ulverstone:

It has, as you may imagine, been a very anxious time for me, and I have felt much regret at having had to separate myself for a time from Mr. Gladstone and many of my friends. I cannot,

¹Ibid., p. 123.
²Ibid., p. 127.
however, feel any confidence, judging from the tone of his recent speeches, in the policy which he seems likely to adopt toward Ireland.¹

When Lord Hartington was asked by Gladstone to enter the cabinet he refused. In a short time, he began to make speeches in opposition to the leader of the party expressing the Conservative point of view.² It was evident in his mind that the electors in England cared very little about Home Rule one way or the other, but they did believe intensely in Mr. Gladstone. Hartington was also highly respected throughout the country and the people listened to him.

Thus Hartington's break had several adverse effects on Gladstone's power. In view of his attacks, it became obvious that reunion between the two men was impossible. His lordship's speeches show his changed attitude toward the prime minister.

There are at least, half-a-dozen Mr. Gladstones and there may be a seventh. But if there is a seventh, who shall guarantee us against an eighth.³

He pointed out the Liberal leader's mistakes in applying:

Liberal principles honestly, sincerely, and, above all, logically, to the case of Ireland,

¹Ibid., p. 127.
²"Mr. Gladstone and the Liberal Party," op. cit., p. 263.
³Ibid., p. 267.
but, after his want, allowed too little weight to the actual facts, or, rather, looked at facts from a point of view determined by his will to believe.\(^1\)

Lord Hartington attempted to expose Gladstone's weaknesses and bias, at the same time ignoring his own, as a landlord in Ireland and as the brother of the victim in the Phoenix Park murders, Lord Frederick Cavendish. The most telling reasoning used by the Whig peer was that:

> arguments used against the government of Ireland from London could also be used against the government of Ulster from Dublin, and with more deadly effect.\(^2\)

This argument proved to be true and was especially crucial in the twentieth century solution to the Home Rule problem.

The issue of Home Rule which led Lord Hartington to break away from Gladstone also caused nearly all the Whig peers to sever their connection with the Liberal party. Except for Lord Spencer, Lord Rosebery, and a few others, this was a general withdrawal from the Liberals of the aristocratic element. Before Gladstone became prime minister, the Whig nobles and their connections had been the governing element of the Liberal party. During Gladstone's ministries they had held their share of the

\(^{1}\)Holland, II, op. cit., p. 115.

\(^{2}\)Ibid.
offices; but in his cabinet they sank to the position of a moderating force.\(^1\) With this split, the more conservative elements were removed from the Liberal party. But perhaps the most important effect of this break was the fact that Gladstone now had no chance whatsoever of pushing through parliament a strong Home Rule measure. Even if it did pass the House of Commons, the peers in the House of Lords would surely reject it. This was to be the fate of Gladstone's second Home Rule Bill which was to be thrown out of the Lords by an overwhelming vote of forty-one to four hundred and nineteen. Lord Hartington, as the new Duke of Devonshire, was to make the motion to reject the bill in the upper house.

The result, according to Gretton, was:

That in September, sacred month of sport, the House of Lords . . . felt it necessary not only to reject the bill -- fifty men could have done that -- but to overwhelm it, to obliterate it, to stamp it out of existence, shows what kind of opposition had been aroused.\(^2\)

In this way he was to smash Gladstone's hopes for Ireland in 1893.

As time went on, Devonshire became an ardent Conservative. More than once, however, the Duke turned down an office in a Conservative government when asked by Salisbury because he

\(^1\)Morley, III, op. cit., p. 294.

\(^2\)Gretton, I, op. cit., p. 337.
believed that the difficulties of gaining support would be too great for him. Lord Salisbury even promised to serve under him if he would form a Unionist ministry. Thus, while Devonshire had always been a conservative member of the Liberal party, it was the Home Rule issue which caused his departure from the Liberals. He, however, still held to his Whig principles.

The Chamberlain Faction

The early story of the Chamberlain-Gladstone relationship is one of contradiction and controversy. Joseph Chamberlain became a political force in the 1870's while Gladstone was in office for the first time. After serving as mayor of Birmingham, he became the popular leader of the radicals and nonconformists. His first national publicity resulted from his stand on the reform of education, especially the removal of religious instruction from state-supported schools. The entire platform was rejected by Gladstone. Chamberlain, notwithstanding, worked ruthlessly to bring about the defeat of the Liberal government and prepare the way for a radical Liberal party.¹ He soon saw that the education issue was not potent enough to give him political power, so he turned toward improving the life of the working class. In this movement he received support from John

¹Garvin, I, op. cit., p. 146.
Morley, John Bright, and Sir Charles Dilke. In fact, Chamberlain and Morley became like brothers in their friendship. Though not particularly interested in the Irish problem, he did refer to it in a speech in 1874.

I believe the extension of the system of local government would be of the greatest advantage both to England and Ireland. But it is only fair and candid to add that I am not in favour of any system which would go any further than this, and which would separate the imperial relations which at present exist between the two countries.¹

This statement is interesting in view of his later expressions about Home Rule.

In 1876, Joseph Chamberlain entered the House of Commons. He soon began to dislike Gladstone, but early formed a lively friendship with Lord Randolph Churchill, a kindred spirit in innovation.² While in parliament, Chamberlain and his supporters constantly tried to induce other members of the reasonableness of Radicalism. He and Francis Schnadhorst, the secretary of the Liberal Association, began to organize the country districts for the Liberal party. Party machines, united into a central caucus, were set up throughout the country. However, there was still no affinity between Gladstone and Chamberlain.

¹Ibid., p. 166.
²Ibid., p. 241.
In the late 1870's Hartington and the young Radical found themselves on opposite sides of several issues; namely, the army bill which was mentioned earlier. Chamberlain's emphasis on a program of social reform, however, was the principal cause for the breakdown of a potential Whig-Radical alliance.

To Chamberlain, Liberalism was a business, while to Gladstone it was a passion. There were differences of outlook, temperament, training and religion between the two men. Gladstone was never able to appreciate the abilities nor the importance of this man nearly thirty years his junior. For his part, Chamberlain misjudged Gladstone's excessive sublety as insincerity, and believed that the prime minister's longevity kept him from the leadership of the party.\(^1\)

However, he did not have the necessary backing to obtain the job.

It was during Gladstone's second ministry that the real trouble between the two arose. When the Liberal leader took office, Chamberlain hoped to get his friend, Sir Charles Dilke, into the cabinet. Instead, he got himself in as head of the Board of Trade. Yet, Chamberlain did not feel at home because he was among a small minority dominated by the Whigs. This fact was a reason for the failure of the

---

\(^1\) Hammond and Foot, op. cit., p. 179.
ministry of Gladstone in 1885. Morley describes the situation as follows:

Confronting Lord Hartington was Mr. Chamberlain, eager, intrepid, self-reliant, alert, daring, with notions about property, taxation, land, school, popular rights, that he expressed with a plainness and pungency of speech that had never been heard from a privy councillor and cabinet minister before, that exasperated opponents, startled the Whigs, and brought him hosts of adherents among radicals out of doors.

Gladstone, on social questions as on ecclesiastical, was inclined to be conservative.

Sir Charles Dilke, who had many friends among the Whigs, formed an inseparable bond with Chamberlain during these years. This tie was very important as it controlled a large amount of political power. Sir Charles was gaining prestige and, had this alliance not been upset, the reorganization of Britain and the Empire might have been achieved. Thus, Chamberlain was in a position to bring much pressure upon the cabinet from outside, through parliament, the public, and the newspapers.

The key to understanding Chamberlain's ideas in this ministry is his belief that Gladstone would soon retire in favor of another Liberal leader. In such a case, Chamberlain

1Ensor, op. cit., p. 66.
2Morley, III, op. cit., p. 3.
felt the ensuing struggle between the Whigs and the Radicals would be decided in favor of a new era of social reconstruction.¹ Ireland, however, blocked the way of Liberal reforms in Great Britain. By this time, Chamberlain's "idea was conciliation first, and that policy, he believed, would avert coercion afterwards."²

The beginning of the ministry found Chamberlain, Gladstone, and Forster, the Irish Secretary, in agreement concerning Ireland. Back in 1878, Chamberlain, through Dilke, had made contact with the Irish leader, Charles Parnell. It seemed at the time that Chamberlain was prepared for Home Rule in a limited sense, but was totally opposed to the idea of complete separation.³ When Forster turned to coercion, Chamberlain became antagonistic and threatened to retire from the government unless there was also land legislation. The land bill became his justification for remaining in the government. Because Irish outrages were on the increase the government, however, had to take action. Chamberlain always consulted the Irish party on questions of this nature, but he was growing antagonistic to Parnell and even agreed to the latter's

¹Garvin, I, op. cit., p. 312.
²Ibid., p. 319.
³Ibid., p. 273.
arrest. He resolved to resist the Irish leader's political aims for he saw that the Irish party would not be satisfied with anything less than complete separation.¹ Garvin believes that Chamberlain moved away from Parnell and Home Rule in 1885, at the same time that Gladstone was being drawn irresistibly towards the scheme.² John Morley did not share the young Radical's views toward arresting Parnell, and there was a lively correspondence between the two friends on the matter. In view of the fact that Chamberlain had contacts with the Irish party, he was authorized by the cabinet to negotiate with them for the release of Parnell. However, this negotiation was carried on through the opportunist, Captain O'Shea, who sadly misconstrued the positions of each of the leaders he met with. Later, when the Phoenix Park murders left the position of Irish Secretary open, Chamberlain thought he would be appointed, but Gladstone bypassed him for Sir George Trevalyan. Chamberlain did not want the position, but would have accepted because of his sense of duty.³ When he did not receive the job, he turned more toward a program of reform in England.

One source of agreement between Gladstone and

¹Ibid., p. 337.
²Ibid., II, p. 87.
³Ibid., I, p. 359.
Chamberlain came in the passing of the Reform Act of 1884. One author believes that this measure led to the downfall of the Whigs as their influence was to be no longer significant in the Liberal party.\textsuperscript{1} It was to be a great aid to the Radicals because of the suffrage extension. Toward the end of Gladstone's second ministry, Chamberlain made several speeches which led the former to believe that a member of his government had spoken about "matters which cannot, humanly speaking, become practical before the next parliament."\textsuperscript{2} Thus, Gladstone seemed to think that Chamberlain had made a popular appeal not only independent of the prime minister, but an appeal which challenged his proper authority. Hence, Chamberlain grew interested in his "unauthorized program" which aimed at alleviating the problems of the rural workers in England.

In 1884, Chamberlain stated his exact views on Home Rule in a letter to an old supporter in the Midlands, Mr. W. H. Duignan.

\begin{quote}
I can never consent to regard Ireland as a separate people with the inherent rights of an absolutely independent community . . .
\end{quote}

Accordingly, if Nationalism means separation, I for one am prepared to resist it.

\textsuperscript{1}Ibid., p. 487.

\textsuperscript{2}Morley, III, op. cit., p. 174. Gladstone wrote this in a letter to Lord Granville on January 31, 1885.
But if Nationalism means Home Rule, I have no objection to make in principle . . .

On the other hand, I consider that Ireland has a right to a Local Government more complete, more popular, more thoroughly representative, and more far-reaching than anything that has hitherto been proposed.

I believe that there are questions, not local in any narrow sense, but which require exceptional treatment in Ireland and which cannot be dealt with to the satisfaction of the Irish people by an Imperial Parliament.

Chief among them are the education question and the land question, and I would not hesitate to transfer their consideration and solution entirely to an Irish Board altogether independent of English Government influence. Such a Board might also deal with railways and other communications, and would, of course, be invested with powers of taxation in Ireland for these strictly Irish purposes.¹

Parnell favored an Irish parliament and a board with more than partial legislative powers. Captain O'Shea was authorized to negotiate with Chamberlain only in vague terms by the Irish leader. The captain turned over a specific document not at all unacceptable to Chamberlain, which he represented as Parnell's ideas for Ireland. Gladstone also received the same plan from Mrs. O'Shea and approved of Chamberlain's actions favorable to the scheme. However, O'Shea kept back letters by Parnell, which expressed his true views on the question, thus causing a hopeless

¹Garvin, I, op. cit., p. 579-80.
misunderstanding between the two leaders.\textsuperscript{1} Though the prime minister favored the plan, the Liberal peers in the cabinet turned it down. They could not stomach the idea of a national board, though they were in favor of local boards in Ireland. After this action, "Chamberlain had no further interest in the Government."\textsuperscript{2} Therefore, in this ministry, the Irish settlement almost succeeded, but the predominance of the Whigs made it impossible for Gladstone and Chamberlain to pass any measure which would have granted any sort of national autonomy to Ireland. Gladstone spoke of Chamberlain and Dilke and their views in a letter to Lord Hartington:

There are two differences between them and me on this subject. First, as to the matter, I go rather further than they do; for I would undoubtedly make a beginning with the Irish Police. Secondly, as to the ground; here I differ seriously. I do not reckon with any confidence upon Manning or Parnell; I have never looked much in Irish matters at negotiation or the conciliation of leaders.\textsuperscript{3}

In 1885, the controversy between Gladstone and Chamberlain took a new course. Sir Charles Dilke, the mediator between these two men, was lost through his implication in a divorce case. Chamberlain and Dilke had had designs on the leadership of the party after Gladstone's retirement. In fact Dilke made a speech in which he said

\textsuperscript{1}\textit{Ibid.}, p. 590.
\textsuperscript{2}\textit{Ibid.}, p. 605.
\textsuperscript{3}Holland, \textit{II, op. cit.}, p. 61.
that he and Chamberlain were in agreement on the shelving of Home Rule and the retirement of Gladstone.\textsuperscript{1} After Dilke's pronouncement Herbert Gladstone made a counterblast in his father's interest which was pointedly anti-Chamberlain. Chamberlain was also disappointed when the prime minister made it clear that the future issue in the Liberal party would not be free education and "three acres and a cow," but instead settlement of the Irish problem.\textsuperscript{2} Gladstone's negative attitude toward Chamberlain's social reforms was also a major source of conflict between the two leaders. According to Garvin:

The older man's vision of the portentous situation actually approaching is far the surer. One good reason is that he may well foresee what he intends to create. He is engrossed by the Irish Question. The younger man is engrossed by what he thinks a far bigger thing - a more longstanding scandal of neglect and he has no intention of allowing the British social question to be swept aside by the Irish claim to the extreme of a separate Parliament.\textsuperscript{3}

From this background, one can see that Chamberlain had to be considered for a cabinet post in Gladstone's third

\textsuperscript{1}Garvin, II, op. cit., p. 134.
\textsuperscript{2}Bruce Miller, "Chamberlain and Gladstone," The Edinburgh Review, CXLVI (July, 1887), p. 363.
\textsuperscript{3}Garvin, II, op. cit., p. 99.
ministry in 1886, because he had a great deal of experience and political power. It is understandable, however, that relations between the older and the younger man would be very difficult. Gladstone again constructed a cabinet of Whigs, which was a mistake. He gave the minor office of President of the Local Government Board to Joseph Chamberlain. The Colonial Office was given to Lord Granville, out of kindness for he needed the money. Hammond states that this was one of Gladstone's gravest errors because the job should have gone to Chamberlain who wanted it. Garvin supports Hammond when he writes that this department had become a subject of intense interest to him. Had he gotten the office he desired, he may have been distracted from a damaging preoccupation with Ireland; and the unity of the Liberal party might have been better preserved. It is important to remember that Lord Randolph Churchill and Chamberlain had much in common due to their Radical leanings. This gave Chamberlain some rapport with a major leader in the Conservative party. The friendship with John Morley was terminated due to their differences on the Irish question.

---

1 Hammond and Foot, op. cit., p. 178.
2 Garvin, II, op. cit., p. 172.
after the latter accepted the office of Irish Secretary.¹

Chamberlain's opinions on the Irish situation carried little weight in Gladstone's thinking and for several weeks he was completely ignored by the old prime minister. Gladstone intended to go further than Chamberlain's ideas of a national council for Ireland. Thus, Chamberlain was not consulted while he drew up his Home Rule plan submitted in 1886. When it was introduced to the cabinet, Chamberlain objected on four counts:

He objected to the cessation of Irish representation [at Westminster]; he could not consent to the grant of full rights of taxation to Ireland; he resisted the surrender of the appointment of judges and magistrates; and he argued strongly against proceeding by enumeration of the things that an Irish government might not do, instead of by a specific delegation of the things it might do.²

Chamberlain believed that Gladstone's proposal was too vague. He also criticized it in view of the fact that Ulster, despite its utmost desire, would cease to be represented at Westminster. On all four points Gladstone was firmly against him.³ According to Garvin, Gladstone must have been relieved when Chamberlain resigned as he

¹Morley, III, op. cit., p. 302.
²Garvin, II, op. cit., p. 192.
³Morley, III, op. cit., p. 303.
made no effort to stop him, and the Radical leader would not have been detained without some "transforming concession."\(^1\)

Chamberlain's departure led a small but noisy group of Radicals to split from the Liberal party. These Radicals, however, had a large following among the working classes, and were definitely an ascending political power in the very area in which Gladstone was the strongest. Chamberlain soon began to blast the prime minister. Just two months after his resignation Chamberlain told Dilke that:

\[\text{I do not care for the leadership of a party which would prove itself so fickle and so careless of national interests as to sacrifice the unity of the Empire to the precipitate impatience of an old man \ldots careless of the future in which he can have no part \ldots and to an uninstructed instinct that will not take the trouble to exercise judgment and criticism.}\(^2\)

One of the most important consequences of Chamberlain's resignation was the fact that he began to lean toward the Conservative party and especially the Tory Democrat, Lord Randolph Churchill. Temple describes his new position in the Commons as a difficult one, sitting with the Radicals, Liberals, and the Irish, where he was abused because he had not "crossed the floor;" and yet he supported the Conservatives in several excellent speeches.\(^3\) A segment of Chamber-

---

\(^1\)Garvin, II, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 193.

\(^2\)Miller, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 362.

\(^3\)Temple, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 142.
lain's political power was removed, however, when Schnadhorst, his assistant in creating the Liberal party election machines throughout the country, disagreed with him and brought the most elaborately developed electioneering device to Gladstone's side.

Later, Chamberlain joined the Unionist government as Colonial Secretary and the Radicals, as a separate party, were killed. Not only did he work to defeat the Home Rule bills in parliament, but he also did his best to keep the Liberals out of office in the 1886 general election. Chamberlain was a political power to be reckoned with as Gladstone's government "went to the people." His influence rivaled that of Gladstone himself, among the electorate. Garvin summarizes Chamberlain's effectiveness as follows:

In little more than three months, by extraordinary wariness and uttermost courage, he had pulled down the whole power of the Gladstone-Parnell combination.

That Chamberlain turned the scales in the national struggle is a fact of history admitting of no doubt. Against, Home Rule, as Gladstone in his haste and glow went about it, Whigs and Conservatives would have acted together in any case. It is certain that without the Radical they could not have defeated the Home Rule Bill in the House of Commons. The voting in the constituencies was close enough to show that his action just made the difference.¹

In this manner, Gladstone lost two of his most powerful colleagues, Lord Hartington and Joseph Chamberlain, in his battle for Home Rule. These leaders joined the Conservative party in opposing Gladstone's later measures for Ireland. Had he kept them, especially the latter, his battle for Ireland might have been successful.
CHAPTER IV

GLADSTONE'S HOME RULE BILLS

Gladstone's First Home Rule Bill

When Gladstone formed his third ministry in 1886, he was pledged to an extensive study of the Home Rule demands of the Irish parliamentary party. Home Rule opposed two basic ideas in British politics. It was felt that the English social system was suitable for Ireland; and on the other hand, that Ireland had not changed fundamentally since the Union and should continue to be a country governed by England through the agency of Protestant ascendancy.¹ Moreover, even though Gladstone's high personal esteem was a strong force for reform, the power of the landlords in the House of Lords was going to prove very difficult to overcome. Since many rich Englishmen owned estates in Ireland, they wanted to be sure that their property would remain secure. Because a majority of these peers were in the Conservative Party, Gladstone had earlier promised to cooperate with them on an Irish program. This suggestion had been made by the prime minister to Mr. Arthur Balfour, who had duly reported it to his uncle, Lord Salisbury.² Though Salisbury had


refused to cooperate, Gladstone remained convinced that he must continue to work for Ireland. The Salisbury government had fallen when it tried to introduce a new coercion bill. The measure had been forced on the ministry because a policy of conciliation had failed in Ireland.

On April 8, 1886, Gladstone introduced his first Home Rule bill. It would create a legislative body in Dublin made up of one house with two orders or parts, to deal with Irish affairs in strict subordination to the English parliament. One order was to consist of twenty-eight Irish peers, and seventy-five members elected by select constituencies.¹ The second order was to include two hundred and six members who would be elected by the existing constituencies. The legislature was forbidden to make laws concerning the crown, the army, the navy, defenses, church endowment and foreign treaties. The viceroy was to be directly responsible to this body though he was to be appointed in England. Finally, Irish members would no longer be allowed to sit in the imperial parliament.² Thus, the bill was primarily a scheme for creating a legislative body and defining its powers.

¹Ibid., p. 27. This refers to Gladstone's idea of allowing only a select group to elect members to this one order. Just who this select group of voters was to be was not yet worked out by the prime minister.

Lord Spencer, the Irish viceroy, and John Morley, the Irish secretary, however, were not pleased with the proposed legislation. They wished to include a plan for dealing with the land problem, on the double ground that the land was too burning a question to be left where it then stood, and next that it was unfair to a new and untried legislature in Ireland to find itself confronted by such a question on the very threshold.  

Other ministers opposed the idea. Gladstone, nonetheless, was convinced, and a plan opening the way to the settlement of the land problem was attached to the bill. Its aim was to create the means by which the tenants could purchase land for themselves from the British government, which in turn was to make purchases from the Irish landlords.

When the bill was set before parliament, it was evident in Ireland that coercion was not bringing about a final settlement. On the other hand, it was quite possible that this bill would be a distinct contribution toward a final solution as it dealt with both an Irish legislature and a land settlement. Yet, there were misgivings over the exclusion of the Irish members from Westminster because the Irish could complain of taxation without representation. A great deal of repugnance was felt toward the scheme for land purchase also. Though Gladstone was a good speaker, at times

1Ibid., p. 301.
he discussed minor points which gave his opponents ammunition. In the debates, he was often baited by the opposition into elaborating on certain parts which had very little significance. One author described his impulsiveness as follows:

The second reading of the Irish Home Rule Bill of 1886 might possibly have been carried had he not been goaded by his opponents into words which were construed as recalling or modifying concessions he had announced at a meeting of the Liberal Party earlier.1

Gladstone's speeches were not the only reason for the defeat of the bill. The aforementioned split of two factions from the Liberal party was also a major cause. Due to this division, Gladstone lost a great deal of power in the House of Commons. Morley states that "in the end exactly ninety-three Liberals did vote against the bill."2

A great deal depended on the stand taken by John Bright, the famous old Radical. Bright remained silent in public, but his private conversation precluded doom to the legislation. Finally, he sent a letter to Joseph Chamberlain in which he stated that he could not vote for the bill. According to Morley:


2Morley, III, op. cit., p. 332.
It seems to have been mainly the moral weight of Mr. Bright that sent down the scales. This letter was afterwards described as the death-warrant of the bill and of the administration.¹

The situation was very tense as most of the members expected a close division. It proved to be thirty. In this defeat, Gladstone's first engagement in the long campaign ended.

The Conservative Interlude

Salisbury followed Gladstone when the latter's appeal for popular support of his Home Rule bill failed in the general election of 1886. Lord Salisbury formed his new ministry on very shaky grounds, his majority based on the seventy-eight Liberal Unionists in Parliament. The Liberal Unionists consisted of those members of the Liberal party who still sat on the opposition benches but were, for all practical purposes, Conservative in their voting.² Because Gladstone had made Home Rule the major issue of the Liberal party, the Liberal Unionists drew toward the Conservatives.

Salisbury soon put a rigid policy of strong government into effect in Ireland. Arthur Balfour was made Irish Secretary and his policy of coercion earned him the nickname in Ireland of "Bloody Balfour." Salisbury stated that "what

¹Ibid., p. 336.

²The two parties in Parliament always sat on benches which faced each other. The party not in power was always called the Opposition.
Ireland wants is government - government that does not flinch, that does not vary.\(^1\) Parnell's advice to relieve Ireland economically, was refused. Because of the growing distress, the Irish tenants adopted a so-called "Plan of Campaign," which called for the organization of several peasant associations to determine the amount of rent that each tenant was to pay his landlord. The landowners met the threat by evicting recalcitrant renters from their land. The peasants, in turn, retaliated with boycotting, arson, and cattle maiming. Because of these crimes, the Conservative government was forced to introduce coercion giving Balfour the powers to kill the "Plan of Campaign."\(^2\) At the same time, Parnell broadcasted the Irish cause in the English parliament.

Gladstone's Home Rule struggle sustained several setbacks during Salisbury's ministry. Charles Parnell was falsely accused of condoning the Phoenix Park murders in a series of letters printed by The Times, but in February, 1889, they proven to be forgeries. By the end of the year 1890, "in which Gladstone's hopes for Home Rule seemed so bright now that the character of its chief Irish supporter had been cleared, that character received a new and far more serious


\(^2\)J. L. Hammond and M.R.D. Foot, Gladstone and Liberalism, (London: English Universities Press, Ltd., 1952), p. 188.
Several years before Parnell had met Mrs. O'Shea, the deserted wife of his Irish colleague. They fell in love and had three children with the knowledge of Captain O'Shea. The captain refused to divorce his wife, as she expected to inherit some money upon the death of an aunt. When she failed to do so, O'Shea lost patience and brought action, citing Parnell as correspondent. The latter was unable to contest the suit though he was urged to do so. As Gladstone was clearly allied with the Irish leader, his own position was somewhat discredited. When Parnell refused to resign as leader of the Irish members, the parliamentary party held an election and unanimously re-elected him. Hammond believes that this was foolish, for Parnell should have retired for awhile to let the sensation pass. But he was too proud to admit that he had antagonized many powerful forces, both in England and in Ireland.  

Prior to Parnell's election, Gladstone had written a letter about the affair to John Morley in which he stated:

The continuance I speak of (namely) that of Parnell in the Irish leadership would not only place many hearty and effective friends of the Irish cause in a position of great embarrassment, but would render my retention of the leadership of the Liberal Party, based

---

1 Ibid., p. 19D-1.
2 Ibid., p. 192.
as it has been mainly upon the presentation of the Irish cause, almost a nullity.¹

This letter was not published immediately as Morley, who had close contacts with Parnell, was sent to the chambers where the voting was to take place, with a severe warning for Parnell. He arrived too late, but Parnell still refused to resign as he thought that, "force of character had made him leader of the Irish party, force of character would keep him there."² After Gladstone published the letter, Parnell replied with a bitter salvo of abuse which was ignored by the former.³ The importance of this affair was grasped by Morley when he wrote:

> The Party interest of the scene was supreme, for if the Irishmen should rally to their chief then the English alliance was at an end, Mr. Gladstone would virtually close his illustrious career, the rent in the Liberal ranks might be repaired.

Largely due to the former prime minister's statement, Parnell was abandoned by the majority of his colleagues in parliament. In addition, the affair split the Irish party at Westminster, the majority swinging their support behind

¹Ibid.
³Hammond and Foot, op. cit., p. 192.
Justin McCarthy, another Irish leader in the House of Commons. On October 6, 1891, Parnell died, but the party remained divided until John Redmond reunited it years later. The consequences of Parnell's disgrace lingered. Hammond states that:

In the summer of 1889, Gladstone thought that the worst disaster that could befall Home Rule would be the death of Parnell. He learned in the winter of 1890 that he was wrong. Parnell's death would have been a small disaster compared with Parnell's disgrace. Home Rule might have survived the first; it was destroyed - for Gladstone's lifetime and long after - by the second.1

Gladstone's Second Home Rule Bill

Salisbury's government, formed in 1886 and based on the support of the Liberal Unionists, held a long-postponed general election in 1892. The Liberals were returned to power with a slight majority of forty members, including the support of the Irish party. Upon taking office Gladstone suspended, by proclamation, the operation of the Crimes Act in Ireland which had been passed by the Conservative government, and thus cleared the way for the Home Rule bill of 1893.

The Liberal prime minister revealed the second edition of his Irish Home Rule scheme on February 13, 1893. It

1Hammond, op. cit., p. 602.
differed from the 1886 bill in that the single chamber device, with its two orders, was dropped, and the bicameral system was adopted. The legislative assembly was to consist of one hundred and three members, elected by the existing constituencies except for the Protestant Trinity College. The second house, to be called the legislative council, was to be made up of forty-eight members elected for eight years by persons who owned or occupied land of the ratable value of £20 per year. If there was disagreement between the two chambers, a joint session would be convened after a lapse of two years and the controversy would be decided by majority vote.

In the original draft of the bill, eighty Irish members were to be retained at Westminster with the privilege of voting on questions which only affected Ireland. Due to the difficulties of deciding which bills these would be, this clause was dropped and Irish members were retained for all purposes. According to Morley, "the crucial difficulty was the Irish representation at Westminster." Exclusion of Irish members along with exaction of revenue would be taxation without representation. Total inclusion would allow the

1Marriott, op. cit., p. 59.
2Morley, III, op. cit., p. 497.
Irish to meddle in English affairs while the English could no longer meddle in theirs. Limited inclusion would still enable the Irish to turn out a British government by a vote against it on an imperial question.

The Irish party was strangely silent in view of the obstructive and loquacious part they had played in the Conservative government of 1886-1892, because they favored the bill. The second reading, proposed on April 6, was carried by the slim majority of forty-three votes. The debates were extensive as Gladstone, Herbert Asquith, and John Morley opposed the attacks of the Conservative-Unionist stalwarts, Arthur Balfour, Joseph Chamberlain, and Sir Michael Hicks-Beach. In September, the third reading was carried by only thirty-four votes. Gladstone was superb, but the protraction of the debate was not exclusively due to the obstructive tactics employed by the earlier mentioned Unionist opposition; as Gladstone's abundance of illustration also multiplied points for debate.¹ His debating instinct made him cling tenaciously to small points. To blame the slow passage of the bill on Gladstone alone, however, would minimize the effectiveness of the opposition. When the bill was sent to the House of Lords, it was quickly defeated by a

¹Marriott, op. cit., p. 59.
wide margin. The Duke of Devonshire, the Unionist leader in the upper house, played a major role in its defeat. Upon its rejection, "Gladstone pressed his colleagues to agree to a dissolution, at which the Liberal's cry would have been that of 1910 - 'The Peers against the People' - but none of them would agree." The defeat was a major blow to Home Rule; but the cause had gained from the exhaustive study of the bill during its committee stages in the Commons. Moreover, the many difficulties were thrashed out in public, and ways which could lead to their eventual settlement were clarified. Newspapers carried the debates to the nation and the difficulties of partial independence were apparent.

Conclusion

After the third defeat of Home Rule legislation, Gladstone was determined to resign as party leader and head of the government. On March 1, 1894, he held his last cabinet meeting, and on the same day made his last speech to the House of Commons. The speech was a call to arms against the hereditary chamber, for he believed that the Irish settlement should be made by the electorate. This was

---

1 Hammond and Foot, op. cit., p. 196.
2 Ibid.
3 Marriott, op. cit., p. 60.
Gladstone's farewell to the house which he had first entered sixty-one years before.

Thus Gladstone ended his struggle for Home Rule, weighed down by increasing infirmities in sight and hearing, an old man who had done his best for Ireland, but whose best had not been good enough. He was disappointed not for the sake of his own personal prestige, but for that of Ireland. While he did have the common human weaknesses which we all have, he truly gave his life to the cause of Ireland. When his body could no longer stand the strain, he retired. On May 19, 1898, this great man died. During the next two days the praise of William Ewart Gladstone echoed throughout Britain. It was as vociferous from opponents as it was from friends. Gladstone's funeral was a token of his place among the rulers of the people even as the crowds at his lying-in-state had been a token of his place in the hearts of the masses. While he did not solve the problem with which he dealt during the latter part of his life, he did point the way to the eventual method used to bring about its final settlement. It would take a quarter of a century more of Irish agitation before the English parliament would effect the solution which Gladstone offered. It would also take a reform of that hereditary chamber which Gladstone attacked in his final speech in the Commons.
BIBLIOGRAPHY

Public Documents:


Books:

Biographies.


General Works.


Special Monographs.


Articles and Periodicals:


Bryce, James, "Some Traits of Mr. Gladstone's Character," The Fortnightly Review, LXXI (January 1, 1902), 13-20.


Madden, W. J., "An Incident in The Life of Gladstone," Catholic World, LXXX (October, 1904), 57-64.

Miller, Bruce, "Chamberlain and Gladstone," The Twentieth Century, CLII (May, 1953), 362-9.

"Mr. Gladstone and The Liberal Party," The Edinburgh Review, CXLVI (July, 1887), 254-76.


O'Brien, William, "Parnell and His Liberal Allies," Nineteenth Century and After, LXXXIII (January, 1918), 170-83.


Rideing, William H., "Gladstone's Closing Years," The Critic, XLIII (October, 1903), 347-53.


