

## The *Dublin Evening Mail*<sup>1</sup> and pro-landlord conservatism in the age of Gladstone and Parnell

The historiography of nineteenth-century Irish newspapers centres on the development of a nationalist press nationally and locally, with expansion of readership and titles connected to the great waves of politicisation under O'Connell and Parnell.<sup>2</sup> Studies of unionist newspapers tend to focus on Ulster or the *Irish Times*, whose institutional continuity maintains interest in its earlier incarnations, and whose relatively liberal nineteenth-century unionism was directed at the Dublin Protestant middle classes. There was, however, another type of nineteenth-century Southern unionist newspaper addressing a conservative audience of landlords, professionals and Church of Ireland clerics. Such diehard newspapers often clung to older business models involving limited readership, and underpinned their activities by second jobs and patronage from local elites, though the Dublin Tory press developed a somewhat wider audience. This business model, with its diehard unionism, condemned the majority of these papers to extinction in the years after the Land War up to the creation of the Irish Free State. Few claimed their ideological inheritance, as their frankly oligarchic outlook contrasted with the relative populism of Ulster unionism, and most causes they espoused were regarded as deservedly lost. Hence, their contemporary influence is underestimated, though it is impossible to fully understand Ireland under the Union without appreciating the interests represented by the diehard Irish Tory press.

The Victorian telegraph integrated Irish ultra-Tory papers into the imperial press network, and by reprinting articles from London papers, journals such as the *Warder* (weekly edition of the *Dublin Evening Mail*) strengthened their readers' sense of connection with metropolitan affairs. Equally, Irish ultra-Tory journalists working as Dublin correspondents for London papers put their own slant on metropolitan understanding of Irish affairs. For much of the nineteenth century, the London *Times* had such Dublin correspondents as William Henry Tyrrell (d. 1860), sub-editor of the *Dublin Evening Mail* (hereafter, the *Mail*),<sup>3</sup> and Dr George Valentine Tyrrell (d. 1899), editor of the *Dublin Daily Express*, who was said never to have forgiven Gladstone for Disestablishment.<sup>4</sup> The *Mail*, the principal subject of this article, did not merely keep readers in touch with Irish affairs and transmit news from the metropolis – it aspired to renew its Irish readers' confidence, and to rouse metropolitan opinion in favour of beleaguered Irish landlords

<sup>1</sup> All citations from weekly edition (*Warder* until 1880, thereafter *Warder and Weekly Mail*); citations from the daily edition, the *Evening Mail*, are referenced as such.

<sup>2</sup> Marie-Louise Legg, *Newspapers and nationalism: the Irish provincial press, 1850–1892* (Dublin, 1999).

<sup>3</sup> M. D. Petre, *Autobiography and life of Father Tyrrell* (2 vols, London, 1912), i, 4, 7.

<sup>4</sup> *Irish Daily Independent*, 19 Mar. 1898; T. M. Healy, *Letters and leaders of my day* (2 vols, London, 1928), i, 60.

and conservatives by maintaining that concessions to Irish tenants endangered property throughout Britain, and that Gladstonian concessions in response to Irish discontent were part of a wider policy of retreat and appeasement threatening the Empire as a whole. L. P. Curtis argues that the eventual demise of Irish landlordism leads historians to underestimate its ability to resist tenant demands during the Land War of the 1880s, to secure financial and political support from some of those shaping metropolitan opinion, and to create groups that upheld landlord interests.<sup>5</sup> A study of the *Mail* in the era of Gladstone and Parnell helps to show how this counterattack was articulated.

The self-presentation of the *Mail* as the organ of a cultured elite symbolised by the classical attainments of Trinity College and under attack from barbarous peasant hordes and ‘ignorantine’ products of Catholic colleges, and its rage and terror at the agrarian violence of the early 1880s, serves as a reminder that the culture clash W. B. Yeats and Douglas Hyde sought to resolve in the 1890s by the invocation of an over-arching Irish identity had two sides; it was not only the nationalist press that articulated an idealised cultural self-image while demonising opponents. The *Mail*’s protests highlight the radicalism, by contemporary standards, of the Land League and 1880s land legislation. At the same time, whilst the mindset of the significant body of Irish conservative and pro-landlord opinion expressed through this ultimately defeated and forgotten milieu of anti-popular journalism – characterised by an insistence that property rights should never be modified or political economy questioned, together with calls for disfranchisement, mass evictions and martial law – was not that of all southern unionists, it helps to explain why the Land War occurred.

## I

The *Dublin Evening Mail* was founded in 1823 to oppose Catholic emancipation. Its first, long-serving, editor was a Church of Ireland cleric, Nicholas John Halpin (1790–1850), whose son Charles Graham Halpine developed Young Ireland sympathies and became a prominent Irish-American journalist.<sup>6</sup> The proprietors were brothers Thomas (d. 1881) and Remigius (d. 1847) Sheehan; both were converts from Catholicism, and both served for a time as editor.<sup>7</sup> In the 1840s Thomas Sheehan, then the editor, was assisted by Dr Henry Maunsell (1806–79), a Dublin surgeon, obstetrician and community physician who wrote several medical textbooks and edited the *Dublin Medical Press*.<sup>8</sup> Maunsell became co-proprietor

<sup>5</sup> L. Perry Curtis jr., ‘Landlord responses to the Irish Land War’ in *Éire-Ireland*, xxxviii, 3–4 (fall/winter 2003), pp 134–88.

<sup>6</sup> Francis Watt, ‘Halpin, Nicholas John (1790–1850)’, rev. David Huddleston, in *Oxford D.N.B.*; G. C. Boase, ‘Halpine, Charles Graham (1829–1868)’, rev. Nilanjana Banerji, in *Oxford D.N.B.*

<sup>7</sup> W. J. Fitzpatrick, *History of the Dublin Catholic cemeteries* (Dublin, 1900), p. 155; for Remigius cf. Oliver MacDonagh, *O’Connell: the life of Daniel O’Connell, 1775–1847* (2 vols, London, 1988–9; 1991 ed.), pp 352, 371, 674.

<sup>8</sup> 4 Oct. 1879; P. M. Dunn, ‘Perinatal lessons from the past: Drs Richard Evanson (1800–71) and Henry Maunsell (1806–79) of Dublin and their paediatric text’ in *Archives of Disease in Childhood: Fetal and Neonatal Edition*, xci (2006), pp F460–F462; Roger Blaney, ‘Henry Maunsell (1806–1879): an early community physician’ in *Irish Journal of*

with the novelist Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu, who bought into the *Mail* in the early 1840s, and who also served as co-editor.<sup>9</sup> Le Fanu acquired a conservative weekly, the *Warder*, in 1840; this became the *Mail*'s weekly edition. His successor as co-proprietor (c.1860) was George Tickell, auctioneer and furniture merchant (living in Clontarf, with business premises in Mary Street), and Dublin Corporation member in the 1870s. On Maunsell's death in 1879, he was succeeded as editor and co-proprietor by his son James Poole Maunsell, a Trinity-educated lawyer who abandoned law for full-time journalism.

Proprietors and editors treating journalism as a part-time career reflected financial and managerial limitations. For a time, the *Mail* was the leading Dublin Conservative paper, but it was slow to adapt to increasing readership made possible by repeal of newspaper stamp duties (1855) and paper duties (1861). It was challenged by the *Dublin Daily Express* (founded 1851; hereafter the *Express*) and the *Irish Times* (founded 1859); both undertook daily publication well before the *Mail* abandoned its original thrice-weekly schedule in favour of daily publication (six days a week). The *Irish Times* was launched as a penny daily, the *Express* became one soon afterwards, and the *Mail* was obliged to follow suit. Under the vigorous proprietorship of a Dublin merchant named Robinson, the *Express* experienced considerable growth from 1854 to 1857, and became the largest Dublin daily, albeit in a modest market.<sup>10</sup> L. M. Cullen calculates its 1857 circulation at 2,000, compared to 1,200 for *Saunders' Newsletter* and 600 for the *Freeman's Journal*.<sup>11</sup> He does not give a figure for the *Mail*, but its relative weakness is suggested by the fact that during a dispute between W. H. Smith and the *Express* over newspaper sales at railway stations, Smith considered buying the ailing *Mail* and investing sufficient capital to make it an effective rival to the *Express*.<sup>12</sup>

The *Express* was outdistanced by the *Irish Times* thanks to the managerial skills of the paper's founder, Major Lawrence Knox; in 1862 the *Irish Times* apparently sold 1,862 copies per day, and in 1863 it sold almost as many as the *Express* and *Saunders' Newsletter* (ceased publication 1879) combined.<sup>13</sup> The *Irish Times*'s advantage was underpinned when it was bought after Knox's death in 1873 by the tycoon Sir John Arnott, though it was displaced as best-selling Dublin newspaper by the *Freeman's Journal* in the 1880s when that paper combined support for the new nationalist politics with a circulation drive that made it the first Dublin daily sold extensively outside the city. In 1876 the *Irish Times* had eight pages (two of advertising); the *Express* and the *Mail* each had four (advertisements on front page).

Not only had the *Irish Times* greater financial resources, its relatively liberal unionism attracted more readers than the ferocious partisanship of the *Mail* and the *Express*. In March 1876, as Isaac Butt proposed a land bill and his follower Sir Joseph McKenna moved to relax coercion legislation, the land agent Patten

*Medical Science*, cliii, no. 1 (9 Jan. 1894), p. 42. Maunsell's flirtations with 'Tory nationalism' caused retrospective controversy. A. M. Sullivan exaggerated his initial support for Butt's home rule (14, 21 Feb. 1880). Charles Gavan Duffy's memoirs erroneously attribute to him views of Thomas Davis's mentor, Thomas Wallis (10 Mar. 1883).

<sup>9</sup> W. J. McCormack, *Sheridan Le Fanu and Victorian Ireland* (Oxford, 1980).

<sup>10</sup> L.M. Cullen, *Eason and son: a history* (Dublin, 1989), p. 52.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 45.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 53.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, pp 45–6.

Smith Bridge was attacked on the Cork/Tipperary boundary; Bridge was severely wounded, his driver was killed, and his two police escorts were injured. The *Mail* suggested the attack was timed to assist Butt's bill – 'a menace to English legislators ... disposed to stick at the sacrifice of the rights of property upon the altar of peace in Ireland' – and asserted that public letters by Mitchelstown Fenian John Sarsfield Casey describing Bridge's mistreatment of tenants were 'a typical exposition of the method of lying by which the anti-property agitation has been kept going'.<sup>14</sup> The *Express* declared that over much of the country the jury system had broken down and should be replaced by courts martial.<sup>15</sup> The *Irish Times* condemned the murder but criticised Bridge's estate management, supported McKenna in the name of the liberties of the subject, and denounced the *Express* as alarmist and unrepresentative.<sup>16</sup>

Although outdistanced by the *Irish Times* and the *Freeman's Journal*, the two Tory papers rode the general increase in middle-class readership to profitability after a lean period in the early 1860s. The *Express* appealed to a Dublin audience. The *Mail* had a significant Dublin readership – in 1876 it published four editions daily (that is, each had a column or so of updates), one known as the *Morning Mail* – but marketed itself as an elite publication. The *Mail* was the only Dublin conservative evening paper.

The late-Victorian *Mail* presented the conflict between nationalist and unionist in cultural, not racial terms: a civilised elite was confronted with barbarians, demagogues and obscurantists. Gladstone's concessions 'drive Ireland back a long way towards its popular, native and aboriginal barbarism, and even ... set up that barbarism as a fetish for worship'.<sup>17</sup> It frequently reviewed classical and academic texts, suggesting Trinity College academic or alumni readership. (Trinity senior fellow, George Shaw, was senior leader-writer in 1870.<sup>18</sup>) The *Warder* headed its editorial column with the classical tag *Moribus antiquis stat Roma* [Rome is upheld by its ancient customs]; from 1 May 1881 the motto was transferred to the first page (below the title).

The publisher's mainstay appears to have been the *Warder*, whose three (updated) editions of each issue sold widely outside Dublin. (The *Express* apparently lacked a weekly edition; the *Weekly Irish Times* was only founded in 1875.) In the 1880s the *Warder* comprised eight pages, one devoted to agricultural matters and headed 'The Farmers' *Warder*', suggesting landlords and farmers formed a significant proportion of its clientele. *Warder* advertisements in January 1876 indicate an affluent clientele with surplus income: there were advertisements for patent and other medicines (Hamilton, Long & Co.'s cod-liver oil; Cockle's antibilious pills), cosmetics (Cracroft's areca-nut toothpaste; Beetham's hair fluid), luxury goods (Francis Faulkner & Co.'s Carlowitz wine; Waterhouse & Co.'s old Irish silver), household furnishings (Edmundson & Co.'s kitchen ranges; Gibson & Son's paper hangings), insurance companies and auctioneers, agricultural suppliers (Robinson & Fletcher's chemical manures; John Bull & Co. cattle sales, corn factor and wool-

<sup>14</sup> 15 Apr. 1876; for Casey see Mairead Maume, Patrick Maume and Mary Casey (eds), *The Galtee boy: a Fenian prison memoir* (Dublin, 2004).

<sup>15</sup> *Daily Express*, 5 Apr. 1876.

<sup>16</sup> *Irish Times*, 3, 8 Apr. 1876.

<sup>17</sup> 26 Nov. 1881.

<sup>18</sup> Dermot James, *From the margins to the centre: a history of the Irish Times* (Dublin, 2008), p. 5.

broker), and charities (Sick and Indigent Roomkeepers' Society; Irish Church Mission). Most advertised businesses were Dublin or London-based.

## II

Under Le Fanu and Henry Maunsell, the *Mail* preferred conservative Palmerstonian Whiggery to Derbyite conservatism; Palmerston pursued a Protestant foreign policy in Europe, and favoured evangelicals in the Church of England, while the Conservatives were suspected of intriguing with Irish Catholic nationalist M.P.s.<sup>19</sup> This changed after Palmerston's death in 1865. Gladstone, Liberal leader by 1866, was regarded by the *Mail* as an apostate former Tory and dangerous demagogue whose high church Anglicanism suspiciously resembled Catholic 'sacerdotalism'. This enmity hardened after Gladstone won the 1868 general election, advocating Disestablishment (enacted 1869), land reform (his 1870 land act obliged landlords to compensate tenants evicted for causes other than non-payment of rent), and changes in the Irish university system; an 1873 university bill, christened by the *Mail* 'Mr. Gladstone's destruction of learning Bill',<sup>20</sup> was defeated by Conservatives who thought it endangered Trinity, Catholics who considered it insufficiently denominational, and Liberal opponents of denominationalism.<sup>21</sup>

For the rest of Gladstone's career the *Mail* defined itself against him. Its calls for strong government uniting Tories and conservative Whig upholders of property rights while ignoring 'Irish ultramontanes' reflected not only the late-Victorian Conservative attempt to polarise politics in defence of property but Palmerstonian nostalgia discernible in demands in the late 1870s and early 1880s for the Irish franchise to be restricted to dimensions resembling those preceding the second reform act.

The *Mail* reluctantly accepted that Gladstone's land and Disestablishment legislation could not be reversed, but argued there had been no real demand for them; the rise of the Home Rule Party, the calls for further intervention in the landlord-tenant relationship, and a minor resurgence of agrarian violence showed that Gladstone increased instability by encouraging unattainable demands.<sup>22</sup> The *Mail* predicted the land act would not benefit tenants as it was too complex to work properly,<sup>23</sup> and declared mass emigration to be the best solution to the problem of small-farmers' poverty.<sup>24</sup> It warned that denunciations of landlordism stirred up agricultural labourers against tenant farmers, and encouraged strikes.<sup>25</sup>

Advocating 'genuine' religious equality, the *Mail* maintained that Gladstone

<sup>19</sup> Alexander Charles Ewald, *The life of Sir Joseph Napier, Bart., ex-Lord Chancellor of Ireland* (London, 1887); [J. S. Le Fanu], *The prelude: being a contribution towards the history of the election for the university by John Figwood, Esq., barrister-at-law* (Dublin, 1865); John Bew, *The glory of being Britons: civic unionism in nineteenth-century Belfast* (Dublin, 2009), pp 204–5, 209–10, 213–14.

<sup>20</sup> 23 Feb., 26 Apr. 1873.

<sup>21</sup> 1 Mar. 1873.

<sup>22</sup> 8 Mar. 1873.

<sup>23</sup> 4, 18 Jan. 1873.

<sup>24</sup> 12 Apr. 1873, 3 Jan. 1874.

<sup>25</sup> 11 Jan. 1873, 3 Jan. 1874.

privileged the Catholic hierarchy,<sup>26</sup> and called on lay Catholics to assert their rights against priestly tyranny. The *Mail* detected such a movement in two particular instances: first, in the Callan case, where Fr Robert O’Keeffe’s resistance to suspension by the bishop of Ossory included a lawsuit claiming that the bishop could not dismiss him from the state-appointed position of school manager; second, the Galway election petition that saw a clerically supported Home Ruler, Captain Nolan – who defeated a candidate backed by a majority of county landlords – unseated because of clerical intimidation. The presiding judge, William Keogh – a nominal Catholic – denounced clerical influence and ordered the prosecution of numerous priests.<sup>27</sup> The *Mail* linked these incidents to a wider European struggle against priestly power, symbolised by the German *Kulturkampf*; it noted that German publicists cited Callan as exemplifying episcopal tyranny,<sup>28</sup> and claimed O’Keeffe’s ‘battle for civil rights ... secured ... the attention of Christendom’.<sup>29</sup> Chief Justice Whiteside’s judicial opinion that O’Keeffe should be reinstated since any exercise of papal jurisdiction constituted usurpation of state power was hailed as a new emancipation, this time of Catholics from hierarchical tyranny.<sup>30</sup> The *Mail* attacked the Board of Education for not reinstating O’Keeffe.<sup>31</sup> It also cheered on the *Kulturkampf* for the rest of the 1870s,<sup>32</sup> hoping that the Old Catholic schism (on the issue of papal infallibility) would cripple papal spiritual authority just as Cavour and the Risorgimento had succeeded in doing in the temporal sphere.<sup>33</sup> Persecution of Protestants in Spain was highlighted,<sup>34</sup> and the *Mail* asserted that an Italian society advocating popular election of Pope and bishops (its members were excommunicated) showed ‘the Italians desire an Emancipation Act’.<sup>35</sup> The *Mail* hoped Italian state schools would be imitated by Spain.<sup>36</sup> Finally, the *Mail* lamented Bismarck’s compromise with Pope Leo XIII.<sup>37</sup>

Colin Barr’s denial that Galway and Callan represent a British extension of the *Kulturkampf* may be true of state policy<sup>38</sup> but the *Mail* saw itself as participating in such a conflict. This produced a surprising policy for such a conservative paper: support for French republicanism. As the monarchist majority in the assembly elected to conclude the Franco–Prussian War divided over legitimist intransigence, the *Mail* argued that conservative republicans such as President Adolphe Thiers were better suited to preserving peace and property rights.<sup>39</sup> The *Mail*’s position reflected hostility to the long-standing connection between the French Catholic Church and monarchism. Citing the claim of Napoleon III’s cousin that Jesuit

<sup>26</sup> 8 Feb. 1873.

<sup>27</sup> 22 Feb. 1873.

<sup>28</sup> 12 Jan. 1874.

<sup>29</sup> 4 Jan. 1873.

<sup>30</sup> 31 May 1873.

<sup>31</sup> 3 Jan. 1874.

<sup>32</sup> 1 Jan. 1876.

<sup>33</sup> 11 Nov. 1876.

<sup>34</sup> 16 Sept. 1876.

<sup>35</sup> 19 May 1876.

<sup>36</sup> 25 Nov. 1876.

<sup>37</sup> 5 May 1880.

<sup>38</sup> Colin Barr, ‘An Irish dimension to a British *Kulturkampf*?’ in *Jn. Eccles. Hist.*, lvi, no. 3 (July 2005), pp 473–95.

<sup>39</sup> 18 Jan., 15 Feb., 8 Mar. 1873, 21 Feb. 1874, 26 Feb., 1 Apr., 19 Aug. 1876.

influence over Empress Eugenie destroyed the Second Empire, the *Mail* commented: 'It is ... as great a difficulty to reduce a Republic to the Roman Curia as to bring a constitutional monarch in modern times upon his knees'.<sup>40</sup> Although Thiers was deposed by the monarchist assembly in 1873, the monarchists lost the 1876 parliamentary elections. The *Mail* replied to criticisms of subsequent moves to limit Church influence in education by ridiculing claims 'that there is danger to religion and order in a repression of the ambition of a clergy within reasonable limits, and that this change is imminent by reason of the success of the moderate Republicans in the recent elections in France'.<sup>41</sup> 'Clerical conspirators against liberty', not the intransigent Radical Party, were the real enemies of religion in France.<sup>42</sup>

The *Mail* attributed the rout of Gladstone's Liberals at the 1874 general election to outraged English Protestant feeling, and linked it to the European *Kulturkampf*. Furthermore, the *Mail* anticipated lengthy Conservative rule,<sup>43</sup> claiming that Gladstone displayed such a reckless mixture of radicalism and ultramontanism that the public would never trust him again.<sup>44</sup> When Disraeli's chief whip Thomas Taylor, M.P. for County Dublin, stood for re-election on appointment to the Cabinet and was opposed by the young Charles Stewart Parnell, the *Mail* ridiculed the idea of preferring an unknown outsider to a seasoned politician. It claimed that its publication of ultra-nationalist statements by home rule politicians swelled Taylor's majority, and hailed his victory as further proof that conservative Whigs were turning Conservative.<sup>45</sup> After Parnell entered Parliament, the *Mail* remained dismissive; he was one of the 'grotesque eccentrics' Butt had to handle.<sup>46</sup> A reference to his 'miracle of prudence in speech' might praise his verbal economy<sup>47</sup> but there is no mistaking the contemptuous tone in which 'the Great Parnell' is associated with fellow-obstructionist Joseph Biggar.<sup>48</sup>

### III

The *Mail* exulted in Disraeli's renewal of the power and influence of the Empire, which Gladstone treated as 'a huge shop'. The Conservative government was paying little attention to Ireland – the best approach.<sup>49</sup> Citing denunciations of American political corruption from elitist reform publications such as the New York *Nation*, the *Mail* advised reduction of the Irish franchise to that used for Poor Law guardians.<sup>50</sup> Although Gladstone resigned as Liberal leader after defeat, the *Mail* foresaw his reappearance, leading 'the allied army of Rome and Manchester'.<sup>51</sup> Gladstone's 1876 'Bulgarian Horrors' campaign was denounced

<sup>40</sup> 2 Dec. 1876.

<sup>41</sup> 26 Feb. 1876.

<sup>42</sup> 19 Aug. 1876.

<sup>43</sup> 28 Feb. 1874.

<sup>44</sup> 7, 14 Feb. 1874.

<sup>45</sup> 14, 21 Mar. 1874.

<sup>46</sup> 22 July 1876.

<sup>47</sup> 26 Aug. 1876.

<sup>48</sup> 12 May 1877.

<sup>49</sup> 1 Jan., 12 Feb., 11 Nov. 1876.

<sup>50</sup> 19 Feb., 3 June 1876.

<sup>51</sup> 11 Mar. 1876.

as a reckless and unpatriotic appeal to a ‘Greenwich mob’ by a ‘stage minister’ bypassing Parliament.<sup>52</sup>

Buttite home rulers and Ulster Liberals seeking fair rent, free sale and fixity of tenure for tenants were dismissed as demagogues.<sup>53</sup> They must know that no British Parliament would accept such an attack on property, endangering as it would capital in Britain as well as Ireland – a calculation shared by Mitchelites and neo-Fenian activists in the early Land League, who believed refusal of concessions would radicalise farmers.<sup>54</sup> ‘To fix tenure in land’, proclaimed the *Mail*, ‘is to eliminate from the whole department of dealing in land the natural principle of contract resting upon a basis of acknowledged oversight, and all admission to the existence of a market’. Politicians who advocated such fixity could only be motivated by hope of fooling farmers into paying for their upkeep.<sup>55</sup>

Butt’s 1876 ‘land transfer bill’, embodying the three *F*s, was described as aptly titled: virtual transfer of the property to tenants, leaving landlords mere rent chargers whose rent would always diminish.<sup>56</sup> The *Mail* advised Irish landlords to join the Irish Conservative press in exposing such schemes, attributing the 1870 land act to their relative silence: ‘The stimulus of that success could alone account for the daring proposals ... made through Mr. Butt’s agency, and the same considerations which influenced the House of Commons before ... might again lure it further into the mire of concession’.<sup>57</sup> The paper welcomed subsequent proposals for landlord counterpropaganda.<sup>58</sup> Calling on Ulster Presbyterian Liberals to join Conservative brethren in defence of liberty and property, the *Mail* hailed Henry Cooke’s Belfast statue – contrasted with the protracted squabbles over O’Connell’s projected Dublin monument – as a symbolic imperialist triumph. Cooke was a true patriot and constitutionalist (that is, Conservative). The by-election victory of a Presbyterian Conservative, William Wilson, in County Donegal was celebrated as a Presbyterian defeat of ‘the whole tribe of opposition from the *Irishman* [Dublin neo-Fenian weekly] to the *Northern Whig* [Gladstonian Belfast daily]’.<sup>59</sup> Ulster Orangemen represented a second stream of Irish public opinion no less weighty than that of their Liberal nationalist rivals.<sup>60</sup>

Butt, the *Mail* declared, fatally compromised himself when his movement identified nationality with ultramontaniam. It noted that priests who processed for the O’Connell centenary avoided the unveiling of the home ruler-sponsored Grattan statue on College Green, though Grattan spent his last years advocating Catholic emancipation.<sup>61</sup> Grattan would not support present-day home rulers; the Irish

<sup>52</sup> 2, 9 Sept. 1876.

<sup>53</sup> 1 Jan. 1876.

<sup>54</sup> Paul Bew, *Land and the national question* (Dublin, 1978). During the Land War, the landlord-run Property Defence Association received financial support from English sympathisers on these grounds (Curtis, ‘Landlord responses’, pp 176–7).

<sup>55</sup> 26 Aug. 1876.

<sup>56</sup> 4, 18 March 1876. The *Mail* recalled Butt’s bill scornfully in 1880: government would never practise rent fixing as this would be too controversial (8 May 1880).

<sup>57</sup> 6 May 1876.

<sup>58</sup> 13 May 1876.

<sup>59</sup> 13 May, 2 Sept. 1876.

<sup>60</sup> 15 June 1876.

<sup>61</sup> 8 Jan. 1876.



experience could only be understood within an imperial framework.<sup>62</sup> (In 1880 the *Mail* opposed the National Museum of Ireland, saying London museums sufficed.<sup>63</sup>) The *Mail* declared that since no British government would ever concede home rule, the home rule campaign was a pretext for extorting money from naive supporters. Recalling Butt's youthful Orangeism and his 1843 anti-repeal speech in a Dublin Corporation debate with O'Connell, the *Mail* noted 'Mr. Butt's prophecy of the result of political agitation in the Council Chamber has been unquestionably fulfilled'.<sup>64</sup> The *Mail* chronicled squabbles between Buttites, Fenians comparing Butt to Lord Castlereagh,<sup>65</sup> P. J. Smyth (advocating complete repeal) and clericalists such as Peter Paul McSwiney as proof the Home Rule Party was collapsing.<sup>66</sup> There would never again be a powerful nationalist movement like O'Connell's. Butt could not even get popular subscriptions as O'Connell did.<sup>67</sup>

In 1875 Christy Cullen of Clerkenwell and his friend Barney Burke of Glasnevin first appeared in the *Warder*. Their inventor was the illustrator Joseph R. Clegg (fl.1880–92).<sup>68</sup> Christy and Barney, supposedly old O'Connellites, offered misspelt and ungrammatical comments on passing events, pouring scorn on present-day nationalists as mercenary vagabonds. Christy and Barney disappeared in the late 1870s, returning to comment on land agitation and Gladstone from 8 January 1881. Their ultra-loyalist sentiments display only the faintest O'Connellite tinge, and Clegg cannot decide whether Barney and Christy voice untutored common sense or laughable naivety and ignorance. From 1883 Clegg added cartoons: first, small vignettes in the text, then large images heading the column (now on the front page). They disappeared when the *Warder* was redesigned in spring 1892.

#### IV

Gladstone's return to power in 1880 was greeted with dismay, Conservative defeat in Dublin city being attributed to a regrettably enfranchised 'proletariat' outvoting the respectable minority.<sup>69</sup> As the Land War intensified, the *Mail* accused Gladstone and W. E. Forster of acquiescing in Irish agitation to appease English radicals:<sup>70</sup> 'The constables have been confined to barracks ... perchance Mr. Parnell and his merry men may besiege and disarm them, distributing their arms among the inhabitants of the scheduled districts';<sup>71</sup> 'To Mr. Forster, and Mr. Forster alone, is attributable the social murder of Captain Boycott';<sup>72</sup> 'No

<sup>62</sup> 8 Jan. 1874, 15 Jan. 1876.

<sup>63</sup> *Evening Mail*, 18 Dec. 1880.

<sup>64</sup> 9 Sept. 1876.

<sup>65</sup> 22 Apr., 20 May, 2, 9, 30 Sept. 1876.

<sup>66</sup> 8 July 1876.

<sup>67</sup> 2 Sept. 1876.

<sup>68</sup> Joel A. Hollander, *Coloured political lithographs as propaganda: warrior artists and the battle for home rule, 1879–1886* (Lewiston, NY, 2007), pp 73–5, 165. Hollander notes the 1890–2 Christy–Barney columns, but overlooks their earlier appearances.

<sup>69</sup> 10 Apr. 1880.

<sup>70</sup> 22 May, 17 July 1880; 9 Apr. 1881. The paper summed up its complaint by protesting that 'the empire is swayed by Birmingham radicals and Liberal cowards' (25 Dec. 1880).

<sup>71</sup> 25 Sept. 1880.

<sup>72</sup> *Evening Mail*, 11 Nov. 1880.

schoolboy ever quailed before the rod of his master as Mr. Gladstone quailed before Mr. Parnell'.<sup>73</sup>

As the Land War advanced, the *Mail* displayed fiercer contempt for the populace – barbarians to be governed by naked force: 'A rabble miscalling themselves a nation ... wants ... to recover by cowardly outrages and assassinations the right to relapse into that savagery from which their conqueror has rescued them'.<sup>74</sup> A Land League spokesman, protesting at the accusation that the league applauded the murder of Lord Mountmorres, said the league had thought the *Mail* respectable and fair-minded compared to the *Express*.<sup>75</sup> The *Mail* was to accuse the league of sponsoring a 'Jihad'<sup>76</sup> of agrarian murder. The paper declared 'there is no God but Davitt and Kettle is his apostle',<sup>77</sup> it called Biggar an Irish Robespierre,<sup>78</sup> and insisted Parnell was worse than Danton.<sup>79</sup> The league and its activities, proclaimed the *Mail*, were on a par with the Colorado beetle,<sup>80</sup> Russian nihilists,<sup>81</sup> the massacre of Armenians by Kurds,<sup>82</sup> the Mafia of southern Italy,<sup>83</sup> and anti-semitic movements in Russia,<sup>84</sup> Hungary<sup>85</sup> and Germany.<sup>86</sup>

The proprietors of the *Mail* helped to plan the Boycott relief expedition, intended as a private-enterprise attempt to show that the Land League could be defeated; the *Mail* complained that John Robinson of the *Express* lost his nerve and informed Dublin Castle, which sent a ruinously expensive escort, defeating the purpose of the enterprise.<sup>87</sup> It backed the Trinity M.P. Edward Gibson's spirited parliamentary resistance to Gladstone's 1880 compensation for disturbance bill (compensating evicted tenants), which, it said, was 'a weak and perilous concession to a lawless agitation' providing 'protection for rent repudiators', and which was passed through the Commons by 'Liberal sheep'<sup>88</sup> despite Whig defections.<sup>89</sup> If the English land system was unsuited to Ireland, why should it possess *habeas corpus*?<sup>90</sup> When the House of Lords rejected the bill, the *Mail* proclaimed that the Lords should be proud and that posterity would be grateful.<sup>91</sup> Gladstone's 1881 land act was accused of deliberate obscurity so as to enable systematic

<sup>73</sup> 27 Nov. 1880.

<sup>74</sup> 10 Dec. 1881.

<sup>75</sup> 20 Nov. 1880; *Evening Mail*, 27 Sept. 1880.

<sup>76</sup> 14, 21 Aug. 1880.

<sup>77</sup> 21 May 1881; Tickell and Andrew J. Kettle clashed at North Dublin Poor Law Board of Guardians' meetings, 2 July 1882.

<sup>78</sup> 27 Mar. 1880.

<sup>79</sup> 5 Feb. 1881.

<sup>80</sup> 4 Sept. 1880.

<sup>81</sup> 26 Mar. 1881.

<sup>82</sup> 9 Oct. 1881.

<sup>83</sup> 15 Apr. 1882, 18 Oct. 1890.

<sup>84</sup> 21 Jan. 1881.

<sup>85</sup> 15 Apr. 1882.

<sup>86</sup> 16 July 1881 (Parnell compared to 'Herr Stocker [Adolf Stoecker (1835–1909)] the German Titus Oates').

<sup>87</sup> 13 Nov. 1880.

<sup>88</sup> 26 June, 10 July 1880.

<sup>89</sup> 31 July 1880; see also 10 July, 7 Aug. (Gibson's speech).

<sup>90</sup> 6 Nov. 1880.

<sup>91</sup> 7 Aug. 1880.

reinterpretation in favour of tenants.<sup>92</sup> According to the *Mail*, this act ought to have been be a final settlement, but ‘the vampires of the Land League ... have not yet done sucking ... blood’.<sup>93</sup> Lamenting Irish landlords as ‘another child thrown out of the Russian sledge to the wolves’,<sup>94</sup> the *Mail* suggested that Gladstone deliberately tolerated agitation to build pressure for land reform, ‘making a Land Omelette by breaking eggs, including human lives and other precious things’.<sup>95</sup> Gladstone’s subsequent action against the Land League would be on the principle that ‘when robbery is legalised the brigands may be fairly requested to desist from murder’.<sup>96</sup>

During the inconclusive 1880–1 trial of Parnell and several of his associates for seditious statements, the *Mail* compared the home rule leader to the Roman aristocratic demagogue Catiline, calling him a suitable case for lynch law, and accusing him of organising ‘a Green Terror ... a Servile War’.<sup>97</sup> When sued for contempt of court, the *Mail*’s lawyers denounced this as an attempt to ‘boycott’ the *Mail*<sup>98</sup> and break the conservative press.<sup>99</sup> The *Mail*’s costs were paid by subscribers to an indemnity fund.<sup>100</sup> These complaints might have attracted more sympathy had not the *Mail* regularly called for the suppression of nationalist newspapers, equating the Land League with the bandits of southern Italy, who no doubt equally disliked law enforcement but never ‘had the cool assurance to parade their grievance in the press, or ever found a newspaper base enough to publish a complaint on the subject’.<sup>101</sup> This mainly applied to nationalist Dublin weeklies, notably *United Ireland* – ‘half maniacal and wholly ruffian print ... disgusting caricature and scandal of Irish journalism’<sup>102</sup> – and local papers; the *Freeman’s Journal* merely curried favour ‘by appeasing the mob’.<sup>103</sup> When the nationalist *Kerry Sentinel* was suppressed by a court in 1883, the *Mail*’s chief printer testified for the Crown.<sup>104</sup>

The *Mail*’s attacks on ultramontanism included denouncing Lourdes as a fraud.<sup>105</sup> Its discussions of popular ignorance and unfitness for government highlighted the nascent Marian shrine at Knock: it commented that had Irish Catholics shown commercial enterprise, Knock could have become another Lourdes.<sup>106</sup> Anna Parnell’s appearance at the inaugural meeting of the Ladies’ Land League at Claremorris was as great a miracle as the appearance of the Virgin at Knock, only true.<sup>107</sup> When the alleged miraculous cure of the ‘Nun of Kenmare’, one of the shrine’s leading promoters, coincided with the escape of a Knock Land League activist

<sup>92</sup> 16, 23 Apr. 1881.

<sup>93</sup> 27 Aug. 1881.

<sup>94</sup> 21 May 1881.

<sup>95</sup> 26 Nov. 1881.

<sup>96</sup> 6 Aug. 1881.

<sup>97</sup> 27 Nov., 4 Dec. 1880.

<sup>98</sup> *Evening Mail*, 17 Nov. 1880.

<sup>99</sup> 11 Dec. 1880.

<sup>100</sup> *Evening Mail*, 18, 20, 29 Dec. 1880.

<sup>101</sup> 15 Apr. 1882.

<sup>102</sup> *Evening Mail*, 16, 30 Dec. 1881.

<sup>103</sup> 22 Oct. 1881.

<sup>104</sup> 9 June 1883.

<sup>105</sup> 9 Sept. 1876.

<sup>106</sup> 31 Jan., 6 Mar., 28 Aug., 18 Dec. 1880; 30 Apr. 1881 (compared to astrology); 3 Sept., 13 Dec. 1881; 1 July 1882.

<sup>107</sup> 19 Feb. 1881.

from a police station, the *Mail* sneered that these miracles assured the shrine's fame; perhaps the escapee's features appeared on the gable wall of the chapel, wondered the *Mail*.<sup>108</sup> As the Queen's University of Ireland (Q.U.I.) – original umbrella body for the Queen's Colleges – was replaced by the examination-only Royal University of Ireland, the *Mail* lamented that Q.U.I. was abolished because 'the light it kindled in Connacht was incompatible with the cause and ideas bound up with the apparitions of Knock'.<sup>109</sup> The *Mail* did, however, publish a letter, allegedly by a Catholic conservative reader, declaring the apparition a divine warning against the growth in Ireland of godless communism on the French model.<sup>110</sup> This is an interesting variant on interpretations of the apparition as a 'vision to the dispossessed' supporting the Land League – a view not openly expressed by Land Leaguers<sup>111</sup> but maintained in its own manner by the *Mail*. Interpretations of the growth and decline of the initial Knock devotion that attribute these developments to the absence of hostile newspapers challenging Catholic devotionism with aggressive rationalism<sup>112</sup> seem unaware of contemporary Irish Protestant/unionist press coverage.

During the Dublin riots (15–17 October 1881) that followed Parnell's arrest, the *Irish Times* and *Dublin Evening Mail* offices had their windows broken.<sup>113</sup> The *Mail* welcomed the arrest of Parnell, whom the paper described as embodying 'the vilest system of tyranny that has ever pressed upon Ireland ... the flood which is inundating Ireland with the garbage of America, and instructing an ignorant and always too excitable peasantry to look with hatred on their sovereign and contempt on their God'.<sup>114</sup> It compared Guiteau, the assassin of American President James Garfield, to his counterparts in 'the Irish uprising against property and honest payment of debts, and the demands made for a reversion to the customs of a barbarous Celtic horde in the light of the civilisation of the end of the nineteenth century'.<sup>115</sup> Declaring that Gladstone only acted against the Land League when coerced by British opinion,<sup>116</sup> the *Mail* called for 'drum-head court-martials and a fair trial of force'.<sup>117</sup> Educational grants were wasted money at present: 'a detective police, and the hangman, and the cat[-o'-nine-tails] ... would now be the best Irish investments of the taxpayer's money'.<sup>118</sup> Demands for Cromwellian dictatorship<sup>119</sup> or full-scale reconquest ensued.<sup>120</sup> The Ladies' Land League, 'spinsters and childless women ... pests in petticoats ... put themselves outside the privileges

<sup>108</sup> *Evening Mail*, 22 Nov. 1881.

<sup>109</sup> 4 Feb. 1882. The paper claimed the R.U.I. would produce university-educated revolutionaries resembling American Clan leaders (13 Aug. 1881); it would have been better to affiliate the Queen's Colleges to Trinity.

<sup>110</sup> 'A Catholic who has suffered for his religion', *Evening Mail*, 15 Dec. 1880.

<sup>111</sup> Eugene Hynes, *Knock: the Virgin's apparition in nineteenth-century Ireland* (Cork, 2008), p. 258.

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*, pp 251, 265.

<sup>113</sup> 22 Oct. 1881.

<sup>114</sup> 15 Oct. 1881.

<sup>115</sup> 9 July, 24 Sept. 1881 (Garfield was shot on 2 July but did not die until 19 September, so the first quote describes the reaction to the shooting, and the second to his death).

<sup>116</sup> 22 Oct. 1881.

<sup>117</sup> 8 Oct. 1881.

<sup>118</sup> 3 Dec. 1881.

<sup>119</sup> 8 Apr. 1882.

<sup>120</sup> 15 Apr. 1882.

usually extended to their sex', and should be sent to Grangegorman prison as criminal lunatics or leave the country.<sup>121</sup> Once again, the *Mail* recalled Gladstone's prophecies that Disestablishment and the 1870 land act would pacify Ireland.<sup>122</sup>

The Kilmainham Treaty provoked a cry of despair: 'The Reds have won and England has surrendered. Henceforth it is to Mr. Parnell and not Mr. Gladstone that we must look for our ruler and our guide ... Ireland is handed over to the tender mercies of Captain Moonlight.'<sup>123</sup> The Phoenix Park murders a few days later were the culmination of a policy of imperial retreat.<sup>124</sup> Listing fifty victims of agrarian murder, the *Mail* proclaimed 'The Boers rule the Transvaal, the Land League rules Ireland, and Arabi Pasha rules Egypt'.<sup>125</sup> The *Mail* reprinted the 'pen' letter produced at Davitt's 1870 trial (describing it as a transparently coded request to obtain a pistol to shoot a suspected informer) as 'proof' that the denunciation of the Phoenix Park assassins by Davitt and Parnell was insincere.<sup>126</sup> It predicted Parnell would soon be eclipsed by Davitt, 'a communist pure and simple'.<sup>127</sup> As the rift between Davitt and Parnell developed, the *Mail* reconsidered: Parnell would probably win, since public plunder such as he favoured had frequently occurred, while Davitt's land-nationalisation scheme was unprecedented. The *Mail* now wistfully endorsed W. E. H. Lecky's declaration that O'Connell had been better than Parnell as he professed loyalty to the Crown and opposed bloodshed.<sup>128</sup>

The *Mail* welcomed the post-Phoenix Park murders crackdown by the new lord lieutenant, Earl Spencer; according to the paper, it distinguished him, as a gentleman, from his Cabinet colleagues,<sup>129</sup> though the *Mail* remarked sourly that it took the murder of an Englishman, after the deaths of fifty Irishmen 'flung naked and defenceless to the Irish Thug', to provoke a response to the murder campaign.<sup>130</sup> The paper celebrated Marwood the hangman as 'Chief Pacificator of Ireland'.<sup>131</sup>

Anyone who questioned the guilt of a person tried and hanged for agrarian murder was called an advocate of 'a fair start and clear course for crime',<sup>132</sup> upholding 'the liberties of the bad subject, of the mutilator, thief and murderer'.<sup>133</sup>

<sup>121</sup> 3, 24 Dec. 1881.

<sup>122</sup> 25 Feb. 1882.

<sup>123</sup> 6 May 1882.

<sup>124</sup> 13 May 1882.

<sup>125</sup> 1 July 1882; comparisons to Arabi, 24 June, 20, 29 July 1882; comparisons to Boers 17, 24 Mar. 1883.

<sup>126</sup> 13 May 1882. The letter restrained a Fenian hothead, Arthur Forrester, from shooting a man on suspicion; Davitt pretended to acquiesce while referring Forrester to senior Fenians who would forbid it. Davitt explained this at the Parnell Commission in 1889 and in private memoranda and correspondence with those who knew the truth (including Forrester): T. W. Moody, 'Michael Davitt and the "pen" letter' in *I.H.S.*, iv, no. 15 (Mar. 1945), pp 224–53. Moody's statement that the only Irish commentator using the letter at this time was Richard Pigott (pp 232–3) overlooks its *Evening Mail* appearance.

<sup>127</sup> 27 May 1882.

<sup>128</sup> 19 Aug. 1882.

<sup>129</sup> 30 Dec. 1882, 14 Apr., 7 July 1883.

<sup>130</sup> 27 Jan., 14 Apr. 1883.

<sup>131</sup> 3 Feb. 1883.

<sup>132</sup> 2 June 1883.

<sup>133</sup> 17 June 1882; cf. 7 Apr. 1883 (denounces proposal for appeal court); 10 June 1882 (Justin MacCarthy accused of wishing ninety-nine innocents die rather than one moonlighter be executed); 23 Dec. 1882 (Biggar compared to Marat).

The same approach was taken to the Maamtrasna murders, where it is now generally accepted that several defendants were innocent.<sup>134</sup> The *Mail* thought that all should have been hanged.<sup>135</sup> The paper noted gleefully that *United Ireland* declared the Invincibles innocent until Carey turned informer,<sup>136</sup> adding that Carey was hated in Dublin not for committing murder but for telling the truth about it.<sup>137</sup> The Invincibles would be romanticised like Robert Emmet, with equal justice.<sup>138</sup> The *Mail* applauded Cardinal McCabe's attacks on the Land League, declaring that, though desiring diminution of priestly influence, it supported any minister of religion opposing communism.<sup>139</sup> When two bailiffs were murdered and their bodies thrown into Lough Mask near Cong, the *Mail* declared that since every local must be complicit, at least by silence, Clonbur should be depopulated just as Glenveagh had been.<sup>140</sup> The only salvation for Ireland and the Empire, declared the *Mail*, lay in Whig defections from Gladstone and the speedy return of Tory government;<sup>141</sup> Gladstone endangered property in Britain as well as Ireland, and there was a limit to the abilities of such Irish Protestant generals as Roberts and Wolseley to save the Empire from Gladstone's policies.<sup>142</sup> It denounced electoral-reform proposals leading to the equalisation of Irish and British franchises and the extension of both in the 1884 third reform act: 'votes for the mob'<sup>143</sup> and 'A household franchise in Irish counties means a hovel franchise'.<sup>144</sup>

## V

The *Mail* predicted Gladstone might adopt home rule well before he did so,<sup>145</sup> and J. P. Maunsell's temporary departure (1886–8) to edit the *Derby Mercury and Express* may have reflected fear of home rule. But by 1890 the *Mail* drew confidence from Balfour's mixture of coercion and constructive measures.<sup>146</sup> It compared Gladstone to Catiline and the Athenian demagogue Cleon,<sup>147</sup> contrasting his denunciations

<sup>134</sup> Jarlath Waldron, *Maamtrasna: the murders and the mystery* (Blackrock, Co. Dublin, 1992).

<sup>135</sup> 26 Aug., 2 Dec. 1882 (Maamtrasna shows Connemara peasantry worse than subjects of King Theebaw of Burma).

<sup>136</sup> 24 Feb., 19 May 1883.

<sup>137</sup> 3, 10 Mar., 28 Apr. 1883.

<sup>138</sup> 21 Apr. 1883.

<sup>139</sup> 26 Feb. 1881.

<sup>140</sup> 14 Jan. 1882. Glenveagh, County Donegal, was cleared in 1861 by its landlord John George Adair who blamed its inhabitants for murdering one of his Scottish shepherds. This invocation is noteworthy because the case outraged most sections of opinion at the time: W. E. Vaughan, *Sin, sheep and Scotsmen: John George Adair and the Derryveagh evictions, 1861* (Belfast, 1983).

<sup>141</sup> 17 July 1880, 11 Feb., 1 July, 12 Aug. 1882, 31 Mar. 1883.

<sup>142</sup> 11 Nov. 1882.

<sup>143</sup> 10 Apr. 1880, 25 Mar. 1882.

<sup>144</sup> 21 Feb. 1880.

<sup>145</sup> 29 Oct. 1881, 18 Feb., 22 Apr. 1882; 31 Mar. 1883.

<sup>146</sup> 29 Mar., 5 Apr. 1890 (Balfour's land-purchase bill discussed as proof of unionist benevolence); 30 Aug. 1890 (on unionist government's establishment of Congested Districts Board); 28 June 1890 (Balfour fulfils Thomas Davis's advocacy of peasant proprietorship).

<sup>147</sup> 24 May 1890.

of Balfourian repression with the draconian former measures of Gladstone and Spencer – now also pro-home rule.<sup>148</sup> The *Mail* happily cited Davitt's denunciations of farmers' selfishness towards labourers, commenting that indulging farmers' desire for excessively cheap land led them to seek excessively cheap labour.<sup>149</sup>

Throughout 1890 the *Mail* mocked the impending O'Shea divorce case and recurring nationalist assurances that Parnell would be vindicated. When Captain O'Shea obtained his verdict, the *Mail* remarked that although Parnell's misbehaviour clearly affected his fitness to lead, 'all such cases are degrading', and his political demise had disadvantages: 'The Irish tenant will not cease to defraud his landlord because Mr. Parnell has been unduly intimate with Mrs. O'Shea.'<sup>150</sup> A few years previously, a Clegg cartoon portrayed Parnell with his coat full of bombs;<sup>151</sup> now he was described as a gentleman wishing to restrain his followers' lust for plunder under home rule. He would not have succeeded, but he might have delayed the debacle.<sup>152</sup>

Not even the Irish Party's worst enemy, however, anticipated the split that followed. The *Mail* expressed amazement that Gladstone and the English Nonconformists balked at a breach of the Seventh Commandment after conniving to flout so many others,<sup>153</sup> gleefully compared Parnell and Healy's exchanges during the North Kilkenny by-election to the mutually destructive Kilkenny cats, and cited the mutual insults of Parnellites and anti-Parnellites as proof of Irish unfitness for self-government.<sup>154</sup>

The defeat of home rule, however, proved a mixed blessing for the *Mail*. The political excitement of the 1880s increased readership; from 1892, with the defeat of Gladstone's second home rule bill inevitable, there was a falling-off, and the paper shrank noticeably. James Poole Maunsell's purchase of the *Express* (1889), his acquisition of the *Mail* and *Warder* (1892), and the flotation of the papers as a company with himself as manager and largest shareholder (1895) was presumably a response to the shrinking market.<sup>155</sup> Moreover, the paper's political position remained precarious. Standish O'Grady's *History of Ireland* grew from a *Warder* historical column; some articles were not included in the book. These omissions included a detailed contrast between the corrupt and treacherous bureaucratic intrigues of the Elizabethan Cecils with the martial heroism of English and Gaelic combatants in Ireland. It can be read as O'Grady warning that the short-term triumph of the Southern unionists was only possible through the willingness of the British Tory Party – led by the Cecils's descendants, Salisbury and Balfour – to support them when it suited their own interests. If circumstances changed, Irish unionists might find these allies as self-seeking and opportunistic as their Elizabethan ancestors.<sup>156</sup>

<sup>148</sup> 8 Feb., 22 Mar. 1890.

<sup>149</sup> 31 May 1890.

<sup>150</sup> 22 Nov. 1890.

<sup>151</sup> 23 June 1883.

<sup>152</sup> 22 Nov. 1890.

<sup>153</sup> 29 Nov., 6 Dec. 1890.

<sup>154</sup> 20 Dec. 1890.

<sup>155</sup> J. P. Maunsell obituary, 16, 23 Jan. 1897.

<sup>156</sup> 'Lord Burghley and his contemporaries', 15, 22, 29 Apr. 1893. Cf. Patrick Maume, 'Standish James O'Grady: between imperial romance and Irish revival' in *Éire-Ireland*, xxxix, nos. 1–2 (spring/summer 2004), pp 11–35.

## VI

James Poole Maunsell died in January 1897; the papers were briefly influenced by Horace Plunkett and his constructive-unionist/cultural-revivalist allies before they were bought in 1900 by the hardline unionist Lord Ardilaun (of Guinness's brewery), with the future *Irish Times* editor John Healy as editor until 1907.<sup>157</sup> Ardilaun's interest in the papers was political rather than commercial; when he died in 1915, they were sold to H. F. Tivy, owner of the Cork-based News Brothers book-and-newspaper distribution firm (Easons's principal Irish rival)<sup>158</sup> and the *Cork Constitution* (a unionist daily paper that ceased publication after its premises were destroyed during the Civil War).<sup>159</sup> Seán Lester, a Protestant nationalist and future secretary-general of the League of Nations, was briefly employed by the *Mail*, but shifted to the *Freeman's Journal* after the Easter Rising when his political affiliations became embarrassing to Tivy. According to Lester's son-in-law and biographer, Douglas Gageby, Lester was only saved from arrest by the intervention of the famously conservative *Express* and *Mail* editor, Henry Doig.<sup>160</sup> Gageby, possibly repeating Lester's impressions, describes Tivy as 'essentially a Cork merchant who happened to own newspapers', suggesting reversion to the part-time proprietorship of Henry Maunsell and George Tickell.<sup>161</sup> Doig's much commented-on defection to the editorship of the nationalist *Evening Telegraph* in 1919 may mark the *Mail*'s final abandonment of intransigent unionism and adaptation to the new political situation. The *Warder* title disappeared in 1920, though a *Weekly and Sports Mail* survived until September 1939. The *Irish Daily Express* was absorbed into the *Dublin Evening Mail* in 1917. The post-independence *Evening Mail*, a Dublin-centred social-and-advertising paper with little comment on public affairs, arguably retained more from the *Express* than from the old, elitist *Mail*. Like the old *Express*, it had a large working-class readership.<sup>162</sup> (In Eilís Dillon's 1960 novel *The Head of the Family*, a member of a dysfunctional literary family wishes 'he had been brought up in a working-class family ... [with] a father whose reading never took him beyond the *Evening Mail*'.<sup>163</sup>)

To some extent, the *Mail* traced a similar path to the *Irish Times*; Protestant ownership and relative detachment from Catholic Church influence opened its letters column to left-wing groups such as Noël Browne's National Progressive Democrats.<sup>164</sup> (This may also reflect pro-Browne sympathies among Dublin

<sup>157</sup> B. J. Plunkett, 'Guinness, Arthur Edward, Baron Ardilaun (1840–1915)', rev. Peter Gray, in *Oxford D.N.B.*; R. J. H. Shaw, 'Healy, John Edward (1872–1934)', rev. Marc Brodie, in *Oxford D.N.B.*; Alvin Jackson, 'The failure of unionism in Dublin' in *I.H.S.*, xxv, no. 104 (Nov. 1989), pp 377–95.

<sup>158</sup> Cullen, *Eason & son*, p. 71.

<sup>159</sup> *Evening Mail*, 29 Oct. 1960.

<sup>160</sup> For Doig (1874–1931), including *Irish Times* obituary (6 Apr. 1931), see <http://doig.net/THOM1752.html> (accessed 19 May 2009).

<sup>161</sup> Douglas Gageby, *The last secretary general: Ireland and the League of Nations* (Dublin, 1999), pp 9–12.

<sup>162</sup> Cf. Martin Maguire, 'The organisation and activism of Dublin's Protestant working class, 1883–1935' in *I.H.S.*, xxix, no. 113 (May 1994), pp 65–87 for the *Express*'s working-class appeal.

<sup>163</sup> Eilís Dillon, *The head of the family* (Dublin, 1960; 1982 ed.), p. 103.

<sup>164</sup> John Horgan, *Noël Browne: passionate outsider* (Dublin, 1999), p. 200.



working-class readers.) Nonetheless, the decline of its Protestant readership and competition for small ads from the *Evening Press* (after 1954) as well as the *Evening Herald* brought inexorable decline. In 1960, with its proprietor W. L. Tivy (son of H. F.; he inherited the paper in 1929) dying,<sup>165</sup> it was sold to the *Irish Times* and relaunched as a tabloid; its losses nearly sank the *Times* before the *Mail* ceased publication on 19 July 1962.<sup>166</sup>

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<sup>165</sup> *Evening Mail*, 29 Oct. 1960.

<sup>166</sup> James, *From the margins to the centre*, pp 158–9.

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