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**Rev. Canon James Owen Hannay, M.A. D. Litt.  
'George A. Birmingham'  
*An Irishman looks at his world***

by

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## ABSTRACT

The subject of this thesis is Rev. Canon James Owen Hannay, George A. Birmingham, and his Irish experience, a period which spans over fifty years, 1865-1921.

The main focus of this work is a biographical treatment of Hannay's work as a Church of Ireland minister, in particular, his involvement with the Gaelic League, his support of Sinn Féin, the Irish Agriculture Organisation Society, Home Rule, and many other issues and organisations which worked towards the regeneration and reconciliation of class and creed in Ireland during the first two decades of the twentieth century. He was a participant in, and an observer of Ireland in an era of hope, renewal, and growth. However, he also witnessed Ireland in a time of revolution and war, bitterness and hatred.

Hannay recorded these observations which provide the historian with valuable primary source material for contemporary Ireland. At the time of his death, in 1950, he had published, as George A. Birmingham, over sixty novels and books of short stories. In addition there were numerous volumes of essays, reminiscences, travel, general knowledge, theological and biblical works, studies of Irish people and Irish life. Over four hundred articles from Hannay's pen, published in the Irish, English, and American press, are recorded in the catalogue of his papers in Trinity College, Dublin, and this is by no means complete. Hannay was also well known as a lecturer and public speaker. The aim of this study is to examine historically Hannay's experiences while living in Ireland, and his account of those experiences, to provide some insights, through his writings, into contemporary Ireland, and to explore Hannay's disenchantment with the issues and organisations he had passionately believed in, resulting, ultimately in his estrangement from Ireland.

As this work deals with his Irish experience, the second part of his life, spent outside Ireland, and the work that he published in this period, are dealt with only briefly.

To my mother for so much,  
my family for their support,  
and Eugene, for his love.

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## Introduction

Rev. Canon James Owen Hannay, M.A. D. Litt., (George A. Birmingham), 1865-1950, has been heretofore a quite neglected figure in Irish historical and literary studies. This study deals, in a biographical manner, with Hannay's Irish experience, a period which spans over fifty years. This experience begins with his birth into a Protestant Unionist family in Belfast in 1865 and ends with his decision to leave Ireland in 1921. At first glance this is a familiar tale. Many Irish Protestants found themselves in similar circumstances. Hannay's experience is remarkably different. From a quintessentially Ulster Unionist background, English public school education, a university education in Trinity College, Dublin, and ordination into the Church of Ireland, Hannay emerged in the early years of the twentieth century as a champion of the Gaelic League and the Irish revival in all its various forms, and, as a firm believer in Home Rule. For one so committed to these causes, and to Ireland, as Hannay was, to find himself estranged from his country, in the same position of so many of his co-religionists, suggests a special case which deserves to be examined. Essential to this examination is Hannay's writings. As 'George A. Birmingham', he

wrote between 1905 and 1922, twenty two novels, seventeen of which had Irish themes. Of these, six were serious in tone, dealing with themes of reconciliation and regeneration in contemporary Ireland. the others were comic in genre, ranging from lighthearted fun in *Spanish Gold*, to a more satirical style in *Up the rebels !*. These works of fiction form an integral part of this thesis, expressing as they do Hannay's view of various Irish issues and institutions. He also published under his pseudonym books which were non-fictional, for example, *Irishmen All*, and *An Irishman looks at his world*.

In total Hannay had published over sixty novels and books of short stories, and two plays by 1950. In addition there were numerous volumes of essays, general knowledge, memoirs and reminiscences, biblical and theological work, studies of Irish people and Irish life. As the scope of this thesis deals primarily with Hannay's Irish experience, discussion of his life, work, and writing is limited to that portion of his life before 1922.

Hannay was also the author of more than four hundred recorded newspaper and periodical articles, which were published in the Irish, English, and American press. These articles, with Hannay's other writings, provide the historian with acute and penetrating insights into Irish life, politics, society, and people. In 1913,



the *Daily Chronicle* wrote that Hannay knew Ireland through and through, 'not a single stitch in the many seams of Irish life and politics has escaped his cool, clear gaze.' His articles were not, however, confined to Irish affairs. He also wrote on English and American topics.

Very little work has been done on Rev. Canon James Owen Hannay, historically or otherwise. The exceptions to this are R.B.D. French's article in *Hermathena*, on Hannay's involvement with the Gaelic League, and two unpublished theses, by H.A. O'Donnell, and Therese Law, on aspects of George A. Birmingham's fiction. This study aims to rectify this neglect.

The first chapter deals with Hannay's background, his heritage, his childhood, his education, what formed the man he later became. Within this first chapter, I have also examined his time as a curate in Delgany, and uncovered some of the signs there apparent of the latent author.

The second chapter is concerned with Westport, Hannay's first parish, his ministerial work and duties, his theological work, leading to his first publications, his post in Trinity College, Dublin, as Donnellan lecturer at the turn of the century. His initially tenuous attempts at speaking and writing on Irish issues are discussed, as are the origins and

creation of his first novel, *The Seething Pot*, published under his pseudonym, George A. Birmingham. In the third chapter, which is the central chapter, the main focus is on Hannay's involvement with the Gaelic League. I have examined his early involvement, his untiring work on behalf of the League, and his importance to the League in terms of his attempts to convince Irish Protestants to join. This early phase of his work on the League's behalf was succeeded by the period when he found himself in trouble, due mainly to clerical reaction to *The Seething Pot*, and how this clerical enmity manifested itself in terms of the League. Inextricable from this primary theme is the publication and reception of Birmingham's second novel, *Hyacinth*.

In the following chapter, I have examined his work, on the one hand, in the Irish and English press, under his own name and his pseudonym, on contemporary issues, social, political, and economic. On the other hand, his fiction is discussed, the developing trend away from the serious and moralistic style of his early novels, towards a satirical, and increasingly farcical style, a trend which becomes more apparent from 1909 onwards. Integral to his written work is his popularity as a public speaker, lecturing to various groups as diverse as the Limerick Young Protestant

Men's Association, Sinn Féin, and the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies.

The final chapter deals with his role as a chaplain in the first world war, his return to an Ireland utterly changed, his inability to live in this changed and changing society, and his ultimate decision to leave. The treatment of the period of his life when he left Ireland, 1921, to his death in 1950, has of necessity been brief.

This thesis is a study of Irish life, from one century to the next, of Irish politics, society, economic debate, and culture. This is possible through the writings, fictional and otherwise, of James Owen Hannay, George A. Birmingham, which provide the historian with many valuable insights into contemporary Irish issues.

However, it is Hannay himself that is central to this study. It is his unusual experience as an Irish Protestant, that this work is based on; his wholehearted involvement with the Irish revival in all its manifest forms, especially the Gaelic League, and Plunkett's work with the Irish Agriculture Organisation Society. There is his preoccupation with the adverse issues of Roman Catholic ecclesiastical power and dominance in Irish life, and the position of the Ascendancy class, and what he saw as their opportunities to regain their position as leaders of

society. There is his support of Home Rule for Ireland, especially illustrated by his actions within the 1912 meeting of the General Synod of the Church of Ireland. Finally, there is his return to Ireland in 1917, after his service as a chaplain in France, and his attempts to come to terms with the different state of affairs that then existed in Ireland. These attempts were not successful, and resulted, along with other reasons, in his decision to leave Ireland, never to return. As I have pointed out, this was a familiar story. Many Irish Protestants experienced alienation and exile from Ireland at this time, but Hannay's case is atypical, because of his passionate belief, sometimes idealistic, sometimes misplaced, in the possibilities of change and progress, of regeneration, and reconciliation between all Irishman, and his commitment to the organisations which worked towards these goals. That he too could be estranged from his country, in spite of these beliefs and commitments, is a problem which I hope to explore, and provide some answers for. An essential key to understanding Hannay's unusual case lies in his writings, his novels and plays, and his non-fictional work, in books, volumes of essays, and many articles in newspapers and periodicals. As I have pointed out these writings provide the historian with valuable primary material in examinations of contemporary Ireland.

**CHAPTER ONE**  
**CITIZEN OF BELFAST - CURATE OF DELGANY**  
**1865 - 1892**

'I was born in Belfast and brought up to believe that, like St. Paul, I am a citizen of no mean city.' (1)

During the mid nineteenth century Belfast was a vibrant city. In the early part of the century it had entered a period of industrial growth and expansion. In 1830 the population was fifty thousand; by 1850 it had doubled. (2)

It was the linen industry that was responsible for bringing the industrial revolution to Belfast. The textile industry thrived, mainly in the west of the city, but the east was the 'home of shipbuilding', (3) an industry which had entered a period of great development in the decade before Hannay's birth. The growth of the three major industries, linen, shipbuilding, and production of textile machinery, were further facilitated by the development of the port. Three times during the nineteenth century Belfast extended its boundaries. In 1861 there were fifty five churches; by 1909 there were one hundred and seventy nine.

This emphasis on church building in an industrial area may have helped make the morals of the factory worker superior to those of the rural working classes, but it also reflected Protestant apprehension at the growing number of Catholics in the town. (4)

In 1800 Catholics accounted for one tenth of the population. This proportion had increased to one third by mid century. (5) With this increase, religious

tensions rose. Slum housing and severe working conditions added to Belfast's growing and 'unenviable reputation for sectarian segregation and rancour' during this century. 'Such problems were frequently ignored by many of Belfast's citizens who were dazzled by the spectacular growth of their town.' (6) One such citizen was James Owen Hannay.

We use to boast and I daresay still do boast, that we possessed the largest ship-building yard, the largest spinning mill, the largest tobacco factory, and the largest rope walk in the United Kingdom, perhaps even in the world.  
(7)

Hannay was born in Belfast in 1865. He was the oldest son of the Rev. Robert Hannay, rector of St. Anne's parish, and later Vicar of Belfast, and Emily, daughter of Rev. William Wynne, rector of Moira. The Hannays were of Scottish origin, dating back as far as 1296 in 'The Ragman's Roll'. One of the family, Patrick Hannay, gained some reputation as a minor Caroline poet. (8) The Wynne family was one of the most distinguished in the country. They were of Welsh origin and settled in Hazlewood, Co. Sligo in the aftermath of the Cromwellian clearances. (9)

Hannay, in his autobiography, published in 1934, looked back at the bustling city into which he was born and thought Belfast's self-confidence was justifiable. He saw its citizens walking the streets with purpose and eager swiftness. To him its fierce energy and pride was

almost tangible. His share of this energy and pride that his native city bequeathed upon him is evident. He himself felt that the characteristic pride of Belfast saved him all his life from

...what is the fashion to call an inferiority complex. No citizen of Belfast, no one who has breathed from his birth the atmosphere of the city, can ever feel himself uncomfortably inferior to anyone else in the world. (10)

His childhood was spent to a great degree in the only public library in Belfast, in the old Linen Hall. The library had its origin in the Belfast reading society, and was established in 1788. Although it was what he called a 'rather poor affair' as a library, he recalled with pleasure the many hours he spent there reading the works of 'Swinbourne, and Morris' *Earthly Paradise*'.

(11) It was a source of wonder to him that no one else seemed to want to read these works, and even more so, who in Belfast had been willing to spend money on these books. His father was one such person subscribing one guinea yearly. (12) It was he who was responsible for encouraging Hannay's love of literature, especially for the work of Sir Walter Scott. He remembered 'the excited delight of the days on which my father brought home with him the latest numbers of *Macmillan, Cornhill, and Blackwood*'.

In this way, through my father's literary tastes, my home in Belfast was better and more enlightened than, I think, that of most other boys in my position in that city. (13)



Not all of Hannay's boyhood was spent in literary pursuits. He and his sister Agnes, and brothers, Robert and William, had as their constant companions a large family of cousins, children of his father's sister, Marion. In the summer they picnicked at Crawfordsburn, bathed at Clondeboye, and built tree forts. In winter they played a variety of games including acting out fairy tales and other stories. This was a concession for not being allowed to go to the theatre, which was highly disapproved of in Belfast when Hannay was a boy. Many regarded going to see a play as a serious sin.

(14) Hannay's father was more liberal minded than most of his fellow clergy, and never objected to his son attending the theatre, although he asked him to do so as unostentatiously as possible.

From the middle of the nineteenth century Belfast was growing, prospering, and this was reflected in the new buildings, the Town Hall in 1871, and the magnificent City Hall which was completed in 1905, Belfast having become a city in 1888. In character Belfast and its people had more in common with the industrial centres of England than with Irish towns. It saw itself as the Protestant capital of Ulster and looked towards Great Britain as a kindred spirit rather than towards Dublin.

We also believe, and I think with justice, that we walked about our streets with an air of purpose and eager swiftness, very different from the leisurely amble of Dublin people. (15)

During 'the very period when its economic growth was at its highest Belfast came to be characterised by recurrent communal rioting of a sectarian nature to a much greater extent than before'. (16) Riots were not new in Belfast. One of the first sectarian riots had taken place in 1813, after an Orange procession, resulting in two deaths. (17) Further riots took place in 1832, 1835, 1841, 1843 and 1852, increasing in intensity and duration. Rev. Thomas Drew, rector of Christ Church decided to preach an open air mission during the summer of 1857. Drew was a native of Dublin and had come to Belfast in 1833. He built up a large congregation, set up Sunday schools, and was active in relief work during the famine. Culturally, according to Budge and O'Leary, 'he was a philistine. He campaigned against the stage and drama as polluting the actors and weakening Protestantism'. (18) Increasingly his sermons were imbued with sentiments of anti-Catholicism. The Grand Lodge of the Orange Order met in his parochial hall in 1849, and in 1852 Drew himself was elected as a Grand Chaplain. During the summer of 1857, using the steps of the Albert Clock as his pulpit, Drew preached to the Protestants of Belfast.

'You possess your churches and your meeting-houses, and your churchyards only until popery has gained sufficient power to nail up the one and to rob you of the other'. (19)

Drew was not alone in his endeavours. Both Rev. Thomas McIlwaine, Church of Ireland, and Rev. Hugh Hanna, Presbyterian, also denounced the evils of popery during the summer of 1857. However it was Drew's sermon of July twelfth which is seen as the spark for the most violent riot that Belfast had yet seen. Boyd characterised it as a 'long fanatical tirade against the Catholic Church'. (20) Speeches of the following variety were commonplace,

'The Word of God makes all plain; puts to eternal shame the practices of persecutors, and stigmatises with enduring reprobation the arrogant pretences of Popes and the outrageous dogmata of their blood-stained religion'. (21)

That evening, rioting broke out and continued for ten days, and went on intermittently until the sixth of September. A Royal Commission held a public enquiry and established the proximate cause of the riots as Drew's inflammatory preaching, 'but a more fundamental cause was the persistent "incitement" occasioned to the Catholics by the Orange Order'. (22)

The year before Hannay was born, 1864, witnessed the worst riot yet. The immediate cause was the unveiling of a monument to Daniel O'Connell in Dublin early in August. Three days later, on the eighth of August, 'a crowd of about four thousand in Sandy Row burnt an effigy of O'Connell'. (23) During the following week 'prominent institutions' on each side were attacked and

a riot broke out lasting eighteen days, resulting in twelve deaths. (24)

One of Hannay's earliest memories was a lesson he received as a very small boy from Dr. Drew. He 'took me on his knee and taught me to say over and over again: "No Pope, no Priest, no surrender, Hurrah." ' (25)

There is no mention of either St. Anne's parish, or of Rev. Robert Hannay in the accounts of the riots. Hannay recalls that his maternal grandfather was an ardent Orangeman, but makes no mention of his father's political or religious views beyond an anecdote illustrating his father's and uncle's confusion with regard to the Franco-Prussian war.

They were both in full sympathy with the French and opposed to the Prussians. But they were uneasy and puzzled. France was a Roman Catholic country whereas Prussia was as Protestant as Belfast. It distressed and worried my father and uncle to find that their sympathy was with a nation which acknowledged the supremacy of the Pope and that they disliked a power which rejected it. (26)

It is significant that, in Hannay's autobiography *Pleasant places*, he does not mention the sectarian strife which convulsed the city before he was born and during his childhood. It is unlikely that he consciously omitted mention of the riots because they were part of daily, or rather annual life as they usually took place during the summer months. His honesty in his other writings makes it highly unlikely that he endeavoured to portray only what he was proud

of in his native city. Perhaps he was trying to indicate that sectarian trouble did not involve all Protestants, and that one could take pride in their religion and believe wholeheartedly without resorting to violence.

...our Protestantism was different in quality from anything of its kind which exists in England. We pronounced the word as if its third consonant was a D, thereby giving it an explosiveness and an obstinacy which no religion in England has possessed since the days of Cromwell's Ironsides. (27)

Throughout his life, especially at the end of his time in Westport, during the great war, and during the upheaval in Ireland from 1918 to 1921, he made it clear how he abhorred violence and intimidation. Also, one must take into consideration that he left Belfast at the age of nine to attend school in England, and that he spent most of each summer at his paternal grandfather's in north Co. Antrim, Runkerry. This was his father's birthplace. His grandfather was a Scot by birth and settled in Ireland due to marriage. Although Hannay did not remember him clearly, he did recall that he was a gentle man with a love for literature, which he passed on to his son and grandson. Unlike his maternal grandfather, William Wynne, his paternal grandfather James Hannay was 'without any enthusiasm either for religion or politics'. (28) His lack of enthusiasm for politics also seems to have been passed on to his son, but not to his grandson.

It was here that Hannay learned to swim and to sail, the latter becoming his beloved pastime. This rocky coastline was also the scene of his historical novel, *The Northern Iron*. It was here that he returned at every opportunity, and it was here that he wished to return

...when my time comes, to creep back to that storm-swept, treeless coast, and see again before the end the black cliffs and long wave-trampled strands. (29)

In 1874, at the age of nine, Hannay was enrolled as a pupil in Temple Grove, a preparatory school in the Thames valley in England. (30) The headmaster was Mr. O.C. Waterfield, the students held the popular belief that his real name was C.O. Waterfield, but that he had inverted his initials to avoid the nickname 'Cow', to which he was nonetheless subjected. He was according to Hannay 'one of the old breed of schoolmasters who believed wholeheartedly in the birch as an instrument of education'. (31)

Certainly Hannay seems to have had his fair share of birching, which he recollects, contrary to general opinion, did not result in personal humiliation but in heroic feelings. In later life this outlook was to stand him in good stead. As in other schools at the time, new boys were put under the guidance of one of the older boys for the first term. Hannay's guardian was Ronald McNeill, later Lord Cushenden, who was the

head boy of the school at the time. Hannay remembers at least one occasion when McNeill saved him from being bullied; the bully Hannay met years afterward as a Canon of an English Cathedral. (32) After McNeill left Temple Grove, there were only three Irish boys there;

Dermod O'Brien, Arthur Cane, and myself. We were fairly representative of our country. Dermod O'Brien had descended from the old Celtic aristocracy... Arthur Cane belonged to the Anglo-Irish settler class, the men who in time became *Hibernis Ipsis Hiberniores*. I came from the Protestant half-Scottish north. (33)

However different they may have been at home, in the midst of English boys they became friends, allies and fellow Irishmen. Hannay enjoyed his time at Temple Grove. He was active on the sports field, though games were unorganised, and rules were a matter of interpretation. His academic career he described as 'undistinguished'. He found his old school reports after his father's death, while sorting through papers. He believed his character was incisively summed up in the last of these reports with the comment, 'Hannay is incurably lazy'. (34)

After Temple Grove, Hannay was sent to Haileybury.

A boy's first few weeks at a public school are all mystery and confusion. He is like a swimmer tossed helplessly about on a stormy sea, thrown hither and thither with no volition of his own, and never knowing what is going to happen next. (35)

Life at Haileybury was hard. The school was built on a height and was always cold. Hannay used to take his

sponge to bed at night to prevent it freezing. The older boys prevented the younger or weaker boys from entering the form room where there was a fire. The result was that Hannay spent most of his first year outside, walking around the quadrangle with others in the same situation. Over a period of time he settled down, and his early love of literature was encouraged by his housemaster, the Rev. F.B. Butter, who, according to Hannay was a great Shakespearian, and a lover of the older English poets. Hannay credits Butter's influence with the recognition of English literature as a serious subject for study at Haileybury.

Schools like Haileybury have been criticised in writings like Eimar O'Duffy's *The Wasted Island*

To Ashbury College, a boy was a mass of crude metal to be fused in the flame of her tradition, cast in the mould of her curriculum, and finally exported to Oxford for the finishing touches. Her duty as she conceived it was to prepare her children's souls for heaven and the rest of them for governing the British Empire. (36)

Hannay would have agreed with some of these criticisms. The curriculum was narrow in outlook. English literature struggled for recognition as a worthy subject, and the teaching of mathematics was considered unimportant in comparison to the classics which took precedence over all other subjects. Hannay had to take extra tuition in mathematics in order to matriculate. Therefore he returned to Belfast in 1881 to attend the



newly rebuilt Belfast Academy. Despite winning a prize for a classical poem his mathematical skills remained weak. He was then sent to the Methodist College, in 1882, where he experienced co-education for the first time, an experience that he did not relish owing to the fact that a daughter of one of the professors constantly outshone him in class. (37) It was also at this time that he became acquainted with the sons of Rev. H.H. Wright, one of whom later became Sir Almoth Wright, and a very close friend of Hannay's when he lived in Mells, Somerset from 1924-34. Another son, Ernest was also a close friend of Hannay's and they entered college together.

Instead of being exported to Oxford at the end of his time at Haileybury, tradition, and more importantly, financial considerations, settled his choice of college, Trinity College, Dublin. His father had been educated there, as were his direct ancestors on the Wynne side of the family. On entering Trinity, in 1883, as a divinity student, Hannay paid his first visit to the College library where he felt humbled by 'the feeling of immensity of human learning inspired by this vast collection of books'. (38) Humbled as he was, his pride was aroused.

The roll of the last Irish Parliament is exhibited, framed and hung on a wall. I was able to distinguish the signature of my great-grandfather and to reflect that he had not been bribed to betray his country. (39)

It was at this time that his father introduced him to Canon Wynne, then the rector of St. Matthias' parish, Dublin, and afterwards Bishop of Killaloe. Canon Wynne held spiritual classes every week during college terms in his own house. The divinity students were given tea and afterward a lecture on the spiritual life and work of ministers. This work was afterwards recognised by the University and Canon Wynne was elected to the newly founded chair of Pastoral Theology. Hannay was greatly drawn to Canon Wynne's lectures. One reason was that he had fallen 'deeply in love' with Adelaide, or as she was called, Ada, Canon Wynne's eldest daughter. However it was some time before she returned his attention. Dr. Salmon, Regius Professor of Divinity, later Provost, deeply influenced Hannay. He admired Salmon's intellectual and academic abilities, and acquired from him 'a habit...of trying to find out the actual meaning of slogans round which our tribes rally', which in later years would lead to the publication of a small volume called *The wisdom of the desert*. (40)

The Divinity school had been reconstructed in 1833 and 'a systematic course of two years study was laid down for all students of theology'. 'Rules of attendance and answering' for students became stricter. In 1879 an attempt was made to place the Divinity School under the control of the Grand Synod of the Church of Ireland but

this was unsuccessful. (41) Dr. J.E.L. Oulton, Regius Professor of Divinity, appointed in 1935, wrote

The latter half of the nineteenth century and the early years of the twentieth saw the Golden Age of the Divinity School. In the period previous to this, Ussher indeed stood out as a star of the first magnitude; but never had there been in the earlier days such a galaxy of talent as was manifested from 1866, the date of Salmon's appointment as Regius Professor, onwards. (42)

Hannay was a typical undergraduate in many ways. In 1892, according to R.B. McDowell and D.A. Webb, sixteen per cent of the students in Trinity were born in Great Britain, and,

The students educated in Britain were half as many again as those born there, indicating an increasing tendency for Irish boys to be sent to English public schools, a tendency almost as strongly marked among Catholics as among Protestants. In 1892 roughly one student in eight had been to an English public school. No longer as in 1861, did Marlborough and Cheltenham have a big lead over the others, Clifton, Rossall, and Haileybury were now as popular....The professional class accounted by now for a clear majority of the students. Twenty one per cent were the sons of clergymen. (43)

The routine of life was similar to that in English universities.

...morning chapel, lectures, rowing, or football, or cricket, the debates in the societies, Hall, and night roll,....after Hall comes in a friend's rooms the glorious College hour of expansion, of wit and wisdom, tale and jest, the hour of coffee and tobacco and disdain of the anxious world. (44)

Students were in general 'contented and conformist'. However, the ethos of an English public school education was apparent.

The working philosophy...comprised a set of values in which imperialism and racial pride went hand in hand with a strong sense of duty, an insistence on courage, a respect for efficiency, a reverence for law, and a tenderness for the weak. (45)

Hannay took his degree in 1887 and achieved a junior moderatorship, which corresponded to a second degree at Oxford. His degree subject was modern literature, though he also attended lectures in classics, logics, ethics, history, and political science before settling on modern literature. His tutor was Dr. Traill, later Provost, who was also a close friend of his father's, and the head of an old Co. Antrim family. It was from the Traill family that Hannay's grandfather had rented Ballylough, the house where his father was brought up. As an undergraduate, Hannay sometimes stayed with Dr. Traill, who had then taken possession of Ballylough. Traill had a strong objection to tobacco as Hannay found out when he first went to stay with him. Traill banished him to a shed at the end of the garden to smoke and forbade him to go anywhere near the house with his pipe. (46) As a college tutor, Hannay recalled, he had a reputation for getting his students out of trouble.

If you were his pupil he took your side as a matter of course, whatever the rights and wrongs may have been, and fought for you with the utmost vigour. This I think, was more value to me on my way through college than any advice. (47)

Hannay commented on Traill's election as Provost in 1904.

His appointment as Provost in succession to Dr Salmon was looked upon at the time as a piece of jobbery, of which the Prime Minister had no reason to be proud. (48)

He did not allude to Traill's attempt to buy the Provostship in 1880, which was only three years before he entered Trinity. (49) Hannay described him as 'a man of great force of character and had the north of Ireland characteristic of never knowing he was beaten'. (50) However, when Traill did become Provost in 1904, he proved a worthy successor to Dr. Salmon.

As I have already pointed out, Hannay had entered Trinity as a divinity student. He was interested in his work and was anxious to be 'worthy of the office in the Church to which I aspired'; (51) but there was a great deal of the work in Divinity School in which he was not only disinterested, but antagonistic towards. He felt disinclined to be in the company of his fellow students, was bored by their conversation, and stayed rather aloof from them, preferring to spend his leisure hours among friends who were studying law or medicine, playing cards for moderate stakes.

The classes for the divinity students continued in Canon Wynne's home. The lectures often left Hannay feeling unworthy to carry out the work of a Minister. Canon Wynne set high standards, and impressed them upon

his students. Hannay overcame his many doubts as to his suitability for the life of a clergyman, and had little trouble with his ordination examinations. He was ordained deacon in Christ Church Cathedral, Dublin, by Archbishop Plunkett. Plunkett and Hannay's father had been close friends when the revision of the Irish Prayer Book was being carried out.

In 1885, Hannay had been offered a curacy in a London parish by a Canon Fleming. At the time he was only twenty; the minimum age of ordination was twenty three. Upon being ordained deacon, Hannay had envisioned his future work among 'people whom I knew and liked: the hard northern working man'. (52) He had planned to return to Belfast, or to one of the large Ulster towns. When Canon J.J. Robinson, who had just become rector of Delgany, Co. Wicklow, in 1888, (53) offered him a curacy, one reason sufficed him to accept. That reason was Miss Adelaide Wynne. Since Hannay had entered Trinity and had started to attend lectures in Canon Wynne's home, he had fallen in love with Ada. The Delgany curacy was totally different from the future he had planned. His work would be rural, among the southern Irish, and largely among the upper classes. When the position was offered to him, Hannay was staying with his cousin, Lily Wilson, in Belfast. Her husband Walter was a partner in the shipbuilding firm of Harland and Wolff. They knew little about church

affairs and were not in a position to advise him. His parent's were abroad. After a short period of consideration he accepted the offer; 'the motive was a desire to keep in touch with Ada Wynne'. (54) If he went to Delgany he would see her often as the Wynne family had a summer house in Greystones which was nearby. There was also the close connection between Canon Robinson who had been a curate in Canon Wynne's parish in Dublin, and a friendship between Ada and Mrs Robinson. He recalled the first interview with Canon Robinson. 'I think he was nearly as nervous as I was. I was his first curate'. (55) Robinson later told him, '...a first curate, like a first wife, is more to a man than any who may come afterwards'. (56)

Hannay had been a lover of tobacco since his first days in college but was also conscious of the fact that smoking was frowned upon by many of the clergy. His father, when ordained, had had to give up his pipe, the prejudice was so strong. Hannay himself had often heard the maxim 'Smoking leads to billiards and billiards leads to beer' and reflected that beyond beer, he supposed there were no further depths. On entering Canon Robinson's study on the occasion of their first interview, he scanned the room for any tell-tale signs of a smoker but found none. He later discovered that Canon Robinson had hidden all signs that he too smoked for fear of shocking his new curate! (57)

Hannay described Delgany as a 'very charming village, much more like an English village than an Irish one'. (58) The heads of society were Mr. and Mrs Peter La Touche, of Belleview. At this time they were both quite elderly. The family of La Touche had been associated with Delgany since the mid eighteenth century. David Dignes La Touche had arrived, a Huguenot, in Ireland in 1697. In 1701 he was listed as a member of the Weaver's Guild in Dublin. With another Huguenot, whose name is unknown, he set up a small silk, poplin, and cambric manufacturing business in the Liberties. This business flourished. David was a trusted friend among his fellow Huguenots. When travelling they often left valuables with him, and eventually a banking business was born. This also flourished and in 1716, with Nathaniel Kane as a partner, the Kane and La Touche bank was officially established. During the 1720s and 1730s David La Touche bought up a great deal of land around St. Stephen's Green. By 1735 his eldest son, David II, was made a junior partner in the bank. In turn his three sons, David III, John and Peter took over the running of the family business. They all bought land as their father and grandfather had done, in Dublin, Carlow, Kildare, Leitrim, Tipperary, and Wicklow. It was in the latter county that David III built Bellevue, at an estimated cost of thirty thousand pounds. His sons held seats in the Irish parliament, one of which



was Peter, who was responsible for building the church at Delgany in 1789. (59) It was described by a contemporary as a

...light gothic structure, one hundred and two feet long by thirty four broad, with a square steeple, ninety feet high in which there is a good bell and a clock. (60)

Peter lived into his ninety fifth year, dying in 1828. His nephew, also called Peter, only survived for two years more, and died in 1830. It was his son, Peter David, who still occupied Bellevue when Hannay arrived as the new curate in Delgany. (61) Years later, taking up the position of rector of Carnalway, in 1918, Hannay became acquainted with another branch of the same family.

Other members of Delgany society whom Hannay met were Lady Butler, the artist, and T.W. Rolleston, with whom Hannay was to become close friends, especially during Hannay's involvement in the Gaelic League. Rolleston was interested in the beginning of the literary revival in Ireland and it was he who introduced Hannay to Yeat's poetry, by giving him a gift of *The Wanderings of Oisín*, and also by leading him to read the work of Standish O'Grady. In Rolleston's biography, *Portrait of an Irishman*, written by his son, C.H. Rolleston, there is a reproduction of a letter written by Hannay in the late nineteen thirties concerning Rolleston's time in Delgany.

I went there as a curate in 1888 and found him resident in a small house where I often visited him. A great friend of his was Alfred de Burgh, and they used to spend many evenings together reading Greek plays....It was at this time that he presented me with a copy of the first book of verse that Yeats had ever published. (62)

Hannay and Canon Robinson had become close friends, a friendship which 'remained unbroken up to the end of his life, in spite of a difference of opinion so serious as to lead to my leaving Delgany'. (63) What this difference of opinion was Hannay did not say. Both had many tastes in common. Canon Robinson was very well read, especially in poetry and modern literature, and evenings were spent discussing literature, recitations, and capping quotations. The dining room of the rectory was the venue for boxing matches between the two, and though Canon Robinson was older, it seems that he was the better of the two. They also decided to write a novel in collaboration, and many nights were filled constructing a plot, and deciding on characters; nothing ever came of this but perhaps it may have kindled an interest of Hannay's which would find expression later on. Mrs Robinson, Hannay considered, was unlike her husband in almost every respect. She had no fondness for literature and tended to approach life in a logical way 'as if life were a series of algebraic problems'. (64) A dominating personality, she and Hannay got on quite well but again he refers, when

describing her in *Pleasant places*, to the cause of his departure from Delgany.

The only time when there was any real misunderstanding between us was at the end of my time in Delgany when she thought - quite mistakenly - that I had been disloyal to her husband. (65)

Apart from his duties as curate, Hannay formed a cricket club in the village which he described as 'the only useful thing I did outside of my proper work'.

(66) Mr. W.R. La Touche, the then occupier of Bellevue, allowed part of a field belonging to the estate, known as the 'shop field' to be used as the cricket pitch. His original idea was that the local village boys and young men would play, and was pleasantly surprised by the numbers of people who joined the club. One of these was Fr. Hurley, the local Catholic curate. Fr. Hurley was to be one of the few priests that later supported Parnell, and, as Hannay later recalled, for this 'act of disloyalty to the Bishops, my friend was punished with a persistent vindictiveness'. (67) What this punishment was Hannay did not say. Another member was the rector of the neighbouring parish, Rev. Waller, later Dean of Kildare. Two of the younger members were Erskine Childers, then a schoolboy, and his cousin, Robert Barton. Of Childers' later life, Hannay commented,

It may be better to die finely for a cause, even a doubtful one, than to live on comfortably

until one has learned to sneer at all causes.  
(68)

It seems that Hannay was here referring to his own experience of life also.

The fortunes of the cricket club were written up in the parish magazine. During one season, 'Delgany's First XI, wearing scarlet caps, won the Challenge Cup, beating Shillelagh in the finals'. When those in Delgany learned the result they were 'determined to give the visitors a welcome home,...The Delgany Fife and Drum Band met the cricketers at Greystones Station...torches blazed, squibs were let off, and bonfires lit on Stylebawn Hill. (69)

The cup was displayed prominently in the village, in Newel's window, an establishment that later became The Wicklow Arms. After another tournament the magazine reported that

Wilgar strikes terror into the hearts of opponents by his deadly bowling...Among the juniors, Hugh McLindon gives every promise for developing into a very useful member of the club. The cup still belongs to us and no club challenged our claim so we hold it for another year. (70)

The cup referred to was the Boscawen Cup which the Delgany Club held for five years. In May of the following year, 1890, it was reported in *The Wicklow Newsletter* that,

The Greystones cricket club have started the season with a series of practice matches, under the presidency of the Rev. J.O. Hannay, and have

already made several fixtures with leading clubs. (71)

In September of 1889 Hannay was ordained by the Archbishop of Dublin, in the parish church in Delgany.

For priest's orders the only candidate was the Rev. James Owen Hannay, B.A. T.C.D., curate of Delgany, who will remain in the parish, where he has in the short time of his ministry, rendered himself deservedly popular. (72)

In the same year, 1889, Hannay and Ada Wynne were married, an event which brought him 'the greatest happiness of my life'. (73) They spent their honeymoon in London, which was to them a 'wild adventure'. Night after night they attended the theatre. Ada had previously been in a theatre only once, Hannay himself, many times, but, he confessed 'never without a haunting sense of wrongdoing'. (74) To balance this indulgence they also went to hear sermons from famous preachers, not confining themselves to those of the Church of England. Hannay admits that it was to gratify his taste for sermons, one that Ada did not share. (75) They lived after their marriage in a little cottage called 'Elsinore'

...with rooms so small that when I stood up in the middle of the dining room, I could touch the walls on each side of me with my outstretched hands. (76)

His salary as curate was one hundred and fifty pounds per annum. He described themselves as being very poor, but with the advantage of years, looking back, wondering why his father-in-law had ever consented to

the match, he came to the conclusion that 'happiness depended very little on the abundance of things we possess'. (77) However, they discovered after a short period of married life that money, or the lack of it, caused problems. One such problem was a coal bill, which amounted to nearly ten pounds, which they found themselves unable to pay. They decided, somewhat naïvely, that Hannay should write a story, get it published, and pay the bill with the proceeds. This he did, writing a short story based on his experiences in the parish. *Temple Bar* published it and he was paid the money that he needed. Hannay himself was the first to admit that in ninety nine cases in a hundred, this plan would not work, and by the time he had received his earnings, they had managed to pay the bill. However, a firm of London publishers, the identity of which remain unknown, read his story and asked Hannay to write a novel for them. He was at first greatly pleased and excited, and commenced work on the opening chapters. After a week or so, Ada put the point to him that it was a choice between the two professions. He could not devote himself entirely to the work of the Church while attempting to write novels. He agreed and the idea was dropped. It wasn't for another fifteen or sixteen years that it was taken up again. The imaginary novel that he and Canon Robinson had collaborated on, and his early and relatively easy success in getting his story

published , in addition to a firm of publishers inviting him to write a novel for them, are all clear indications that the author in him would eventually emerge.

Meanwhile, his work occupied his mind. He became involved in the local temperance society. Canon Robinson was a diocesan secretary of the Church of Ireland Temperance Society

One of the most successful meetings in connection with the Church of Ireland Temperance Society was held in Delgany school-house on Monday evening last....The ten, five, and one year medals were then given to those entitled to them....Mr. Hannay's address was an able and telling one. the effect of it was evident from the number of adults who remained behind and joined the movement. (78)

This is the only trace that I have been able to find of the Delgany branch of the movement with the exception of annual notices of offertories and money collected for the society in the *Annual Reports of the Church of Ireland Temperance Society*, in 1889-91. These offertories and collections usually amounted to £3. Hannay is not mentioned in these reports. (79)

However, another church matter was causing great disquiet among the clergy and people of Co. Wicklow, and throughout the country. This was the practice of street preaching. Rev. Richard Hallows, rector of Arklow, 'claimed it as his inalienable right to preach the Gospel of Christ in the public thoroughfares' of Arklow. (80) This caused public uproar. Mr Balfour

...announced in parliament that some two hundred policemen and officers were kept away from worship every Sunday in order to protect Mr. Hallowes....Arklow was changed from a peaceful town into an area of strife and tumult. But Mr. Hallowes conscientiously persisted, believing that he was contending for a sacred principle. At the beginning of his evangelistic campaign some of his leading parishoners held aloof and expressed disapproval; but the guileless heroism of the preacher, and the personal injuries which he received, served in time to secure the sympathy of all the churchmen in the district, and to soften the antagonism of Roman Catholics. (81)

The parish of Delgany was experiencing its own trouble towards the end of 1891. There was a convalescent Home in the parish for destitute and orphaned children. Canon Robinson, his wife and 'other ladies' (82) were the principal parties in the management of the Home. In November 1891, a headline was printed in the *Wicklow Newsletter*, 'Alleged Child Abduction at Delgany', concerning a case that had been brought before the petty sessions at Newtown. The case involved a child named Francis Christian, born in 1884, the daughter of a charwoman, 'of alleged doubtful character, stated to be the widow of a labourer who died in 1885'. The child had been given by her step-sister, Eliza Cook, into the care of Miss White, the superintendent of the Prison-gate Mission, in Dublin. Miss White, in turn, gave the child to one of the honorary secretaries of the Delgany Home, a Mrs Eustace, confident that it would 'be taken care of in a matter suited to its tender years'. (84)



After a year and four months, without any prior notice, two women arrived in Delgany, one of whom claimed to be the child's mother, and demanded custody of the little girl. It appeared that this woman, and the local Roman Catholic curate, Fr. Hurley, had been in communication over the matter. Canon Robinson, the manager of the Home, received a telegraph from Mrs Eustace instructing him not to give up the child. It was stated in the court that the

...Rev. Fr. Hurley and the two women rescued the child and removed it from the place. A car was in waiting and the child was driven off in the direction of Greystones. Canon Robinson who was informed of it, requested the assistance of a constable, and went in pursuit and came up with the party at Killincarrick. He made a formal demand for the child, but it was not given up and the Rev. Fr. Hurley said he would be responsible for the child. They then drove off to Greystones, with the intention of catching the train there, and at Greystones station the constable arrested the woman. (85)

The woman Jane Christian, aged forty-five years, was charged with having 'feloniously stolen her child, Fanny Christian, from the Rev. Canon Robinson's Home in Delgany.' (86) During the case Canon Robinson under cross examination made the following statement.

I have a Home at Delgany for children. It is established for some time over a year and it is supported by voluntary contributions. There are, I think, about twenty four children in it. It is a Protestant institution and the children are brought up as Protestants. (87)

He was then asked;

Are any inquiries made as to the faith of the children who are taken into the institution?  
No.

The child is received and brought up as a Protestant whether the parents were Protestant or not ?

Yes.

When the child is brought in do you inquire whether the parents of the child are Catholics ?

No.

Whether the child has been baptised a Catholic ?

No (88)

Canon Robinson explained that the Home was chiefly for delicate children who were sent to Delgany for a change of air from Dublin hospitals and other institutions. He denied that it was a proselytising home although the barrister for Mrs Christian, tried hard to prove that it was. The case was dismissed, the presiding magistrate, Dr. Truell, stating that it was not a case to be considered by the magistrates. The child was taken back to the Home in Delgany. The following week, in the Four Courts, Mrs Christian's barrister, Mr. Redmond, moved for a conditional order for a writ of *Habeas corpus*, directed to the managers of the Home to hand over the child, Francis Christian, aged eight years. The child's mother, in an affidavit, alleged that the child was a Roman Catholic, and was being detained against her will. There was a further affidavit to the same effect by Fr. Hurley. The court ordered that the custody of the child be returned to the mother, but it exempted Canon Robinson from paying any costs. (89)

The *Wicklow Newsletter* expressed the opinion that

Had the course been adopted which common courtesy would have suggested, of making an

application for the custody of the child by a person whose right was accredited, it would have been given up as a matter of course; but in that case, no clamour could have been raised, and no opportunity afforded for denouncing the institution as a proselytizing establishment.  
(90)

The Home was not proved to be a proselytizing institution, though this seems to have been the belief of Fr. Hurley. The majority of the children, according to the testimony of Canon Robinson, were Protestants, though he couldn't say how many that was, or how many were of other religions, including Roman Catholics. Replying to the question,

But a child of Catholic parents, baptised as a Catholic, brought up as a Catholic, is, the moment he enters your Home, treated as a Protestant ?

Canon Robinson said

If a child is sent to me it must be brought up according to the formulas of the Protestant Church. (91)

There was an end to the matter when the Judge of the Superior Courts ordered that custody be given to the mother of the child, and there were no further accusations of proselytism made against Canon Robinson. The significance of this incident lies in its character and timing. It took place at the end of 1891, close to the time as Hannay made up his mind to leave Delgany. In all the reports dealing with the incident there is no mention of either Hannay, or Ada. This is surprising. As curate of the parish, Hannay would have

been likely to have taken part in the work involved. Moreso Ada, as it seems that many of the local ladies, including Mrs Robinson, were involved. As wife of the curate, Ada would have been expected to help out. Then there is the question of the friendship between Hannay and Fr. Hurley. Even if Hannay had remained neutral in the controversy, there would have been a strain on relations between him and Canon Robinson, and between him and Fr. Hurley. It is also surprising that, while he alluded to a 'difference of opinion' between himself and Canon Robinson, and that Mrs Robinson felt that Hannay had betrayed her husband, there is no mention whatsoever of this case in Hannay's autobiography. It seems too important an incident to have been forgotten, or excluded. Judith Flannery, in her work on the history of Delgany, concluded that,

In 1892 there was, according to Rev. J. Hannay, 'some trouble in the parish' of which Canon Robinson and he had different views, and he accepted the offer of an incumbency in Westport. The trouble was not mentioned in the parish magazine but it did refer to his 'somewhat hurried departure.' It may have had something to do with his nationalistic outlook for during his time in Delgany Hannay had become very involved with the pre-Gaelic League movement. (92)

Flannery bases this supposed involvement solely on his friendship with Rolleston. If Hannay had a nationalistic outlook at this time there is no evidence for it. In his autobiography, he wrote that he was in Westport for many years before he became aware of or involved in

anything to do with the Gaelic League or admitting that he had a nationalistic outlook. (93)

Hannay was not appointed as rector of Westport until May of 1892. It is reasonable to surmise that for an important position such as this, he would have indicated his interest a few months previously, no later than March. His departure was unlikely to have been hurried. It is more probable that he did not announce his departure until shortly before he left. He would also have had to inform Canon Robinson of his intentions to give him time to find another curate.

This suggests that the trouble in the parish to which he referred took place very early in the new year or at the end of the old one. There is no other evidence of any kind of trouble or controversy in the parish for 1892 so it seems more than likely that the reason for Hannay deciding to leave Delgany had to do with the controversy over the Home or Canon Robinson's actions regarding the case. Whatever the reason for the disagreement, according to Hannay, he and Canon Robinson remained friends. (94) In 1904, 1905, and 1911, he received letters from him; it is possible that he received others that did not survive. (95) Other considerations would have also played a part. Hannay had been a curate in Delgany for over three years. The fact that he now had a family would have been another reason to consider a position such as that in Westport.

Hannay, Ada, and their first son, Robert, born 9 July, 1890, moved to Westport during the summer of 1892, there to start a new chapter of their lives which was to bring many changes and was to span the next twenty one years. (96)

CHAPTER TWO

Rector of Westport - Secret author

1892 - 1905

The *Irish Ecclesiastical Gazette* in May 1892 reported that the incumbency of Westport had been filled.

The Board of nomination for the parish of Westport met on Friday last in the council office, Tuam. There were present - The Bishop of Tuam in the chair; also the Dean, the Archdeacon, Lord John Browne, W. Livingstone, Esq., R. Powell, Esq., The vacancy was filled by the appointment of Rev. James Owen Hannay, curate of Delgany, diocese of Glendalough. (1)

Westport in 1892 was a large parish. It extended seventeen miles from east to west, and six from north to south. Over ninety five percent of those who lived in the province of Connaught were Roman Catholic. (2) According to the 1901 Census Returns, the parish of Westport was made up of Aghagower, Kilmeena, and Oughaval. Of the total population listed for these three areas, just under ninety-five per cent were Catholic, just under five per cent Protestant. (3) Hannay's congregation never exceeded six hundred in number, and during later years declined considerably. The town of Westport itself, where the rectory was situated, was almost in the middle of the parish. It was at this time the terminus station of the Irish Midland Railway. The service to Dublin was slow and limited, adding to the sense of isolation that Hannay and Ada experienced when they moved to Mayo. Both were used to large towns, or at least easy access to them. Hannay described Mayo as 'the most desolate county in the whole of Ireland'. The town itself was an



attractive one and unusual, Hannay felt, in that it was 'planned with a certain feeling for dignity and beauty'. (4)

Originally, the town had grown up around the quay. During the early 1770s, the linen industry had been introduced to the small town and became the foundation for its later prosperity. By the next decade

Westport was a well established and growing town with a small port...as yet not fully developed, its market for agricultural produce, and its linen market. The only church at this date was the Church of Ireland. (5)

After the Act of Union in 1800, the new Marquess of Sligo, John Denis Browne, third Earl of Altramount, undertook an ambitious project of town planning which continued the work begun by his ancestor of the same name, John Browne, during the 1750s and 1760s. The new work included

...the Malls, a quarter mile of tree lined boulevards flanking the embanked Carrowbeg River, with two cascades, crossed by three stone-arched bridges, the whole flanked by public buildings, town houses and private dwellings with a unifying Georgian character. (6)

By the time that the Hannays moved to Mayo, many attempts were being made to improve the position of the people there. The famine and the land wars had devastating effects on the whole province of Connaught. Mayo was an area in which the government tried to concentrate relief measures. The Congested Districts Board in particular carried out a great deal of work

around Westport, and some of the islands in the harbour, for example Clare Island. Michael Davitt founded the Land League in Mayo in 1879, and it was in Westport that Parnell made his famous statement to his listeners on keeping a grip on their homesteads. William O'Brien, MP, lived just outside Westport, and it was here that he founded the United Irish League in 1899.

In the early 1900s Westport was recognised as one of the foremost industrial towns in Ireland as well as being a major trading town....Westport harbour was also a very busy port with ships arriving regularly carrying timber, grain and other items for local businesses...while exporting cattle and other goods for countries such as Scotland, England and other centres. (7)

In the centre of the town, the Roman Catholic church stood, a building that Hannay considered as a 'singularly ugly' one. The original carving over the door was a piece from the Douay translation of the Bible which read 'This is an awful place. This is none other than the house of God.' He pointed out that at some point the first part of the inscription had been chiselled away, having been deemed unsuitable. (8) The Church of Ireland was situated north of the central street. This was quite a recent building, Hannay believed it to be the last church erected by the ecclesiastical commissioners before disestablishment. Apart from the graceful spire and the mural decorations erected by the Sligo family. he considered the church

as largely uninteresting and unattractive. However some disagreed with him on this point.

The church there [Westport] in which Canon Hannay officiated, is reckoned to be one of the most beautiful in all Ireland. It was built by public subscription...The design is a basilica, and the walls are faced in white marble upon which are carved in outline scenes from the life of Christ; these with its fine apse, its stained windows, its beautiful symmetry, make it a gem of architectural art.  
(9)

The rectory was a gracious Georgian house which dated from 1798, and it was here that Hannay, Ada, and their son Robert moved in 1892. Life in Westport was quite different from that in Delgany. Hannay himself, twenty seven, was quite young to be a rector, and 'responsible for a curate whom I was not fit to control'. (10) His clerical income barely amounted to four hundred per annum. (11)

Although the number of his congregation was never large, the distances he covered in ministering to them were. His parishoners were for the most part local gentry who attended services in the town. He had three other churches to look after, the number later increasing to four. Some of these were in outlying districts, and he also had to minister to some parishoners who lived on various islands around the harbour. Each Sunday, either Hannay or his curate, had to travel around twenty miles in all. At first Hannay travelled on horseback, but at the first opportunity he

purchased a bicycle, a mode of transport that for a while many of his congregation looked askance at. However, they eventually decided that it didn't constitute a sin of Sabbath-breaking. In addition to his clerical duties in the parish, he was also the chaplain of the Westport workhouse, and served on its board, for which he was paid twelve pounds per year.

(12) He was a school manager, and served with the Roman Catholic priest on numerous relief committees. These committees were all much the same, they included Hannay, his Catholic counterpart, and

...a few members of Boards of Guardians, and such bodies, most of them with axes of their own to grind. This meant that the parish priest and I had to do the work. (13)

Hannay was also the chairman of the Protestant orphan society in Westport. The previous rector, Rev. S. Hemphill, had been the chairman before him. The minute book of the society usually had eight to ten orphans listed. The meetings, held monthly, usually consisted of a report on each orphan, with occasionally a request for extra funds. Each child received one pound, two shillings, and sixpence every three months, towards clothing and nursing. When an orphan reached the age of fourteen or fifteen they were placed in service, or as apprentices. Although they no longer received direct aid from the society, it continued to keep a check on their progress. Hannay first filled the role of

chairman on 8 October 1892, and continued to do so until at least 1895. There are no further records of the society, but it is reasonable to assume that he continued to exercise the functions of the office until his departure from Westport in 1913. (14)

While still in Delgany Hannay had developed an interest in the teachings of Dr. Moule, Bishop of Durham, (15) which suggested to him that there were two types of Christian life. There was the ordinary normal life of the man who did his duty, said his prayers, and believed the main articles of the Christian faith. It was the other type of life which intrigued Hannay. This was as he phrased it himself

...a kind of inner circle which aimed at a higher life, more spiritual, more devoted, not without a slight contempt for the ordinary Christian life. (16)

In Delgany, in the evenings he and Ada had begun to study this idea, reading such books as *Holy living*, by Jeremy Taylor, *Serious call*, by Bishops Hall and Law, and progressed to *Imitatio Christi*. When they moved to Westport in 1892, they continued their reading, which led them progressively back to the origins of Christian monasticism. Little had been written about the early Christian hermits, in the English language, with the exception of the works of Dom Cuthbert Butler, O.S.B. and the then Bishop of Oxford, Dr. Paget, the latter having written a sermon which dealt with some aspects

of the seven deadly sins listed by the hermits. These also formed part of Hannay's area of study, tracing them down through medieval times. In order to further their study, Ada and Hannay were obliged to read the works of the early fathers of the Church, his knowledge of Greek aided them in this pursuit. Dom Cuthbert Butler corresponded with Hannay on this subject, the latter expressed his gratitude to Butler in *Pleasant places*. (17)

I was completely isolated, living so far even from my own university that I could scarcely ever make use of its library, and I was quite out of touch with men who were doing scholarly work. (18)

He and Ada also started to tackle the writings of German theologians such as Otto Zöckler, and Harnack, in order to trace the line of thought of those who had accepted the monastic life, and how their views differed from those of the ordinary Christians who had remained in the world. Instead of trying to grasp the language by learning the grammar and completing simple exercises, they slowly but steadily worked their way through the German theologians with the help of a dictionary. Not surprisingly, their progress was quite slow, taking over ten years to complete.

Life in Westport was, then, quite a full one; a large parish with five churches, schools to inspect, relief committees, the orphan's society, study in the evenings, and a growing family. However, Hannay, Ada,

and their children, Robert, Theodosia, Althea, and later, Seamus, still found time to indulge their favourite pastime, sailing. At first they relied on Tom Rutledge, (19) a close friend of the family, to take them out in his boat, but in later years, when Hannay had published the first of his novels, they bought a boat of their own. In his autobiography, and in several of his novels, sailing figures prominently in long, prosaic passages.

We seize the dinghy, lift her stern and pull her down, splashing deliciously through tepid shallow waters. She floats at last. We climb on board and pole her out through the deepening water. We reach the boat. The jib is hoisted, moorings dropped, the main-sail boomed out to catch what little wind there is, heat-laden easterly wind. We slip slowly out into the bay, just stemming the flow of the tide. (20)

Not everyone they met shared their love of the sea. Hannay recalled one occasion, sailing in Killary Bay, which for wild beauty 'surpasses anything I have ever seen', though he felt that the Antrim coast had more grim majesty. He was aboard Tom Rutledge's boat, the *Phoenix*. Also aboard was Rutledge's employer, George Moore, who sat in the cabin and declared that mountains were 'nasty conceited things sticking up into the sky' and refused to come out. (21) Another sailing expedition Hannay made was with the fishermen of Achill Island, at night, in a curragh, an experience though exhilarating, was also terrifying.

In May of 1894 Hannay's father died at Dundrum, Co. Dublin, aged fifty nine. He had not resided in his parish in Belfast for some years 'owing to failing health and infirmities'. (22) In 1898, the *Belfast Newsletter* anniversary services were held in Trinity Church, Belfast. Hannay preached the sermon on this occasion.

The many friends of the Hannay family in Belfast will be pleased to hear that this young gentleman, who is the eldest son of the late Rev. Dr. Hannay, Vicar of Belfast, occupies a very distinguished place in the Church, being Rector of Westport. Like his father who was one of the most gifted preachers of his day, Rev. Mr Hannay is a deep thinker and an eloquent speaker. (23)

In 1895 Hannay received his M.A. from Trinity College, Dublin, for the research he was undertaking on Christian monasticism, and in 1898 he published his first work, a biography of his father-in-law called *The life of Frederick R. Wynne D.D., Bishop of Killaloe*. In his own opinion the publication of these memoirs by Hodder and Stoughton was undertaken on the strength of Bishop Wynne's name and reputation, rather than his own talent for writing.

It was Ada who suggested to Hannay that they should offer their research on Christian monasticism to Trinity College, Dublin, as a subject for the Donnellan lectures. In 1794 the College had received from Miss Anne Donnellan a bequest 'for the encouragement of religion, sound learning and good manners'. (24) It was



used to found an annual series of six lectures which, more or less, took the form of sermons, and were delivered on two consecutive Sundays in each term. The endowment provided payment for these lectures, with a further payment if the lectures were published. Hannay felt that their research was useful, as so little existed on the subject in the English language. Therefore, in 1900, under the title 'The spirit and origin of Christian monasticism', they submitted a synopsis of their work and awaited the outcome. Also at this time there was an appeal in the Church papers for a minister to go to the island of Tristan da Cunha to act as chaplain and schoolmaster. During his theological study Hannay had been greatly impressed with the example of the hermits, and discussed with his wife the possibility of giving up Westport to take up the post in Tristan da Cunha. After much discussion, and many misgivings on Ada's part they decided that the matter would be settled by the outcome of the Donnellan lectures. If they were offered to Hannay, they would stay in Westport. If not, they would go. Eventually notification arrived, informally through Dr. Gwynn, at first, then officially from J.P. Mahaffy. Dated November, twenty fourth, 1900, it informed Hannay that he had been appointed Donnellan lecturer for the year 1901-2. (25) All plans of journeying to Tristan da Cunha were forgotten as Hannay worked to prepare the

lectures. While in Dublin to deliver the lectures, he stayed with the Provost of the College, Dr. Salmon. Dr. John H. Bernard, afterwards Archbishop of Dublin, corresponded with Hannay on the question of publication. Academically, Hannay had no university reputation. In terms of subject matter, the interest of the general public would be slight. Bernard provided him with letters of introduction to publishing houses. (26) After many refusals by various houses, Methuen agreed to publish it; this was the beginning of a long relationship between that publishing house and Hannay. In February, 1903, Bernard wrote

I congratulate you very heartily on your book which will bring you reputation....I predicted after your first lecture, that your Donnellan course would be a credit to Trinity, and I am delighted to find that the prediction is going to be fulfilled. (27)

Reportedly the book was favourably reviewed by several German theological papers, but little notice was taken of it in Ireland. The *Daily Chronicle*, an English paper, also reviewed the book favourably.

Mr. Hannay has written a notable book which, with certain limitations, is by far the best work on the subject in the English language. He set himself a difficult task when he chose monasticism for the Donnellan lectures of 1901-02 but he has approached it with that wide reading, deep thought, and sympathy which are necessary for successfully treating a subject so alien from present-day audiences. (28)

In 1901 Hannay gave a lecture in England on 'Life and ways in the west of Ireland' which was reported on in

the *Leigh Chronicle*. Hannay's brother-in-law, Dr. F.E.

Wynne chaired the lecture.

The lecturer said the various English parties and governments had been tinkering with the best intentions at Ireland for the past century or so, and now they had left it nearly hopeless and altogether hapless. (29)

Hannay went on to point out that in his view,

Although the English had tried to do her good, Ireland had experienced a forty per cent drop in population in the preceeding years, and although the Irish were at war with each other on most questions, they were one in their dislike of English politicians. (30)

He continued, referring to periodical famines, and difficulties in distributing relief funds, to illustrate the miserable living conditions in the west of Ireland. Although he did point out many of the problems in the west, and in Ireland as a whole, overall his view of Irish society and politics had not yet matured. He took no account of the cultural regeneration which was coming into its own in the 1890s and early years of the twentieth century, although through Rolleston he had already come in contact with the literary side of it. He did not venture any suggested remedies for the problems that he did point out. In all, it was more a word-picture of daily life in the west. However, this is the first attempt Hannay makes to look at Ireland, and although he may not have seen the true complexities and contradictions of the subject he was dealing with, it marks the starting

point of his development as a shrewd and incisive commentator of contemporary Ireland.

It is not until nearly one year later that he again attempted to comment on Irish issues. In October of 1902, Standish O'Grady, editor of the *All Ireland Review* printed a letter from Hannay. The letter was concerned with a report of a committee of the Westport District Council. The committee was set up to look at the condition of congested districts in the area. The committee's report was published in the *All Ireland Review*. Hannay, in his letter reflected on what O'Grady had called the controversy of *Homo versus Bos* on Irish land issues. Although he approved of the language of the report, 'Fact, figures, and a certain calmness ought to be more effective than rhetoric, than threats', Hannay objected to some of the recommendations of the report. 'Is it really politic to banish if possible all large landholders?' he asked. A list of large graziers of the Union had been attached to the report. Three quarters of these, Hannay agreed, were 'simply worshippers of the great Egyptian god - the ox'. However the rest were farmers rather than graziers.

They rear cattle but they also till their land. They introduce new agricultural machinery, experiment in new methods and improve breeds....Ought these men be deprived of their land? (31)

Hannay went on to accuse the Congested Districts Board, and the United Irish League, of refusing to differentiate between the farmers and the graziers. 'We shall deprive ourselves of the services of the very men by whom improvements are effected.' He concluded his letter with a comment on the *All Ireland Review* itself. He was glad to see it

...is steadily gaining an influence in the land. More people read it, and therefore more people are learning to set a value upon thinking rather than shouting. (32)

Land and politics, Hannay admitted in his next comment on Irish affairs, were tempting subjects, but he wondered were they more important than the issue of education. The management of Irish schools, especially at a primary level, had been a source of discontent for some time.

As the nineteenth century drew to a close dissatisfaction with the content, nature and method of education provided by national schools was being voiced from many quarters. (33)

In 1897, the Belmore commission had recommended a wider curriculum range, more practical subjects and the abolition of payment by results. By 1900 the *Revised programme for national schools* was operational and it carried out many of the report's recommendations.

Thus the new century saw the introduction of a dramatically different programme and a modern approach to national school education. (34)

However, there were still many problems, including the restructuring of the inspectorate which was carried out

by W.J.M. Starkie, the resident commissioner of national education. Teachers welcomed the abolition of payment by results but felt that the new programme was impractical in its demands, given the circumstances under which most teachers had to work. By 1900, only fifty per cent of teachers had been trained. (35) Many teachers were still unhappy with salary arrangements, and at the number of dismissals at this time. Managers were angered by remarks that Starkie made in a speech in Belfast in 1902, in which he accused them of lack of interest in their responsibilities in relation to national schools.

His two major complaints were the incompetence of the national school managers and the deplorable situation of lay teachers in Catholic intermediate schools. (36)

During 1903, Mr F.H. Dale, an English inspector toured the country and in a report testified to the fact that many schools were in poor condition;

...he recommended the establishment of an education department and local education bodies with the power of striking rates to remedy these defects. (37)

Hannay dealt with all the above issues in his letter to the *All Ireland Review*, (36) the position, training, and payment of teachers, the questions of inspection and management, and examination. By the beginning of the twentieth century there were one thousand, three hundred and thirty schools in the national school system under Church of Ireland management. They had

their own training college in Kildare Place which was supervised by the education committee, which was appointed by the General Synod. In his autobiography, he refers to at least five schools in the parish of which he was manager.

When I first became a school manager the parents were still paying a little for their children's education. The 'school pence', as the people called these payments, went to augment the teacher's salaries. Then education was made free. This was supposed to be a great boon, but the result was a drop in attendance, the parents arguing, not unfairly, that what cost nothing could not be worth much. Compulsory education had not yet been decreed for Ireland and even when it became law was not enforced in most country places. (39)

Titley estimated that 'in Connacht where of a total population of 646,932 only 728 pupils attended intermediate schools. (40)

Hannay, in his letter, called for the establishment of national school boards, and a reduction of clerical control, especially that of the Catholic Church, in the schools. His was one of many voices calling for the same measures but to the Catholic Church the existing structure was 'perfectly satisfactory...and attempts to tamper with it would be viewed with suspicion'. (41) L. Paul Dubois was another contemporary who wrote on the subject, concluding that the clerical monopoly in education was

...undesirable and contributed to the system being 'backward and inefficient'....The war of words seems to have achieved little, however,

except perhaps in warning the church that its enemies were at the gate. (42)

The Catholic Church were prepared to defend their position. In 1904 the Chief Secretary, Wyndham,

...gave notice that he intended to restructure the whole Irish education system. Two central planks of this policy were to be the introduction of local rate aid for education and the establishment of management boards for national schools. Such intentions were strongly and successfully opposed by the Catholic Church and Irish MPs. Further attempts at changing the financing and administration of Irish education included in the Irish Councils Bill of 1907 were lost in the rejection of that measure. (43)

The education question was to continue for some time. However many its faults and inadequacies, the national school system was making some progress. The number of schools had risen to nine thousand by the beginning of the century and the illiteracy rate had fallen from forty seven per cent in 1851 to twelve per cent by 1911. (44) By 1903, with this succinct and knowledgeable article on the state of national education, and his recommendations for change and improvement, Hannay's development as a commentator and interpreter of Irish issues is apparent. The style and language of his later writings were for the first time recognisable in this article.

When the Church of Ireland was disestablished in 1869, the representative church body realized that the funds it received were 'insufficient to meet the church's



long-term needs'. (45) A sustenation fund was set up, with each diocesan synod responsible for its own area.

In the early 1880s it was estimated that in the eleven years following disestablishment well over £2,000,000 had been contributed, and by 1906 the total contribution had swollen to over £6,500,000. (46)

In addition, a great effort was made at the beginning of this century to increase the capital held by the representative church body. An auxiliary fund was set up in 1904. This fund was intended to help meet the loss on the change from mortgage investment, which involved a fall in the rate of interest received. The change in investment occurred because during the 1880s

...the classes which paid a large part of the diocesan assessment for stipends had 'suffered severely from the recent commercial and agricultural depression'. (47)

This meant that there was quite a sum of unpaid interest outstanding on mortgage loans - 'an indication that many Irish landlords were in difficulties'. (48) With the introduction of land purchase in 1903 a great deal of this money was recovered and there was a decline in the amount lent on mortgage.

Each diocese was instructed to frame a financial 'scheme' for meeting its ecclesiastical requirements. The diocese was credited by the representative church body with the profits of commutation and compounding, and with subscriptions to the sustenation fund earmarked for its use. It was expected to settle parochial boundaries, decide how many clergy it could support and the parochial assessments to the stipend fund. The representative church body acted as a banker for the dioceses, receiving

the assessment money, paying stipends and managing the diocesan capital. (49)

Those who were working in the church at the time of disestablishment had a choice of accepting a state guaranteed annuity, or depending on the representative church body for their income. Three quarters of the clergy remained loyal to the church, and commuted, that is, relied on the church body for their income. This meant that the church body received a bonus for every member of the clergy who chose not to accept a state annuity. 'Compounding' meant that a clergyman could receive part of his annuity from the church body, with the choice of being released from service in the Church of Ireland. If he chose so, the church body would retain the other part of his annuity. (50)

Writing in the *Church of Ireland Gazette* in August of 1904, under the broad heading 'Church of Ireland Auxiliary Fund - the problem of the West', Hannay drew attention to the financial difficulties of his diocese. (51) The diocese was made up of thirty five parishes, with sixty two churches or licensed places of worship. The diocese contained four thousand, eight hundred members of the Church of Ireland. However, about half of these members were concentrated in six strong parishes, leaving the other twenty nine parishes with an average Church of Ireland population of less than one hundred. Of the thirty five parishes, he wrote,

only thirteen were able to make up their assessments without the help of the Bishop, and the Diocesan Council, help that was only forthcoming when it was apparent that the parish concerned had done its best to come up with the amount required. This was the 'present' situation, but, Hannay asked 'What of the future?' Of the thirty five parishes in the diocese, thirty were more or less dependent on endowments to pay their assessments. Of the total sum subscribed in the diocese, Hannay estimated about one half came from landlords, land-agents, and clerks. Contributions from these quarters had been steadily declining since the 1880s and it was expected that they must shrink further, leaving the parishes dependent on them in financial trouble. He posed the question of whether it was worth trying to keep on these small weak parishes and concluded that as the Church of Ireland, the church must 'keep her grip on every corner of the country or give up forever her claim to be a National Church'.

(52) If the Church of Ireland did not rise to this challenge,

...there remains only Romanism for a wide district in Connaught, Romanism entirely dominant with the last check to her aggression removed. (53)

As it was, ninety five and one half per cent of the population in Connaught in 1891 were Roman Catholic. This percentage rose to ninety five point eight per

cent by 1911. Conversely, three point seven per cent of the population in Connaught were members of the Church of Ireland in 1891. This had declined to three point four per cent by 1911. (54)

Also in 1904, continuing his work on the early Christian hermits, Hannay published an anthology of their sayings, which was titled *The wisdom of the desert*. It was soon after this was published that his thoughts turned once more to novel writing. 'My work in Westport was less and less every year owing to the diminuation of the population'. (55) As always money was a problem and it was this which prompted Hannay once more to try his hand at writing fiction. The evenings which had once been devoted to theological work, were now filled with writing *The Seething Pot*. Ada, as always, worked with him and she 'who had a good critical faculty, made me alter a great deal'. (56)

Hannay, since 1901, had been commenting on some Irish issues, as we have seen, and improving his analysis and style. In his first novel he consciously tried to incorporate his views on Irish politics, society, and culture, in a work of fiction. In October of 1904, his brother-in-law, F.E. Wynne who had read the manuscript of the first draft, wrote 'I don't agree that the book is a political essay pure and simple and not a novel'. (57) Hannay had expressed this opinion of his work while on a visit to his brother-in-law. A friend of

F.E. Wynne's, T. Sackville Martin, referred to the same opinion in March 1905. 'I remember what you said when you were here, to the effect that your novels were rather political tracts than novels' (58) Wynne himself, regarded

The character of the hero, the dilemma which you construed for him, ...and the use you make of the actually existing cross-currents of political thought in Ireland are all the very best kind of fiction. (59)

He pointed out some minor criticisms, particularly of 'what reviewers call the love-interest', but on the whole his impressions were positive.

Of course it solves no problem; its strength is in that it does not attempt to. But it is an altogether admirable 'enunciation' of the problem that waits solution. (60)

Wynne seems to have been the only one that Hannay showed the manuscript to. He then sent it 'ill-written' and 'untidy' to a literary agent, A.P. Watt. (61)

Eleven publishers refused to publish it before Edward Arnold agreed to. According to Ada's diary it was published on Friday 3 March, 1905. (62) It was not published under his own name, but a pseudonym. 'George A. Birmingham', a name that was, in time, to become more widely known than his own, and which represented his life outside his work in the church.

The principle theme of *The Seething Pot* was the lost opportunities of the Anglo-Irish gentry. The prologue deals with the fate of Gerald Geoghan, a Protestant

gentleman, who is sentenced to hang for leading an armed rebellion of peasants in the south. This sentence is later commuted to transportation, but the indictment of the judge represents the loyalist view towards a man considered a traitor to his own class and creed.

You are a member of a Church which has always inculcated loyalty upon her children as a sacred duty, and taught the sinfulness of rebellion....You are a member of a class whose traditional boast it has been that they are England's garrison in this country. (63)

Many years later, the son of this rebel, Sir Gerald Geoghegan, journeys from Australia, to take over the family estate in 'Clogher' Co. Mayo, which he has inherited. 'Clogher' resembled Westport in many ways, the description of the buildings were slightly different, but the picture he drew of the bay, at the end of which 'Clogher' stood, perfectly matches Clew Bay. On his way to 'Clogher' Sir Gerald meets Desmond O'Hara, who tells him,

You are an Irish gentleman, Sir Gerald, and therefore one of the natural leaders of the people....We're an aristocratic people, and we're loyal to our leaders....Unfortunately, our gentry, our aristocracy, stand out and won't lead us, so we fall back on priests and political leaders of one sort or another. We must have, and we ought to have you and your class. (64)

On arriving in 'Clogher', the young Sir Gerald mistakes a local deputation meeting Michael McCarthy, a local nationalist returning from prison, for a welcoming party. The young hero was then cursed, criticised, and

threatened in the local paper, which was also nationalist in outlook. His initial enthusiasm, to become involved in his new country and help people around him, dies very quickly. However, his interest is rekindled by John O'Neill, the Nationalist leader. Under his guidance, Gerald tries to introduce an enlightened land scheme to his tenants, who treat him with wariness and distrust. His involvement with O'Neill leads to his increasing isolation from his own ascendancy class, who actively begin to ostracise him, especially when he is persuaded by O'Neill to stand as a Nationalist candidate in the parliamentary elections. However, the 'internal dissensions and self-seeking elements in the party repel him' (65) and he finds himself torn between the reality of Irish politics, and his natural idealism. O'Neill, the Protestant leader of the Irish party in Westminster, has Home Rule within his grasp if the party votes as he tells them, but they desert him at the instigation of the priests who fear that his success would limit their power. This results in O'Neill's death at the end of the novel. Disillusioned, Gerald had retired from the political scene. His dilemma is that of his whole class.

The land-owning gentry had no role to play in a rapidly changing world, as had their ancestors, the Volunteers of 1782. To work with the Irish Parliamentary Party which supported land agitation was to work against the interests of their own class. (66)

The landed gentry was becoming increasingly impotent, rigid as its outlook was, in a world which was leaving them behind. In *The Seething Pot*, Hannay introduced for the first time what was to be repeated again and again by him in other writings. This was the theme that the aristocracy were isolating themselves by refusing to lead the people and that their failure to do so would lead to their demise as a class. They were perishing through mistaken loyalty to England, a loyalty which they believed their principal duty, but which was repaid by betrayal again and again on England's part. The title of the novel was taken from Hannay's favourite Old Testament prophet, Jeremiah. (67) Ireland was the seething pot, as Hannay points out in the last chapter.

...We are a seething pot - we, the Irish people. Just now it is the scum which is coming malodorously to the surface, and perhaps scalding your hands and feet. Yet within the pot there is good stuff. (68)

One of the first reviews was published in the *New Ireland Review*. The reviewer recognised that 'George A. Birmingham' was a *nom de plume* and asked the question 'Who is George A. Birmingham?' In answer, he voiced a suspicion that the author of *The Green Republic*, Dr W.R. MacDermott, could also be the mysterious 'George A. Birmingham'. He concluded that *The Seething Pot* was

...an experiment in a mode much practiced in France,....under the title of contemporary history....The author is interested..in types and tendencies, in the sociological and



political ideas operating in contemporary Ireland. (69)

The writer went on to commend the 'large tolerance of the book';

Here is a writer who grasps the fact that every class and every individual has a characteristic point of view, a certain right to exist, and a certain historical, even if no actual, justification. (70)

However, he also pointed out what was to become the major criticism of the *Seething Pot* and its author.

Ireland is so small that to describe a publicist is practically to name an individual....Some of his people, however, bear their names on their foreheads. (71)

The review in *Uladh* stated that it was 'its dramatic presentation of the contending forces at work in the country that make it of unique importance', but objected 'it leaves us where it finds us, that it describes but does not explain, and merely echoes the old note of despair.' (72)

Whoever Mr. George Birmingham may be, he knows a great deal about Ireland today....*The Seething Pot*, a political novel, turns largely upon the question of clericalism versus nationality in Ireland....The chief interest in the book, however, lies in the very clever analysis of clerical influence in Roman Catholic Ireland. Mr. Birmingham is no rabid anti-clerical; he sees that the priests stand for a great deal besides the dominance of their own order, and that their downfall might very well entail the loss of much which Ireland could ill-afford to lose. (73)

The publication of *The Seething Pot* in 1905 brought Hannay a little money, but, more importantly it 'opened the doors of such literary society as existed in

Ireland'. (74) He renewed his friendship with T.W. Rolleston, and met George Russell, and Horace Plunkett. Rolleston was one of the first to discover the identity of 'George A. Birmingham'. Hannay recalled,

I met him one day in Stephen's Green, outside the University Club. He stopped me and began to talk about *The Seething Pot*, and to draw certain deductions from the book itself as to the authorship. I suppose my manner was nervous and embarrassed for he suddenly said to me 'Did you write it?' I confessed, although I had made up my mind to lie about it if asked a direct question. (75)

Rolleston wrote to Hannay shortly afterwards

...to apologise to you for my inexcusable indiscretion in asking you about the book. The fact is I was taken by surprise too. I never imagined it could be anyone living at a distance from Dublin and its literary circle. (76)

He disapproved, however, of the character of Denis Browne in the novel, which was a caricature of George Moore, and easily recognisable as so.

...you should take pains not to give details which identify your victim so plainly.... Moore is not a reptile, in spite of his veneer of Nietzscheism, but an artist of true genius and a man of sincere convictions which he would rather starve than belie. (77)

Many of the characters in *The Seething Pot* are clearly caricatures of living people in Ireland at that time. Stephen Gwynn wrote in March 1905, complaining about the presentation of the character of the rebel, Geoghegan, whom Gwynn believed was based upon his grandfather, the Young Irishman, William Smith O'Brien. This certainly seemed to be the case, but as

Law points out, 'it is worth noting that there had been a young Protestant nationalist, Arthur Gerald Geoghegan,' (78) who had been a member of the Young Ireland movement. Unlike the fictional Geoghegan, and the real William Smith O'Brien, Arthur Gerald Geoghegan was not transported to Australia, but worked in the Excise Department in the Civil Service, and died in London in 1889. (79) Gwynn, in his autobiography, *Experiences of a literary man*, seems not to recall that he sent a letter of complaint to Hannay.

...the book was a puzzle to me when it came at its first appearance to me for liberties taken with my family history. (80)

He did recommend the book.

Anybody who wishes to re-constitute the political conditions in Ireland at the time when I was definitely entering Irish politics would do well to look at a very clever *roman à clef*, which appeared in 1905. This was *The Seething Pot*, first of a long list of novels which have been signed 'George A. Birmingham' (81)

Appended to a review of *The Seething Pot* in the *All Ireland Review*, Standish O'Grady wrote, in surprise, at finding himself in the character of Desmond O'Hara, editor of *The Critic*, in Hannay's novel.

I found myself boldly introduced in the flesh and also flagrantly misdrawn and misrepresented....Then the queer representation of the physical man is not improved by an accompanying exaggeration of moral and intellectual force. (82)

Also printed, in the same edition of the *Review*, was a reply from Hannay, signed 'George A. Birmingham'.

I should like to assure you that the description of you is purely imaginary, and that no single item in the sketch of Desmond O'Hara, regarded as an individual has any foundation whatever in fact. You will understand this because you know that I had not the honour and pleasure of your friendship at the time of writing the book, and therefore it was wholly impossible for me to attempt a description of you. *The Critic* in my novel is, of course, *All Ireland Review*, of which I have read every number since the first. I brought it into my novel because it seemed to me the purest and most elevated force at work in the 'seething pot' of our national life. (83)

Standish O'Grady had previously written to Hannay, on 11 March, that the book 'is really powerful and very interesting.' (84)

The character of Denis Browne is easily recognised as George Moore. Like Moore, Browne was a landowner in Co. Mayo. 'The salacious suggestiveness of Denis Browne's remarks to Lady Geoghegan' were characteristic of George Moore. (85) The character of O'Neill, the parliamentary party leader closely resembles Parnell but there is also some likeness to William O'Brien MP, who, after 1900, spent a great deal of time at Mallow Cottage, outside Westport.

John O'Neill lived about two miles from the town of Clogher. His house nestled down to the shore of one of the innumerable little inlets of the great bay. At full tide the sea washed against the wall at the bottom of the lawn. (86)

Michael McDonagh described O'Brien's house thus;

He and his wife settled down in a romantically situated house by Clew Bay, Mayo, with its hundred islands. Mallow Cottage they called it. The waters of the bay lapped its lawn. (87)

The resemblance in setting was commented upon by reviewers in the Irish papers, and this point was also carried in the *Edinburgh Review* and *Harper's Weekly*, New York.

Hannay's practice of thinly disguising contemporary, well known figures earned him a great deal of criticism. This was especially true in relation to his second novel, *Hyacinth*. It was a scene from *The Seething Pot*, however, which caused him most trouble. It earned him the enmity of the Administrator of Westport, Fr. MacDonald, who believed that the character of Fr. Fahy in the novel was a gross and insulting representation of himself. Hannay denied that he had Fr. McDonald in mind when he wrote the book, and also claimed that it had been completed though not published, a year or more before Fr. MacDonald arrived in Westport. Fr. MacDonald, in the same month that *The Seething Pot* was published, was prosecuted for attacking a Bible-reader, in the main street of Westport. The Bible-reader had been distributing tracts among the townspeople. The *Freeman's Journal* carried a report of this incident under the title 'Proselytism in Westport'. (88) Fr. MacDonald's actions towards Hannay will be dealt with in the next chapter.

Rolleston wrote to Hannay on the subject of the novel.

You have crystallised an epoch of history in it, and in such a way that we must all turn with new

interest to watch the next move in the great game. (89)

T. Sackville Martin, a friend of Hannay's in England, also wrote enthusiastically about his novel.

It seems to me that you have written about Ireland in a manner that no-one else has done...if you go on doing so, you are likely to leave behind you a record of what the country was at a certain time, from which future generations may know it. (90)

On March 12, Rolleston wrote again to Hannay, agreeing to read through the manuscript of Hannay's second novel, which he had just completed. Hannay it seems still had misgivings about *The Seething Pot*, which Rolleston disagreed with.

I don't think *The Seething Pot* failed in being a true picture of an epoch because you introduced into it some circumstance and personage from a later epoch. (91)

*The Seething Pot* was set in Ireland during the 1880s and early 1890s, and Hannay felt that some contemporary figures, like the caricatures of O'Grady and Moore, were irreconcilable with that period. Rolleston disagreed with this point, but stated that, for example, a body like the Gaelic League would have been, and observed that in his array of forces at work in *The Seething Pot*, the Gaelic League was absent. Hannay himself felt that not only would the League have been misplaced in the period he had written about, but as he saw his first novel as a political one, he would have

been anxious that the League, with its non-political character, would have been well and truly excluded. At this point, a month or so after *The Seething Pot* was published, the identity of 'George A. Birmingham' was still something of a mystery. Rolleston wrote, however,

I don't think your secret will be kept long. The O'Grady's, to whom I 'let on' not to know anything about the authorship of the book, told me at once....I spoke to them, however of the undesirability of your name coming out, and I daresay it will be known only to an inner circle of literary folk in Dublin. (92)

It was not until after the publication of his second novel, *Hyacinth*, that Hannay was revealed as 'George A. Birmingham'. The furore that ensued has to be placed within the context of his involvement with the Gaelic League, which will be examined in the next chapter. A humorous side of the revelation was recalled by Hannay many years later.

My name came to be generally known, but most people refused to believe that I had written the book. Having met me they made up their minds that I was much too dull a man to have written *The Seething Pot*. Ada, on the other hand, struck strangers as intelligent. The general belief was that she had written the book, and out of wifely loyalty, I suppose, allowed me to take the credit. (93)

With his first serious attempt at writing fiction, Hannay had produced a novel which was principally a novel of ideas. The plot and characterization were subordinate to the theme, which was the failure of the Anglo-Irish, landed, ascendancy class, as represented by the hero, Gerald Geoghegan. He justly assessed the

inflexibility of Irish society, one which was based on class and religion. Hannay's own personal experience was very soon to illustrate clearly to him just how inflexible that society could be.

Despite the bubbling in the Pot, the deep-seated jealousies and ancient grudges still found expression in contemporary Ireland. Ironically, Hannay, who understood them so clearly, himself suffered from them. (94)



**CHAPTER THREE**

**Lieutenant of the Gaelic League**

**1904-1908**

Hannay recalled in his autobiography that there had been a saying when he was a young man 'to the effect that everything of any importance in Ireland began with a P, politicians, priests, potatoes, poets, poteen, and pigs'. (1) Living where he did, he later supposed it was inevitable that he and Ada would get involved in some of the 'P's. However, during the first ten years or so that they were in Westport, they were so involved in their work on the early Christian hermits that they were largely unaware of what was happening around them. What was happening ? Hannay saw an 'intellectual and spiritual revolution in the country awakening the people from the long political stupor which followed the death of Parnell'. (2)

The fall of Parnell, and the consequent split in the Home Rule party has traditionally been seen as the beginning of the intellectual and socio-economic movements which developed in the last decade of the nineteenth, and the first decade of the twentieth centuries.

The modern literature of Ireland, and indeed all that stir of thought which prepared for the Anglo-Irish war, began when Parnell fell from power in 1891. A disillusioned and embittered Ireland turned from parliamentary politics; (3)

This quotation from Yeats' *Autobiographies*, has in the past been cited frequently to place the beginning of what has become known as the cultural revival from Parnell's death onwards. Lyons felt that Yeats was

right 'in seizing on the death of Parnell in 1891 as a symbolic event', but

...that in one important sense Yeats was wrong in his chronology. The stir of thought which he observed in the years after 1891, and to which he himself contributed so much, would not have been possible had not a trail been marked out by others in a more remote past. (4)

The somewhat exhausted quotation from Yeats'

*Autobiographies*, which emphasized the downfall of Parnell, and the subsequent turning from political matters to those cultural, was echoed in Hannay's autobiography, published in 1934, and as Foster points out, '...other memoirs emphasized the same priority, and many historians have followed them'. (5)

Foster himself chooses to regard the developments in culture, language, and literature, 'as another facet of a maturing and sophisticated society', (6) while other historians have drawn attention to the fact that Ireland was not alone in these developments. No doubt the fall of Parnell

...did drive some sensitive souls to seek alternative forms of politics and alternatives to politics, but a similar proliferation of social, political, and cultural organisations is to be found in most parts of western Europe in the quarter century before 1914. (7)

The trail in the past, that Lyons spoke of, had been marked out in the previous century with the foundation of the Royal Irish Academy in 1785 and continued into the nineteenth century.

As the century progressed, scholars, working either as individuals or in groups, or through

specialist societies - ranging from the Gaelic society (founded in 1806) to the Irish Archaeological Society, the Celtic Society, and the Ossianic Society (the last three active mainly between 1840 and 1860) - began to uncover more and more of what slowly came to be seen as the evidence of a rich and splendid history. (8)

One of these scholars was Sir Samuel Ferguson. He was born in Belfast in 1810 and was educated in the Royal Belfast Academical Institution, and Trinity College, Dublin. He was called to the bar in 1838. In 1867, he retired from practice on his appointment as first deputy keeper of public records in Ireland. (9) While he was in college, Ferguson started to write for the *Dublin University Magazine*, which was then edited by Issac Butt. Ferguson came to the conclusion that the only way that the Anglo-Irish could survive and prosper was by 'identifying themselves with the Irish past', and be the leaders in recovering that past. (10) With the passing of Catholic emancipation in 1829, Britain, previously seen as the guardian of the Protestant Irish, now seemed prepared to sacrifice them for its own interests.

This sense of crisis ,provoked the expression of a new Protestant nationalism when, in 1833, the *Dublin University Magazine* was founded by a group of young Trinity College men. (11)

One of these young men was Hannay's father, Rev. Robert Hannay, who contributed poetry to the *Dublin University Magazine*, *The College* and the *Irish Metropolitan* during his student days in Trinity College, and indeed,

afterwards, when he was the rector of St. Anne's parish in Belfast. (12)

For these young men the revival was, as it was for Ferguson,

...a means by which to attach the Ascendancy firmly to the Irish soil, like their eighteenth century grandfathers, of the Irish nation. (13)

These young men, under Ferguson's guidance, were, as Foster puts it, 'A bridge between the flowering of national studies in the 1830s and the literary renaissance of the 1890s'. (14)

The trail, as Lyons refers to it (15), was a continuous one since the eighteenth century. The work of O'Grady and Hyde, was a logical and natural progression from what had gone before, just as it was a natural progression from father to son, that both Robert Hannay and James Owen Hannay were involved in the work of the cultural revival, though, of course, in different ways, at different stages and to different degrees.

The cultural revival was not a reaction to the fall of Parnell, and subsequent disillusionment with parliamentary politics, as many contemporaries, including L. Paul-Dubois, and Hannay himself saw it.

(16) Other contemporaries who wrote on the birth and development of the Gaelic League also shared this point of view. Michael Tierney saw

...the Gaelic League as a very roundabout but highly effective flank movement coming after the manifest failure of Parnell to achieve Home Rule. (17)

Another contemporary, Arthur E. Clery, writing in 1919 held the same view.

It took its beginning at a time when politics had fallen into a great contempt in Ireland, amid the futile wranglings of the Parnell split... (18)

However, as Professor Waters has shown, leaving aside the foundations built during the previous century, statistics concerning the League indicate clearly the degree of influence that Parnell's fall had on the cultural revival. He concluded that

The slow progress of the Gaelic League in its early years suggests that its later growth had little to do with the fall of Parnell. (19)

D.G. Boyce sees Ireland at the beginning of the last decade of the nineteenth century at a crisis point in the process of change and development under the Union, irrespective of political developments;

...a crisis for both her Roman Catholic and her Protestant people. For the Protestants, the crisis was that of becoming the victim, or at least the losers, in the revolution, 'rotting', as O'Grady had put it 'from the land in the most dismal farce tragedy of all time without one brave deed, one brave word', unlamented even by itself. (20)

The time was right for such an organisation as the Gaelic League to come into being, providing, according to the ideals of its constitution, a forum, where Protestants and Catholics could meet without sectarian or political issues to cloud matters. Two of the architects of the League were Standish O'Grady and Douglas Hyde. O'Grady, like Ferguson before him, was more involved with laying the foundations upon which

Hyde and his compatriots built the movement, but he continued, as editor of the *All-Ireland Review*, 1900-06, to work strenuously on its behalf. O'Grady was a Unionist and, like Hannay after him, exhorted the ascendancy class to govern, to lead. He also urged landlords to do their duty. He warned them that they would 'perish out of the land while innumerable eyes are dry'. (21)

Of you as a class, as a body of men, I can entertain not the least hope; Indeed who can ?  
(22)

Both O'Grady and Hyde were decisive influences in Hannay's decision to become involved in the League later on. O'Grady, through his writings, 'awakened his contemporaries to a creative sense of Ireland's epic past and he has been called the "father of the Irish literary revival"'. (23)

He provided a role model for Hannay who met him in 1905, and whom he later referred to as 'the father of all who wrote at that time'. (24)

Hyde was born at home in Frenchpark, Co. Roscommon. The son of a clergyman, Hyde is usually introduced with the fact that he was educated at home, and therefore had the opportunity of learning the Irish language, stories, songs, and customs from the people around him. These people

...had preserved much of the oral tradition of the west of Ireland and from them Hyde picked up not only the language, but the poetry and

folklore of an Ireland closed to his contemporaries. (25)

In 1880, Hyde entered Trinity College, Dublin.

Before he came to Trinity College, Hyde must have seen among his neighbours in the country much of the indifferent or hostile spirit of the Irish gentlemen to Gaelic. In Trinity he was surrounded by this spirit. (26)

While at college 'he participated enthusiastically in debates that were a feature of College Historical Society meetings'. (27) However O Cobhthaigh draws attention to the fact that,

Many of his later speeches and writings show that in the University he always regarded himself as an alien in a hostile place. (28)

During his time in Trinity, though he may have felt isolated,

...he mingled with the scholars of the Royal Irish Academy and with the brilliant young men - T.W. Rolleston and Charles Oldham the chief of them - who had also recently graduated from Trinity...These young men represented a striking deviation from the traditional Anglo-Irish culture. Although the products of Trinity, they were not congealed within the austere Anglican-unionist ethos which the university establishment rigorously maintained. (29)

Hannay, during his Trinity days, though not a contemporary of either Rolleston, or Hyde, would have fallen into the latter category. At this time, both Hyde and Rolleston 'were conscious of movement towards some as yet undefined goal:' (30) In 1885 the *Dublin University Review* was set up, replacing the *Dublin University Magazine*, which had ceased publication in 1877. Hyde, after graduation in 1884 with a B.A.



remained in Dublin to continue his law studies, in which he received a doctorate, but never practised law. By 1886 an editorial in the *Review* was asking what it was that Hyde and his friends wanted in regard to the Irish language. Hyde responded with 'A plea for the Irish language'. Hyde made it clear that he regarded trying to make the Irish language the language of 'everyday speech and communication' an impossibility, but he did believe in the policy of preserving the language,

...to assist the Irish-speaking population at the present crisis and to establish for all time a bilingual population in those parts of Ireland where Irish is now spoken'. (31)

In 1891 Hyde returned to Ireland having spent the previous year at the University of New Brunswick. On his return he became president of the National Literary Society, which was founded in May 1892, and which had developed from the Irish Literary Society of London, founded a few months previously by Rolleston, Yeats, and himself. The following November, 1892, marks the date of what became his most famous and influential address, but which was also his inaugural lecture as President of the Literary Society. The title of this lecture was 'The Necessity for De-Anglicising Ireland', which has been the subject of many historical opinions, but which set out the aims which, the Gaelic League was founded in 1893 by Hyde, Eoin MacNeill, Fr. O'Hickey,

and Fr. O'Growney, to fulfil. (32) Hyde was its first President. The League differed from other earlier movements such as the Ossianic Society (1853), the Society for the preservation of the Irish language (1876), and the Gaelic Union (1878), whose attitudes were antiquarian, whereas the Gaelic League set out to revive the use of Irish as a spoken language.

Professor M.J. Waters wrote of the League,

As an historical phenomenon it is a somewhat curious case since everyone pays obeisance to it while no one studies it in depth. (33)

This is quite true. There are few good historical studies of the Gaelic League, with the exceptions of the work done by M.J. Waters himself, in his article on the social aspect of the League, and Shane O'Neill, in 'The politics of culture in Ireland 1899-1910'. (34) In the beginning of its existence the League's growth was 'slow rather than spectacular', according to O'Neill. (35) John Hutchinson takes a rather more optimistic view.

Soon after its inception the League had branches in the cities of America and England as well as in Ireland...it was producing Irish language primers, collections of Irish short stories, plays, poems,...in 1895 it was one of the sponsors of the Feis Ceoil. (36)

As M.J. Waters pointed out, it wasn't until 1896 that a branch was formed in London. (37)

Despite the slow beginning, and slow rate of development for the first few years, the League entered

the new century with a spurt of growth. As O'Neill puts it,

...The League mushroomed into a nationwide movement comparable to any of the great political mass movements which had arisen in nineteenth century Ireland. Reliable statistics of its strength are extremely difficult to come by, and historians have been content to trust the estimations of contemporaries and of the League itself. (38)

To illustrate this point he gives the examples of Kee's *The green flag*, and an article by Brian O Cúiv (39) to show varying estimations of the League's growth and strength. Kee declared that the League '... had 58 branches by 1898; 200 by 1901; 600 by 1903; and 900 by 1906; with a total membership of 100,000' (40)

O Cúiv, on the other hand estimated

...in 1908 - after fifteen years growth - only 34 of the 599 League branches in existence were in Dublin. The greatest number was in Cork where there were 76 and the next in order were Kerry (52), Donegal (36), Dublin (34), Clare (31), Galway (31), Mayo (25), Antrim (22)... (41)

Other historians also give varying accounts of statistics relating to the progress of the League, for example, F.S.L. Lyons.

After four years of hard work by its founders only 43 branches of the League had been formed...by 1904 nearly 600 branches were in existence. (42)

Brendan S. MacAodha, in his article on the League in *The Gaelic League idea*, estimated that,

By 1897 only 43 branches had been formed and real progress was being made only after 1901. In the following year the number practically

doubled to 227; and a similar increase occurred in 1902-3. By 1904 there were almost 600 branches. (43)

Waters had pointed out that the 'evidence on the growth of the Gaelic League is somewhat inconclusive'. (44) He quoted from the Executive Minute Book, 7 July 1897, "the Secretary was authorised to buy a regular minute book". (45) Thus his conclusion was that four years after its foundation 'the League was still a small and informal body of enthusiasts'. (46) This conclusion is further supported by Arthur E. Clery's article, published in 1919.

...by 1898 it was already occupying a somewhat wider field of action and becoming an intellectual and moral revival with all the challenge which such a revival implies. At first it was laughed at and looked upon as a quixotic enterprise. It made slow progress. I can remember when all its active members could be, and in fact were, comfortably housed in a fairly large room. (47)

O'Neill, using information from the original register of branches, and from the surviving minute books, attempted to calculate the pre-1899 strength of the League. Although the register records that one thousand, two hundred and thirteen branches of the League were formed between 1893 and 1910, O'Neill estimated the active strength of the League using the number of branches, marked and dated on the register as having paid their affiliation fees. Taking into consideration that some branches, though active, neglected to pay their affiliation fees, he concluded

that this method would be an accurate one in testing the minimum number of branches. He plotted his results on a graph, which showed the following.

Year	Number of affiliated branches
1895-96	22
1898-99	58
1899-1900	120
1900-01	227
1901-02	412
1902-05	443
1905-06	419
1906-07	465
1907-08	546
1908-10	548
1910-11	448
1911-12	391
1912-13	354
1913-14	340
1914-15	282 (48)

From the results, it is clear that 1899-1902 were the years of most rapid growth. Membership continued to steadily rise until 1908-10, thereafter declining. After such a slow start why did the League 'mushroom into a nationwide movement' ? (49) Waters attempted to provide some solutions.

By February of 1901 there were over 200 branches, and there were nearly four hundred the year after that. The circulation of *An Claidheamb Soluis*, the weekly newspaper of the League, more than doubled, to 4,000 readers, in the eighteen months after July, 1900....Was there anything happening at the turn of the century that made the Gaelic League attractive to large numbers of Irishmen ? Was the growth of the League in this period related to any long developing trends ? (50)

Waters regarded the Boer war as providing 'a crucial catalyst to the development of Irish cultural nationalism' (51), but O'Neill considered that 'it

might be too tempting to ascribe' the League's growth with the 'intensification of nationalist feeling' due to the Boer war, though he did agree with Waters that it was 'a crucial catalyst in the resurgence of both political and cultural nationalism in this period'.

(52) Hyde himself later stated that '..the Boers were steadily pumping hope and self-reliance into Ireland; and it was the language movement which benefitted most from it'. (53) There were, however, other factors which should also be considered, according to O'Neill, one of which was,

The rise of William O'Brien's United Irish league in 1898 provided the necessary impetus for the reunification of the party in 1900 under the leadership of John Redmond. By the end of 1898, the United Irish League, according to police reports, had 94 branches and 8,853 members. Two years later it had 865 branches and 86,119 members....The coincidence in the timing of the growth of both Leagues reflects on the nationalist resurgence of the years 1898-1902. (54)

Waters, too, took into consideration other factors in accounting for the growth of the Gaelic League. This aspect of cultural nationalism had become relevant to the needs to a large number of Irishmen, for various reasons but

... the decline of the Irish illiteracy rate from fifty three per cent to sixteen per cent between 1841 and 1901 was a crucial prerequisite for the development of any broad based movement of cultural nationalism'. (55)

O'Neill also points out that the Gaelic League 'cannot be explained merely in political terms' as it claimed

to be outside politics. He observed that the League was 'in a sense an evangelical movement aimed at the moral regeneration of the Irish people' apparent in the context of the devotional and religious revival which occurred in post-Famine Ireland. (56)

The Gaelic League also drew strength from the economic and industrial revival movements. The League set out very clearly the connection between economic and cultural self-reliance.

...'the Irish language...is a powerful level in the present Industrial Revival...Leaguers will support none but Irish manufacture'. (57)

The Gaelic League Industrial Committee was set up in July 1902. Sub-committees were to be formed by branches of the League to encourage people to buy Irish manufactured goods. However, rather than direct action, 'The function of the League was, as always, to propagandise rather than to involve itself directly'. (58)

One change following Parnell's death, which to some extent helped to provide the League with increased membership, in O'Neill's opinion, was

...a diminution of the party animosities that had characterised relations between Nationalists and Unionists throughout the previous decade...Both Unionist and Nationalist found refuge from the bitter storms of politics in the calm waters of the various literary and cultural societies. (59)

It was therefore not totally unacceptable for someone in Hannay's position to become involved in what was

happening at this time, although some of his parishoners did not approve of his actions.

I founded in Westport a little literary society which at first used to meet in my house, but soon grew too large for that and had to migrate to the schoolroom. (60)

Hannay's interest in literature was one, as we have seen, which had its beginnings in childhood. While a curate in Delgany, an early interest in the literary revival formed due to the influence of T.W. Rolleston, but never really developed fully due to his work as a minister and his theological studies. It wasn't until the early years of the twentieth century that he became aware of and interested in what was occurring around him. This interest grew and matured, from it *The Seething Pot* was written, and published in 1905.

Meanwhile, the founding of the Westport Literary Society which he referred to above was an important step in Hannay's progress towards the Gaelic League. The Literary Society made steady progress, the only problem being the lack of those willing to present papers. A good deal of the work fell to Hannay himself, who presented two or three papers, on English poets such as Wordsworth and Browning. He persuaded Ada to present a paper, which she agreed to with much reluctance. Her talk dealt with the Young Ireland movement in the middle of the nineteenth century. As a girl Ada had spent a good deal of her time in Sir



Samuel Ferguson's house. Ferguson's wife, Lady Ferguson, was a Guinness, and therefore a distant cousin of Ada's.

Ada's association with her had brought her some knowledge of the Young Irish movement, chiefly of the literary figures in it. She often told me about her talks with Lady Ferguson, who had known many of the Young Irelanders. (61)

The composition of the Westport Literary Society was to a large extent made up of the Anglo-Irish gentry of the surrounding area. Ada in her talk to them spoke 'with warm admiration of some of the Young Irelanders' and of their poetry, published collectively in *The spirit of the nation*. (62) The majority of those in the society

...were distrustful of anything Irish and very much shocked at the thought of anyone speaking kindly of men tainted with nationalism. (63)

In the discussion which followed, Hannay gave permission to a man, who though present, was not a member of the society, to speak. This man, whom Hannay knew to be 'a strong nationalist of Fenian sympathies', spoke with great zeal about the Young Irelanders. His speech caused great 'uneasiness and annoyance among our regular members'. (64) This urged Hannay, in an attempt to soothe the irritated and offended, 'with my mind full of the literary work of the Young Ireland period, and very little thought of politics' to recite what he himself described as 'Jacobite Nationalist poetry' by Mangan, 'The Dark Rosaleen'. (65) It was only in

retrospect that he saw his mistake. Far from placating the meeting, he became 'suspect'.

It was only too easy to feel that when I expressed Nationalist sympathies I was doing something plainly wrong....There was the conviction that I, the rector of the parish, was sinning... (66)

This was enough to drive Hannay, with his stubborn Northern temperament, of which he was quite proud, further in the direction of nationalism. He and Ada spent evenings reading Irish history, 'a fatal thing for anyone to do who wishes to remain a sound Unionist'. (67)

The more severely they were frowned upon, the more they became involved. They began to associate with individuals, whom their own class and creed termed 'blackguards', and from there they progressed towards joining the Gaelic League. In this respect they were not alone, but were in a distinct minority.

The Gaelic League made a point of declaring itself to be above and beyond political and confessional divisions....But the number of Hyde's contemporaries capable of appreciating this ideal was small, and the number prepared to live by it was even smaller. (68)

Hyde had nationalist leanings, politically, so too did other Protestant members of the League, but as Hannay was to discover, political beliefs had no place in the League. Many of the Protestants in the League were Unionist in outlook but were attracted by the League's ideals.

Such people saw in the League the prospect of a new beginning, the hope of moving away from the bitter politico-sectarian division that had afflicted Irish society for decades... (69)

Hannay had been 'deeply stirred' by Douglas Hyde's *Literary history of Ireland*, and was drawn to its author. He came to see in the League

...a great force which might bring together the classes and creeds, and which, if they chose to take it, seemed to offer to his own people, the Anglo-Irish, an opportunity to assert their true place in the national life'. (70)

Hannay recalled in his autobiography that his involvement in the Gaelic League was almost accidental. (71) He dated his involvement and subsequent membership from 1904 onwards, as a direct result of his campaign against the opinions expressed by the *Church of Ireland Gazette*. However, according to the *Irish Peasant* in 1906, Hannay had become involved at an earlier date.

He was brought into touch with it in 1903 by Mr Joseph McBride of Westport and acted with him as treasurer of Feis Mhuigh Eo the next year in the town. Mr. McBride was the man who had most to do in making a Leaguer of him. (72)

The campaign which Hannay undertook on behalf of the League began during the summer of 1904. On 20 May, the editorial of the *Church of Ireland Gazette* under the title, 'Language and Politics', claimed to 'hold liberal views about the movement which is called, broadly, "The Irish Revival"'. Although the editor felt that,

...Irish studies and questions of Irish economics deserve more attention than they are now getting from the majority of Irish Protestants and Unionists... (73)

He was also of the opinion that within the last few years 'the Gaelic League has made the study of Irish a question of politics' and agreed with Dr. J.P. Mahaffy's assessment that 'everybody in Ireland must be either anti-Irish or anti-English'. (74)

The editorial went on to demonstrate that the League was 'political in a sense far more dangerous than that in which the Irish Party is political' by quoting a speech given by Hyde in Castlerea the previous week.

He said the League 'was intended to do more than teach the people the language of their country: it was intended to prepare them for becoming an Irish nation'. (75)

According to the *Gazette*, one of the League's 'most pronounced characteristics' was 'intolerance of any sort of criticism' but worse was 'the practical mischief...supported by a majority of the Roman Catholic clergy' which the League was working all over the country, according to the editorial, which concluded with the dire prediction that

...this organisation [is] at least as dangerous to English rule in Ireland as was the Land League or any of its political predecessors. (76)

According to *Pleasant places*, Hannay had not yet met Hyde, his autobiography is unreliable in this instance. French is correctly of the opinion that Hyde and Hannay

discussed Hannay's first letter to the *Gazette*, which was a reply to the above editorial. Hyde wrote a letter to Hannay which is dated 26 May 1904. In this he says 'It has been a great pleasure to me to make your acquaintance', and he thanked him for the time he had spent as the Hannays' guest, 'I enjoyed myself immensely with you'. (77) Enclosed with this letter was a pamphlet on the University question, and one that Hyde wrote in answer to Mahaffy during the struggle to secure the place of the Irish language in the primary and intermediate schools.

During 1899 a Royal Commission had been set up to enquire into the working of the intermediate education system. Mahaffy had attacked the Irish language stating that it had no place in the education system.

I am told by a much better authority than any of them in Irish that it is almost impossible to get hold of a text in Irish which is not religious or which is not silly or indecent.  
(78)

Hyde enclosed these to give, it seems from the phrasing of the letter, background for an article which Hyde asked him to write. They 'may give you some hints if you are kind enough to write that article'. (79)

As mentioned previously, Hannay upon reading the editorial in the *Church of Ireland Gazette*, wrote a letter in defence of the League. In his autobiography, he gave his reasons for his action. The *Gazette* he described as 'strongly Tory and anti-nationalist in its

policy, and ready to attack anyone suspected of

Nationalist sympathies'. (80) He continued,

I did not know Dr Hyde personally and was not in any way connected with the League: but the attack struck me as unjust. (81)

In his reply to the editorial, Hannay summarised the position of the *Gazette* as he saw it.

There is no objection to an Irish revival as long as nothing is revived or to the language movement provided it does not move. (82)

Methodically, he dealt with the points raised by the editorial. Firstly, the attempt to revive Irish as the spoken language of the country was 'neither a political nor a religious aim'. (83) The second point that the editorial had claimed as an aim of the League was 'The revival of Irish industries to the exclusion as far as possible of all commercial relations with England'.

(84) The economic regeneration of Ireland, no matter how successful, Hannay argued, could not result in the exclusion of all commercial relations, a point that the most extreme Gaelic Leaguer, in his view, would agree with. Thirdly, 'the discouragement in Ireland of all English customs and games'. (85) Hannay agreed that the Gaelic League aimed at a revival of Irish games, but what the editorial meant by 'English customs' was unclear. Finally he dealt with the fourth point the editorial had made in relation to the aims of the League.

The encouragement of the notion that to enlist in the English army or navy is to become a traitor to Irish Ireland. (86)

This, Hannay firmly denied, was part of the Gaelic League programme. He followed this rebuttal with a statement that he was to make over and over again.

It is not fair to take the opinions of individual members and charge them against the President or against the League itself. (87)

In terms of what the editorial had accused the Gaelic League of, a good example that Hannay could have used in his refutation was the case of Captain the Honourable Otway Cuffe, son of the third Earl of Desart, who was a member of the Gaelic League at this time. With the help of his sister-in-law, Lady Desart, he set up factories, a hospital, and a theatre in Kilkenny. His interpretation of the aims and purpose of the Gaelic League was thus,

'Some persons thought that the learning of Irish was the only object of that the League had set before it. He did not believe that was so. (Hear, hear) They knew it that the principal object of the Gaelic League had all to do with the encouragement of all that made for beauty in the land (loud applause) for the encouragement of everything that would tend to make life better and brighter with those amongst whom they lived'. (88)

Hannay concluded his defence of Hyde in the *Gazette*, with a quotation from a speech made by Hyde in Dundalk. 'The Gaelic League is founded not upon hatred of England. It is founded upon love for Ireland'. (89)

In essence, what Hannay was arguing was that the Gaelic League was non-political, that Hyde had made no pronouncements on politics, or enlistment in the Imperial forces. What the League truly aimed for was that Ireland should become aware of and support her own culture and traditions, the revival of the language, and encouragement of native industry as the means by which this awareness could be achieved. With this step, of defending Hyde and the League in the official organ of Irish Protestantism, Hannay had appointed himself its champion. As rector of Westport, what he said would carry weight with the readers of the *Gazette*. He was very much respected and trusted, though moreso outside his parish than within. From this point onwards, Hannay defended and explained the aims and position of the League, and tried to persuade Irish Protestants of its importance and value to them. To Hyde, he was a close friend and confident, and he quickly became Hyde's 'lieutenant' in the printed and vocal battles which lay ahead. (90)

In its following editions the *Gazette* continued to aim criticism at the League.

Our point is that the whole spirit of the 'Irish revival', in which the Gaelic League is the most active and authoritative agent, is gradually becoming more hostile to the Irish connection with the Empire. (91)

Such bodies as the Gaelic Athletic Association and Cumann na nGaedhal were indistinguishable from the



Gaelic League, as Leaguers 'manned' these organisations, the editorial argued. The 'conduct of soldiers walking with their girls in Sackville Street' was censured by Dublin Corporation, influenced by League members elected to the Corporation, not because the conduct of the soldiers was worse than others, claimed the *Gazette*, but because they wore the British uniform. A further accusation was that the Irish movement did not show any inclination to celebrate Empire Day. Another complaint was that

...a prominent official of the League was one of the leaders in the organised rowdyism which recently broke up the International Exhibition meeting in Dublin. (92)

The *Gazette* editorial concluded that

We contend that, so long as the governing body of the League is completely silent on developments of this kind it must be taken to approve of them. (93)

This was the crux of the problem. How could the League make pronouncements on various incidents without abandoning its non-political stance? As Hyde knew, the League could not yet afford to take sides. However,

To attract the support of his own people was vital to Hyde's policy. The carpings of the *Gazette*, often trivial in themselves, uncovered very serious obstacles to such support. (94)

Yet by remaining silent, it left itself open to criticisms like those of the *Gazette*.

Another problem was how to deal with criticism of the members of the League; what of the blame laid on the League's doorstep for the opinion and actions of

members outside League business ? Again and again these were the issues that the leaders of the League had to deal with. However, while simple intolerance, bigotry, or ignorance could be summarily dealt with, many of the criticisms levelled at the League by the *Gazette* contained some truth. The *Church of Ireland Gazette* was an extremely important publication for Irish Protestants, it was the official organ of their Church, though R.B.D. French was of the opinion that its 'carpings' were 'often trivial'. To refute the accusations was to strike at the core of opposition to the League, and this task fell to Hannay.

Patiently and methodically throughout the summer of 1904, Hannay wrote defending Hyde and the League, for which, 'I became more suspect than ever, not only in my own parish, but in the Church generally'. (95)

However, it was not only the *Gazette* that he was called upon to deal with. Other organs of Protestant opinion, such as the *Londonderry Sentinel* echoed the opposition to the League, the northern papers more vehemently than the rest.

'It will hardly be necessary to warn Protestant loyalists against the soft-soaping efforts of individuals...championing the society known as the Gaelic League....The short and long of the whole matter is that the Gaelic League and its kindred societies are all covered with the same coat of Home Rule tar and are at the bottom little better than Fenian; any unwary Protestant getting mixed up with them is being played as a decoy duck for all he is worth'. (96)

As French has pointed out, it was crucial for the future of the League, and Hyde's hopes for it that the Protestant population would become involved. The opinions expressed by papers such as the *Northern Whig*, the *Londonderry Sentinel*, the *Belfast Newsletter*, and the *Church of Ireland Gazette*, shaped Irish Protestant thinking. Hannay's role as spokesman for the League was vital. As I have pointed out his position as rector of Westport guaranteed him some influence, but it was his constant contributions and refutations in the press that brought the true aims and ideals of the League before the majority of Irish Protestants. He urged them to join the League, to take part in what was happening, and ensuring by their involvement that the League remained non-political and non-sectarian. He gave instances of his own experience, and encouraged Protestants to believe that they would be welcomed by the League. He was supported in his arguments by other Church of Ireland clergymen, who wrote to the *Gazette*. On the question of the resolution passed by Dublin Corporation censuring the behaviour of soldiers in Sackville Street, which the *Gazette* had complained about Hannay argued,

It would be just as reasonable to hold the Archbishop of Dublin and the General Synod responsible for the actions of the Protestant Defence Association. (97)

The editorial of 17 June concluded the 'our point of view and Mr. Hannay's are and will remain irreconcilable' (98), their choice of phrase an indication of how prepared they were to listen to the League's point of view. Hannay also agreed with this statement in terms of

...the reasonableness, not to say justice of regarding Dr. Hyde and the Gaelic League as responsible for all the resolutions which are passed in Ireland. (99)

He went on to state

...the most hopeful sign of the decay of narrow and bigoted sectarianism in Ireland today is the spread of the principles of independence and religious tolerance professed and practised by the Gaelic League. (100)

In the issue of 1 July 1904, a letter appeared from a non-member of the League, 'an Irishman exiled in England', F.E. Wynne, Hannay's brother-in-law. It was 'a source of deep gratification' to the correspondent to observe the Irish revival which he somewhat optimistically described as

...overflowing old social barriers, helping to drown the catch-words and jealousies of political parties and creeds. (101)

He urged the Church of Ireland 'to put herself at the head of this movement for the discovery and development of all that is good in the Irish character, Irish customs and traditions, without necessarily committing herself to the details of any existing policy'. If she did so could 'anyone doubt that she will one day

become, in fact as well as in name, the Church of Ireland ?' (102)

In the following edition of the *Gazette*, the article that Hyde had mentioned in his letter of 26 May was published under the title 'The Gaelic League', written by Hannay. (103) He approached the subject firstly from the point of view of the Irish churchman. The League had been condemned on two counts. It was accused of being strongly political, and purely Roman Catholic. In terms of religion, it was clear that the majority of the members were Roman Catholic. This, Hannay argued, was due to the fact that most of the Irish population were Roman Catholic, and also due to the fact that many Protestants refused to join the League. He declined to accept that Protestants had grounds for complaint, and illustrated his own experiences of the League as evidence of its unsectarian nature. Citing his experiences and his observation of the League's activities, not to mention the constitution, according to which branches had to act, he strongly and repeatedly asserted in this article 'that the League actually is what it professes to be, non-political'. (104)

To this, the editor, Mr. Graham, responded,

We fully appreciated - and appreciate - the merits of the League's official programme. We praised its work in the cause of temperance. We recognised the intellectual good that must result from a general revival of interest in the Irish language and literature. We said that

Irish Protestants, as a body, ought to take more interest in these matters.... We wish nothing but ill to an intellectual extravagance which blinds men to the economic facts of their life and surroundings, to a political extravagance which not only perpetuates but intensifies the bad results of our national history; and to a sectarian extravagance which promotes injustice and intolerance. We still maintain that all these forms of extravagance are too commonly associated with the practice, as distinct from the preaching of the Gaelic League. (105)

Overall, the editorial is characterised by its concluding sentence. 'We are content to judge the League by the public acts of its members'. (106)

Signing himself 'Consistent', a Church of Ireland clergyman in a further issue of the *Gazette*, supported Hannay's arguments on behalf of the League. He admitted that many of the points put forward by the *Gazette* had facts to support them but he placed the blame for this on his own people.

We have ourselves to thank for the extreme swing of the Gaelic League pendulum for we have held aloof as a body from that movement. (107)

Although not a member of the League, he described an instance when he took part in a discussion at Gaelic League headquarters, and experienced no intolerance or prejudice, but the contrary. In this same issue another correspondant who signed himself 'T.E.R.' admired the *Gazette's* editorial on the League, and expressed the opinion that no Unionist or Protestant should have anything to do with the League,

...for the very reason which seems to commend it to Mr. Hannay and his sympathisers, viz., that it is professedly Nationalist.

The letter term he felt was 'synonymous with Romanism'. Mr. Hannay and *hoc genus omne* would do well to ponder' over this and might,

...thereby be induced to retrace their steps before they had gone to far in associating themselves with those who were humouring and making use of them while laughing at their simplicity. (108)

Protestant opinion tended to polarise around one or other of these viewpoints. In each edition of the *Gazette* during the summer of 1904, the correspondence page was, as one clergyman put it, 'a controversial arena'. (109) The majority of those who expressed their opinions were distrustful of the League, or condemned it outright. However there was a minority who supported Hannay and his efforts to obtain a fair hearing for Hyde and the League. Quite a few of these were also clergymen. One of these signed himself 'Sagart'. He characterised the Protestant attitude to the League as 'childish'.

The Protestant press throughout Ireland has nothing but censure for the Gaelic League. 'It is disloyal' ! 'It is Roman Catholic' ! ....Who is to blame ? Why, the Irish Protestants themselves.... An Irish service was held in St. Kevin's church on St Patrick's Day last and was a complete success, although its welcome at the hands of Irish Church members as a whole did not rise to the figures *cead míle*. (110)

The editor of the *Gazette* was the Rev. Mr. Graham of Celbridge, Co. Kildare. As the controversy over the

League continued Hyde began to feel persecuted by 'a monstrous figure of evil'. (111) Hyde wrote to Hannay expressing his opinions of Graham. 'He is afflicted with a racial antipathy to all things Irish'. (112)

He is like a feather bed. You may dig your fist with all your might into him and he ignores it. (113)

R.B.D. French put forward the opinion that it was not so much Graham that was responsible for the editorials as his assistant editor, whom French asserted was John E. Healy, then on the staff of the *Dublin Daily Express*, and later editor of the *Irish Times*. The style of the writing, French claims, 'can scarcely be mistaken' for that of Healy. (114) While this may be true, by 1911-12, Healy was one of Hannay's strongest supporters, especially in his protest against the policy of the General Synod of the Church of Ireland in relation to Home Rule in 1912. However, if French is correct in his opinion, Hyde himself in October of 1904 came close to the truth.

The *Daily Express* and the *Gazette* are acting in couples, and, I almost think, in collusion. (115)

Also, as early as May 1904, Hyde had written 'the *Express* continues the controversy....This perpetual skirmishing and misrepresentation is fatiguing'. (116) By the end of September 1904 the controversy came to a head. A letter was printed in the issue of 30 September which 'constituted a libel upon Hyde'. (117)



Hannay urged Hyde to take action. Hyde wrote to Hannay on 15 October informing him that he had seen a solicitor 'and desired him to demand an apology'. He had not seen the *Gazette* of that week, on doctor's orders he was not allowed out. (118) Again Hannay tried to persuade Hyde to prosecute the *Gazette* for libel, but Hyde was unwilling to pursue this course of action. He clearly saw that however satisfying it would be to humble the *Gazette*, it would alienate those who regarded it as the official organ of their Church. He chose compromise and conciliation.

I am sure my solicitor's letter frightened him. Mrs Hamilton, a very good Gaelic Leaguer thinks it would be represented as an attack on the Irish Church and would do the *Gazette* rather good than harm ! (119)

Shortly afterwards Hyde wrote again to Hannay. The solicitor's letter Hyde referred to is not with Hannay's papers, I therefore assume that Hannay returned it to Hyde having read it.

I enclose you the solicitors letter enclosing me Grahams. What do you think ? Don't you think I might let it be now ? I won't do anything 'till I hear from you. (120)

However, Hannay was exceedingly angry at the *Gazette*, and was determined to take a stand even if Hyde was unwilling to pursue the issue. He called the article 'dishonest'. In his following remarks he referred to the editor of the *Gazette*, as well as to the correspondent 'A True Irishman', who had accused Hyde

of editing a magazine called *Irish Ireland*. A magazine of this name did not exist. *Ard na h-Eireann* was the true title of the periodical that the correspondent had linked Hyde to. The *Gazette* followed this letter with an article which quoted lines from a poem in honour of the Virgin Mary, contributed by Hyde and which was printed in the periodical, as evidence of the sectarian nature of the League. Furthermore, the *Gazette* quoted from an article on a nationalist poet called John Frazer, 1804-52, originally from Birr, and a short story which had called Orangemen "treacherous, cruel and bloody" as evidence of the true nature of the League and its leader. Hannay wrote to Hyde expressing his anger. 'There is no nobility in fighting in the public streets with a prostitute...Nothing that went before is anything to this. One can excuse political prejudice and total ignorance' Not so 'with the creature who sacrifices honour and truth. (121)

He enclosed with this letter to Hyde his reply to the accusations of 'A True Irishman' which was published in the *Gazette* at the end of October. 'It was the best I could do, but I had little heart in the doing of it'. (122) In the issue of 28 October 'A True Irishman' apologised to Hyde for his 'one small inaccuracy', that of accusing Hyde of editing *Ard na h-Eireann*, and hoped that Mr. Hannay would

...abandon a position which is hardly consistent with the character of a Church which

is loyal and not foreign, and cease to appear as champion of the Gaelic League. (123)

In the same issue Hannay's letter was published, the letter he referred to when writing to Hyde. Using information sent to him by Hyde on 15 October, Hannay refuted once again the insinuations and accusations of 'A True Irishman', which he had already done in the previous issue, but directed the body of his letter towards the editor; 'your apology for 'A True Irishman' fails hopelessly and utterly'. Hannay challenged the *Gazette* to print in full Hyde's contribution to *Ard na h-Eireann* and

...allow your readers to judge for themselves who is guilty of sectarian bitterness....I am sick at heart to write such things to you. (124)

Hyde, recovering from his illness, greeted the publication of Hannay's letter with glee.

It has printed your letter therefore damning itself, and it has repeated an apology to me in a fuller form....I think I may now let matters drop....I am very grateful to you for all the trouble you have gone to in this matter....You have observed that Graham has not accepted your challenge ! (125)

Hannay was sufficiently mollified by a second apology to Hyde to allow the matter to lie still, later agreeing that it wasn't worth alienating Irish Protestants by suing Graham for libel. However, Hyde later wrote to Ada that the apologies from the *Gazette* were not all that he had desired.

Personally on reading the apology again, I think Mr. Graham has made matters rather worse, he

only regrets that his correspondent did not make his point better. (126)

It is this episode, which French describes as 'trifling' but also the 'turning point in Hannay's remarkable career'.

On the one hand he had his share of Northern combativeness, and it was fully aroused. He had fought hard for a cause which he felt to be good, defending it against charges often as inaccurate in substance as they were unscrupulous in design. (127)

However, the episode was not quite over. In his letter to the *Gazette* which appeared in the issue of 21 October, Hannay had picked up on what he thought was an error on the part of 'A True Irishman' in referring to the death of a man called 'Norbury'. Hannay thought that he was referring to Lord Norbury and proceeded to correct him. Thus he fell into error himself and was called upon by the *Gazette*, and 'A True Irishman' for his mistake as they had apologised for theirs. This Hannay did though it must have cost him great effort. He apologised for his mistake in relation to 'Norbury' and continued,

I further desire to ask your pardon and that of your readers for any words that I may have used in my letters...which were discourteous or unchristian. If it should ever be my hard duty again to defend a cause or a friend in a newspaper I shall try to be more gentle and more sympathetic...I do not apologise for having taken the part of the Gaelic League and Dr. Hyde. I am in no way ashamed of approving the aims and principles of the League, and I am more than ever proud to call myself the humble admirer and sincere friend of An Craoibhin Aoiibhin. (128)

In a further letter to Ada Hyde wrote the Hannay was 'really a saint to write that apology, for it was the fault of the anonymous letter-writer which misled him'. (129)

As I have mentioned previously, it was at this time that Hannay dated his membership of the League, stating that he and Ada became members during October 1904. (130) However, his autobiography is unreliable in matters of dates. the *Irish Peasant*, in an article in June 1906, put the date of his involvement at 1903, though it did not say whether Hannay had become a member. (131) Their attempts to learn the language were mostly unsuccessful. Hannay blamed his inability to reproduce musical and foreign sounds. It was during these early days of trying to learn Irish that they met Stephen Gwynn.

Canon Hannay had interested himself keenly in the language revival, and since very few of the Irish Protestant clergy were doing the same, was held in high esteem by the League as a whole. I saw this friend of mine for the first time at one of the League's annual Conventions, the Ard Fhéis, which he attended as a delegate from the Westport branch; and I rather think that the first words I heard George A. Birmingham utter were uttered in Irish. If so they were very badly uttered. To hear myself speaking Gaelic is to know how Anglo-Irish I am; and Hannay was if possible more lacking in the chords and palatal arrangements which a good tongue of Irish demands....Hannay's speech, like mine, betrayed him for an Anglo-Irishman. (132)

In November or December of 1904 the League elected Hannay to the Coisde Gnótha or executive committee, in

recognition of his 'enhanced standing' within the League due to his valiant support of Hyde and the League during the controversy with the *Gazette*. (133) Hyde wrote just before Christmas.

Let me congratulate you on being co-opted on our Coisde Gnótha, I believe unanimously....You will now know the League from the inside....and judge for yourself if you have done rightly in championing it. (134)

His parting remark in this letter, is, I agree with French, 'a little touch of mischief'. (135) 'You will find four or five priests on the Coisde Gnótha along with you'. (136) It was not long before Hyde saw how much mischief this was to cause. In his election Hannay was supported by branches in 'Dublin, New York, Manchester, and Castlebar', (137) and his proposer, Mary Butler, wrote to him that

...there was quite a little scene of enthusiasm when the result was announced. As a Protestant clergyman, she thought, he would be a tower of strength, and his election, besides attracting more members both from his Church and her own, would show that the League was really and truly unsectarian. (138)

Almost immediately what became known as the 'Kilkenny Dispute' arose. In December of 1904, the Kilkenny branch of the League, under the presidency of Captain the Hon. Otway Cuffe, had been preparing to stage a nativity play written by Hyde. The priests in Kilkenny had not been consulted and they issued a statement opposing the performance of the play. They pointed out that such an undertaking should be closely supervised

by the Church, and denounced the play as 'an unwarrantable and dangerous liberty with one of the most sublime mysteries of the Catholic faith'. The secretary of the Kilkenny branch replied to the clergy's statement in a letter which was published in the press. This letter explained that 'The Nativity Play' was written in Irish by Dr Douglas Hyde, and was translated into English by Lady Gregory. It went on to point out that the solemn theme of the play was dealt with in a reverent manner and was produced in convents and other Roman Catholic institutions without complaint. 'The chief cause for censure seems to lie in the fact that some intending to take part were non-Catholics'. This was, wrote the secretary, regrettable as those involved considered the meeting of members of different churches 'in perfect harmony and in deep reverence' as one of 'the chief sources of satisfaction' and entirely in keeping with the spirit of the Gaelic League'. (139) Hyde wrote to Hannay expressing his surprise and hurt.

The little play has been often cited in convents and the Bishop was present in Sligo, I believe, when it was played. (140)

When the League was first founded, the Roman Catholic Church had been wary of, and indeed, in some cases, hostile to, the movement. As it grew and developed many of the younger clergy became members 'the need was seen to exercise a quiet but effective control from within'.

(141) Catholic clergy were usually invited to become a patron of each branch, if not the president of the branch. The Catholic clergy became a dominant force in the League and occupied a very powerful position. The *Church of Ireland Gazette* took up the issue. The incident

...adds another to many recent proofs of the fact that Protestant compromise with Roman Catholicism is impossible....It gives us a lurid forecast of the spirit and influences that would mould and inform a Roman Catholic University under ecclesiastical control....We are curious to see how the Gaelic League will regard the interdict of the Kilkenny priests....On former occasions the League has allowed itself to be influenced by ecclesiastical dictation in a manner that has done much to discredit it among Protestants in sympathy with its aims. (142)

French describes the Kilkenny dispute as 'one of the "incidents" which diversified' the history of the League. (143) At the very least, it was the first of what can be seen as a series of incidents which put the League in a position which seemed to call for definite action. Hyde, however, was unwilling to test the strength of the League, a position that he continued to occupy when faced with the other incidents, Strokestown, Portarlinton, and Claremorris. He wrote to Hannay in January 1905 that 'It is not a matter of first rate importance'. (144) Hannay was, on the other hand, inclined to react more strongly. To him it was a chance 'to assert vigorously the unsectarian character



of the League'. (145) Hyde, no matter what his personal reaction was, was determined to avoid controversy

The League will not go on with the play, for the obvious reason, if for no other, that it could only be acted in an atmosphere of calm and goodwill. You will be glad to hear that their action is widely disapproved of, and Capt. Cuffe...thinks the bishop is very sorry he spoke - and the Franciscan priests are bricks and have stuck by the League as well. In fact good rather than harm seems to have come from it. The clergy have lost some credit and prestige, and the League has been consolidated. (146)

He also gave some insight to his views on the clergy.

....no doubt the fact that the League forced the managers (against their will in some cases) to have Irish taught in the schools, made the clergy glad to hit back when they thought they saw their chance....I think the reply of the local branch very plucky, and it is pretty certain no body of Roman Catholics before the rise of the League would have gone half so far in asserting their independence....I read the article in the *Gazette*, it characteristically made the most of the matter....I would not bother much about one incident of this kind'. (147)

Two months later Rolleston wrote to Hannay, warning that the increasing power of the Catholic Church would have to be carefully monitored if the League's independence was to be preserved. He saw the Kilkenny incident as a ominous portent of the League's fate.

...politics in fact have now been, like everything else, absorbed into the Church - everything but one thing, and that one thing is the Gaelic League. The League represents the last effort of the Irish spirit for nationality and a personal independence. The Church began by opposing it; it's now, as usual, doing its utmost to absorb it, when it will become the mere tame cat like the political party and cease to have any vital existence for the future of Ireland. Whether the League can resist the Church any better than the politicians did is

very doubtful, but we must fight the matter out as best we can - and *qui vivra verrea*. (148)

During 1905, as shown in the previous chapter, 'George A. Birmingham' was quite busy, with the writing and publication of his first novel. However James Owen Hannay was also quite busy, continuing to defend the League's interests. The *Mayo News* in January 1905 declared,

Mr. Hannay deserves great credit for his courage in acting as he has done on several occasions on committees where he has sat side by side not only with Catholic priests, but with men of the most advanced National views and thereby giving offence to many bigoted members of his own flock. (149)

*The Seething Pot* was published on 3 March of this year. Hannay was already hard at work on his second novel. He sent a draft manuscript to Rolleston at the end of March. The latter advised him not to publish it in its present form. He did not regard it as a worthy successor to *The Seething Pot* and voiced disapproval of the portraits of living people that it contained.

You are bound to go one better in a second book or at any rate make it *different*. But here you are simply telling an identical story....Your next book ought if possible to show how a man can do something for Ireland without allying himself with any of the showy and noisy 'policies' we hear so much of. (150)

He advised him to write on the present state of affairs in Ireland.

English people know very little about the real significance of the Gaelic League, nothing whatever of the 'Hungarian Policy',....religious bigotry is also a phenomenon deserving study and attention. (151)

On the subject of *Hyacinth*, Rolleston wrote again on 10 April, 'If you *must* preach, I suppose you *must*', but he made further criticisms of the manuscript.

Augusta Goold's character is portrayed in a much more favourable light than it deserves. (152)

Augusta Goold represented Maud Gonne. Rolleston was also of the opinion that Hannay was too generous in his treatment of members of Sinn Féin.

The 'United Irishmen'...are a venomous little clique, quite incapable of carrying through any policy worthy to be called a national one. their constant attempts to run the Gaelic League in the interests of their own faction and their own rather purile idea of nationality are as great a danger to the League as the bigotry...of the *Leader*. (153)

The following week he received a letter from Hannay, in which he had asked Rolleston for advice about some of the people which he had included in his book.

Rolleston replied,

Maud Gonne does smoke ! You describe her appearance very well but her beauty was always spoiled by her passion for posing. Griffith I never saw. I wish you could have a talk with Plunkett and tell him your mind. He could be depended on to keep your secret. He has often spoken to me with great admiration for your book. (154)

The secret referred to was, of course, the true identity of 'George A. Birmingham', a secret which was not to last much longer.

The publication, *A dictionary of Irish history*, D.J. Hickey and J.E. Doherty, (ed.), lists Hannay as a member of the General Synod of the Church of Ireland

for the years 1905-1915. (155) This is incorrect. According to the *Journal of the General Synod*, Hannay was a member of the house of representatives, for the diocese of Tuam, Killlala, and Achonry, as early as 1903. (156) The election of new members for the house of representatives, clerical and lay, was held each year on the first day of the Synod. Individuals were nominated either *viva voce* or by letter to one of the Secretaries of the General Synod. A list of nominees was read aloud to the Synod meeting. If only one person was nominated for each diocese, they were declared duly elected. If more than one person was nominated, an election was held, conducted by two Assessors, appointed by the President of the Synod. (157) In Hannay's case there is no record in the *Journal* for 1903, of his proposer, or his election. Comparing the list of the representatives from the parish of Tuam, Killlala, and Achonry, for the year 1902 and for the year 1903, yielded only the information that Hannay replaced Dean William C. Townsend. (158)

Hannay was quite young when elected to the Synod. One reason for this, apart from his position as rector of Westport, an important parish, may have been his appointment as Donnellan lecturer in Trinity College, Dublin, the previous year, and the subsequent publication of those lectures as *The spirit and origin*

of *Christian Monasticism* in 1903. An entry in Ada's diary, for 1905, recalls a trip to Dublin for a meeting of that year's Synod.

Monday May 1, Jim went to Synod...I went to Nat. Lit. Soc. - had to speak, met Rolleston.  
(159)

It was at this time that Hannay first made contact with Sir Horace Plunkett. Long an admirer of Plunkett Hannay had written to him early in May on Rolleston's advice. Plunkett replied that he looked forward to meeting Hannay and added, 'It would be a great pleasure to me to discuss the problems of Irish life with you'. On May 10, Ada noted in her diary, 'Letter from Rolleston and book from Sir H. Plunkett. "secret out"  
(160)

Again, the "secret" referred to the true identity of George A. Birmingham. Although some people in Dublin, mainly in literary and League circles, now knew that Hannay and Birmingham were one and the same, it still wasn't common knowledge.

Andrew Gailey, in *Ireland and the death of kindness: the experience of constructive unionism 1890-1905*, has drawn attention to Hannay at this time, following the publication of *The Seething Pot*. 'Flushed by the reception' that the novel had received from 'Irish political society',

Hannay began concocting a scheme for a radical alliance between Sinn Féin and the Independent Orange Order (which he interpreted as a revival of northern prestyberian radicalism of the

1790s) against the domination of the narrow priest and the political boss. (162)

The evidence that Gailey cites for Hannay's reaction to *The Seething Pot*, 'flushed' by its reception, as he phrases it, is a single line from Ada Hannay's diary, 4 July 1905, which it seems Gailey mistakenly believes was Hannay's own diary. (163)

According to Ada's diary, on 23 June 'J. received invitation to stay with Sir Horace Plunkett'. (164)

Plunkett wrote,

We think it would be of great advantage to the Dept. if you could possibly make it convenient to come up to Dublin. (165)

This he did on Monday 3 July, and on the following day, Ada recorded,

J. lunched at Kildare St. Club with Sir Horace and Lord Monteagle. Went to Department. Had tea with the Lord Lieutenant at Viceregal Lodge ! Met Dean Bernard and got promise of Gaelic celebrations at St. Patrick's. All enthusiasts over "pot". (166)

Rolleston had written to Hannay the previous March, expressing his discontent with the powerful position that Catholic clergy occupied in Irish life. As we have seen before, in the aftermath of the Kilkenny incident, he was pessimistic about the Gaelic League. Although he supported the League, Rolleston felt that it would not long withstand the pressure of the clergy, and would therefore lose its independence. In his letter of 14 March, he suggested to Hannay an

alternative solution to the problem of 'priestly influence' in Ireland.

If only the Northern democracy would come in then we should see an Ireland to be proud of....The thing seems so obvious that it seems to me if one could get twenty Orangemen around a table and put it before them, they would go out new men with a mission and the North would be won. I wonder would it not be possible in the strictest secrecy and quietness to get together some such gathering and talk to it ? (167)

Hannay thought over Rolleston's suggestion, one which appealed to him immensely. Although Hannay was a firm believer in the work of national reconciliation through the Gaelic League, he was also a firm believer in the re-establishment of the gentry's position as leaders of Irish society, a theme which he explored, as we have seen, in *The Seething Pot*. This re-establishment could be brought about, in his view with the help of the members of his native northern province, replacing Catholic ecclesiastical power with ascendancy power. Hannay contacted Lindsay Crawford, the Grand Master of the Independent Orange Order, in May 1905. (168) The Independent Orange Order was a breakaway group from the Orange Order. Crawford was a 'leading propagandist' of the Order, and founded the *Irish Protestant* in 1901, which he edited until 1906. Hannay wrote to him putting forward Rolleston's suggestion and declared that,

I have the possible union of the two Irish democracies so deeply at heart that I want it made perfectly plain from the start that while we are willing to trust our R.C. fellow

countrymen we are not going to shut our eyes or allow them to shut theirs to the danger of priestly tyranny. I believe Griffith is able to see the danger as clearly as we do... (169)

The two democracies that he referred to were, on the one hand, that of the northern Protestants, and on the other, that of Griffith and Sinn Féin, and those of either religion who were working against Roman Catholic 'priestly tyranny'. Hannay continued in his letter,

I shall be all eagerness to hear the result of Magheramore. We can't expect a revolution in six weeks but we can keep at it and it is an immense comfort to me to feel that you are the kind of man who will keep at it. (170)

Hannay informed Crawford that he was planning a series of articles on 'A further chapter in the history of Irish Protestantism' in which he hoped to 'tell the story of the volunteer movement of 1782'. (171) He also wrote to Hyde, enlarging on his plans.

We have first of all to get the idea of nationalism into the heads and hearts of the Orangemen... I am starting next week in the *Irish Protestant* a series of articles giving a short history of the Volunteer movement of 1780. I want to rub it in that the thing was a Protestant patriotic movement, a stand for Irish rights and that it was the thing Protestants have more reason to be proud of than anything else they ever did in Ireland. I mean in the end to draw the inevitable conclusion "This is our constitution. As patriots, Protestants, and loyalists we are bound to...our legal constitution - not given back to us for it never could be legally taken away - but recognised and acted on". (172)

In July, Crawford produced the Maghermore Manifesto, a document which emerged from a meeting of the



Independent Orange Order, in Magheramore, near Larne, Co. Antrim, a document for which Crawford was personally responsible and in which a minority of 'Orangemen were declaring unionism' to be 'a discredited creed' and calling on 'Protestant and Roman Catholic' to 'in their common trials unite on a true basis of nationality'. (173)

The Manifesto also called for compulsory land purchase, a national university for Ireland and it attacked the Ulster Unionist Council.

Hannay greeted this as 'the most hopeful document which has appeared in Ireland for the last hundred years'. (174) However, Crawford was not at all representative of northern Protestants. He was, as O'Neill sums up,

...an idiosyncratic figure whose ideas were becoming more and more distanced from those of the majority of his co-religionists. (175)

Crawford's views led to his expulsion from the Independent Orange Order in 1908.

Hannay was somewhat naïvely optimistic about the manifesto, and unrealistic about the strength and power of the Roman Catholic clergy.

The...question now is whether the rest of Ireland will respond to the call or whether the priests still have the powers to smother the national spirit. No doubt they will try and no doubt they have the control of the whole, or about the whole, of the Irish nationalist press. However, if the people don't respond today they will tomorrow. (176)

Hannay was overly optimistic and largely naïve in his hopes for a union of the 'two democracies', the northern Protestants, and Griffith and Sinn Féin, together with the minority of others who saw the dangers of ecclesiastical dominance in Irish life. However, although he adopted Rolleston's suggestion about courting the support of the Orangemen, and although he enthusiastically entered into lengthy correspondence with Crawford, whom he felt was representative of the opinion of the majority of Orangemen, on the issue, it seems somewhat extreme to judge him as actively 'concocting a scheme for a radical alliance' between Sinn Féin and the Independent Orange Order, as Gailey has done. (177)

This seems too definite a course of action for one so new to the scene of Irish politics. Hannay had not yet met Griffith personally. His zeal was the result of his idealistic nature. For all his perception, Gailey wrote, Hannay's analysis of the situation in this instance was 'singularly myopic'. The denouement of his own novel should have indicated to him the fate of one who tried to 'cross the class divide and reconcile the two traditions', failure. (178) Perhaps this is so. Experience had not yet taught him this difficult lesson, and he remained incurably optimistic that common ground could be found for the two traditions.

It wasn't until many years later that he resignedly wrote,

...the most striking feature of Irish politics is the stability of parties...The nationalist remains steadfastly nationalist. The unionists steadfastly unionist. No one imagines that the opinions of the voter can be altered by any means. (179)

During July, 1905, he published a further series of articles in the *Irish Peasant* on the Gaelic League as an economic and social force in the country. Meanwhile he and Hyde were corresponding on the situation of the Church and politics. Hyde confided to Hannay his views on the topic of ecclesiastical power.

I have long been of the confirmed opinion that the only way to kill undue ecclesiastical power or undue use of it, is to give Ireland Home Rule when the eyes of the country would be centred on their lay representatives. At present I don't believe that the most far-seeing of the bishops even desire Home Rule and they were glad to seize the opportunity to get rid of Parnell whose continued leadership would have made it a certainty...for a bishop now is a little prince...but Home Rule would put up other idols beside him... (180)

During August, the Hannays travelled to Dublin for the Gaelic League Oireachtas. Ada shopped while Hannay attended the Ard Fheis. It was at this time that they first met Griffith, who, according to Hannay,

...was utterly unlike any Irish politician that I knew. He had no gift of private conversation...When he did speak it was briefly and coldly. Yet, from the first time that I met him I was greatly attracted by him. (181)

Hannay continued trying through his writings to draw both sides together. His experiences at the Ard Fheis

provided material for a letter to the *Londonderry Sentinel*, an implacable foe of the League.

Will you, sir, and the gentlemen who have written letters to your paper in dispraise of the League, believe me when I assure you that we talked no party politics and no religion. We discussed matters connected with the organisation of our society. It is in the hope of inducing you and your highly intelligent but somewhat terrified correspondent, the 'Loyal Protestant' to think a little less hardly of us poor Gaelic Leaguers that I send you this brief note of my own experiences. (182)

He continued, giving a detailed account of what had taken place at the Ard Fheis. Hyde later wrote, calling it an 'admirable letter'. (183).

During the Ard Fheis a resolution was passed, 'That it is our opinion that the Irish people should establish a Gaelic University for themselves without delay'.

This resolution was adopted, one hundred votes to forty five. The following week the *Church of Ireland Gazette* once more tackled the League, posing the following questions.

What about the 'non-political' and 'non-sectarian' character of the Gaelic League? If there is any Irish question which is both highly political and intensely sectarian it is the University Question;...Does the League expect to gain Protestant support by passing an implied vote of censure on Trinity College? (184)

The editorial went on to criticise

...other resolutions passed demanding equality for Irish with Greek and German in the Intermediate examinations and pre-eminence for it in primary education. (185)

Furthermore, the *Gazette* pointed out, the League called for Irish to be made a compulsory subject for the entrance examination of teacher training colleges, that school managers would not accept teachers from training colleges which did not make Irish compulsory, and for parents to send their children to only those colleges which met the views of the League. The method, the *Gazette* declared 'seeks to force the Irish language on an unwilling nation by making it compulsory upon teachers' and 'a condition of public employment' (186) and were denounced as the 'Russian methods of the Gaelic League'. Hannay once more prepared to defend the League. Both he and Patrick O'Daly (General Secretary of the League), wrote to explain the position of the League. Prefacing their letters, the *Gazette's* editor insisted that both Hannay and O'Daly had misinterpreted the remarks of the previous week.

We did not attack the rational study of the Irish language nor did we suggest for a moment that Trinity College satisfies at present all the needs of a body which puts Irish on the same level as Greek and German. What we did say was that the governing body of an organisation which professes to be strictly 'non-political' and 'non-sectarian' had committed itself to a resolution of a very political and sectarian character. Mr. Hannay's sarcasm cannot, any more than Falstaff's wit 'coruscate away the facts of life'....Do Mr. Hannay and Mr. O'Daly assert that the resolution of the Ard Fheis does not imply and was not meant to imply, that Trinity College is 'anti-Irish' and do they suppose that one in a thousand of the Irish Protestants whom

the League invited into its parlour will endorse that opinion ? (187)

Hannay began his letter by asking, 'What is there political or religious in the idea of a Gaelic University ?....Why is the suggestion of such a University to be reckoned an insult to Trinity College ?' and once more attempted 'again the somewhat difficult task of making our position plain to you', concluding with 'At present our policy of maintaining a strict neutrality in all sectarian disputes seems to be working very well. We are steadily gaining more and more sympathy and help from Protestants. (188)

O'Daly's letter echoed what Hannay had said though the tone was more aggressive, Hannay's was calm and polite, he had learned from his first defence of the League, and did not intend to apologise again. However, neither of them addressed another question that had been posed by the *Gazette*, 'If the resolution was absolutely "non-political" and "non-sectarian", why was its adoption resisted by Mr T.W. Rolleston ?' (189) Rolleston had proposed an amendment to the resolution, to the effect that the League should refuse to commit itself to any particular policy on the University Question. This amendment was defeated by eighty one votes to sixty four. Rolleston himself explained his own actions in a letter to the *Gazette* the following week.



I resisted the adoption of the resolution because I thought the League ought not to recommend other people to do things which it was not going to do itself and with which it had no concern...I merely deplored the outbreak in the League of that disease of 'resolutionitis' to which public bodies in Ireland are prone, and which the League has hitherto strongly discouraged. (190)

On the subject of Trinity College, he added,

...with great respect and gratitude for Trinity College. I cannot forgive it for bringing me up in utter ignorance of my own country, and ignoring, as it does to this day, not only the Gaelic League, but the whole history and literature of Ireland, ancient and modern. The class of Irishmen who get their education there...are brought up to despise what the rest of the country honours and loves, because their University brands it as not worth knowing. And they and the country suffer for it more than they realise at present. (191)

Fortune, however, was not smiling on the side of the Leaguers. Within a few days, the Strokestown branch of the Gaelic League, 'embittered by the Government's policy on the teaching of Irish in the national schools, adopted, on the proposal of a priest, a violent political motion'. (192)

The resolution declared that in view of the action of the Government,

...'it was the duty of all Gaelic Leaguers, although the Gaelic League is a non-political association, to be disloyal to that Government and her representatives in this country; to weaken their influence as far as possible; and, in particular, to use all their efforts to prevent all classes of our countrymen from enlisting in the British army'. (193)

For the *Gazette*, this incident provided the ideal 'opportunity for bringing matters to a direct issue'.

The *Gazette* challenged the governing body of the League to take measures publicly to denounce the resolution. If this challenge was not taken up, the League, it declared, would lose all credibility, 'the approval of silence' would mean that the League could not maintain that it was 'non-political' with any truth or decency.

Our chief criticism of the League is that while it is in theory 'non-political' and 'non-sectarian' it does not condemn many highly political and sectarian things that are said and done under its auspices. (194)

Hyde made his intentions clear in a letter to Hannay towards the end of September.

It is only too true that the confounded branch in Strokestown passed that resolution....The stupid bosthoons!....I'll try to get the branch to rescind the resolution. If not I'll bring it before the Coisde Gnótha and ask for a vote of censure....The worst of it is that Father Brennan (a great friend of mine, confound him) is about the best Gaelic Leaguer in Roscommon. (195)

On 21 September, at a public meeting at the Rotunda, Hyde publicly censured the Strokestown resolution and as Hannay wrote to the *Gazette*,

...re-asserted in the strongest terms possible the non-political position of the League and warned all branches against meddling in politics....The reception which the great meeting gave to the President's pronouncement is a proof that not only the leaders of the movement but the great mass of the rank and file are determined to keep their organisation clear of political disputings. 196)

The Strokestown branch, 'in deference to the opinion of our respected President', rescinded their



resolution. Meanwhile, in the columns of the *Gazette*, the League received many letters of support from both members and non-members alike.

Many members of the Church of Ireland are Gaelic Leaguers, and that hostility displayed in the columns of your paper must naturally distress and offend them as expressing the opinion of the representative journal of their Church. (197)

The above correspondent, J.C. Kane, was not a member of the League. Another correspondent, Richmond Noble, also protested against the conduct of the *Gazette*.

...we Irish have to tolerate each other's religious views in the same manner as in any other country. Comments, such as yours are not well calculated to bring about such a result. I can only infer that you desire that Protestants should join no movement which has the welfare of Ireland at heart. (198)

In November, Rolleston expanded his views on the University Question in a lengthy article, 'Irish Protestantism and the Gaelic Movement'.

An inward transformation must first take place, and a mountain of ignorance and prejudice must be removed from the mind before the average Irish Protestant can be an effective force in Ireland. For my own part I feel more and more that the false system of education in Ireland, and especially University education, is at the bottom of the trouble. (199)

Hannay followed this with a twelve page article in *The Independent Review* on the League, its origins, development and growth, how it was helping the country, not only in terms of language, but also in other areas, for example, the economic revival, the literary revival, and compared the Irish and their

problems, to the Danes, holding the latter as an example of what could be done.

The Danes have proved their case in Denmark. Will the Gaelic League be able to prove its case in Ireland ?....What threatens the League's future usefulness is, paradoxical as this may seem, its growing popularity. (200)

The original members of the League were enthusiastic, self-sacrificing, and absolutely loyal to the non-political and non-sectarian constitution, Hannay argued, now it remained to be seen whether the new mass of members would be permeated by the old spirit or would the League 'a new babe in the wood' be buried 'under a fluttering shower of unanimous resolutions'. (201)

Entries in Ada's diary for December, 1905, show that the last proofs of *Hyacinth* were finished on 29 December, and the novel was published in February, 1906. The plot of Hannay's second novel centres around Hyacinth Conneally, the son of a Connemara clergyman, who goes to Trinity College, where he is treated badly by his fellow students, because of his pro-Boer sympathies. Driven by loneliness, he becomes friends with a group of young men with nationalist views, leaves the Divinity School, and becomes a traveller for woollen goods, and finally becomes a curate in the Church of England. There is a link with *The Seething Pot*. At the time Hyacinth enters Trinity, John

O'Neill, the Nationalist leader of the first novel, has been five years dead. According to H.A. O'Donnell,

This story provides Hannay with the opportunities he wants to criticise the English government of Ireland, the attitude of Trinity College to Irish affairs, and more especially, the selfishness of the Roman Catholic Church and the Convent industries. (202)

This is a somewhat narrow view. All of the above institutions received criticism, it is true, but more importantly, this novel provided Hannay with the opportunities to explore his hopes for national regeneration and reconciliation through the character of Hyacinth.

Although the identity of George A. Birmingham was known in some Dublin circles, it was still a secret in the West of Ireland when *Hyacinth* was published. Shortly before its publication, Hannay delivered a lecture in Dublin, on Irish fiction.

His conclusion, that it lacked a wholesome romanticism, was not liked by the platform, and the proceedings were about to close on a note of lukewarm and grudging tribute when John Dillon, with a touch of the impulsive generosity associated with the family name, rose from his place in the audience, praised the brilliancy of the lecturer, rebuked the dullness of the audience, and revealed Hannay as the author of *The Seething Pot*. (203)

French dramatically claimed 'The West was instantly awake', but on the contrary, it was two or three months before recriminations started to appear. (204) Also in January of this year Hannay gave an important lecture entitled, 'Is the Gaelic League political?'

This was 'delivered under the auspices of the branch of the five provinces', and was chaired by Eoin MacNeill. This branch was also known as Craobh na gcúig gcúigí, and had been founded in Dublin in 1905.

Its objects were, as its secretary informed James Bryce, 'to draw "the quality" into the movement' because 'One feels so much the unhappy alienation between the different classes and creeds in Ireland'. The branch's president was, significantly, Rolleston, and one of his vice-presidents was Hannay. (205)

There is no other evidence that I have found which supports the allegation that Hannay was actively involved in this branch, O'Neill provides no reference for his evidence of Hannay's involvement. Hannay's lecture was later published as a pamphlet. In this lecture Hannay declared that

The enemies of the Gaelic League have no worse terms of abuse in their vocablury than these two words - Religious and Political - ....poor Ireland, the battleground of creeds, the fever swamp of miasmic bigotry....Our opponents, are all of them occupying themselves in this game of politics...such an extremely exciting and interesting game....They think that we have got hold of some new and extremely subtle way of playing the game which they themselves don't quite understand'. (206)

One point he endeavoured to get across to those who labelled the League as a political organisation was that during January, during the build-up to the General Election, 'for the last three weeks or so the Gaelic League has almost disappeared out of the public view'. (207) Again and again he asserted

The Gaelic League is non-political. Its members are, therefore, free to hold any political

opinions they choose. The Gaelic League can't denounce everything....It won't denounce the politics of particular members because to do so would be contrary to one of the articles of its constitution....I assert that my principles and opinions have made no difference whatever to my position in the League. I do not find that I am looked on askance, that I am distrusted or shunned. On the contrary I am received with the utmost possible friendliness. (208)

Here it is clear that he is speaking of treatment within the League. Outside the League his own parishoners, as he recalled in his autobiography, treated him with suspicion and distrust. However, he continued to claim,

...no man joining the League, no matter what his political or religious opinions may be, need fear persecution or ostracism... (209)

In the light of developments during the following months, Hannay would later find that these confident assurances had a hollow ring. He concluded with,

I can imagine no greater misfortune to the League itself...than the capture of the League by any political party whatever. He does an evil day's work who attempts such a capture. (210)

*Hyacinth* was more realistic, and yet more optimistic than *The Seething Pot* had been. Hannay abandoned the Anglo-Irish gentleman as his hero, for *Hyacinth*, unlike his previous hero, though idealistic, was not of the ascendancy class, 'with nothing but his Irishness to recommend him as the new man Ireland so desperately needed' (211) Yet it was this attribute which gave Hannay his theme, the hope of national regeneration and reconciliation. However, many aspects

of *Hyacinth* caused Hannay trouble. Chief among these was the general identification of the convent in the novel, Robeen, with the Providence Woollen Mills at Foxford, Co Mayo, an institution started by the Sisters of Charity in 1891.

In the novel, *Hyacinth*, working for a privately owned mill appeals to the public to buy Irish manufacture and is appalled by the dealings of the gombeen man. The mill where he works then is financially ruined by competition from the convent mill which 'paying near starvation wages and subsidised by the government' is able to undersell the competition. (212) Apart from unfair business methods, there were other criticisms of the fictional convent. Therese Law saw that 'Plunkett's influence on Hannay's thought is reflected in passages in *Hyacinth*

One of *Hyacinth's* friends [Tim Halloran] has returned from the reception of his sister into a convent. He is bitter not only at the loss of his sister, but because of the dowry of £600 which his father was obliged to pay. 'It ought to be invested in a local factory or in waterworks, or gasworks, or fifty other things that would benefit the town it's made in. Instead of which, off it goes to Munich for stained glass, or to Italy for a marble altar. Is it any wonder that Ireland is crying out with poverty?' (213)

Plunkett, in *Ireland in the new century*, included a chapter entitled, 'Church buildings and monastic establishments', where he criticised

...the multiplication...of costly and elaborate monastic and conventual institutions, involving in the aggregate what must be an enormous annual

expenditure for maintenance, is difficult to reconcile with the known conditions of the country. (214)

Hannay, in the preface to his next novel, for reasons which will be discussed in more detail, declared that his 'Robeen' was not the Foxford mill, but admitted that in certain particulars there was too close a resemblance between the two. He said that he believed that the Foxford factory had been started with a philanthropic and not a commercial motive and that the wages paid in the factory were probably not below the usual standard in Connaught. He did, however, hint that there was injustice in subsidising a business which would compete with other unsubsidised commercial undertakings.

Rolleston, writing just after *Hyacinth* was published, congratulated him.

I did enjoy the book extremely....*Hyacinth* is something we must all be grateful to you for; which means of course that you will be nearly as much abused for it as Sir Horace Plunkett for his *Ireland*. (215)

Rolleston was correct in his prophecy. Hannay was to be abused for this novel, but moreso than Plunkett had been. In relation to prophecy, Hannay had written in *The Seething Pot*,

It remains for someone, a prophet, to see the good and evil, to know where each comes from and to divide them one from the other. (216)

Law asked the question, 'Was Hannay that prophet? He met at least, a prophet's fate'. (217) Reaction to

Hannay's early novels can be divided into three categories, according to Law, the politically disinterested was the first reaction, and the least vociferous.

In relation to *The Seething Pot* the reviews have already been examined. With the publication of *Hyacinth*, more and more of the English newspapers began to take note of George A. Birmingham. Under the title of 'The Vicious circle in Ireland', the *Manchester Guardian* regarded the pseudonymous author as

...a close, acutely critical and yet not wholly unsympathetic student of the various currents and cross-currents of social, political, and religious feelings in modern Ireland. (218)

The *Daily Chronicle* reported

Two books which are being widely read in Ireland just now, *The Seething Pot*, and *Hyacinth* are significant of the present mood. They are notable for their bright sidelights on the Irish character but more especially for the ideals which are brought forward by the author. He is keenly critical of things as they are, but at the same time reveals a genuine spirit of national sentiment. (219)

The second reaction to Hannay's early novels, according to Law, was 'less disinterested' than the first 'but also praised Hannay usually because the reader saw something of his own ideas reflected in Hannay's'. (220) Michael Davitt wrote to Hannay thanking him for a copy of *Hayacinth*,



You are not a jot too severe upon us  
Nationalists and Catholics for our faults and  
failings. (221)

Horace Plunkett wrote a lengthy letter about his  
reactions to *Hyacinth*, and his hopes that Hannay's  
work would continue.

I think it is a far more powerful statement of  
Irish problems than *The Seething Pot* though I  
daresay the latter will have the greater  
popularity. *Hyacinth* compels thought and that at  
once narrows the circle of readers. I am afraid  
you will be very bitterly attacked by the R.C.  
organisation....Such criticism as yours,  
Davitt's, Frank H. O'Donnell's, and mine...the  
greater independence of the new occupying  
owners, the influence of the Gaelic League, the  
growing popular interest in educational  
problems...will all combine to force the clergy  
to reconsider their position and moderate their  
ambitions and pretensions in secular life...The  
criticism of your own Church and T.C.D.  
beautifully balanced the criticism of the R.C.  
Church...To me it is a true and masterly  
analysis of things as they were from five to ten  
years ago. (222)

Plunkett did offer one criticism. He felt that the  
novel lead nowhere.

If you follow it up with a book which gives us a  
silver lining to the cloud you have painted, you  
may add to the inestimable service of  
courageously telling us the truth, the still  
rarer service of stimulating constructive  
thought at a time when something can be  
done,....Would that I had your imagination,  
literary lore and training. I would show the  
world what I mean ! (223)

Alice Stopford Green wrote at the end of February,

Your indictment against Trinity is racy and  
justified; and I wonder to how many it will be  
new as it was to me, that formidable thing about  
the Foxford nuns and their subsidy. (224)

The reference to the Foxford nuns is in relation to Hannay's fictitious convent industry, 'Robeen', which seemed to many people to be the same place. A.S. Green was just one. The whole issue of Foxford/'Robeen', and the trouble that Hannay found himself in over this issue will be dealt with later, as it is an integral part of later events.

Hannay did earn himself quite a bit of criticism over *Hyacinth*, but there were two types of criticism. It is important to differentiate between those who criticised, believing either they or their beliefs had been insulted by his novels, and those who offered literary criticism. Criticism of the latter type echoed much of what had been said about *The Seething Pot*, especially in relation to characterisation. The *United Irishman* did not

...consider George A. Birmingham a bigot, - we consider him an extremely well-informed man on many matters on which he is now sure he is an authority. He views Ireland not from her centre but from a corner, and his vision, not his heart is at fault. (225)

Exception was taken, by the *United Irishman*, and other papers which reviewed the novel, as with his previous novel, to the characters of *Hyacinth*.

...nine-tenths of the readers of *Hyacinth* will identify them with real persons...we do not question his right to criticise any and every party in Ireland, and any and every influence in the country. But we question the good taste of the manner in which this information is conveyed. (226)

Many did, however, question Hannay's right to criticise. The third reaction, that Law pointed out, to Hannay's early novels as a group, was 'partisan and acrimonious'. (227) He was attacked from many angles. The local parish priest, Fr. McDonald, attacked him for personal reasons, and for criticising the Roman Catholic Church and clergy. Nationalists were angry because they felt he ridiculed their institutions. Many of his own class and creed had long mistrusted him, but now rejected him altogether. Law saw Hannay's difficulty with his own class reflected in the dilemma of the idealistic Hyacinth,

...who attacks the Church of Ireland for offering the people a church which is "in sentiment and sympathy...English and not Irish". And in an interview with Dr Henry, [based on Dean J.H. Bernard], his mentor at Trinity College, Hyacinth is warned that "there is nothing more fatal to a man among the people with whom you and I live and work than the suspicion of being tainted with Nationalist ideas". (228)

In March, Hannay made history by celebrating Holy Communion in Irish in St. Patrick's Cathedral, Dublin, on St. Patrick's Day. As Ada recorded in her diary he had convinced Dr. Bernard to give his permission the previous year. In carrying this out Hannay

...had the support of a handful of enthusiastic young men of no property among them Ernest Blythe and Sean O'Casey, both of whom have writted about their experiences. (229)

French regarded this celebration of Holy Communion in Irish as a striking example of the 'spirit of the time and the degree to which Hannay was a pioneer'. (230) Although Hannay had received permission from Dean John Henry Bernard months previously, the latter

...in permitting it, he told Hannay, he had been accused of condoning a profanation of the Blessed Sacrament. (231)

During 1905-06 Hyde was in the United States making

...a triumphant fund-raising tour of fifty two United States cities and revisited Canada. This tour provided vitally needed funds for the League's Irish language campaign. (232)

A correspondant calling himself 'Virgil', in the April edition of the *National Review*, London, took a rather different view of Hyde's expedition to America.

Long before he landed at New York - at the very time indeed when his name was paraded as evidence of the non-political character of the League - he had given free and full expression to his views and objects and had received the thanks and approbation of Mr. Redmond, Mr. Healy, and other leading Nationalists for his 'great work' ! (233)

'Virgil' continued in this vein, quoting from the *Freeman's Journal*, accusing Hyde and the Nationalist Party of working together, and declared that the Gaelic League and Sinn Féin were also in league together.

The believers, real or professed, in the non-political character of the Gaelic League will not admit that it has any relation with 'Sinn Féin' but this opinion does not prevail among the Irish in the United States. 'This movement is born of the Gaelic League - that wonderful body which has resurrected the language of Ireland and re-created the national sentiment.

It is called "Sinn Fein" or "Ourselves Alone"  
[National Hibernian, n.d.] (234)

Hannay at once prepared to answer 'Virgils'  
allegations but events overtook him. Moran, in the  
*Leader*, published an article on Hannay's novels under  
the title 'Bigotry in Fiction', in which he declared  
that Hannay exhibited

A lofty contempt for our current ideals of  
patriotism, and an unusual measure of Protestant  
scorn for the ministers and institutions of our  
national religion [and] a venomous hatred for  
the religious institutions of the majority of  
the Irish people. (235)

He later dubbed Hannay 'the Westport bigot'. (236) In  
the *Mayo News*, on 28 April, the following headline  
appeared. 'Fr. McDonald unmask the author of *The  
Seething Pot*, and *Hyacinth*'. Considering that John  
Dillon had revealed the identity of George A.  
Birmingham in January, and that the majority of  
English and Irish newspapers, including the *Mayo News*  
had carried reports of this, together with reviews of  
both novels, the headline was somewhat dramatic !  
French also gives the impression that directly after  
Dillon's disclosure in January, 'The West was  
instantly awake' (237) but three months had passed  
before Fr. McDonald launched his attack. In his letter  
to the newspaper he claimed that he had heard the  
names of Birmingham and Hannay linked as one but

...could not be convinced of that; because I  
regarded the rector of Westport as a cultured  
gentleman, and no bigot and because the books in  
question contain gross libels on living men, and

virulent attacks on bishops, priests, and nuns, I resolved when next I should meet the rector, to put him the question and get an answer from himself direct. I have put the question, and to my astonishment and regret, he confessed he is the author. (238)

The parish priest then declared that the books could no longer be attributed to the 'unknown and colourless Mr Birmingham', but to their real author, 'Rev. James Oliver Hannay'. In attributing the novels to Hannay, he misquoted his name. At great length and in detail, McDonald went on to show that 'Clogher' in *The Seething Pot* was Westport, on which indeed it was most obviously based, and that the characters of the novel were readily recognisable. This criticism was largely justified, but again not new. He went on to take exception to a scene in *The Seething Pot* where the local parish priest is host at a meal for members of the Nationalist Party, which is vulgar and coarse, as indeed was the character of the priest. From *Hyacinth*, he cited a scene where the parish priest received what amounted to bribes from the local landlord in return for keeping the people of 'Clogher' quiet and in order. McDonald took these incidents, and the characters of the priests as personal insults. He felt that he was being caricatured.

I characterise that as the most audacious lie that ever appeared in print, and I characterise its author to be a disgrace to his church...When I heard from the man himself that he was the author of these books, I asked him what justification he had for such calumny on the administrator of Westport. The only reply he

could make was that "Clogher is not necessarily Westport" - a characteristic reply, evasive and miserable ! (239)

McDonald then challenged Hannay to point out a priest in Ireland who had ever accepted such a bribe. Of the novels he stated

The books pretend to describe Irish life as it is at the present day but any intelligent reader will lay them down with the conviction that they are chiefly an attack on the position and influence of the Catholic Church in Ireland. (240)

This was followed by an open letter to Hannay again in the *Mayo News*, on 5 May 1906, supporting Fr.

McDonald's point of view as an

...able and telling exposure of your vile and vindictive indictment of Bishops, Priests, Nuns and Catholic laity. (241)

Hannay's claim to have been equally critical of his own class and church was found by the correspondent to be 'hypocritical and untrue'.

...give up slandering your co-religionists, for if you don't they will reduce your stipend - ah, your soul sickens at this thought - give up slandering the holy Nuns, for if you don't the very stones of Clogher will of themselves fly in your face...as your immoral books reveal you in your true colours, 'a sweet faced bigot from Belfast'. (242)

The letter was signed 'A Well Wisher'. The last sentence of the above letter provided the headline for Fr. McDonald's second article. 'Fr. McDonald shows the Rev. Hannay in his true colours'. Increasingly, his opponents refer to 'Clogher', not as a fictional place, but as they would refer to Westport, Galway, or

Dublin. To them Westport and 'Clogher' were interchangeable names for the same place, and the characters of both novels, the people of Westport. In his second article Fr. McDonald chose excerpts from the novels which, he declared, 'are not much read in Ireland, but they are devoured like bread and honey in England', presumably, in his view, an immoral place. (243) Most of his remarks were an expansion of the points that he had made previously, with appropriate quotations, out of context, or not fully quoted, to support his points. During the following week the Westport Board of Guardians met and the subject of Hannay was discussed and gave rise to strong condemnation. The following resolution was proposed.

That we, the Guardians of the Westport Union hereby demand an apology from one of our officials, the Rev. Mr. Hannay, for the gross calumnies contained in his books, viz: 1. By stating that the doctor of this town could propitiate us by denouncing the Protestants; 2. By stating that a Poor Law Guardian drew blood from the nose of the Rev. Administrator of this parish. Furthermore be it hereby resolved that in our opinion who approves of the abominable crime against the human race clearly approved of in Mr. Hannay's books, is unfit to perform the duties of a minister of religion, and we therefore call upon the Local Government Board to remove him from the chaplaincy which he holds to this workhouse. (244)

It is entirely unclear what they refer to as an abominable crime. Mr. Austin McNamara, the proposer of the above resolution went on to condemn

...in the strongest possible manner the foul-mouthed, libellous statements contained in this man's books in reference to the Administrator of



Westport...He has calumnated and defamed the whole Catholic population of this district in general and some in particular...Why, I believe if he went back to his native town of Belfast he would find more drunkenness and immorality in that town than in all Connaught put together,...Gentlemen, must not that man have a front of brass to come and walk the streets of this town in face of the people he has defamed and to say there was a priest dragged through the streets...but I know a clergyman living in Westport, and he deserves to be dragged through the streets and he is not a clergyman of the Catholic Church. (hear,hear) And if he were dragged through the streets, he should be pitched into the river afterwards, where he would get the opportunity of cleansing his foul mouth, (hear, hear). (245)

The reference to the priest being dragged through the streets was included in *Hyacinth*, but was based upon the story of a Fr. Manus, and had nothing to do with Fr. McDonald. Mr. T. Gallagher in response to the resolution stated that Hannay was a 'wolf in sheep's clothing'. Mr. Sweeny declared that 'He shouldn't be allowed to live in Westport'. Gallagher agreed with this, adding that Hannay 'should be up in his native Belfast and not down here'. The chairman of the meeting, Mr. John Walsh J.P. admitted that all he knew about the Rev. Mr Hannay's books was through reading the extracts from them published in Fr. McDonald's letters. None of the other members stated that they had or had not read either of the novels, but they relied on the same extracts that Fr. McDonald published to condemn Hannay. It seems likely that none of the Guardians had read either of the novels.

However, in the words of the *Connaught Telegraph*, 'the resolution was put and passed with acclamation'. (246)

The matter was then brought up in the House of Commons by Mr. Charles Craig, (Antrim). In a report published in *The Times* he asked the Chief Secretary

...whether his attention had been called to the strong language and resolution used and adopted by the Westport, County Mayo, guardians, on May 17, towards the Rev. Mr. Hannay, rector of Westport and workhouse Protestant chaplain, because of opinions expressed and characters and types portrayed in the novels of which the guardians alleged that the Reverend gentleman is author; whether, in view of the speech of one of the guardians advising that Mr. Hannay should be dragged through the streets of Westport, and pitched into the river, the police would be directed to be watchful to prevent this suggestion from being carried out; and whether the Local Government Board intend, as demanded by the guardians, to dismiss the Rev. Mr. Hannay from the chaplaincy on the charge of having written two very readable novels. (247)

Tim Healy responded that he had failed miserably in trying to read the novels, a remark which was greeted with laughter by the members of the House of Commons.

The Chief secretary, Bryce, responded to the query,

It sometimes happens that critics do not themselves read the books on which they pass judgement and I gather this was the case in the present instance. (Laughter) The Local Government Board do not intend to dismiss the Rev. Mr. Hannay from the workhouse chaplaincy. (248)

At this point most English and Irish papers had noticed the incident, some sardonically suggesting that Hannay was getting

...so good an advertisement that he and his publishers must be sorry that his books were published under a pseudonym. (249)

*Sinn Féin* commented that although they disliked the Rev. Mr. Hannay's book as thoroughly as the Westport Guardians,

...perhaps even moreso, as we have had the advantage of reading it...we do not believe the Westport Poor Law Guardians realised what they were doing...they were sealing the charges of intolerance which have been made against Irish public boards. (250)

At the end of May, the Westport Urban Council also passed a resolution.

That we the Westport Urban Council have read with surprise and disgust, extracts from books of which the Rev. Mr. Hannay, Rector, Westport, admits he is the author...We repudiate as false and unfounded the base calumny running through Mr. Hannay's books...his work is well calculated to bring about bad feeling and ill-will between neighbours of different religious beliefs in this district. (251)

Amidst the furore, the English newspapers continued to review Hannay's novels favourably. In an article entitled 'Through new glasses', the *Daily Chronicle* wrote of 'George A. Birmingham'.

His interpretations shatter many preconceptions, or at least make us eager to examine their foundations. They rob our views of Ireland of their simplicity. They mix the colours on the political map and introduce many "fine shades". (252)

While Hannay's writings found favour in the English press, Fr. McDonald continued to castigate him in articles in the *Mayo News*. One of these bore the title

'Rev. Mr. Hannay as arch accuser of the Irish priesthood'. Fr. McDonald summed up Hannay's criticisms of the priesthood as follows. That the Irish priests have neither principle nor honour. That the priesthood is tyrannical. That Irish priests are anti-National. That the Irish priests are the bribed agents of the English Government. For each of these points he quoted, for support, from the novels. (253) Pierce Beazley, editor of the *Catholic Times*, a weekly paper published in Dublin, supported Fr. McDonald's campaign against Hannay. An article, entitled 'Scandalous attacks on Irish nuns', printed originally in his own paper, was reprinted in the *Mayo News* early in June. In its general criticism of the novels and their author the article repeated much of what McDonald had already said, and what had been reported in other newspapers, but this was followed by very specific criticism of Hannay's treatment of the 'Robeen' nuns. Like 'Clogher' and Westport, 'Robeen' and Foxford were becoming synonymous. It is extremely unlikely that Hannay had anywhere else in mind when describing 'Robeen', though he later denied it was based on the nuns' mill at Foxford. Beazley, however, pointed out with some justification,

The details given of this institution can only possibly apply to the Providence Mills of the Sisters of Charity at Foxford, Co. Mayo....The 'Robeen' nuns are described as appealing to religious bigotry to push the sale of their goods as against those of Hyacinth's employer,

who is a Protestant; as selling goods at a loss and then getting a grant from the Congested Districts Board to supply the deficiency; as paying the girls starvation wages and building magnificent conventual buildings with the profit realised. (254)

In the subsequent issue of the *Mayo News* Fr. McDonald also defended the nuns of Foxford. Again a detailed history of the origins of the factory was given, what the inside of the convent actually looked like and the wages paid, facts he gathered, from his own account, from random enquiries among the factory hands.

Is further evidence needed to prove that he insidiously endeavoured as far as in him lay, to ruin one of the few industries which are the rising hope of our struggling nation. (255)

As early as February, shortly after *Hyacinth* was published, Plunkett had written to Hannay with reservations about his portrayal of 'Robeen'. Like A.S. Green, Plunkett too, assumed that 'Robeen' was directly based on Foxford.

...I rather doubt whether you are quite fair to Foxford....I doubt whether the competition of Foxford has done nearly as much harm to competing manufactures as it has done good by advertising Irish manufacture. The Quinns of Ireland are ruined by English shoddy, not by competing woollens...the outcome of a single small factory cannot really affect prices; and even when sweated as no doubt they are, the Connaught peasantry are not cheap producers, compared with Lancashire and Yorkshire girls. I much doubt whether the nuns have had any surplus to pay over to their Order, and certainly they have enormously improved the condition of the peasantry immediately surrounding their factory and school. (256)

What then was the story of the Providence Mills ?

According to Beazley, in 1891,

A ruined mill on the Moy was purchased, grants being subsequently made by the Congested Districts Board for the re-construction of the mill-race, the teaching of the workers and the purchase of the necessary appliances. A loan of £7000 was secured by a mortgage on the property of the Sisters of Charity in Dublin. Of this loan £6,300 has been repaid. The Sisters of Charity put £10,500 of their own money into the undertaking and friends put some £8,350. (257)

Wages, according to Fr. McDonald ranged from eight shillings to thirty, per week, depending on the work involved. (258) It is unclear whether Hannay really intended to portray Foxford in his fictitious 'Robeen' As I have already pointed out, in the preface to *Benedict Kavanagh*, published towards the end of 1906, he denied that this had been his objective, though he did admit that there was too close a resemblance between the two. He believed, he said, that the Foxford factory had been begun, not with a purely commercial motive, but with a philanthropic one in mind. However, he must have had some basis for the corrupt 'Robeen'. There is no evidence in his correspondence which still survives, that he was informed of corrupt practices in Foxford while writing *Hyacinth*, that is during 1905-06. According to his correspondence it was after the whole controversy over his second novel, that he first began to investigate what the situation really was in relation to Foxford.

Information from his correspondence bears this out. It wasn't until July, 1906, that Foxford is mentioned in any letters with the exception of those written by A.S. Green and Plunkett after *Hyacinth* was first published. Hannay wrote to Plunkett, asking him to throw some light on the true situation of the Foxford factory, a request that Plunkett was in a position to fulfill as he was a member of the Congested Districts Board, a body that he had deep misgivings about, which he had confided to Hannay.

As you know although a member of the Congested Districts Board, I do not approve of its general policy. I have always felt that, if my colleagues had possessed any economic or sociological sense, they could have done wonders with the poor people who are committed to their charge. (259)

What the date of Hannay's letter to Plunkett was remains a matter of speculation, as the letter has not survived, but I think it is reasonable to assume that it was after the whole controversy with Fr. McDonald started. It was mid-July when Plunkett replied to the letter, suggesting that Hannay had written to him sometime in the previous month or so. Plunkett was pleased to tell him that

I am now in a position to give you some information about Foxford. The Congested Districts Board lent them £7,000 for the equipment of their factory. Close upon £5,000 has been repaid, but I see that there were building grants amounting to £1,164 and capitation grants paid from time to time prior to 1900, amounting to £8,333. The capitation grants were given to workers while they were being trained, and presumably the building

grants were sanctioned on the grounds that the factory was also a school. Assuming that the factory can now be carried on upon commercial lines without any further assistance, considering all the circumstances of the district, I am inclined to think that the action of the government in giving it support was justified. Now, however, comes the question of the sweating of the workers, and upon this I cannot help thinking that you have been misinformed. I have had an inquiry made by people I can trust. I am told that a large number of the workers get an average of 9s/6d a week, some ranging from 10s/ to 20s/. you can safely say that they pay the wages usual in Connaught, subject to the qualification that usually no wages are paid in Connaught. (260)

These figures correspond quite closely with those of Pierce Beazley, editor of the *Catholic Times*, in his article, which was re-printed in the *Mayo News*, 25 May. The amount of the loan, Beazley wrote, was £7,000, the exact figure that Plunkett had found out from the Congested Districts Board, as the amount of the initial loan. How much had been re-paid was somewhat more according to Beazley's account, £6,300, in comparison to Plunkett's figure of £5,000. There was no mention, however, of the various building and capitulation grants, that the Sisters had received, in Beazley's article. Although Plunkett considered the financial aid that the factory had received was justified, and that the workers were being paid the standard of wages usual in Connaught, Hannay was not convinced. He wrote to the rector in Foxford, Rev. Theo Landey and received the following reply.

It is impossible to get the information you require in such a way that it can be verified.



the word has evidently been passed to say nothing. (261)

This is the last mention of Foxford in Hannay's correspondence for 1906. However, one of the last phrases in Plunkett's letter, 'I cannot help thinking that you have been misinformed', provides us with an indication of how Hannay had created 'Robeen'. At some point during the period when *Hyacinth* was being written, Hannay had received information from some individual that all was not well in the Foxford mill. Whether he incorporated directly what he had been told was the true situation in the factory, or whether most of 'Robeen' was indeed fictitious, as Hannay later claimed, is a perplexing question. However, it becomes clearer during the following summer.

In July, 1907 Hannay wrote to Francis Sheehy Skeffington, saying that he had been approached by a man, though he did not specify the identity of the individual or when exactly he had first been approached, who wished to discuss the Foxford factory with him. It seems that this man's brother had inherited a shop in Foxford upon his father's death, and took over the business. The man also had a sister working in the factory in Foxford. He himself was a commercial traveller, like the character of *Hyacinth*. The character of Tim Halloran in *Hyacinth* also incorporates many of this man's personal details,

which Hannay wrote of to Skeffington, suggesting that Hannay had met him before, or while writing the novel, and adopted his characteristics and situation, for fictitious purposes, a trait that Hannay had been criticised for in both of his novels.

Hannay told Skeffington in his letter that the man wanted some facts published about the condition of the workers in the Foxford factory. The man was a Protestant, and did not want 'to incur the reproach of fouling his own nest by an appeal to Protestant bigotry'. (262) Therefore he wished his information to be published in a 'non-Protestant' newspaper. Hannay wrote that he had spent an evening with the man the previous week, and found that

...when he left I had a lower opinion of the Foxford factory than I had before; Although I never had any great admiration for an institution which makes money by posing as charitable, wheedles grants of public money out of government officials and basks shamelessly in the smiles of fashionable women with a taste for playing at philanthropy - I sent my friend back to investigate the facts he laid before me and to prepare a comparison between the condition of the worker under Smith of Athlone. (263)

One such 'fashionable' woman, as Hannay had phrased it, was the Countess of Fingall, who recorded her impressions of the Providence Mills, and its leader, Mother Morrrough Bernard. During the Parnell divorce case, according to the Countess' memoirs, Mother Morrrough refused to dismiss some of her workers, ordered by the Bishop, for having hissed at the local

priests during a political demonstration. 'Politics had no place in their industry', the Countess wrote.

(264) She continued, writing of Mother Morrough,

She had built up at Foxford, within a few years, an industry that, with its many offshoots and wide embracing roof of Christian charity, was like a guild of the Middle Ages. The exhibition was designed primarily to advertise the woollen goods being produced at the Foxford mills. But the side sections indicated the width and imagination of Mother Morrough Bernard's work in her district for the better living, towards which we were all in our different ways trying, to help the people. (265)

This was an altogether different picture than the one that Hannay believed existed. At the end of July 1907, Hannay came up with the following information from his informant's ongoing investigations, and set up the following lines of enquiry, which he wrote to Skeffington.

(1) the amount of (a) government and (b) public charitable money received by the institution - Under (a) I find in the C.D.B. report two sums of £8,000 odd and £1,000 odd, amounting to nearly £10,000, by way of gift; and am informed that there was also a £5,000 loan. Under (b) a sum of , I think about, £2,000 collected from charitable people by Lady Arran.  
(2) The rate of wages paid, as compared with the rates paid in unsubsidised factories in similar places i.e. that of Smith of Athlone...-but the Foxford wages are kept very private - the comparison is something like this

Athlone	
Skilled labourer	25s/ per week
Very highly skilled labourer	30s/ per week
Girl's work	9s/ - 12s/ per week
Foxford	
Skilled labourer	12s/ per week
Very highly skilled labourer	15s/ per week
Girl's work	5s/ - 7s/ per week

From wages, he then went on to the subject of housing. According to his information Smith of Athlone had built houses for his workers

...which are let at 3/6 per week with the prospect of ownership after 18 (?) years i.e. on a sinking fund principle - that is those people are housed at 14% of their wages, (3/6:25), a fair proportion of income to pay in rent. The Foxford people have also built houses which are let at 3/ per week with no prospect of ownership. That is they are housed at 25% of their wages, (3/:12/) - an utterly absurd amount to pay in rent out of an income of that kind. (266)

He did not vouch for the accuracy of these figures, Plunkett had put a large number of the worker's earning between 9/ and 15/ per week, Hannay had averaged it out at 12/, therefore it seems that his figures were fairly accurate. However, he found it hard to verify the information that he received from his informant, whose name was, he told Skeffington, Sheils.

Since the publication of *Hyacinth* it has been impossible for any outsider, as I have set the most unsuspecting looking people at the job, to find out exactly what the Foxford people do pay - the workers are apparently forbidden to tell. I presume that the Congested Districts Board might if it chose inspect the wages sheet. It does not choose. The only information I could obtain from a member of the Board whom I tackled was this - "The average rate of wages in the Foxford factory is probably not lower than that usual in Connaught". The rate usual in Connaught for absolutely unskilled labour is 10/6 to 12/ for men, and 6/ to 9/ for women. If that is the average wage at Foxford for skilled labour, and if Smith of Athlone, after capitalising his own business, can make money after paying double those wages, then the Foxford factory must be a

small goldmine for the proprietors or be grossly mismanaged. (267)

Hannay wrote to Skeffington with this information in the hope that the latter would see that it was published. Hannay knew he would resurrect all the antagonism of the previous year if his own name was associated with it, and assured Skeffington that 'Sheils, who is really in a position to know, will give you much more reliable information'. (268)

There is, however, no more mention of the subject after this despite the fact that Skeffington and Hannay kept up a regular correspondence. Skeffington's replies have not survived, and what he thought of the information, and what he did or proposed to do with it is a matter of speculation. There is no trace of its publication, or of the controversy which would have followed. Hannay had warned him to be 'cautious about taking a handful of Connaught nettles'. (269) Hannay himself had felt their sting and perhaps Skeffington felt it was wise to follow his advice.

In June 1906, in the midst of attacks and violent resolutions in Mayo, Hannay was the subject of an article under the series title of 'Irish Pioneers - Sketches of workers and thinkers in Ireland', in the *Irish Peasant*. Stating that it had no contribution to make to the ongoing controversy, it set out to 'explain Mr Hannay and his evolution' and to judge

whether 'he may be more valuable to us on the dry land than under the water', a reference to the meeting of the Westport Guardians, where the resolution they passed against him was followed by fiery remarks on the part of some of the members, including one individual who had advocated pitching him into the local river, and to Mr 'Puck' of the *Leader*, who wanted to immerse his books too. the *Irish Peasant* expressed the opinion that

His real work for the League has been a ceaseless endeavour by letters to the papers, articles in periodicals, and especially by private correspondence to break down the prejudices of Protestants against the League...there are signs of awakening, thus he has been asked to lecture next autumn to the Protestant Young Men's Association in Limerick. (270)

Under a sub-heading, 'Satire and sincerity', the writer claimed,

It is against what seemed to him shams that he directed the satire of his novels. He now knows that they are full of mistakes and contain several grave injustices but he was altogether sincere in writing them. (271)

Hannay may have accepted criticisms with good grace in relation to the characterisation of his novels bearing too close a resemblance to living persons. He accepted criticism of 'Robeen' and Foxford, though he denied he had based the former on the latter, but he never admitted that his work was 'full of mistakes and...grave injustices'. In the same vein, the writer continued,

With a good deal of the criticism of Irish life we do not agree - he himself now admits frankly that he was often mistaken...but Irish Ireland as a whole is sane and liberal. It does not penalise opinion and does not call criticism bigotry. (272)

Hannay had been the subject of quite a lot of criticism, anger, and hostility, but to a large extent it was confined to the printed word. In June, however, he met it face to face at a local feis.

Our truculent priest McDonald sent over six men to hoot me when I arrived, four of them I believe were worse for drink...A friend in Westport heard of the scheme and sent word the day before to Ryan, the secretary of the feis...He met the priest's emissaries at the door when they arrived and informed them that he had fifty stalwart Gaelic Leaguers enrolled for the keeping of order...In the evening I went to the concert,...I had no sooner sat down in my place than a priest just behind me got up somewhat ostentatiously and walked out, presumably to avoid the defilement of contact with me. (273)

Hyde returned from America in June to find not only Hannay in trouble with the priests, but also the Portarlinton branch of the League, trouble which had begun the previous year. The coming election for the Coisde Gnótha, was fast becoming a trial of strength for the anti-clerical element of the League. The 'Portarlinton incident' had begun when two members of that branch, Peadar McGinley and Stephen Roche, had

...protested against a slur on the League by the clergy who were themselves Leaguers. The usual objection was made to mixed classes, and when it was suggested from the pulpit that young women attended them for the wrong reasons the two protested in the face of the congregation. (274)

These wrong reasons were in the view of the clergy, 'purposes other than Gaelic, that probably if the town were lighted they would not go there at all'. (275)

The expulsion of the parish priest from the branch followed, and the curate denounced the branch from the pulpit, resulting in a protest from the two men, McGinley and Roche, and the subsequent expulsion of the curate from the branch.

Friends of the clergy started a rival branch of the Gaelic League in Bishopstown, a townland of the parish and elected the P.P. as president but the executive in Dublin refused to affiliate it. The next move was the organisation of what they called a feis, or public Gaelic League festival, an obvious effort to interfere with the real Feis of McGinley and his friends. (276)

In the weeks before the Ard Fheis, then, the Portarlinton incident loomed large in everyone's mind. Then the *Irish Peasant*, and *Sinn Fein* came into possession of copies of a circular letter which the parish priest had addressed to other priests, claiming that the Coisde Gnótha was in sympathy with his opponents, although it had ten priests on it, and that it was in general anti-clerical. He went further and urged them to elect good Catholic priests and laymen to the executive in order to render harmless and remove the anti-clerical elements. As both Ryan and French put it 'The issue was knit'. (277).

Characteristically, Hyde was anxious to ward off a confrontation. He wrote to Hannay,



If the *status quo* could be sustained for another five years, how strong we would be then to fight if a breach should come. (278)

He had not changed his opinion on the strength of the Catholic clergy, and the importance of avoiding a direct confrontation with them. If anything, he was more adamant.

They are and will be for the next fifty years (unless a strong Home Rule Bill is passed) the dominating factor in Irish life....Make them feel that the League is theirs and do nothing to frighten them off. The Portarlinton business is a hungle-bungle and we have got the worst of it. I don't see the way out but I certainly won't aggravate the situation if I can help it. (279)

What is noticeable in Hyde's letters to Hannay following his return from the United States, is a definite change in style and tone. His first letter, 11 July, regrets his lack of time to see Hannay due to his workload since his return from America. This seems plausible enough, but in his next letter, 16 July, he, for the first time addresses his 'lieutenant' as 'Mr. Hannay', instead of 'A chara' or 'A chara dhíl'. He concluded his letter, by saying that he wished to

...avoid all friction for as long as possible...I have been re-thinking over your letters and I find that you attended the Coisde Gnótha only twice. That being so perhaps it would be better for you not to stand again at the next Ard Fheis. I feel pretty sure now you would be beaten'. (280)

Hannay later wrote to Hyde, 'You are general...You decide and I obey in all matters pertaining to the

Gaelic League'. (281) Like Hyde, he was, as French puts it,

...anxious that his experiences should not be used to provoke a struggle within the League, and he declined firmly to accept the role of martyr for which his supporters were casting him. (282)

In a letter to the *Northern Whig*, in August, Hannay quoted that paper's comments of some weeks before.

(283)

We are inclined to think that Mr. Hannay has had reason to change his opinion somewhat since he wrote that panegyric of that body [the Gaelic League] in the July number of the "Review" [National]. The clumsy persecution to which he has been subjected since he published his last book must have opened his eyes to the true character of the tyrannical and reactionary cliques who wish to control the destiny of this country. (284)

Hannay denied being 'bullied' or 'persecuted'. He summed up the events of May and June thus;

A priest, who seemed a little irritated wrote some curious letters in a local newspaper and a few members of public boards exercised themselves by making speeches about me. But the public in the west of Ireland has too much a sense of humour to take this kind of thing seriously. (285)

The *Londonderry Sentinel* treated with sarcasm the 'ingenious enterprise' of the *Northern Whig* in discovering Hannay's 'persecution' and sardonically suggested that

The Rev. Mr. Hannay is not quite the sort of Rector that 'Ulster' requires in an emergency....Mr Hannay has not a proper appreciation of his value as 'a victim'. (286)

Though Hannay had promised to obey Hyde in all matters pertaining to the League, before he received Hyde's letter of 16 July, he had replied to several Gaelic League friends who had urged him 'very strongly to stand for the Coisde Gnótha', saying he would do so.

I think I had better stick to what I said and stand. I don't mind being beaten so long as my candidature does not embarrass you on the policy of the League. As a matter of fact I was never a suitable person for the position. I'm a miserable committee man and live at such a distance from Dublin that it is well-nigh impossible for me to attend meetings. I am, and shall I trust, continue to be convinced of the value of the Gaelic League to Ireland and shall fight for it in print and private conversation and letter writing. (287)

Hannay, decided to 'go ahead and take my chances of being beaten at the election. I am not quite sure that I shall'. While agreeing that the priests were powerful he voiced doubts at the feasibility of Hyde's policy. 'Your policy is no doubt the right one. But can you carry it out ?'

In the long run the two forces must clash...However they [priests] may go on pretending to believe they can control the League for a while yet....We are of course non-political and non-sectarian but we are creating a spirit in Ireland which will fiercely assert the rights of human liberty against state and church alike....I think you believe in the possibility of Gaelicising of Liberalising (the words so far as Ireland is concerned are synonymous) the bulk of the Roman clergy. It is an ideal solution....I trust and hope that in this matter I am a fool but frankly I don't believe it is possible. (288)

The result of the Ard Fheis were, in French's words, 'accepted by the Gaelic world as a severe defeat for

the older clericalism'. (289) Peadar McGinley headed the poll which aroused 'joyous demonstration'. (290) Fr. O'Leary, the parish priest of Portarlinton, remained unelected. W.P. Ryan, in *The Pope's green island*, later recalled,

One of the successful candidates whose name was the occasion of hearty demonstration was 'George A. Birmingham', the Rev. J.O. Hannay, Protestant rector of Westport. (291)

Another Protestant elected was Mr. Stephen Gwynn MP, and seven ladies were also elected. Of those elected, six were primary school teachers, a further cause for 'the sorrows of the older clerics and clerical managers'. (292) Hyde's policy being what it was, he must have been disappointed at the outcome, and not a little fearful of what would follow. Plunkett shared these fears, though from a different viewpoint.

Writing to Hannay, he saw clericalism as

...a power which is declining, from my point of view with a dangerous rapidity, dangerous because the force which threatens to oppose clericalism of this type is one which will be difficult to reconcile with the higher ideals of the Gaelic League, and also because the character of the people is not prepared for the sweeping away of the one moral influence which has hitherto exercised power over them. (293)

Hannay too greeted the results of the election with some trepidation. He wrote to Skeffington,

You are not in my opinion quite fair to the Gaelic League...we are not and in my opinion, not likely to be controlled by either Maynooth or the Castle. But I own that I watch with great anxiety for indications of what the clerical policy is to be in the face of the resounding defeat the party received at the Ard Fheis. I

think they are too wise to denounce us and precipitate a pitched battle. I am afraid they will try spoonfeeding us with cream and sugar until they can get the shears at our hair....It is quite possible that they will succeed in doing this. They have the women of course, and women count a lot in the Gaelic League - I say of course because priests always do retain control of the women. (294)

In the meanwhile Hannay was occupied with the setting up of the Mayo Industrial Development Association. At its preliminary meeting, Hannay spoke comparing the state of industry in the 1830s and the present day in the county. He stated that

In 1834 Westport had exported 116,117 quarters of grain, and 5,140 cwts of flour and meal. The vessels belonging to the port were 6, the vessels entering were 101, and the vessels leaving were 154. The following factories were in existence; Distilleries, breweries, saltworks, corn stores, tanneries, flour and oatmeal mills, cotton mills, etc.....Mr. Hannay said it should be one of the functions of the M.I.D.A. to enquire into extinct Mayo industries and see if it would be possible to revive them. (295)

There is no further mention in Hannay's papers of the Mayo Industrial Development Association, nor is there any account of its development or activities in the Gaelic League Industrial Committee's reports. (296)

As Hannay had feared, the conflict with clericalism did not end with the election to the Coisde Gnótha. Within a month he found himself once more at the centre of controversy. At the end of September, a meeting of the League was held in Claremorris to consider the hosting of the Connaught Feis for 1907.

Twenty two delegates attended. Of these five were Catholic clergymen, including the chairman Canon Macken, P.P. of Tuam. Canon Macken had spent some time in Westport as a curate, and was a close friend of Fr. McDonald. As a member of the Coisde Gnótha, Hannay also attended the meeting. The preliminary details were settled and it was decided to host the feis. Hyde was elected President of the Feis, though he was not in attendance, and the Protestant and Roman Catholic Bishops of the province were elected patrons. Mr Hamilton, of Tuam, then proposed,

That all present together with one representative from each branch, two from each Coisde Ceanntair, and two from each Feis committee not represented here, for the executive Committee. (297)

This seemed a fair proposal but the chairman objected. When questioned as to his reason he replied, 'I emphatically dissent...but this is not the place to state my objection'. (298) A League organiser, John Fitzhenry, consulted with Canon Macken and then proposed the following amendment.

That all here present representing affiliated branches, together with two members of each Coisde Ceanntair, and one member from an affiliated branch in the League not represented here today, form the Executive Committee of the Connaught Feis. (299)

This amendment had the direct effect of excluding Hannay from the Executive Committee. Some members insisted on being informed of the objection to the

original resolution. Canon Macken eventually agreed to explain.

There is a certain gentleman excluded from the Committee by the amendment, but included by the resolution and with that gentleman, I for one, will certainly not act on the Committee. I believe in giving every man the ordinary courtesy and kind treatment which Christianity and nationality suggest, but it is another thing altogether to promote a man to a position of trust and honour. (300)

There were immediate objections. Mr. Hamilton, proposer of the resolution, declared,

The Gaelic League is as wide as Ireland and if you make it a bit narrow it decreases. No matter...we have to sink our differences in the League. (301)

Fr. F. Connolly also objected, exclusion of the gentleman concerned, for the reasons given 'would be a breach of the Constitution of the Gaelic League'.

Macken responded, 'I do not hold myself bound down in matters of principle by the constitution of the Gaelic League. There is a higher constitution which I look to...' The gentleman concerned 'has outraged and trampled on the deepest sentiments and aspirations of Catholics and Irishmen and who has calumniated one of his own countrymen. That is my reason for objecting'. (302)

Mr. J.A. Glynn sided with the chairman.

I don't agree with the speakers before me that every man because he is a member of the Gaelic League, can express language hurtful to us Catholics and Irishmen, and if a man does so express himself, is he to be received with open arms by the Gaelic League ? (303)

Fr. Connolly continued to object.

If I raised objections to a man's political actions, as you have to a man's literary criticism, I would be violating the principles of the League. I think you have enunciated a very dangerous principle. (304)

At this point, the heated debate died down as Hannay himself rose and addressed the meeting.

I feel obliged to Canon Macken for speaking out frankly on this subject, and to Fr. Connolly for the way he put the case, and if the chairman allows me to support the amendment, which excludes people not named here from the Committee, and which among others excludes myself, I shall be pleased to do so. (305)

The amendment was carried, with two dissentients, Fr. Connolly, and another priest who remained anonymous in the reports of the meeting. This event 'convulsed Gaeldom', it was the latest in a series of incidents which had occurred over the previous two years that the Gaelic League as a body faced. Hyde's consistent policy had been to try to keep the League free from political and sectarian issues, and from becoming embroiled in a power struggle with the Catholic clergy. Could he, in the light of this most recent incident, stay true to this policy or did the fact that the constitution of the League had obviously been broken mean that decisive action would be taken against Canon Macken ? A decision had to be made on an issue 'which was at once grave and perfectly simple'. (306)



The *Peasant* felt the answer was obvious. If Canon Macken did not consider himself bound by the constitution of the League, he shouldn't be a member of that body. (307) The official organ of the League *An Claidheamb Soluis*, was more emphatic.

The action at Clár Cloinne Muiris is the first instance of intolerance of which a Gaelic League body has been guilty, and we should be untrue to ourselves and to the trust reposed in the organisation if we did not protest with all the vehemence of which we are capable. (308)

The editor of the above, Patrick Pearse, had not consulted Hyde before taking this stance. (309) Hyde hoped at all costs that the situation might yet be diffused. He wrote to Hannay, once more addressing him as 'A chara dhíl', on 1 October, a letter which was marked 'Private' and for the first time typed.

With regard to his action I agree with you that he had no right to take the chair and to say that he was a law unto himself. I hope Gaelic Leaguers will never give him the chance again. Of course I would not dream of presuming to advise you what to do in this matter, but if I consulted my own wishes and feelings I would be glad if the affair were not pushed, for many reasons. First there is a growing feeling of lay liberty in all affairs, you can see it yourself, but a vehement struggle over this question now will make people take sides and harden into parties, much to Ireland's detriment.... This incident certainly gives good grounds for raising the whole question of clerical tyranny, but I would sooner not see it raised all the same. It is a "reculer pour mieux sauter".  
(310)

Hannay immediately wrote back, angry and hurt. His own reaction to the meeting was that it was

...in reality a question between the fundamental axes of Protestantism and Romanism.... I have

been attacked again and again by my own clergy and people for opinions I hold and express. But the attack has always been that the opinions themselves were wrong and unjustifiable -  
....The attack their priests make on me is different. (311)

Although he respected Hyde's wishes on the matter, 'You are general...you decide and I obey in all matters pertaining to the Gaelic League.', in his heart he doubted the

... wisdom of retreating from point to point...it is ill fighting with soldiers who have got into a fixed habit of making strategic movements to the rear. (312)

Hannay also entered into correspondence with Canon Macken who replied that the action he had felt forced to take was distinctly disagreeable to him but that there was no 'other satisfactory line of action...open to me'. (313) He denied that he had acted in a manner inconsistent with the spirit of the constitution of the League. He wrote,

There is scarcely an institution in the country you have not scourged in your writings, religious, political, educational, or social...all come in for a lash of your whip. (314)

He concluded by castigating Hannay for his 'ferocious and unjustified attack on the Foxford nuns'. Hyde was of the opinion that

Canon Macken was afraid of getting into trouble with the Tuam priests if he did not say something....There is no doubt that you have a good percentage of the others with you or neutral....I don't think from what I hear that the Archbishop took any part in the matter. (315)

Sir Horace Plunkett, Sheehy Skeffington, Peadar McGinley and Alice Stopford Green all wrote to Hannay expressing their sympathy and support. Plunkett wrote

I do not suppose that you are very much distressed over the Claremorris incident, but many of your friends are. (316)

Sheehy Skeffington wrote from Rathgar, Dublin, that he found the whole episode extremely interesting, but informed Hannay that 'a few Gaelic Leaguers whom I have spoken to here are wildly indignant about it'. (317)

McGinley was one of the indignant,

I am convinced that while the presence of Protestants in the Gaelic League is invaluable to us, the arrogance and pretensions of some of the Catholic clergy must be met by Catholic laymen. It is still too easy to get up a sectarian cry in Ireland. (318)

A.S. Green informed Hannay that the Chief Secretary 'Sir Antony [McDonnell] is wholly on your side, contemptuous of your opponents'. (319) Meanwhile the debate continued in the newspapers. According to *Sinn Féin*,

'The West British journals in Ireland have seized on the proceedings to argue that the Gaelic League stands for intolerance and sectarianism'. (320)

This they did, such papers as the *Dublin Daily Express*, the *Dublin Evening Mail*, the northern papers, the *Northern Whig* and the *Londonderry Sentinel*, and of course, *Church of Ireland Gazette*. Hannay published a letter in the *Gazette*, commenting on the whole issue.

I assert without the slightest fear of contradiction that Canon Macken does not represent Gaelic League opinion. (321)

Proof of this he stated was his election to the Coisde Gnótha only a month previously, where four hundred delegates voted, compared to fourteen delegates at the Claremorris meeting, most of whom abstained from voting. Hannay quoted *Sinn Féin*.

"The attack is not on the Rev. Mr. Hannay but on the principle of free speech, and the Gaelic League has been used as the instrument of attack. We maintain that the proceedings at Claremorris were in direct violation of the constitution of the League, and we assert that they are calculated to do more injury to the League than a hundred attacks upon it by the English Press and its Irish imitations. (322).

Hannay appealed to Irish Protestants to read a selection of Irish papers, and judge the incident themselves. Hannay's action at the Claremorris meeting, voting for the amendment against himself, appealing to Irish Protestants not to judge the League on the basis of Canon Macken's actions, and his own inaction in appealing to the Coisde Gnótha for support - all had been done in the hope of avoiding a split in the movement, true to Hyde's wishes. Shane O'Neill felt that the attacks on Hannay 'seem to have induced within him a sense of crisis over the importance of keeping the Gaelic League free from sectarianism'. (323) There is some truth in this. Like his experience the previous June, Hannay was indeed anxious that he should not be cast in the role of a victim. Privately,

however, he hoped that in this instance Hyde and the executive committee would decide to take definite action against Macken and the ecclesiastical tyranny that he represented. French, however, was of the opinion that Hyde was playing a waiting game, understanding that, in Ireland, issues were rarely straightforward and that 'the most passionate issues are often dissipated in an aura of muddled good will'.

(324)

On 9 October, Hannay received a notice of a meeting of the Coised Gnótha to be held on the 13 of that month.

Of the motions listed, Hyde had put forward,

That we hereby reaffirm the non-political character of the League. That in view of certain recent occurrences in the West of Ireland we call the particular attention of all Gaelic Leaguers to these vital principles, the only possible ones upon which to create a National and United Ireland. (325)

Peader McGinley, however called for the condemnation of the

...insult offered to one of our members, Rev. J. Hannay, by the Committee of Feis Connacht at Claremorris. (326)

He also called for Canon Macken's retirement from the League. Hannay replied to the executive committee that it would be impossible for him to attend the meeting.

(327) Neilí Ní Bhriain later wrote to him that

The Craobhín looked very white and worried. I am not afraid of the priests capturing the movement but I fear they will kill him. (328)

The meeting when held took an unexpected turn, Stephen Gwynn was the person concerned. He recalled in his autobiography,

I was precipitated into a somewhat amusing quarrel....What the precise cause was, I forget; but the Catholics present were almost to a man desirous to censure Canon Macken, whom I, the one Protestant, was defending. (329)

Neillí Ní Bhriain had warned Hannay in her letter about Gwynn.

Don't waste words on him more than necessary. He is not showing himself altogether a good Gaelic Leaguer these times. (330)

Gwynn supported Macken at the meeting, saying he was right,

...that Mr. Hannay had wronged certain people, and the fact that he was a Protestant clergyman made it seven times worse....He said that he understood that Canon Macken was about to make a statement on the whole question and that it would be a good thing if Mr. Hannay did the same....He said in conclusion that a correspondence was in progress between the Canon and Mr. Hannay. (331)

Hyde saw the value of delay, and an amendment was proposed to the original motion, postponing the whole issue for a year. This was carried. Gwynn wrote to Hannay, having pledged to write to him what he had said at the meeting. According to his autobiography,

I got back the angriest kind of letter, for in mentioning this quotation I had only transcribed the part which would give offence. (332)

The quotation that he refers to was one that Fr.

McDonald and Canon Macken were both fond of quoting,

but incompletely, as did Gwynn. The first part of the passage was always the part quoted.

The Irish priests have schemed and lied, have blustered and bullied, have levied taxes beyond belief upon the poorest of the poor... (333)

This was rarely accompanied by the second part of the paragraph.

...but they have taught the people a religion which penetrates their lives, and which in its essential features is not far from the essential spirit of Christ. Such religion is not to be taught by word. The man who represents it must first understand it and possess it in his soul. (334)

Although Gwynn recalls receiving an angry letter from Hannay, he never saw the original one that Hannay had written, in anger and haste, but on reflection had decided not to send. Instead he drafted a second letter in which he told Gwynn that

...having been myself badly judged I am more anxious to cling to the hope that another man might be trying to do right....It is a cheap and popular thing in Ireland today to hunt me with pitchforks like a mad dog. I thought that you had simply joined the chase. (335)

Hannay's sense of hurt and betrayal are evident in this letter despite his public stance of shrugging off a meaningless attack. Though he had no wish to force the matter to a fight between two sides, as is evident by his public behaviour, he expected more support from the Coisde Gnótha than a tacit agreement to conveniently shelve the issue and forget about it. In his letter to Gwynn, he expressed his disappointment

and regret at the decision that the executive committee had reached.

I refrained in spite of pressure from bringing the matter before the Coisde Gnótha when I thought it might be brought forward, I tried to prevent it and would have prevented it if I could. I was not consulted about any of the resolutions on the agenda paper....I do not know what the resolution of the Coisde Gnótha means...I take it that the correspondence between myself and Canon Macken is at an end for he has not replied to my last letter....I am quite content that it should now be dropped. But if it is it obviously becomes impossible for me to attend Gaelic League meetings...I have been mistaken about the meaning of the constitution and retire, if not from the organisation, at least from taking any active part in its work.  
(336)

Gwynn, along with Hannay, had urged his co-religionists to support the League, the previous year. Commenting on Gwynn's call for Irish Protestants to join the League, the *Daily Express* had given voice to the dominant attitude of its readership to the League. They stated that most Irish Unionists regarded Ireland as part of their country, and to accept the principles of the League would be to set Ireland on 'a pinnacle apart'. This was at odds with Unionist ideas as regards their citizenship of the 'great British Empire'. Some listened to Hannay's assurances of the non-political and non-sectarian character of the League, but most viewed it from a political point of view. Hannay's fate confirmed this body of opinion in their belief that Home Rule Ireland would be susceptible to the power of the Catholic clergy.



Hannay's case was seized upon by the *Express* as proof that it was impossible for men 'to be Gaelic Leaguers and preserve their liberty of thought, action, or criticism'. (337) The paper continued,

We are convinced that the League is both seditious and sectarian. Its object is to de-Anglicise Ireland, to destroy British influence and power, to efface as far as possible, all traces of the British occupation, and win for the country, independence. But that is not all. It desires to make Roman Catholicism the sole religion of Ireland, for one of its strongest objections to the English language is that it is the language of heresy. (338)

This strident reception was matched by other organs of Protestant and Unionist opinion.

Canon Macken, at a second meeting of the Connaught Feis Committee, again in Claremorris, on 24 October, made a statement. He reiterated that he was guilty of no breach of the constitution of the Gaelic League, because his action was in obedience to the moral law common to humanity.

All the world knew that he did not oppose the Rev. Mr. Hannay's promotion to the committee of the Feis Connaught because he was a Protestant clergyman. The constitution therefore was not violated. (339)

This statement in its entirety was reported on by most of the Irish papers, each echoing their original stances on the issue. The entire press of the Gaelic League and 'Irish Ireland' repudiated Canon Macken's attitude, with the sole exception of the *Leader*.

Hannay replied with a statement of his own 'to be read to the Coisde Gnótha at its meeting in November'.

I can see no way out of the difficulty except to resign my seat on your committee. By resigning, I for my part free you from the necessity of a decision....I remain perfectly convinced that the League is doing good work for Ireland, and if I am no longer to take any part in this work the loss will be mine. (340)

Griffith had written to Hannay before the meeting, urging him not to resign.

If the election for the Coisde were to take place again tomorrow you would be re-elected by a larger poll than on the last occasion....It may be unfair to attribute Gwynn's attitude towards you, to his impending candidature for Galway but it is at least suspicious....we all who wish for the success and permanence of the League desire you to remain....I know I am expressing the feelings of thousands who, if this matter is pushed are determined to stand by you and the constitution. (341)

Hyde had not changed his point of view. He wrote to Hannay before the November meeting of the executive committee, reiterating his belief that the League could not afford to battle on Hannay's behalf against the Roman Catholic clergy.

In view of the ticklish position of the language in the Archdiocese, and the certainty that to censure Macken will turn all the priests in the Archdiocese against it and kill the language, I think the Coisde Gnótha will just let things be....Not very heroic ! but I am looking far ahead and want to put off any possible fight to a time when we shall be much stronger than we are now....I'm awfully afraid of frightening the clergy off. We'll never revive the language if we do. We must keep them by hook or by crook. (342)

Hannay replied, informing Hyde of his resolve to resign his seat and thus free the executive from having to make a decision. Hyde approved.

I think your suggestive resolution excellent. there should be no reason why it should not be accepted. (343)

Griffith also reluctantly approved. 'If the Executive believes it proper to take no action, I shall raise no objection'. (344) Hannay's typed statement was read out at the meeting.

Canon Macken has made a public statement in his own defense. He declares that he was guilty of no breach of the constitution of the League because his action was in obedience to the moral law common to humanity...Obviously the question is no longer of the legality of Canon Macken's action but of its justification...The question thus becomes a perfectly plain and simple one. Am I a person of such notorious immorality that I cannot be permitted to sit on any committee of the League? I hold that the Coisde Gnótha is not competent to decide this question'. (345)

His morality, he stated, was between he and 'the Master that I serve', and seeing no other choice, he informed the Coisde Gnótha of his decision to resign his seat on the executive committee. One month later, he received a letter from Canon Macken, thanking him for his statement, and concluding that in his opinion, everyone thought the controversy had been conducted in an admirable spirit on both sides. (346)

Hannay remained a member of the League and continued to support its work. Indeed, directly after the November meeting of the Coisde Gnótha, he delivered a

lecture on the League to the Limerick Young Protestant Men's Association, which he had agreed to do some months previously. He spoke on the Protestant tradition of Grattan, the Volunteers, and Davis and stated that differences of creed, and political differences count for nothing in the Gaelic League. Of these claims he said, 'I am a Gaelic Leaguer and I know that they are true'. (347)

Hannay's writings gained 'new weight and authority, for his experiences commanded respect'. (348) After the 1906 general election, which the Liberals won, he was 'constantly sought out by politicians and journalists' in Westport. In his autobiography, Hannay referred only in passing to his 'brief and ill-starred connection with the Gaelic League'. (349) However, Ada in a letter to Hyde in April of 1907 expressing the full extent of her anger. She pointed out that Hannay had sacrificed a great deal in supporting the League, with the result that

He is now practically an outcast, an object of suspicion in his own Church. (350)

Above all they both regretted, Ada wrote, that the result of the whole controversy was the

...sad fact is that the League does not now provide a platform broad enough for anyone to stand on who is not *persona grata* with the Roman Catholic priests. (351)

Hyde replied to this letter assuring Ada that

...nobody in the world appreciated Mr Hannay's goodness and unselfishness more than I do. He

might have made a most awful row over the Claremorris business and split the Gaelic League into two parts and put an end forever to our dream of reviving the Irish language...he effaced himself and did not raise the passions he could so easily have done...I most heartily sympathise with you both and cannot tell you how...sorry I am that things have turned out as they have. (352)

This letter is the last one from Hyde that survives in Hannay's correspondence, but they continued to write to each other, until at least the summer of 1908.

(353) Hannay attended the Oireachtas in August 1907, and dined with Hyde. (354) It appears then that they remained friends despite the controversy. Privately though, Hannay expressed his doubts about the future of the League.

I am not so hopeful about the Gaelic League as I was two years ago. I thought then that it was setting the people...free from the twin tyrannies which are crushing our lives...- the tyranny of the priest and the tyranny of the political boss. I still believe it has done this to some extent and is doing it by awakening the intellect of the people and setting them thinking. In my own personal experience I have come across so many instances of independent thought and courage created by the League's teaching that I shall always, I hope, remain a member of the League and support its work. But I find of late that some of the leaders of the movement are becoming cowardly and are truckling to priests and politicians. (355)

CHAPTER FOUR

The observer and the observed

1907-1914

'In all this seething new life', wrote Hannay, in his autobiography, *Pleasant places*, in 1934,

'I had little or no part, except that of a deeply interested spectator, but I did make some effort, through articles in the press and occasional speeches' to induce,

...the men of my own race and creed...to remember that their grandfathers were great Irishmen, filled with the spirit of nationalism; that their loyal reliance on England was a futile thing, since all English parties were equally likely to let them down, that by throwing themselves into the new nationalism they might win security, honour, and power in the Ireland of the future. (1)

From the end of 1906 onwards Hannay was increasingly sought out in Westport, by English politicians and journalists. The *Pall Mall Gazette* wrote in February 1907, that

Mr. Birmingham's Irish studies have gained themselves a special claim upon the attention by their clear, temperate exhibition of the national problem from a detached and yet sympathetic point of view. (2)

According to the *Gaelic American*, Hannay had, in their opinion, 'risen well above his environment', his 'mind plays with a free acuteness over the whole Irish question', he 'has unfettered himself...from the prejudices of his class'. (3)

The *New York Times* agreed with this assessment. Hannay was, in their mind,

...one of those writers who show the direction in which the thinking minds of his generation and class in Ireland are tending. (4)

*Sinn Féin* echoed this point of view.

'George A. Birmingham' has won himself a good deal of influence and he has used that influence to forward that national idea among those who are biased against it by class or creed. His work is of considerable importance to Ireland of the present day. (5)

Hannay's third novel, *Benedict Kavanagh*, was published in February, 1907. Hannay wrote the novel during the second part of the previous year, 'under the stress of strong emotion'. (6) Although some contemporary reviewers suggested that it was more a political treatise than a novel (7), Law later characterised it as being 'marked by two qualities',

... Hannay's growing power to describe the minutiae of Irish life and the development of his own philosophy of Irish life...The novel is also marked by a growing ability to characterize and an increasing mastery of technique'. (8)

Hannay focused on three aspects of Irish society. Again, the ascendancy class occupied a prominent place in the novel, but he also looked at the Ulster Orangemen, and the lower middle classes in urban and rural Ireland. Ascendancy society is again treated as before, romanticised, though Hannay recognised that it was still neglecting its true role as the leading class. Many other writers of the time and afterwards dealt with the fortunes and vicissitudes of this class, but in Hannay's writing, there is, as Law points out, none of the 'squalor beneath the surface', which is found in the work of Somerville and Ross. (9)



In terms of his generous treatment of the Ulster Orangemen in this novel, it must be remembered that this was part of his heritage. Hannay's maternal grandfather, William Wynne, had been a staunch Orangeman. Hannay admired the spirit of the northern men, their stubbornness and strength, but for his hero, Benedict, this society could not offer the spiritual freedom and meaning that he sought. He found this freedom and meaning in the unity of religion and patriotism, an theme which had been brought up in *Hyacinth*, but not explored. The hero of the previous novel is also featured in the end of *Benedict Kavanagh*. Benedict stood on the shore of a small bay and watched the Roman Catholic priest, Fr. O'Meara, and Hyacinth, now a Protestant minister, walk away together, both at their own pace and style, but reaching the further shore together. In this closing scene we see Hannay's hopes for the bridging of the gulf between Catholic and Protestant in the unity of their aim. Benedict, the hero, is represented as belonging to no particular class but is a new type of man, as Hyacinth was in his individual way, 'an amalgam of the best elements in the old society'. (10) Benedict joins Hyacinth in his work of moral regeneration, 'the work Sinn Féin formula: self-help, self-sacrifice, self-reliance'. (11)

The novel ends with a symbolic description of a moonlit bay - symbolic of the hope of better things to come in Ireland.

Taken together, Hannay's early novels form a trilogy around a single theme that is explored in many ways. That theme is the regeneration of Ireland. *The Seething Pot* acknowledged the failure of the ascendancy class to lead the revival, but Hannay himself does not abandon his hopes of that class. Through the enlightenment of the middle class, and organisations such as the Gaelic League and Sinn Féin, the way becomes clear for Hyacinth, though a moral regeneration is also necessary. This is realised in *Benedict Kavanagh*. Hannay still hoped that the ascendancy class might yet take their rightful place as leaders of society in this new Ireland. The novel was greeted with enthusiasm. Even Canon Macken had a positive reaction.

...there is not an objectionable sentence from beginning to end. Not only that but its tone and spirit are altogether admirable...the gulf that separates the various political classes and the different religious creeds in Ireland is altogether too wide and deep and your book will go a long way towards bridging the chasm. (12)

Alice Stopford Green wrote that she found the novel 'as admirable as can be'. (13) In a further letter she wrote that,

The Monteagles were quite delighted with it...Lady Brunton and her household have been greatly charmed with *Benedict Kavanagh*. (14)

The *Church of Ireland Gazette*, however, was not so favourably disposed.

Urbanity is his real distinction as a writer, just as intense and blighting provinciality is the mark of the professional Irish politicians....This book is an apologia for the Gaelic League, and it is a very charming book. But it will not make Gaelic Leaguers out of many Irish Unionists. (15)

A. E. Horniman, the proprietor and patron of the Abbey Theatre, wrote

I was very much interested in *Benedict Kavanagh*. You treat the Gaelic League on its good and constructive side...What good reviews you have had in the London papers. (16)

Meanwhile, Hannay had embarked upon a propaganda campaign to support Sir Horace Plunkett and the Irish Agriculture Organisation Society. Hannay greatly admired Plunkett and dedicated his next novel, *The Bad Times*, to him. Hannay and Ada were often guests at Plunkett's home, Kilteragh. Countess Fingall, in her memoirs, recalled meeting them there.

The atmosphere at Kilteragh was convivial and interesting. People always coming and going, good talk of affairs and work, and a background of great comfort....They were pleasant companionable people, good company and great admirers of Horace's. (17)

Plunkett himself visited the Rectory in Westport as often as he could. (18)

Before the establishment of the Department of Agriculture and Technical Instruction in 1899, the I.A.O.S. had depended mostly on private subscriptions from its supporters. After 1900, the Department

provided the cost of the educational work of the society which meant that the I.A.O.S. could concentrate resources on co-operative organisation. Plunkett was vice-president of the Department, and donated his official salary to the I.A.O.S. but relations between the two were always strained, with Plunkett as mediator. (19)

In the Council of Agriculture there were signs of animosity between co-operators and non-co-operators...which came to a head in May 1906 when a resolution to continue financial support to the I.A.O.S. was strongly contested but carried. A scheme was then devised by which the Department would subsidise the general operation of the I.A.O.S. for the year ending February 1907 up to a maximum of £3,700; (20)

Plunkett was in the unusual position of holding a ministerial post, yet not having a parliamentary seat. When the Liberals were voted into power in January 1906, his position was unsure, but the new government did not request his resignation, as they regarded the position as a non-party one. Under Nationalist pressure, James Bryce, the Chief Secretary, resigned at the end of 1906, and was succeeded by Augustine Birrell. In March 1907 the Nationalists moved the following resolution.

That the position of vice-president of the Board of Agriculture was intended by parliament to be, and in fact is, a ministerial and parliamentary office, properly vacated upon a change of government, and that the retention of the office by an opponent of the government of the day is undesirable as a permanent arrangement. (21)

The Nationalist's argument was based on the unconstitutionality of Plunkett's position. Plunkett received a great deal of support, from diverse sources such as the English press, Belfast Chamber of Commerce, *Sinn Féin*, the *United Irishman*, and the Ulster Liberal Unionist Association. (22) Speeches in the Commons debate

...were, with one exception, moderate in tone, and the vice-president received a number of tributes from all sides, but Dillon making no attempt to disguise his antipathy for Plunkett and all his works, launched a blistering attack. (23)

An amendment, to the motion to the effect that no change should be made in the vice-president's position until the committee of enquiry had reported, was proposed, but was defeated 'after a three hour debate by 247 votes to 108, and the motion was then carried without a division'. (24)

In *Sinn Féin*, in March 1907, Hannay questioned the 'nationalism of the Nationalists', in relation to the controversy over Plunkett's position, the I.A.O.S., and the Department of Agriculture. Alice Stopford Green had written to Hannay at the beginning of March,

The most shameful intrigues cross over from Ireland to strengthen the Treasury in its bad ways. The Parliamentary Party has not the least wish to see anything at all passed, and no desire to dim its own éclat by setting up any kind in Ireland which will give the people over there a chance of showing what they can do. (25)

Hannay drew on this for his article in *Sinn Féin*.

There is in Ireland one governing body - the Department of Agriculture which attempts to do its work in consultation with the Irish people....At the head of the Department is an Irishman, Sir Horace Plunkett (26)

Pointing out that he was not going to discuss the value of the work done by the Department, or whether or not Plunkett should be at its head, he came to the crux of his argument.

...the members of a party professing to believe in the ability of Irishmen to manage their own affairs are stultifying themselves, giving the lie publicly to their own professions, denying the very basal conception of nationality by going behind an Irish body and appealing to Englishmen to interfere in Irish affairs and dismiss from his post an Irishman whose dismissal has not been demanded by the representative assembly to whom he is responsible....we may fairly ask whether the Nationalism of the National Party is worth preserving ? (27)

On 22 May 1907, Plunkett handed over the office to T.W. Russell, the Nationalist nominee. Russell 'took the official nationalist view of co-operation' and tighter control over I.A.O.S. finances was recommended, and that the Department of Agriculture and Technical Instruction 'should take over the organisational functions carried out by the ' I.A.O.S. (28) Towards the end of 1907, an unfortunate incident provided Russell with the excuse he needed to cut off all financial support to the I.A.O.S. Plunkett, resuming the presidency of the society, had made a speech 'redefining the I.A.O.S.'s relationships to the farmer, to trading interests, and to the D.A.T.I.'. (29)

The *Irish Times* published his speech in full, and Plunkett asked T.W. Rolleston, who had written the report to send copies of it 'to some of his American friends from whom he hoped to solicit aid for the I.A.O.S.'. (30) Rolleston sent the paper, with 'an injudicious covering letter' to Edward Devoy, in Missouri. (31) This letter came into Redmond's hands and it was subsequently published in *The Freeman's Journal*. Rolleston had written of Plunkett's speech that it was,

...a very important event, and means an attempt to organise the Irish farmers to shake off the grip of the country publican and Gombeen Man, who has hitherto controlled the parliamentary representation of the country. No sort of attack upon Home Rule or upon Home Rulers as such is dreamt of. It is only insisted that Irish farmers will not use people who will use their power, as Dillon and the rest of the parliamentarians have been doing, to crush the farmer's movement for the better organisation of his business. (32)

The Nationalists seized on this letter as proof of a conspiracy against them, and although,

Plunkett denied all knowledge of the letter and Rolleston admitted full responsibility, all hope of reconciliation between the Department and the co-operative movement vanished in a flood of vitriol. (33)

In April the publication of Lord Dunraven's *Outlook in Ireland* prompted Hannay to discuss the whole question of devolution, the conciliatory policy of Lord Dunraven and other landlords, which had led to, and developed from, the Land Conference in December 1902. While

proclaiming their loyalty to the Union, these reforming landlords wanted to see Ireland given more extended powers of local government. However, none of the 'conciliationists' involved were 'representative of feeling within the groups from whence they sprang.'

(34)

From the nationalist side, the old suspicion of 'sectionalism' regarding any offer less than Home Rule remained; while the Unionists feared the smuggling in of Home Rule by the door of devolution. (35)

In the April issue of the *Albany Review*, a London published periodical, later the *Independent Review*, Hannay expressed his opinion that devolution was not a realistic policy.

It is wonderful, considering the history of the last thirty years, that Protestant Unionist landlords have understood so much. It is more wonderful still that, having seen what they do see they can remain where they are; can be content to advocate their Devolution as a remedy for the evils they deplore. (36)

Their policy would never attract the mass of the Irish people, he declared, or even secure the allegiance of the majority of their own class. He concluded, 'It cannot be thought of as the final cure of Ireland's sickness'. (37) Instead, in a further issue of the *Albany Review*, he set forward the policy of Arthur Griffith and Sinn Féin, which he believed had its spiritual ancestors in the

...Volunteers of 1778... Wolfe Tone and the United Irishmen of 1798; Mitchel and the Ieter Young Irishmen; and finally Fenians of the school of Kickham and O'Leary....But though the



spirit is the spirit of the armed revolutionary the methods of the Sinn Féiner do not include rebellion. (38)

Hannay wrote that he had been for some time observing the Irish provincial papers, several of which, notably the *Leinster Leader*, had been for some time, severely criticising the Irish Parliamentary Party, especially in the wake of the rejection, in May, of Birrell's Irish Councils Bill. These papers, he wrote, were

...hinting pretty plainly at the advisability of adopting the Sinn Féin policy. The Irish provincial papers as a rule are not so much leaders of public opinion as mirrors reflecting the views of local political 'bosses'. The fact that any of them should have been found bold enough to advocate a policy banned and detested by local branches of the Parliamentary party's organisation is extremely significant. (39)

It remained to be seen, therefore, he wrote, whether the Irish people as a whole will 'reject, endorse, or modify the amazing policy devised and preached by Mr. Arthur Griffith'. (40)

Even the *Leader*, one of his most implacable foes, had to admit that this article was entirely devoid

...of bitterness or prejudice or abuse....In one word he takes the policy as it really is, and puts it plainly on paper with all its imperfections on its head. (41)

Further to his article on devolution, Hannay also drew on Dunraven's views on education, for an article in the *National Democrat*. He agreed with what Dunraven had written, that, 'The whole educational system of Ireland is an anomalous botch'. (42) The 'evil' of the primary

school system, Hannay wrote, was that it was governed by two irresponsible bodies, the National Board and the school managers. He proposed a remedy, a scheme in which the managers would be appointed by a central body, this body would also decide the subjects to be taught, and would fix the teacher's salaries. This central board would be elected by the county committees, and would act in close cooperation with the Board of Intermediate Education. His views however were treated with scepticism by the *Church of Ireland Gazette*.

What guarantee have Protestant communities that this overwhelming Nationalist body would respect their wishes in the appointment of managers or in the selection of secular subjects, or that the Nationalist county committees would respect their wishes in the appointment of teachers? Mr. Hannay asks the Protestant minority of the south and west to place far too much faith in the fairness and intelligence of a preponderatingly Roman Catholic population. (43)

Undaunted, Hannay continued to try to draw both sides together. He continued his work on behalf of the Gaelic League with lectures such as the one on the 'Gaelic League and the intellectual revival', given at the end of April, 1907, to the Portarlinton branch of the League. To these League members, Hannay declared, in truth, he could claim that

The Gaelic League has thrown down the walls that kept our people divided and allowed the free play of intellect on intellect, entirely apart from considerations of such things as men's creeds or politics. (44)

*Sinn Féin* reported that 'Mr. Hannay spoke for upwards of three quarters of an hour and was followed with rapt attention'. (45) Other articles which he wrote on the subject of the League were published in the *Glasgow Herald*, and the *World's Work*. (46)

However, the worry that not enough Protestants were joining in the work of the League led, in May, to a meeting of the 'Committee of Gaelic Leaguers for the propagation of Gaelic League principles among Protestants' under the auspices of the Craobh na gcúig gcúigí. According to O'Neill, Hannay was a vice-president of this branch. (47) However, there is no evidence of him having had any involvement with this committee, or branch. Rolleston, in the *Freeman's Journal* denied that it was an attempt to set up separate Protestant Gaelic League branches. The committee was to act as a pressure group by sending deputations to Protestant schools in Dublin and Protestant churches to ask them to pay more attention to the Irish language. (48)

Increasingly the Irish Parliamentary Party at Westminster came under Hannay's sharp criticism. In his opinion the Parliamentary party had ceased to become Irish, and had also ceased to truly know what it was that Irishmen wanted.

Like retriever puppies in training, they have tumbled over each other in slobbering joy while they have fetched the sticks that were thrown for them; have slunk behind Mr Birrell's

petticoats when the episcopal whip threatened their backs. The English people may congratulate themselves. They have done with Irish Nationalists at Westminster. They have to deal instead with the Irish section of the Liberal party. (49)

He went on to warn of the growing doubt and discontent, which he observed, as we have seen, in the provincial press, but which was as yet only half-expressed.

The number of men in Ireland who accept the details of the Sinn Féin policy is probably small. It is...a policy which requires immense enthusiasm, real self-denial and a faith....But there are very many, and these not the least vigorous and intellectual, who are attracted by the Sinn Féin movement....It is obvious that this new militant nationalism is gaining ground and becoming a real danger to the Irish-Liberal party'. (50)

At the end of May 1907, as mentioned previously, the Dublin Convention rejected Birrell's Irish Councils Bill. Hannay followed closely the events leading up to the Convention and was in attendance at it. He wrote many articles on both the Convention and the Irish Parliamentary Party under Redmond. (51) Redmond's speech, reported Hannay, was

...received without enthusiasm; The speech was, in fact, an *apologia* for Mr. Redmond's policy and for the Parliamentary tactics of the party....It was plain that Mr. Redmond thoroughly understood the position and mind of the Liberal Government....It was plain, also that he had lost touch with Ireland; that he had not understood until the very last moment the strength of the forces in Ireland which were opposed to compromise....Will this programme be sufficiently inspiring to save the Irish party from the decay which threatens it?...There is a more serious question still: 'Is it worth while supporting the Parliamentary Party any longer?'. (52)

Privately he wrote to Hugh de Fellenburg Montgomery, a liberal unionist landlord,

I hold that the people of Ireland are beginning to find this condition intolerable. There are signs on all sides of intellectual and moral awakening. The Gaelic League, in spite of the cowardice of its leaders, is one. The propaganda of the Sinn Féin party is another. The literary, dramatic, and artistic revival is a third....A fourth, perhaps the greatest of all, is Horace Plunkett's work. (53)

Hannay held out hope that even yet the gentry would take their rightful place as leaders of society. 'Then we shall have an Ireland united....the gentry are the best class in Ireland'. (54)

The hope that the regeneration of the ascendancy class might yet be achieved was the theme Hannay explored historically in *The Northern Iron*, which was published in 1907. This novel looked at the role of Irish Protestants during the rebellion of 1798, and was set in Co. Antrim, incorporating memories of Hannay's childhood on the coast.

In a further letter to Montgomery, he repeated this hope that the ascendancy would assume their true role as leaders of society.

The present situation in Ireland is extraordinarily interesting. I think that Redmond and Co. are done. They have nothing to offer....The Sinn Féin people are honest and clever don't seem to be able to produce a leader. The Irish gentry have got a great chance. (55)

This was a theme which, as we shall see, Hannay returned to over and over again. Meanwhile, in August

1907, the Central Church of Ireland Y.M.C.A. held its opening meeting. Hannay was among those who spoke. Once again he spoke at length on the meaning of Sinn Féin and Griffith's policies. He urged his fellow Protestants to look at their history and to recognise that although the majority of the members of the Church of Ireland were Unionists, the Church itself was not Unionist. He concluded by reminding them that 'one hundred and ten years ago the majority of the members were the strongest nationalists in the country'. (56) This speech was misquoted and condensed in the *Irish Times* which prompted Lord Gough to write to Hannay questioning what had been reported. (57)

Hannay also attended the inaugural meeting of the Trinity College Gaelic Society in November 1907, where he proposed a resolution declaring the society worthy of the support of the students of the College. (58) He dealt with some adverse criticisms as to what was supposed to be the under-lying motive in founding the Society. It seemed to him, so far from barring and discouraging the study for which this society existed, that Dublin University ought to encourage and help the society because it was setting itself to this 'work of producing and sending forth into the country men who understood and loved Ireland'. (59)

During the early weeks of 1908, Hannay renewed his propaganda campaign, supporting Plunkett and the

I.A.O.S. with increased vigour. In January, he published a lengthy article in the *Pall Mall Gazette*, entitled 'Politics or Prosperity?'. He wrote,

While Sir Horace Plunkett was vice-president of the Department of Agriculture, the society received a small annual subsidy. This was in reality a hindrance to its work, for the acceptance of public money necessarily prevented the organising of general stores which would directly compete with the provincial traders. But Mr. Redmond hoped if the subsidy was withdrawn the society would collapse. Therefore the dismissal of Sir Horace Plunkett was engineered and we were treated to the pitifully sordid farce of last May. Mr. T.W. Russell succeeded Sir Horace and at once pronounced in favour of a gradual withdrawal of that subsidy. (60)

Hannay continued, accusing those who wanted to keep Ireland poor in order that Irishmen should support a party 'to whine in the House of Commons' of celebrating, supposing that the I.A.O.S. would slowly die. But this it declined to do. An optimistic sign, in his opinion, was the fact,

...that the three papers - the *Irish Times*, the *Belfast Newsletter*, and the *Northern Whig*, which represent the opinions of the commercial classes, have expressed unqualified approval of the fresh start which Sir Horace Plunkett is giving to the co-operative movement. (61)

The rest, he wrote, was up to the farmers. Had they the strength and sense to discern their own interests? He addressed that question more directly in a letter to *The Spectator*. He traced briefly the history of the agrarian revolution, the story of the land. He outlined the hope, on the one hand, of what Plunkett and the

I.A.O.S. represented, and on the other hand, the determination of the Irish Parliamentary Party to crush that hope.

So it looks as if we were to have another stand-up fight in Ireland, not this time tenant against landlord, but farmer with Sir Horace Plunkett and the Irish Agricultural Organisation Society to guide him, the trader with a strong political party under his control....Sir Horace Plunkett was elected president of the Society....He addressed the delegates in words which leave no doubt about his intentions. He does not want to fight any political party. He wants to keep the Society over which he presides clear of politics altogether. But if his work is attacked and hindered he is prepared to see the struggle through. (62)

An editorial in the *Belfast Newsletter* took notice of what Hannay had been writing, and pronounced that,

'George A. Birmingham' whose identity is so well known, has performed a very good service to Ireland by the letters he has written to the English papers on the sequel to Sir Horace Plunkett's expulsion....The service is all the greater because it is likely to be so effective by reason of the position which the writer is known to hold in Ireland. Here is a well-known Irish authority who has the almost unparalleled advantage of being able to write upon a subject of Irish economics into which, to its harm, politics had been imported for the meanest party purposes and who in exposing this meanness cannot be accused of doing it from political motives. the aloofness of this writer from the Irish political arena is well known to all cultured Englishmen....When therefore, "George A. Birmingham" takes up his pen...he is likely to speak with authority and carry conviction. (63)

George A. Birmingham's fifth novel *The Bad Times*, was published in 1908, and carried the following dedication to Sir Horace Plunkett.

O heart too brave to suffer long  
Under the spite of little men,



Or pay their hatred back again  
With bitterness; O Soul too strong

To turn from what you find to do  
In sick disgust or mere despair  
And find your life work elsewhere  
I offer this my work to you (64)

Set in the days of the Land War, this novel was a reversion to *The Seething Pot* not only in theme, the Anglo-Irish as leaders of society, but also in structure of the plot, setting, characterisation, and political background. Both novels begin with a historical prologue in which the hero's ancestors give him a rebel heritage. In *The Bad Times*, Stephen Butler's grandfather scorns the Act of Union and by solemn oath in front of an altar binds his descendents, to

...never...yield obedience to laws made for this realm in England...never while life lasts will I pay loyalty to any government other than that proper, under its own constitution to this kingdom of Ireland. (65)

His grandson Stephen, unaware of the oath, wanted 'to stay in Ireland. I want to know my people and see what can be done for them and the property', (66) but he is treated as an enemy when the Land War begins, simply because he is a landlord. Like Sir Gerald, in *The Seething Pot*, though a stronger character, Stephen's attempts to help his tenants, and his ambitions for Ireland, end in failure, but not in compromise, as in Hannay's first novel, but in death. Stephen Butler is shot, accidentally, by the Land Leaguers, and dies.

This death is symbolic of the failure of Hannay's hopes for the ascendancy. It was historically inevitable. The gentry had missed their opportunity, and the events of history made it impossible for them to seize it again. The novel received mixed reviews. Some saw it as a novel of the Land League, 'the vision' of which the *Peasant and Irish Ireland* did not see as flattering. However it conceded 'it is not judged or studied as a whole. Rather we have certain flashes and phases of it'. (67)

In March, Hannay published an article on Sinn Féin in the *Albany Review*, continuing his work begun in 1906 on behalf of Griffith's policy. The *Northern Whig* noticed this article as '...a sympathetic well-informed article, which does not, however, quite do justice to the uncompromising elements in the movement', and went on to describe *The Bad Times* as 'what may be fairly described as the first Sinn Féin novel' and 'an account of the Ireland of the Land League days from the Sinn Féin point of view'. (68)

The *Church of Ireland Gazette* agreed with this assessment, and went on to state that,

Like Sir Horace Plunkett, he sees plainly that the only chance for Ireland to rise from the slough of depression is for men of education to associate themselves with the people, try to influence them and lead them on the path of industry and self-reliance. (69)

However, they were also of the opinion that

Mr. Birmingham is one of the leaders of the new Irish politicians who accept the changes in Ireland as an accomplished fact and are looking around for a *modus vivendi*... Mr. Birmingham taught self-help in his earlier novels... and we know that his work made a deep impression on the reading public, of Ireland. He has no panacea: he only asks for support of co-operation, of home industries, of all the work in which Sir Horace Plunkett is a leading figure. (70)

The *Irish Times* asked,

'Does George A. Birmingham simply desire to set before us a living picture of Ireland under the Land League tyranny, while he stands aside, calmly indifferent and allows us to draw any conclusion we please? Or does he desire to point to some particular moral? (71)

The English papers were more generous in their reviews.

The *Warden* felt that it

...is probably the strongest thing that Mr Birmingham has yet done... *The Bad Times* is emphatically a book for every Irishman to read whether he agrees with all its pages or not. (72)

The *Evening Standard* printed a review which declared that, in their opinion, 'There is no other novelist who does for Ireland what Mr. George A. Birmingham does for her in his sombre, cultivated, powerful books with their tone of bitter conviction'. (73)

*Punch* particularly approved of the dedication of the novel to Sir Horace Plunkett,

...an Irishman who has done more for the welfare of his country than any Secretary of State or any agglomeration of Nationalist members. (74)

The reviewer also confessed that the novel left him in 'pleasing doubt' as to whether the author was a Unionist or a Nationalist. 'What is certain is that he

knows the country, the period, and the people of whom he writes'. (75)

The *Daily Chronicle* pronounced that Birmingham 'is more than a teller of tales and an interpreter of character: he is a social and political philosopher'. (76) Hannay himself felt that it was the best work that he had done. (77)

Although he still supported the Gaelic League, the years 1907 and 1908 saw less and less offerings on its behalf from his pen. In Hannay's opinion the League was in a critical state. He wrote to Hyde in May 1908.

The League as a force in this country is not what it was three years ago. It is emasculated. The priests have captured it or snuffed out the independent provincial branches and the central executive has left them to their fate....In other words the constitution of the League - in which true strength lay - has been...informally abrogated. The League is now sectarian...and political in the sense that it has chosen the way of negotiating rather than fighting on a straight issue....I need scarcely say that I view this state of affairs with profound sorrow. I feel intently for you personally. I feel even more for Ireland....When I recollect all the good the League has done...and think of all that it might do I weep and curse. (78)

He ended his letter on a hopeful note,

It is, I believe, still possible to save the League. I may be wrong, totally wrong in my diagnosis of the roots of the evil; but if I am right there is only one cure. (79)

This was, as he saw it, the removal of both Fr. Dineen and Stephen Gwynn from the League.

Very unlikely the patient would die under the treatment. But as I believe, it will certainly die without the treatment'. (80)

Between 1908 and 1910 the League successfully campaigned for the acceptance of Irish as an 'essential' subject in the National University. O'Neill sees this campaign as the

...climax to over fifteen years of Gaelic League activity. it was the last great battle to be fought in the politics of culture before the question of Home Rule once more absorbed the attention of all Irishmen. After the successful conclusion to this campaign, the Gaelic League declined in strength. (81)

Hannay did not involve himself in this campaign beyond contributing one or two articles to the English press which poked fun at, and drew comedy from the situation while still providing accurate and shrewd observations. (82) However, he did not strongly support the League's position in print, preferring to keep a neutral stance, though he wished Hyde the best of luck and warned him to be careful of the Bishops. (83) He also discussed his pessimism about the League with Sheehy Skeffington.

I agree with you that the League is done, as an influence for good and liberty. The leaders sacrificed their chance and it is only 'once to every man and nation'. I am sorry. I think the movement was on the right lines. (84)

Perhaps, he suggested, there was some hope that the 'self-sacrificing enthusiasm' that the League had developed, 'an enthusiasm for straight thought and

honesty which survives still among the rank and file...may yet assert itself before the end'. (85)

'But I don't think', he concluded, 'that the organisation...can survive as a force in Irish affairs. To put the matter nakedly - the leaders funk'd'. (86)

In June 1908, Hannay had written to Sheehy Skeffington about the local elections in Co. Mayo, a subject which formed a series of articles for the *Pall Mall Gazette*.

We have had a delightfully comic set of local elections here - Conor O'Kelly MP versus the local priests...It so far as it has ended, in Conor O'Kelly's supporters very skilfully holding up a mail train so that quite a number of earnest...Councillors, clericals to the back bone, couldn't arrive in time to vote against Conor O'Kelly and he was successfully elected chairman of a committee. (87)

These elections formed the basis for an article in the *Pall Mall Gazette*, under the title 'Priests and people'. In a slightly more serious tone Hannay gave an account of the elections and wondered,

Does all this mean anything ? Is there a tide of anti-clericalism, of French atheism, and other horrors rising over Ireland. Or is it a summer storm upon the surface of a mountain tarn ?...It is noticeable that the leaders of the anti-clerical party are admirers of the late Michael Davitt. His conception of democracy was not anti-religious, but distinctly hostile to the political dominance of the church; It is always possible that his spirit may break out in his disciples. Many shrewd observers of Irish affairs believe that it is very near the surface now. (88)

There were many who were antagonised by Hannay's obvious hope that the political dominance of the

Catholic church in Irish life would be successfully challenged. Three days after the above appeared in the *Pall Mall Gazette*, a letter was printed in the *Peasant* which the paper took pains to point out was not their opinion or attitude. A correspondent who signed himself 'P.F.' wrote,

...George is a phenomenon. He is a man of letters of considerable distinction...In spite of his many indiscretions he might still be able to teach a few elementary lessons of citizenship to his own people. Of course he cannot get rid of the obvious fact that we Irish Catholics are the real backbone of Ireland...It has brought upon George A. Birmingham and his friends the consummate humiliation of having their right name invented by their enemy and mine, Mr Birrell, when he called them 'carrion crows'.  
(89)

In August of this year, *Spanish Gold* was published. This was Hannay's first comedy and remains the only one of his books that has been repeatedly reprinted. All reviewers found it exceedingly funny and most commented on the step away from the 'stage Irishman', in the novel while retaining a very Irish spirit. Quite a few of the reviews equated Birmingham with George Bernard Shaw, in terms of humour. The *Daily News* called him 'a sort of un-Anglicised George Bernard Shaw'. (90) Hannay would probably have felt 'de-Anglicised' a better term. The *Morning Post* felt that it was good to see that 'Mr Birmingham has in him the gift of Irish laughter as well as the Irish tears'. (91) As Law wrote,

In comedy he found the medium for his gift, for his detachment, for his knowledge of Irish social life. Circumstances too, played their part: the success of *Spanish Gold* demonstrated his ability and ensured him of an audience. He himself was tired of the old quarrels. He began to experiment in a new medium. (92)

This is quite true. Increasingly Birmingham begins to become less earnest and serious in his writing, and more sardonic and farcical. Hannay retained his seriousness however in writing on aspects of Irish life. During the autumn, he was working on a series of articles on 'movements of thought and life in Ireland', including two articles, the first on trade unionism in Ireland, the second on unorganised labour and slum poverty. (93) However his major preoccupation was the still the fate of the ascendancy class. In January of 1909, he wrote under the title 'A Doomed Aristocracy', in the *Westminister Gazette*.

This aristocracy of ours is passing unsung, unlamented....They have lived, these gentlemen of Ireland, aloof from their people and their land. They are dying aloof from them now. (94)

In many ways Hannay was echoing what O'Grady had written before the turn of the century, and what he himself had explored in his early novels. Now, however, there is the certainty that there is no possibility of a regeneration of the ascendancy class.

The Irish gentry are men without a country....They always gave their sons to the Empire. Now they sacrifice them with religious ardour. (95)



Indeed, no-one could have foreseen that it would be only a short time until they would take part in the biggest sacrifice of all, the Great War.

In taking Imperialism to his heart and scorning patriotism he has mistaken the transitory for the permanent....There seems no possibility of saving the Irish aristocracy or of their saving themselves. Their doom, in spite of their fine qualities seems irrevocable. But the pity of it and the loss! (96)

At least one member of the ascendancy was alive enough to write a scathing reply to Hannay's articles. He 'pours sarcasm on the doomed class' wrote J.M. Wilson, Currygrane, Edgeworthstown, Co. Longford. (97)

Does he forget that his own Church of Ireland would have been in a sorry plight ere now had it not been for the support, financial and otherwise, which this class has afforded it? Has he any right to speak for Ireland as a whole?...for a writer now to endeavour to belittle a whole class, many of whose members are, I contend, doing all that is possible in very difficult circumstances, is, to say the least of it, ungenerous....when he proves his right to criticise those whom he considers doomed all over Ireland, and dissociates himself from what savours rather of clap-trap of a League orator, his letters will carry more weight! (98)

Hannay continued his articles in the English press, moving on to explore the middle classes, an aspect of Irish society he had examined in *Benedict Kavanagh*. These articles were entitled 'A Ruling Bureaucracy', a relatively recent development which he saw succeeding the passing of the gentry.

...a government by official men who were intensely distrustful of the people's will....More and more the government, the real government of the country, is passing into the hands of permanent officials....the question is

whether government by bureaucracy is the inevitable outcome of a democratic constitution or whether it is merely a temporary expedient, a stage in transition. (99)

The style and tone of his articles, as well as his fiction, were beginning to undergo change. He was still the shrewd observer, the acute surveyor, diagnosing Ireland's ills, but increasingly, his treatment of his subject was a humorous one, comedy with a very sharp edge. More and more his articles appeared under his pseudonym rather than his own name, and the practice of giving a by-line explaining who Birmingham really was disappeared. George A. Birmingham had become a person in his own right. Increasingly too, from 1908 onwards the bulk of his writing was published in the English press. He had always been a contributor to the English newspapers, but previously most of his writing had been for the Irish press. It was as if slowly, but surely he was removing himself from Irish society as much as possible while continuing to write about it. In August, he contributed a further series of articles to the *Westminster Gazette*, under the title 'A Dominant Caste', in which he examined the position of the Roman Catholic clergy in Ireland. Hannay was openly critical of the clergy, as he always had been. He asked, 'why on earth should Ireland be treated

simply as a creché for nurturing a superfluity of priests and nuns ? (100)

Lest the supply should fall off...our education must be controlled by a clerical caste....Lest the breath of modern thought should reach our people, the founding of public libraries must be discouraged and newspapers must be whipped to heel or suppressed. Books written in good intent are denounced unread... (101)

It was obvious that he was referring to his own experiences, and possibly that of the *Irish Peasant*.

Hannay also saw the Roman Catholic bishops as

...instrumental in breaking an aristocracy. The fall of Parnell left them in a position to dominate....The hierarchy is a dominant caste in Ireland. Is there any force rising or has risen which can break its power....In these two facts, the existence of democratic and patriotic priests, and the watchful hostility of the Protestant minority lies the secret of the unchallenged supremacy of the hierarchy. (102)

There is evident bitterness in the tone of these articles. Apart from his experiences with the clergy of the Roman Catholic Church, perhaps he was more bitter against them than he ever admitted. Another reason for his scathing treatment of the clergy may have been due to his reaction to the conversion of his sister Mabel to Catholicism. Most of the correspondence which survives for these years, 1909, and 1910, is that between Hannay and Mabel on this subject. Mabel lived in England, and had been experiencing dissatisfaction with the Church of England, which she had written about in her letters to Hannay. He advised her to read certain books, and to

dwell on certain passages of the Bible, in order that she might reconcile her difficulties with some of the teachings of the Anglican Church. Upon receiving the news that Mabel found many of the answers that she sought within the Roman Catholic Church and that she had decided to convert, Hannay was extremely upset. He tried to dissuade her, but Mabel had made a decision and was received in the Catholic Church. This was, for Hannay, 'a cause of great sorrow'. He also felt that Mabel's 'change of faith should alter the relations between us, is unfortunately quite inevitable'. (103)

By Christmas 1910, he had still not accepted her actions but wrote that 'within certain limits we can continue to be friends and it is my very sincere desire that we do so...though we continue to be friends we cannot be intimate'. (104)

This he expressed with 'neither bitterness nor anger, only the inevitable regret'. (105)

During 1910, Hannay's productivity, in terms of articles decreased somewhat. 1909 had seen the publication of a second comical novel, *The Search Party*, but in the following year he did not publish a novel for the first time since 1905. He continued writing on the subject of the passing of the aristocracy, which had become something of a crusade on his part, and for his efforts he was labelled by the *Irish News* and *Belfast Morning News* as the

'caoiner-in-chief of the "Irish Gentry" of our time'.

(106) In the Christmas edition of a Dublin serial publication, the *Lady of the house*, he wrote on the passing of not only one but two aristocracies from Ireland, drawing the parallel between the 'old owners of the soil who were expropriated for their mistaken fidelity to the Stuart cause and the newer "gentry" who came into the land during the days of Cromwell, and William of Orange'. (107) He quoted from the work of poet Emily Lawless, comparing the ascendancy class to

War-dogs, hungary and grey  
Gnawing on a naked bone,  
Fighters in every clime,  
In every cause but our own. (108)

The editor of the *Irish News and Belfast Morning News* feared the the 'ingenious writer of many novels' had undertaken a hopeless task if he was trying to

...pursue the idea of weaving a hazy web of Romance over the pitiable squalor, the unredeemed selfishness, the inborn rapacity and the callous stupidity which were the prominent and dominant characteristics of the landlord race of our generation. (109)

*Sinn Féin* took a somewhat different view. 'Mr Birmingham is a courageous man. He says what he thinks and moreover he likes to say it publicly'. (110) The reviewer, Michael Orkney saw Hannay's work, fiction and non-fiction as revealing

...for the first time the awakening of a mind of a strongly 'ascendancy' type to the reality of the National feeling in Ireland....The 'ascendancy' class had for many years

deliberately cut themselves off from any participation in the national life of the country. But recently a change has come over them. They are now beginning - so many of them as are left with us - slowly, but surely, to take their rightful place in the resurgent nation. This is the phenomenon around which Mr Birmingham weaves his most effective stories... Their great value is that they are really true to what is happening at the present moment, to a certain extent, in the country.

(111)

In February 1910, Hannay attended a meeting to support the campaign for the franchise for women. Three prominent women headed the meeting. Mrs Millicent Garrett Fawcett, President of the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies, The Countess of Fingall, President of the Leinster Branch Conservative and Unionist Women's Franchise Associations, and Lady Castletown, Munster president of the same body. Hannay spoke at the meeting supporting the resolution for the enfranchisement of women. He stood, he said, as a stranger upon a platform of that kind and was a comparatively recent convert to the cause of woman suffrage, and identified his process of conversion with that of Countess Fingall's, that being the extraordinarily bad argument of their opponents. He admitted that he used to scoff but then began to think. Thought produced conversion, and thus the reason that he supported the resolution. (112)

In October he received a letter from the former rector of Westport, Rev. S. Hemphill. The latter urged

Hannay to take a more active part in the Grand Synod. Since 1903 Hannay had been a member but served only on the social services committee, one on which he had little chance to be a part of decision making. Hemphill felt that it was time that Hannay took his proper place on a more powerful committee, as

...a leader of thought and a patriotic Irishman....I could mention about half of Ireland now paralysed by episcopal incompetence. Your political alliances have no effect whatever in the way of estranging men of character from you. (113)

It was also at this time that the editor of the *Irish Times*, John E. Healy, wrote to Hannay asking him to write an article on the present position of priests in politics for *The Times*. (114) Hannay was also requested by W.K. Lowther Clarke to write an article on the Irish priests and people. Clarke was engaged in putting together a book on the condition and belief among different classes of English society. Although Hannay did write the article for *The Times*, he declined to contribute to the book. (115)

1911 was a very busy year for George A. Birmingham, he published three novels, *Lalage's lovers*, *The Simpkins plot*, and *The Major's niece*, all comedies, and also a book of Irish humour, *The lighter side of Irish life*. Hannay, however, was engaged in writing on Irish Protestantism, Nationalism, and Home Rule. In March he gave a lecture to 'a thronged audience' at

the Sinn Féin headquarters in Dublin. The title of his lecture was 'The Irish minority and Irish nationalism; some Unionist difficulties'. (116) In trying to establish what made up the 'Irish minority', Hannay said that it was not a coherent whole, but that it was united only in its dislike and distrust of the idea of Home Rule. The minority was made up of three sections. The first was composed of farmers, according to Hannay, the industrial democracy of the North, and the rank and file of the Orange Order. This was, he said, the strongest and most vital section. The second was made up of the old aristocratic gentry, and the third, of the professional and business middle classes. Of the latter two sections, Hannay argued, that they did not absolutely dread Home Rule, but desired change to come about slowly. The Belfast workingman however, genuinely believed that Home Rule meant Rome Rule, and that the Catholic Church would obtain a controlling voice in Ireland under Home Rule, and would pass laws to harass Protestants. This belief, Hannay declared, was further strengthened by the papal decree, *Ne temere*. The middle class section feared that an Irish parliament would overweight mercantile enterprise and manufacturing with excessive taxation, and in reference to the aristocratic class, he pointed out that it was only natural that they should be attached to the Imperial idea. Although, generally speaking,



Hannay felt the whole tone of the Irish Unionist minority had been undergoing change during the previous fifteen years, no longer were they ashamed of being Irish, but their opposition to Home Rule had barely weakened. This, he attributed, to the fear of 'the Church of Rome'. Concluding, Hannay stated that the topic of the lecture had been chosen for him by the Central Branch of Sinn Féin, and it was a topic he did not like speaking on it 'as it bristled with controversial thorns of the prickliest description'.

(117)

However, he found himself speaking and writing more and more on the religious difficulties in Ireland in relation to Home Rule.

Bryan Cooper, a Unionist MP, wrote to Hannay in March, thanking him 'for the fairness with which you have put our case' but also wrote that,

There is one point which you appear not to have dealt with...and that is our attitude towards the present state of affairs. We do not believe that the Union is necessarily unjust to Ireland...We hold that at last England is disposed to treat us fairly and we can see that the prosperity of the country is increasing in almost every way. (118)

In fact Hannay had dealt with this aspect of the question - the report of his lecture in the newspapers had omitted it. In a further letter Cooper wrote,

I am very much interested in your account of the reception of the lecture. When we have learnt to listen to opinions from which we differ, Ireland will be a very different country. (119)

Many Unionists wrote to Hannay with admiration for his lecture and supporting his aim of bringing both sides closer together. At the end of the summer, however, Archbishop Crozier of Armagh objected to an article by Hannay in the *Belfast Evening Telegraph*, during the month of August. Hannay replied to his criticisms.

I did not accuse the northern working man of reckless levity nor of personal disloyalty. I said that he occasionally talked as if he were disloyal....If you had taken the ordinary precaution of reading what I wrote before denouncing me for writing it, you would, I hope, have grasped my meaning. (120)

The outcome of the disagreement was a happy one. Even though Crozier returned one of his letters unopened, Hannay recalled in his autobiography, that they renewed their friendship while he was rector of Carnalway. (121)

In a letter to his sister Mabel, at this time, Hannay gives us some interesting insights into his views on Sinn Féin.

The present position of Sinn Féin in this country is one of suspended animation. If Redmond gets a satisfactory Home Rule Bill from the Liberals, you have probably have heard the last of Sinn Féin as a political organisation. If Redmond fails, Sinn Féin will, like the prophet Isaiah's eagle, renew its strength...It has, in my opinion, done a very great deal to help forward the Irish industrial revival. Sinn Féin has been, broadly speaking, constructive and not destructive, but its idealism has hindered its immediate and tangible success in Irish politics. It is even now more an ideal than a policy. I know of no ultimate of its adherents. I should say it was strong in Dublin and weak elsewhere'. (122)

In October of 1911, a book called *Home Rule problems*, edited by Basil Williams, was published in London. It was composed of articles on various aspects of Home Rule. Hannay contributed an article entitled 'The religious problem in Ireland' in which he dealt again with the question of Irish Protestantism in relation to Home Rule. Many of the points in this article were identical to those that he had raised in his lecture, but in the article, he also attempted to answer these problems from a Protestant Nationalist point of view. He made the point that in his opinion Irish Protestants had 'ample and sufficient safeguards...against the danger of clerical bullying'. (123) Firstly, although a minority, they were a strong and influential one. The second was the fact that the political power of the priests was steadily diminishing. He drew examples in his private correspondence of what he considered a rising tide of anti-clericalism in the country. Thirdly, and this he considered the strongest point, an Irish parliament would not be tempted to bully Protestants, instead of religious divisions under Home Rule, he argued, there would be a division of urban and rural parties. On one point, however, Hannay was pessimistic.

Is the spirit of religious bitterness dying out of Ireland? Two years ago, I would have answered without hesitation, "Yes, it is". I still answer "Yes" but I do so with a certain reserve. There has been lately a recrudescence -

I hope only a temporary recrudescence - of religious strife. (124)

He felt that in the past thirty years the old barriers had been breaking down, there was 'freer intercourse, far more social intermingling in all classes'. This led to the question of marriage, and then the trouble began.

From the point of view of the statesman mixed marriages are the most desirable things possible. From the point of view of the ecclesiastic they are the least desirable. All the clergy opposed them. The Roman Catholic clergy forbade them except on terms impossibly humiliating to Protestants. Hence the notorious decree *Ne temere*....It could only have had the effect of reviving religious bitterness in its worse form [and] put a weapon into the hands of Irish Protestant Unionists which they would use with considerable effect against Home Rule. (125)

This, Hannay felt, was the desired result, apart from discouraging mixed marriages, as 'Rome has much to lose and nothing to gain by the establishment of an Irish parliament'. (126) Gerald O'Donovan, a former Catholic priest, in 1914, was to explore some of the effects of *Ne temere* in his novel, *Waiting*. (127)

Hannay drew attention to some religious problems in articles for the *Daily Chronicle*. One was the case of Richard Kingston, a Protestant farmer in Co. Cork, who was being boycotted. He was the occupying owner of a ninety two acre farm over a period of twenty eight years. The Catholic son of the previous tenant, who had been evicted eighteen months before Kingston took

over the farm, returned from America claiming his right to be reinstated. This was considered and rejected by the Estates Commissioners who offered him a different farm in another district. This the son refused. Kingston found himself boycotted by his Catholic neighbours, with whom he had had good relations. Hannay in his article on this case called on John Redmond to stop the persecution of Kingston.

(128)

In further articles, Hannay dealt again with the same district, where the Protestant graveyard had been reported desecrated, repairs of the local Protestant schoolhouse would not be undertaken, and in the case of a mixed marriage, two daughters of a Protestant farmer were reported abducted. (129) The Unionist papers had reported on all the above, including the Kingston case. They declared, 'We are getting a foretaste of Home Rule'. (130) Hannay disagreed. The Unionist papers, he said

...have advertised a reign of terror and announced a general boycott of all Protestants. There is no reign of terror. There is no general boycott of Protestants. (131)

However, he agreed that the Kingston case demanded attention and called on the Nationalists leaders to act, 'in daring greatly to do what is right', they 'might serve very effectively the cause they have at heart'. (132)

The abduction of the Shorten children proved to be a domestic dispute. The damage to the churchyard was, in the opinion of local Nationalists, the work of Unionists, anxious to impress members of the Eighty Club who were in the district. On the other hand, the Unionist papers felt that it was the work of 'desperadoes' trying to terrorise Protestants, and was surely what they could expect under Home Rule. Hannay reiterated his arguments for Home Rule in the *Irish Times*, in October. (133) He continued following the fortunes of Plunkett and the I.A.O.S., ably defending them in a letter to the *Irish Times* in November, on the subject of the development grant which the Council of Agriculture refused to recommend the society for. (134) He explored this issue more fully in an article for the *Irish Review*, entitled 'Politics in the Nude'. He saw the consequences of this refusal as

...more than a loss of a sum of money to Ireland or the smirching of the honour of the Nationalist party....there are signs that the centre of gravity of the Irish Nationalist party is shifting. It is ceasing to be a Party devoted, as it once was, to the cause of the farmers. It is becoming the Party of an urban proletariat....It is scarcely worth while to waste time over the excuses made for refusing support to the policy of the I.A.O.S....The work of the I.A.O.S. is not injuring but benefitting the commercial classes....The other excuse - the politics of the I.A.O.S. is more pitiful still. Does anyone believe that the thousands of Nationalist farmers enrolled in the co-operative societies would not know if Sir Horace Plunkett were trying to turn them into Unionists ? (135)

Much of what Hannay said and wrote in support of the I.A.O.S. was not new, he had said much the same four years previously, but he continued to believe strongly in the value of Plunkett's work in the midst of all the controversy over religion and politics.

In November, the Bishop of Down wrote to Hannay, expressing his views on the subject of Home Rule,

...it seems to me that the difference between us, in relation to the deliverance of Ireland from the tyranny of Rome is that you wish for a cataclysm, I prefer an orderly evolution. Home Rule would probably bring the former and after a time. The Union will secure the latter....Home Rule will certainly bring, if it comes, a tightening of the chains of Roman authority, an effort to thrust Protestants out of every possible position, the creation of a state of things like in Quebec. after a time, a reaction may come and a revolt. But it is possible that it may not. Roman tyranny will more and more drive all energy out of the country...and Ireland may not have enough power left in her to break her chains. (136)

In 1912 Hannay once more turned to public affairs in his fiction with *The Red Hand of Ulster*. This was written against a background of rapidly developing events. Hannay, in this novel, surveyed the paradoxes and absurdities of the situation in 1912 with regard to the Home Rule Bill and the prospect of armed rebellion in Ulster. On 9 April the Unionist party committed themselves to the cause of Protestant Ulster, and the defeat of the Bill. Three days later, the Bill was published and on 16 April there was a special meeting of the General Synod of the Church of

Ireland held in Dublin. The purpose of this meeting was to pass a resolution against Home Rule. Four hundred people attended the Synod and passed the resolution with only five dissentients of whom Hannay was the first and the spokesman. On 22 April he began to write *The Red Hand of Ulster*. (137)

Throughout 1911, as we have seen, Hannay spent much of his time writing articles, addressing himself to the Unionist minority, north and south, on why there was no need to fear Home Rule, and correspondingly, addressing himself towards the Nationalists, endeavouring to explain the fears of the Unionist minority. What he said was not new.

He felt that the whole tone of the Irish Unionist minority towards Nationalism had altered and was altering rapidly during the previous ten to fifteen years. No longer were they ashamed of being Irish but their fear of the Romanist bogey had not dissipated, but rather had been enflamed by such measures as the Papal decree *Ne Temere*, against which the General Synod in 1908 had protested. The Bishops of the Church of Ireland had stated that,

According to this decree, 'no marriage is valid which is not contracted in the presence of the (Roman) parish priest of the place, or of a priest deputed, and of two witnesses at least', This rule is henceforth binding on all Roman Catholics....As a result of this rule, it is now the case that, in Ireland, marriages which the law of the land declares to be valid are declared null and void by the Church of Rome,



and the children of these marriages are pronounced illegitimate. (138)

The extent of this fear and distrust was made readily apparent by the resolutions passed by the General Synod in April 1912 which was one of the last statements made by Unionists as one body, before there was a split between those of Ulster and those of the south.

The General Synod of the Church of Ireland was composed of two houses, the house of bishops and the house of representatives, the houses voting and sitting together, except when the bishops expressed a desire to consider separately a matter in debate. The diocesan synods elected the members of the house of representatives which included some lay members. (139)

From the time of the introduction of the first Home Rule Bill in 1886 the Church of Ireland made its position clear through the resolutions of the General Synod. 'Have we, the members of this synod,' demanded the archbishop of Dublin, William Conyngham Plunkett who presided at the 1886 meeting, 'any right to deal with a question of politics?' 'If we distinguish politics from party', he answered, "I say unhesitatingly we have". (140)

Hannay had been a member of the Synod since 1903. In 1908 he was elected a member of the Social Services Committee, on which he served until 1912. (141)

Hannay had decided to speak at the Synod meeting as early as January 1912 but evidently had some misgivings about how he would be received as a letter from Charles Frederick D'Arcy, Bishop of Down on January 25 shows.

I think you are mistaken in imagining that the Synod would shout you down, or that you will be prevented from uttering your protest. In my opinion you would do more wisely if you would explain your position in some other way. I am glad that you hold that Home Rule should not be passed in the teeth of Ulster opposition. If you would only say that, your protest would, I think, be very well received by many who do not agree with you. (142)

Hannay intended to base his protest against any Home Rule discussion within the Synod and against the Church committing itself, on such a political issue. Colonel (later Sir) William Hutcheson Poe also corresponded with Hannay on this issue.

In view of the large anti Home Rule meetings already held in Ulster and of those yet to take place in Belfast where representatives of other provinces are to attend to give expression to the opinions of Protestants generally throughout Ireland, I should have thought our Church might well have held itself aloof from the controversy. (143)

Hutcheson Poe was a Unionist involved in politics at a local level in Co. Laois. He was also a distinguished naval officer, having served the Empire from 1867-88, a member of the Irish Land Conference, 1902; a Governor of the National Gallery of Ireland, 1904; and a member of the Vice-Regal Commission on Irish Railways, 1906-10. (144)

In a letter written after the Synod, in the *Church of Ireland Gazette*, 12 July, Hannay asked the question, 'Are the decisions of the recent Synod to be reckoned 'the Voice of the Church' ? In order to be churchmen must we be Unionists ?' (145)

Walter MacMourrough Kavanagh agreed with Hannay's point of view in a letter written on 26 March 1912. Kavanagh was a direct descendent of the Gaelic King of Leinster, Dermot MacMourrough, but also a member of the Anglo-Irish gentry and M.P. for Co. Carlow 1908-10. He stated that

I certainly intend to make a protest at the Synod against any Home Rule discussion, first, against the introduction of politics in our Synod; second, (if that is overruled) against any anti- Home Rule resolution. I expected to be quite alone in such a protest - but I am glad to hear that you will be there also. I did not propose to move an amendment - My vote will be a direct negative - That is all we can do - and just to say a few words - on my part a very few words - if I get a hearing I'll object altogether to the introduction of political subjects in our Church Synods. (146)

An anonymous correspondent echoed this point of view 'Religion is debased by politics and politics is corrupted by having religion mixed up with it'. (147)

In an interview for the *Daily News* on 28 March 1912 Hannay spoke on Irish Protestantism and Home Rule. The paper reported,

As a northern Protestant who has lived on the western shores of Connaught. Mr. Hannay knows the Belfast Unionist as well as he does the thoroughgoing Nationalist, and no one is more amused than he is at the suggestion that Home Rule can spell any loss or danger to the

Protestants who are thinly scattered through the predominantly Roman Catholic parts of Ireland. (148)

The Synod met on April 16. The Lord Primate, Archbishop Crozier,

...who was received with cheers, said that their Church knew no politics and was tied to no political party, and if Home Rule were a question of party politics rather than a matter affecting the very existence of their Church, they might well stand on one side and leave the politicians to settle it. In 1886 and 1893, the Synod had been summoned to pronounce on Home Rule and on each occasion it spoke with no uncertain voice. (149)

Many Protestants, including Hannay, felt that the Church was acting in a manner similiar to the way it had reacted to Catholic emancipation and disestablishment. As Hutcheson Poe commented

In 1829 and 1869 Irish Protestants were convinced that the days of their Church were numbered, that nothing could save them from the tyranny of Rome. How utterly groundless were such fears is sufficiently shown by the position which the Church of Ireland has attained. (150)

Crozier in his speech to the Synod stated

I have never faced any duty with a deeper sense of responsibility than the duty of summoning the present Special Synod at this crisis in our national and ecclesiastical history....Ireland, and the Church of Ireland, are my first concern. I absolutely deny to any of my fellow-countrymen the exclusive right to be called patriots. Ireland is as dear to us members of the Church of Ireland as to the so-called Nationalists....We regard with horror the thought that the destiny of our native land should be handed over to the mercy of men who have 'marched through rapine and rebellion to the dismemberment of the Empire'....It was noteworthy that the vast majority of the members of all the Protestant religious bodies were absolutely united on this question. Considerably over one million Protestants regarded the

prospects of Home Rule as disastrous to Ireland. There was no doubt a small fraction among them were in favour of Home Rule but he ventured to declare that they were not anything like one per thousand of their members, and like a stage army were exploited on all occasions. (151)

He went on to state that Home Rule for Ireland was utterly absurd. Ireland had never been a nation and never would be. Home Rule would result in anarchy and civil strife and he prayed that God would grant Ireland rest and salvation from all that now threatened her destruction, that He would save her from bigotry, intolerance and strife, and from the expatriation of the most industrious and law-abiding of her sons. (152)

The Archbishop of Dublin, Joseph Ferguson Peacocke, proposed the following resolution:-

That we the Bishops, clergy and laity of the Church of Ireland solemnly assembled in general Synod, and invoking the guidance and protection of almighty God, hereby affirm our constant allegiance to the Throne and our unswerving attachment to the legislative union now subsisting between Great Britain and Ireland. We make this declaration at the present crisis not as adherents of a party nor on behalf of a class but as a body of Irishmen representing more than half a million Irish people holding various political opinions, following different callings, and sharing at the same time a common desire for the honour and welfare of our native land. (153)

Thus, the Church of Ireland, not for the first time, had pronounced its opinion on an essentially political issue, in its Synod Hall, and had made its political affiliations clear. As a body it wanted no change in

the constitutional relationship between Ireland and Great Britain. It was also clear that the opinions of the minority of Protestant nationalists, political and cultural were dismissed as unimportant and self-deluding. Hannay tried to rectify this by putting forward the minority's point of view. As *The Times* reported on April 17 1912,

The Rev. J.O. Hannay, Rector of Westport, who is known under the pen name of "George A. Birmingham", struck the first note of dissent from the overwhelming sentiment of the meeting. He said that he believed in the policy of Home Rule for Ireland, though he was not an admirer of Mr. Asquith's Bill. The resolution went further and declared hostility to any possible form of Home Rule. From that position he utterly dissented, and he knew he spoke for a minority not insignificant. He urged the Church to believe that it might be mistaken now just as it had been mistaken when it prophesised all sorts of disaster at the time of Disestablishment. A really good measure of Home Rule would upset all their doleful predictions. (154)

This was followed by protestations of 'No, no !' and Canon Pooler who followed described Mr. Hannay's arguments as 'nonsense'. (155) In Henry E. Patton's account of this special meeting of the Synod, he wrote that,

...the Synod was almost unanimous in its preference for maintaining the Legislative Union. But Mr. Walter McMorrough Kavanagh, the inheritor of a great name and the possessor of a personality which, apart from political differences, men regarded with reverence and affection, 'emphatically protested against raising a political question in the Synod Hall or turning the Synod Hall into a political debating ground.' Colonel (now Sir) William Hutcheson Poe and Rev. J.O. Hannay both prophesised that as the Church had been mistaken in its attitude towards Disestablishment, so it

would again prove mistaken with regard to Home Rule. But the Synod's opinions remained unchanged. (156)

The resolution was carried with five dissenters.

Hannay received many letters of congratulation and support for his speech at the Synod. From these it becomes increasingly clear that his correspondents felt that the leadership of the Church of Ireland was very much out of touch with the true opinions of many of its members. Lily Williams wrote on April 17;

My friends and self are more grateful than can be expressed to you for standing up for us in the Synod. It was revolting to us that such a resolution should have been proposed at all. The Bishops and clergy have no idea apparently of the large numbers of members of the Church of Ireland who are in favour of self-government, and whose views were so accurately and ably expressed by you in protest on our behalf. (157)

E. R. Dix wrote on April 18;

Allow me as a Home Ruler to thank you very sincerely for your manly speech at the Synod. It needed great courage. May you carry on 'though our Church in its lamentable blindness and prejudice is against you and Ireland. There are a great many more clergy and laity too I fancy, than our worthy Primate imagines who detest this unreasoning clamour against Home Rule and would wish to see the representatives of our Church more prepared to discuss the question than to hide. (158)

W. E. Vandeleur compared the situation to the infamous Dicken's characters, 'Bill Sykes' and his sidekick 'Bullseye' in *Oliver Twist*;

...But surely Irish Unionists should be the last to cry up loyalty to the King...but as someone said at the Synod 'Loyalty is born with us'. God help us. Always kicked and always loyal ! not

unlike the late William Sykes and his dog !  
(159)

The *Church of Ireland Gazette*, 12 July, printed an article by Hannay entitled 'The Voice of the Church'. The title refers to a pamphlet of the same name which published an account of the Synod meeting held in April. In this article Hannay dealt with the question, 'Is the Church justified in making formal declarations, as a church, through her representative assemblies, on political questions ?

He questioned a sermon by a Canon Foley who maintained that the Church not only had a right to pronounce on political questions, but also a duty. Hannay put forward his view that individual churchmen may, and have a perfect right to express their views. The problem was that these opinions were not and could not be 'The Voice of the Church'. He stated that,

Until the Creeds and Articles of the Church were altered in such a way as to make the political faith of Unionists binding upon Churchmen, no resolutions passed by any Synod are anything more than the expressions of the individual men who passed them. The Church did not speak at the recent General Synod. Certain Churchmen spoke.  
(160)

In the following edition of the *Gazette*, Hannay's point of view was taken up by one Dudley Fletcher. He argued that if the resolutions passed by the General Synod were not the 'Voice of the Church' then the Church had no voice by which to express the opinion of her members as a corporate body. Also in this issue of



19 July, a long editorial piece was devoted to the resolution of the Synod. The petition which had been drawn up against Home Rule was described as 'a grave and statesmanlike document' and the editorial went on to reiterate all the arguments against Home Rule which had been raised both within and outside the Synod. Not once was the dissentient minority view mentioned. The piece ended with

The Church cannot but work with all its might against the coming of a measure that would convulse the land with savage strife and sanguinary reprisals. Should what it fears come to pass, then it may prepare for scenes of outrage and commotion such as this land has not seen for two centuries. (161)

In the issue of 26 July Canon Foley replied to Hannay's criticisms supporting the voice of the Church as meaning the law of the Church in the context of the pamphlet, for which he disclaimed any responsibility. (162).

*The Red Hand of Ulster* was published on 30 July 1912, and was a satirical and fictional account of events in Ulster centered around the opposition to Home Rule. Conroy, an American millionaire of Irish descent, tired of the endless social rounds in London, decided to finance a rebellion in Ulster against Home Rule for the sole purpose of 'bucking against the British lion'. The rebellion was readily organised and the two major events are the 'March Past' on the twelfth of July; the British having objected to the title

'Review', and the battle of Belfast during which the only damage inflicted is to the statue of Queen Victoria, and that by a British warship ! The absurdity continued until the end when Ulster offered her terms. She utterly rejected Home Rule but insisted that the English clear out of Ireland altogether ! Each of the characters in the book are presented with shrewd humour, and everything and everybody are judged by the standard of what is done in Belfast. One character, the Dean, personifies Hannay's view of the events of the Synod in a quiet, satirical way. The Dean, an ardent Unionist, asserts emphatically that he considers it wrong for the Church or a clergyman to take any active part in politics. With disarming naivete, Lord Kilmore, the narrator, gently remarks,

I should certainly have believed he was taking a side in politics, if he had not solemnly assured me he was not. I might even have thought, taking at their face value, certain resolutions passed by its General Synod, that the Church was, more or less, on the side of the Unionists, if the Dean had not explained to me that she only appeared to be on their side because they happened to be always in the right, but that she would be quite as much on the side of the Liberals if they would only drop their present programme which happened in every respect to be morally wrong. (163)

Hannay continued to speak out against the involvement of his Church in politics. In November 1912 he wrote in *The Times*,

It used to be a reproach which members of his Church cast at members of the Roman Catholic Church in Ireland. No longer could this reproach remain in their mouths. They had degraded their

Church, degraded their Orders, degraded themselves. They had dragged down their Church into the mire of politics, and to him there was nothing happening in the recent months in Ireland more terribly sad than the pitiful series of sophistical excuses made by the heads of the Church to which he belonged for what seemed to him an intolerable betrayal of the religion which they professed. (164)

Hannay had been accused in the past, especially during 1906 when his first novels were published, of being a Protestant bigot, sectarian, and irreligious. As we have seen, he had outraged the Catholic population in Westport by his criticisms in *The Seething Pot*, *Hyacinth*, and *Benedict Kavanagh*. However, it is clear from his stance in relation to the Synod that he was just as critical of his own Church and class. The significance of Hannay's stand against the Bishops in the General Synod lies in the fact that there was a part of the Church of Ireland which did not agree with, firstly, involvement in political issues, and secondly, an official Church position on a specific political question. Not all of those who supported Hannay were Nationalist in outlook. Many Unionists felt very strongly about the growing relationship between their Church and politics, notwithstanding the fact that the Church was on the Unionist side. Hannay can be seen as the spokesman for what was a unquestionable minority, but one that was being treated as the Unionists feared they would be treated if Home Rule were passed.

Plunkett wrote to Hannay in September,

Here is my summary of the Ulster Day proceedings. I think that it has killed the Bill and has brought us a stage nearer to Home Rule. I do not want this talked about but my own idea is that a group of men, the best type of which would be yourself and AE might soon get together quietly and formulate a scheme for the next Home Rule campaign. It must, of course, strike a new note; it must appeal to a nationality in which North and South can take pride and part; it must - and this is where the brains will beat the blather - provide a sound economic foundation for the new Ireland, both industrial and agricultural. (165)

In March of 1912 Hannay had received a letter from Charles Roden Buxton who was engaged in setting up a Home Rule committee to define Home Rule.

There is at present much vagueness in Great Britain among Home Rulers as to the best form of Home Rule and as to the real difficulties in its way; while opponents are often found to be so because they do not understand what is proposed. (166)

Among the questions to be considered was firstly, the present system of government in Ireland. Secondly, parallels to Home Rule in other countries. The real attitude of Ulster and what guarantees would satisfy her, was the third consideration. This was followed by issues such as religion, finance, and commercial and industrial factors. Buxton asked Hannay to join this committee. It does not appear that he did so, and there is no evidence to indicate what his opinions of the proposals were.

French sees this year as a turning point in his life, the period before 1912 had been spent in Ireland, apart from his schooldays. The period after 1912 was largely spent outside the country.

Regarding *The Red Hand of Ulster*, reviewers were

...puzzled, feeling no doubt that the Ulster question, dark enough to begin with, had now become for them an impenetrable enigma. The writer had turned everything upside down. Yet there did seem to be predictions and events in it that came uncommonly close to the realities of the past few months. (167)

While the book was being written its title was changed. Hannay had begun it as *Ulster will fight*, picking up on the popular slogan 'Ulster will fight and Ulster will be right', coined in 1886 by Lord Randolph Churchill. French has pointed out somewhat obviously,

No doubt he felt that he could scarcely use the first part of the slogan without implying agreement with the second. But later it appeared that a more significant change had been made. The ending of the book had been altered completely. (168)

According to the *New York Times*, in an interview with Hannay, the original ending centred around the fact that Germany intervened by offering help for northern resistance. There was an immediate revulsion of feeling, and Ulster intransigence vanished in the face of what both north and south saw as a danger from the common enemy. But this, Hannay said, his publishers had objected to as illogical and fantastic. So seriously did they take it that the manuscript was sent to 'a

statesman of the Foreign Office'. He returned it with an urgent request that it should not be published 'in view of the delicacy of the international situation at this time'. (169)

Hannay reluctantly altered the book, and the new ending was deemed more suitable. Tom Paulin sees this novel as an argument that Irish culture is really unified at its extremes, in contrast to Lyon's arguments in *Culture and anarchy*, about the collision of irreconcilable cultures. (170)

Hannay's popularity as a writer abroad continued to grow, especially in America. He was the subject of many interviews and articles. During 1913, his second, and most successful play, *General John Regan*, was performed in London in February. His first play, *Eleanor's Enterprise* had been produced in the Abbey, in 1911, but was only moderately successful. *General John Regan* was adapted from a novel of the same name which had been published in 1913. The plot was of the type usual in his comic novels, and centred around a monument being erected to a man that had never existed. Irish characters were portrayed in an exaggerated manner, tending somewhat towards stage Irishness. However, the play was extremely popular with its English audiences, it was initially staged in London. In February, *The Times* reported,

The Irish circle of the Lyceum Club which is composed of ladies held a reception...in honour of Canon Hannay. (171)

By April, *General John Regan* had reached its hundredth performance and was still as popular as ever, according to the *Commentator*. (172) In May, Hannay made a speech to the Royal Academy, responding to the toast 'Literature' during the annual banquet. Taking the definition of 'literature' lightheartedly to mean books that no-one ever read, he supposed then he had produced literature.

Hannay continued to keep a close watch on Ireland and during June he once more focused on the Ulster risk in the *Daily Mail*. (173) Again and again he patiently and methodically explained the arguments for and against Home Rule, the position of the Nationalists and the Unionists, concluding with,

There is, I think, no certainty that Ulster will really rebel against Home Rule which we are promised next year; but there is a horrid possibility of such a thing. Is the risk worth taking from the point of view of the English people ? (174)

In July, *The Times* reported,

Canon Hannay, the novelist and playwright, better known as 'George A. Birmingham' intends to resign the rectory of Westport, Co. Mayo, which he has held for twenty one years. The resignation will take effect in September. Canon Hannay will continue to hold his canonry in St. Patrick's Cathedral'. (175)

Hannay had been elected a Canon of St. Patrick's Cathedral, Dublin, in June 1912, at the height of the

controversy in the *Church of Ireland Gazette*. Rev. S. Hemphill had been correct when he wrote to Hannay that despite his political beliefs, he was respected within the Church. (176) Hannay later wrote, in his autobiography, that when he had a parish he used to 'chafe and fret at the ties'. However when he was free from the responsibility of a parish, he longed for his bonds. (177) However, he and Ada had decided to give up Westport, and take a rest from the ministerial life. This was due, in part, to the success of *General John Regan*.

Upon news of the Hannays' decision to leave Westport, the *Irish Times* reported a meeting of Hannay's parishoners which he attended and in which

The Chairman, Thomas F. Rutledge read an address which ran thus, 'We, the parishoners of Aughaval and Kilmeena, wish to place on record our great regret at your departure from Westport after upwards of twenty-one years among us'....The address, the Chairman continued, was signed by nearly two hundred parishoners of what were now the united parishes of Aughaval and Kilmeena, and this in itself was striking testimony to the regard and esteem in which Canon Hannay was held....Naturally they felt proud of the high eminence he had attained in the world of literature and they would follow his career with pleasure and pride. (178)

During 1913 Hannay was the subject of much interest as the numbers of interviews and articles about him in English and American newspapers testify to. (179) he was also invited to give lectures, which he did, on numerous topics, such as the relationship of the church



and stage, and the true measure and value of life. He was hailed by the New York press, *New York Times*, *New York Evening News*, as a prophet, as having rediscovered English literature, and as an authority on all aspects of Irish life. He continued his work for Irish issues in a series of lectures in New York, 'The Irishman in English fiction', 'The literary revival in contemporary Ireland', and 'The Economic revival'. (180)

Having left Westport, the Hannays after a short interval in England went to America,

...partly because my publisher there was very anxious that I should. He thought that a lecture tour would increase the sale of my books. He was quite wrong about that....But the lecture tour was not our chief reason for crossing the Atlantic. My *General John Regan* was to be produced in New York, and we were anxious to see how it got on. (181)

The remarks about the lecture tour were false modesty on Hannay's behalf. The play was a noted success in New York and the press there pronounced his lecture tour a very successful one. (182) It seems though that the American perception of Hannay, from articles and profiles, was quite different from what Hannay turned out to be. He took the opportunity of the attention of the press to speak about the revival in Ireland and in particular the work of Horace Plunkett which he spoke about at every opportunity. Upon his return from America, he gave a lecture on his impressions of the country and its people which was published in the *Irish*

*Times*. (183) Afterwards, when he and Ada returned to England, he enlarged upon his experiences in a book called *From Connaught to Chicago*.

The Hannays sailed home from America on the *Lusitania* and spent Christmas of 1913 in Dublin, as their daughters were in school there. Early in the New Year they went to England, intending to take a house in an English village for a period of six months. This they did, choosing a house in Beaulieu, Hampshire, and spent nine months there. During this time they had a well-earned period of rest and relaxation. Their children were all at school, with the exception of Robert, the eldest, who was working for the *Irish Times*.

However, in Ireland in February 1914, things were not so peaceful. *General John Regan* was staged in Westport. Mr. Payne-Seddon, a theatrical manager received a telegram from his manager after the opening performance of the play.

Riot here last night. Stage stormed. scenery smashed up. Police baton charge. Demonstration pre-arranged against author. (184)

All the Irish and English papers carried reports of the riot, the first of its kind since Synges' *Playboy of the western world*. The *Freeman's Journal* reported,

The first act was allowed to proceed on its course but not a syllable of what was uttered on the stage could be heard, owing to the din caused by the stamping, jeers, catcalls, and whistling which were continuously kept up... Early in the second act a character which was supposed to represent a Catholic clergyman appeared on the stage. Exception was taken to

the character and immediately on his appearance a rush was made from the back of the hall and half a dozen young men were quickly on the stage....Wild cheers, loud and long were given for the very Rev. Canon McDonald, P.P. Newport; Rev. Father Canavan, Adm. Westport and loud groans and boos for the Rev. Mr. Hannay. (185)

The *Irish Times* reported what the rioters chanted,

'Down with Hannay', 'Down with Carson', and called for cheers for the Catholic clergy. (186)

A few days after the riot it was reported that,

...twenty young men were arrested in Westport on Saturday and charged...with riotous assembly, attacks upon the Payne-Sheddon theatre company and assaulting policemen. (187)

Meanwhile the play was staged in Mullingar where it received a favourable reception and Mr. Payne-Sheddon wrote a letter to the *Irish Times* stating that *General John Regan* would continue its tour of other Irish towns. The *Evening News* reported that

Canon Hannay is frankly puzzled by all the bother about the production of his play in Ireland. 'Just laughter and comedy' is his description of it and he cannot understand why Irishmen object so strongly to caricature when other nations do not get angry about it. (188)

The *Fall Mall Gazette* quoted the remarks of the editor of the Mullingar paper, the *Midland Reporter*, who wrote,

'We think the people who wasted their money to see Canon Hannay's play in Mullingar deserved to lose it....A more stupid, senseless production it is hardly possible to conceive. It is destitute of any shred of real wit or humour. It is written by the former Protestant rector of Westport for the purpose of ridiculing in a feeble way Irish provincial life, shiftless doctors, unscrupulous housekeepers, dirty servant girls, and tippling parish priests....Canon Hannay is typical of the

'Abbey' clique in Dublin, who have made money and a certain reputation for themselves by the most blatant advertising of each other. Synge's utterly dull and stupid play, the *Playboy of the western world* got a certain notoriety because it was made purposely offensive to Irish feelings and was deliberately used to provoke riots and thus get an advertisement that it did not deserve. (189)

The *Literary Guide* warned that this 'hysteria' was a bad sign.

In the case of Hannay's comedy it was meant as a warning to non-Catholics not to poke fun at Catholicism. (190)

The *Evening News* echoed this assessment.

It is a warning to Irish Protestants not to see anything humorous in their Roman Catholic brethren, and, further, it is a reminder that that wonderful toleration with which the hearts of his followers, according to Mr. Redmond, are filled to overflowing, only exists in his own vivid imagination. (191)

One reporter pointed out that while the riots were raging in Westport, Hannay was speaking in Manchester.

'There was', he said 'a tremendous seriousness coming into Irish life, the purposeful seriousness of men bent on making the most of their chances'. He thought this seriousness ran a risk of being overdone. They were losing their capacity for making jokes and for seeing them. The previous most notable of Irish self-consciousness as to the national character was the hostile reception given to Synge's *Playboy of the western world*. (192)

Meanwhile in Beaulieu, the Hannays were living a pleasant life.

From time to time Irish friends came to visit us. Horace Plunkett came. So did Lord Monteaigle and his daughter... Life was quiet but never dull. It was delightfully peaceful after all our struggles in Ireland'. (193)

Then came 'the sudden disaster of the War'.

At that time we were thinking and talking of nothing but Ireland. Lord Montague...told us a great deal of the inner gossip about the Buckingham Palace Conference, that final attempt at an Irish settlement. (194)

Then, Robert, their eldest son who kept in constant touch with his father, wrote to them warning,

Nothing but a European conflagration can now save us from civil war. (195)

Thus it happened. The Great War begun.

CHAPTER FIVE

Padre in France - Rector in London

1915-1950

With the outbreak of the war, 'like everybody else in England we were anxious to be of some use'. (1) Hannay went up to London from Beaulieu each week and helped his sister, Mabel, who was the head of a branch of the Charity Organisation Society. He spent his time finding the wives and dependents of reservists who had been called up, and card indexing their names and addresses. Ada stayed in Beaulieu, and headed a group which was occupied with making pyjamas for the troops. (2)

Robert, their eldest son, volunteered for service with the Navy, but had little experience to recommend him, except a thorough knowledge of the waters off the west coast of Ireland, which was not considered to be relevant. Seeing little chance of being accepted in the Naval services, he obtained a commission in the Irish Guards and joined up early in 1915.

In the autumn of 1914 the Hannays were faced with a decision. The lease on Sackville Cottage, in Beaulieu, was due for renewal. They also had the option of buying the cottage, but they decided to return to Ireland. There were several reasons for this decision. Robert was, at this time, still working for the *Irish Times*. Theo was in Trinity College, and Althea was finishing her last year at Alexandra College. Seamus was due to begin his secondary education in Castle Park school. Dublin seemed the natural choice, but, 'besides, I think we both wanted to go back to Ireland'. (3)

The decision was made, and they took a house, Mount Mapas, on the summit of Killiney Hill. Just when Robert obtained his commission and travelled to France to fight, Hannay was beginning a second lecture tour in America. There is no evidence to suggest why he did so. It seemed a particularly ill-chosen time to leave his family. With Robert going off to war, Ada was left on her own to cope with the rest of the family. The content of most of Hannay's lectures, from his own account, seemed to deal with the war and the cause of the Allies, rather than his own work as a writer, and on this lecture tour, in contrast with the last one, there is little or no mention of Ireland. With his popularity and reputation as a writer, speaker, and propagandist, it is possible that he was asked to go on this lecture tour, to stir up support for the Allied cause. There is no evidence in his surviving papers, however, to support this. His reports of his experiences in America given in the English and Irish press dealt almost exclusively on America in relation to the war.

It was a very curious experience to go to America from war-excited England, and scarcely less excited Ireland. In New York I found that people generally were in mild sympathy with the Allies though, as I soon realised, they had no idea that they might be called upon to take any part in the struggle. (4)

Recalling how young men in England, and to some extent in Ireland, had been eager to join in the fight, Hannay



was shocked when he lectured to over seventy students in one male university on the position of England and the cause of the Allies. The lecture over, a large group of young men rose and sang an anti-war ditty,

'I didn't raise my boy to be a soldier,  
I raised him for a mother's pride and joy,  
Who dares to put a musket on his shoulder  
To shoot some other mother's darling boy?  
There'd be no war today, if mothers all would  
say,  
I didn't raise my boy to be a soldier.' (5)

Hannay felt disgusted with this 'pacifist sentimentalism' that young American men were displaying. (6) In his view, it was a duty to fight for the Allied cause, it was a question of right against wrong. These young men with their anti-fight attitude made a mockery of what he believed was a just duty, and made a mockery of the beliefs of thousands of idealistic young men, like his son Robert, who were joining up to fight in France.

It was during this second stay in America that Hannay came to know Theodore Roosevelt, though he had met him once before in Kilteragh, Sir Horace Plunkett's house. When Hannay was in New York, he was invited by Roosevelt to spend a few days with him. (7) Hannay recalled that Roosevelt told him that he had quoted from a piece by Hannay on politicians, for one of his speeches. 'This high compliment filled me with delight'. (8)

Hannay's passage home was booked on the *Lusitania*. New York was full of rumours that the German's were lying in wait to torpedo the ship off the Irish coast, and more than one person advised Hannay to change his booking. He refused to do so. His was the last eastward trip that the *Lusitania* completed, the rumours proving true on her next voyage, during which she was torpedoed and sank, with the loss of many lives.

The crossing in 1915 was uneventful though many passengers were quite nervous. *Lusitania* set sail from New York on Easter Sunday morning, and Hannay obtained permission to hold a celebration of Holy Communion upon the ship. Although there were no proper arrangements for such a service on board, they made do with what they had. The service was held in the smoking room, with

a bottom of a butter dish for a Patten and a champagne glass for a Chalice. There was a very large congregation...I think that everyone, though not frightened, was aware of the risk we were running and was in a serious mood. (9)

Three consecutive Easter Sundays of 1914, 1915, and 1916, found Hannay celebrating the Holy Communion at three strangely different places.

In 1914 I celebrated in the ancient church at Beaulieu, which had once been the Refectory of the Abbey. In 1915 I celebrated on the *Lusitania* in the luxurious smoking room of that great ship. In 1916 I celebrated in a hut belonging to the Y.M.C.A. at five o'clock in the morning and with the plainest ritual, but with rows and rows of young soldiers kneeling on the bare floor. (10)

The ship reached its destination without incident and Hannay travelled home to Dublin. He returned to an Ireland which was strange to him. He had only spent two months in the country since he had given up Westport in 1913, those two months having been when he returned from Beaulieu to Dublin the previous autumn. When he returned in 1915, he found that,

The country was sharply divided, more sharply and deeply than it had ever been before, between those who regarded the War as a just and righteous struggle against a threatened tyranny, and those who took the extreme Nationalist view that England's extremity was Ireland's opportunity which should be used to wrest from a distressed and harassed England, Ireland's right to manage her own affairs. It very soon became evident that these extreme Nationalists hoped for an English defeat and a German victory. It was inevitable that there should be an unbridgeable gulf between the two sections of Nationalist Ireland'. (11)

There was no change in the position of men who were Conservative and loyalist. They recognised the justice of the Allied cause, but had always been anti-Nationalist. For men like Hannay there was a difference. They too recognised the justice of the Allied cause, but had been supporters of Irish Nationalism in the past. They were caught between the two extremes. No longer could they support the extreme Nationalist position which was growing stronger all the time, yet they did believe in Ireland's right to Home Rule. As Hannay pointed out the country was sharply

divided, there was little middle ground, and what remained was shrinking fast.

Here was no matter of a difference of opinion, where toleration and mutual respect might have saved the rupture of friendship. The thing went deeper. so strong were the feelings on both sides that even ordinary social intercourse became impossible. It was not a drifting apart....It was a sharp severance of relationships which had been pleasant and intimate....We could not meet on neutral ground because there was no neutral ground. (12)

To Hannay it was perfectly clear that England was right and extreme Nationalist Ireland wrong. On his return he began to write a series of articles about his experiences in America. The main thrust of these articles dealt with American public opinion in relation to the war, with headlines such as 'What America is thinking', and 'The judgement of the U.S.'. These articles were published in the *Daily News* in April and May, 1915. Public opinion in America, Hannay estimated, 'is eighty per cent on the side of the Allies'. (13) He examined the influences which produced this favourable attitude towards the Allied cause. Americans were not, he stated, influenced by the direct presentation of the English case by Englishmen, and English newspaper articles which reached America tended only to irritate the general public there. However, he felt that the German apologists in America in striving to win the support of public opinion had made a much worse mess than the English. He challenged European views of

America. It was not, as the English liked to think, still in some sense a colony of theirs which ought to be loyal. Americans were most definitely not, as the Germans liked to think, totally incapable of reasoning.

The American public is not a class of college students, set out in orderly rows, with notebooks in hand, and minds in a state of docile receptivity, waiting to be taught what to think by authoritative professors, either British or German. (14)

Hannay placed the violation of the neutrality of Belgium as the first, not only in time but also importance, among the factors which had shaped American opinion.

Nothing the German's have said in explanation or apology has done anything to mitigate the sense of outrage which the invasion of Belgium created in America. The plea of military necessity, put forward at first made things worse instead of better. (15)

The American dislike of militarism formed the subject of his second article, and was a further fundamental reason for influencing the Americans towards the Allied side.

The word militarism stands for something that the American people both dislike and fear; and it is felt that Germany is militarist in a sense in which France is not, though she submits to compulsory service, and England has never been (sic)...Americans dislike and fear militarism partly because militarism is the enemy of democracy. But a far more important matter than his attachment to his idea of democracy is the American's strong feeling in favour of pacificism...America is obsessed with the horror of war. (16)

A further factor in influencing American opinion very strongly towards pacificism, in Hannay's opinion, was the action of American women. He declared that their influence could not be over estimated.

The women's clubs, originally associations for literary study, are everywhere taking an increasing part in the work of civic reform, and it is a common boast that when the women of a town take a matter up, it may be regarded as already settled in accordance with their wishes. (17)

He concluded his article with a note of warning to the Germans.

But there are signs that Germany, despairing perhaps of winning American sympathy, is inclined to hector and send insulting notes to Washington. What will happen if the insults become very gross? Men, male men, are not inclined, in America, any more than anywhere else, to submit to being bullied. It will be interesting to see whether their resentment will prove stronger than the pacifist feelings of the women and the less male men who feel in these matters as women do. If the masculine feeling asserts itself strongly American sympathy with the Allies will take on a new colour, it will become vivid instead of neutral. (18)

A third article which also dealt with American attitudes to the war, was entitled 'Why America is neutral. "The expression of the country's good will"'. Although Hannay had estimated that the majority of Americans supported the Allied cause, he endeavoured to explore the reasons for America's continued neutrality, a stance which many Englishmen interpreted in terms of veiled hostility.

The horrors which have affected American imagination and moved America to the deepest feeling, are those which form a necessary part

of war, the killing of great numbers of men in the prime of life, the terrible sufferings of the wounded, and the misery of the civil population in the fighting area. (19)

The Americans could not believe at first, he wrote, the reports of outrages committed by the Germans. Many Americans were of German descent or were close friends and neighbours with those who were. However, as the war continued, and;

As the evidence of the outrages committed by the Germans accumulates the American attitude of scepticism is beginning to give way. It is interesting to observe that with an increasing belief in the truth of the stories there has come a tendency to hold the German commanders, rather than the German soldiers, responsible....It is this almost universal conviction that war is abominable which has done more than anything else to keep America neutral. (20)

The influence of the universities in America was another important reason, in Hannay's opinion for American neutrality. The universities had, by tradition, close ties with their counterparts in Germany, but Hannay felt that the majority of American scholars saw the justice of the Allied cause. However, the government had arrived at a decision in favour of neutrality. It was important that the universities supported their decision. This they did. Thus the policy of neutrality was not in Hannay's view likely to be reversed.

The universities, partly because there are so many of them, count for more in America than they do in England; and the universities are as neutral in spirit as the Government in Washington is in action....American scholars

have for more than one generation sat at the feet of German professors, and the connections between the universities of the two countries have been close and friendly....The result was a brotherhood in scholarship and research, a connection between the learned men of the two countries far closer than that which existed between the same classes in America and England....It must be remembered too, that American universities are very closely connected with American statesmanship and political life....When the State declared itself neutral the university feels bound in honour to maintain an attitude of scrupulous, occasionally over-scrupulous, neutrality. Such neutrality is easily interpreted, misinterpreted, I believe, as selfishness, or indifference to claims for support made in the name of justice and humanity. (21)

There was a minority in America who actively supported the German cause. Hannay estimated that twenty per cent or so of the population were definitely against the Allies in sympathy, and were chiefly made up of those of German origin, primarily those who had not been in America for long. Those of German descent that had been there for more than one generation remained attached to their country of origin, but did not necessarily subscribe to the view that the Kaiser could do no wrong. The strength of this minority lay in the fact that they tended to live in the same districts, they formed communities of their own, and used their influence as a body rather than individuals. However there was another element to the pro-German party in America. This was a small body of Irish-Americans who supported the views of the extreme Nationalists in Ireland.



But admiration for Germany has little or nothing to do with the sentiment of the pro-German Irishman in America. His alliance with the German-Americans is the outcome of a traditional hatred of England which still survives. It is, I believe, a dying feeling. It is less vigorous among recent Irish immigrants than among the survivors of an older generation. The Irish in America, as their position in society steadily improves, are ceasing to be a unit, a block. They are becoming Americans rather than Irish-Americans. (22)

His articles on America were followed by articles on the state of Ireland. 'During the early part of 1914', he wrote, 'Ireland enjoyed a blaze of publicity'. (23) There was a Home Rule Bill in Parliament, the passing of which seemed inevitable.

Volunteers drilled, paraded, marched and countermarched all over Ireland... Gun-running was a popular amusement. It was carried on in the teeth of a Royal Proclamation which forbade the importation of arms into Ireland... The risk was not serious because the Government made it clear from the start that it did not mean to punish anyone... Then came the outbreak of the War and, following it, Mr. Redmond's declaration of unswerving loyalty to the British Empire. Ireland disappeared from the stage, bowing acknowledgements to rapturous applause, but bowing awkwardly and with some embarrassment. It was the first time that Ireland had ever been hailed as the 'One Bright Spot' in the Imperial horizon. It will probably be the last. (24)

Hannay explored the various stages of the development of extreme views, regarding the war in Ireland, among the Orangemen, the extreme Nationalists, those willing to follow Redmond, and the southern Unionists. The main theme of his articles was the problem of recruitment in Ireland. The northern and southern Unionists enlisted as expected, and Redmond's efforts ensured enlistment

from some of the Nationalists, but Hannay felt they could do better. The Catholic Church, he thought, could have made an appeal on religious grounds, but they chose to keep quiet. However, the attitude of the Church, in his opinion, had little influence on the formation of Irish opinion about the War. As the War continued, the recruitment figures rose somewhat. Sinn Féin continued to work against the Allied cause, but mostly underground as the Government had done its best to suppress their propaganda. There was one class in particular which he singled out for criticism.

Recruiting among the farmers has been very poor. Explanations are offered and excuses made for the farmers, but the fact of their failure is not denied. No doubt their work, the supplying of food is peculiarly necessary at present; but it can scarcely be argued that the Irish farmer's son stays at home and allows other people to fight for him out of pure altruism. No doubt the farmers, not only in Ireland but everywhere, feel the economic pressure of the War less than most men. The steady rise in the price of foodstuffs tends to benefit the farmer; and he is all the less inclined to venture forth into new ways of life because he is doing very well where he is...The other point of singular interest is the fact that the failure of recruiting among the farmers has apparently nothing to do with either politics or religion...It is farmers as farmers who have fallen behind the rest of their countrymen, both Unionist and Nationalist, in enlisting or sending their sons to enlist in the Army. (25)

Hannay concluded on a hopeful note that perhaps the 'patriotic appeals' of the I.A.O.S. and more personal efforts by individuals, including himself, would result in Ireland playing its role in providing men and money

for the Allied cause. (26) He followed this article with one on the same topic six months later, which was published while Hannay was on his way to France. In this article he traced the attempts made by the Recruiting Committee in relation to Ireland. Not much had changed since his analysis of the same problem in August, but this time he examined closely the part played by the Irish Parliamentary Party.

...we note with regret that the Recruiting Committee has received very small help hitherto from the Irish Parliamentary Party. There are certain honourable exceptions. Mr. Stephen Gwynn has done his best, and is himself serving with the Colours. Mr. Kettle has proved himself an able and courageous advocate of recruiting. And Mr. Redmond, especially since his return from his recent visit to the Front, has been inspired with a genuine enthusiasm for the cause of the Allies and a real desire that Ireland should bear an honourable part in the struggle. But the great bulk of the party has stood aloof, neither blessing at all, or cursing at all, (27)

Opposition to recruitment on the part of Sinn Féin was more vigorous and better organised than previously.

Sinn Féiners increased and multiplied in a most surprising way. They carried on a vigorous propaganda, interrupted meetings, hooted speeches....Its policy crystallised into an effort to embarrass England in every possible way....The activities of this newly augmented Sinn Féin Party are causing a certain amount of anxiety, and men are to be met with who regard them as serious and dangerous. I do not think that there is any real cause for fear. The original Sinn Féiners, with their political idealism and their purity of purpose, might have been dangerous if there had been enough of them. (28)

However, a new recruitment campaign had begun under the Lord Lieutenant which seemed to be meeting with more

success than the previous attempts. The numbers of those enlisting had increased although the target of ten thousand men per month was not being met, but Hannay felt it was improving and that the Committee had got within measurable distance of that number.

There is every hope that when our new organisation is perfected we shall do better still and be spared the humiliation of seeing the ranks of our famous Irish regiments filled with men from England and Scotland while our own hang back. (29)

Soon after his return from America, Hannay had applied for a commission as a chaplain. His first preference, like his son, was for the Navy, but he felt himself that he was regarded as too old. (30) He was approaching his fiftieth birthday. The same objection could have been made by the army, but

I was fortunate in being backed by Lord Wimbourne, then Lord-Lieutenant of Ireland. I was one of his chaplains, and when I expressed a wish to serve with the forces he supported my application. (31)

However, it wasn't until nearly the end of the year that he received any information about his application. In December, he received the following communication from Ian C. Maitland, Vice Regal Lodge, on behalf of the Lord Lieutenant.

With regard to your conversation with His Excellency about your application to be appointed a Chaplain to the forces, I enclose a letter from General Friend's Aide-de-Camp. I have shown this to His Excellency, and he desires me to send it to you. (32)

This letter was from the headquarters of the Irish Command in Dublin, addressed to the Lord-Lieutenant.

...Col. Cowan asked us to let you know that the Rev. Hatton has sent Canon Hannay's application to the Chaplain General and that there ought to be no difficulty about him being commissioned.  
(33)

His application was successful, and very shortly afterwards he was on his way to France. However, he was one of few from the Church of Ireland to serve. Jane Leonard, in her article on Catholic chaplains, estimated that,

In 1920, 109 Church of Ireland clergymen were listed as wartime chaplains. These were mainly curates from the sees of Dublin, Down, and Cork. They included a number of well-known figures: Rev. J. Crozier, son of the Archbishop of Armagh; Rev. J.O. Hannay, better known as the writer George Birmingham; (34)

Before he left for France he had to submit to a medical examination and an interview with the Chaplain-General, Bishop Taylor-Smith, in London. Up to this point proceedings had developed at a leisurely pace.

After my visit to London, the interview, and the examination, the whole spirit of the proceedings changed. I was involved in a worse than American hustle, and found myself obliged to hustle other innocent people, tailors and boot-makers, in order to get together some kind of kit in time for a start to be made at the shortest possible notice. (35)

It was less difficult for Hannay to obtain a commission than many others because he was relatively free, he had no parish to take care of. In France itself the matter was settled for the priest or parson, they were liable

to be drafted with lay men. In England, any man in charge of a parish had to make provisions for his duties to be carried out in his absence. He also had to gain permission from his bishop to be released. Finally, he had to commend himself to the Royal Army Chaplain's Department, and be interviewed by the Chaplain -General. Members of the Church of Ireland wishing to serve in France had to follow the same procedure.

Before the war Bishop Taylor-Smith had carefully worked out a scheme so that chaplains would have a clear place in the army establishment in wartime. But the Army Council had not accepted his suggestions, so the organisation of the Chaplains department was hopelessly inadequate... Bishop Taylor-Smith was necessarily preoccupied with administration in London. So Bishop Gwynne was appointed Deputy Chaplain-General in July 1915 with special responsibility for chaplains and troops in France. He broadened recruitment and made the organisation more efficient. (36)

As recruitment broadened there was an increase in appeals for chaplains. Soon after Sir Douglas Haig took over the command of the Expeditionary Force in 1915, he was recorded as saying to Bishop Gwynne

...that he regarded his job as one of the most important under his command. 'A good chaplain is as valuable as a good general... We are fighting for Christ and the freedom of mankind'. (37)

In Ireland, the *Church of Ireland Gazette*, reported week by week the progress of the War, and included short articles by soldiers and chaplains alike about daily conditions in France. Readers of the *Gazette* also

contributed articles and letters on the War and more specifically on the Church's role and duty. Appeals were made for donations for Church Army huts for the men's recreational hours. The *Gazette* also criticised the problems in relation to the Church and the Army.

It is calculated at the present time there is one Church of England chaplain to every four thousand men. This seems to be utterly inadequate. How can one man attend to the spiritual needs of four thousand men, often scattered, and often including a large number of sick and wounded. The accounts which we read of the work of the chaplains show that they are doing magnificent and devoted work and that they are unsparing in their attention and care. But the burden is too much for flesh and blood. We do not wish to throw blame on the War Office at the present time for the stress of work and the difficulties surrounding the new organisation must be very great. But nonetheless we think that more might be done for the spiritual needs of the men. In the case of the Irish Chaplains who are volunteering for service with the Irish Division it seems very hard, considering the small remuneration granted them, that they should have to provide their own 'kit' when a grant of £50 is made to other officers. (38)

The *Gazette* also praised the work of the Y.M.C.A., and printed extracts from war sermons. In February, it noted a despatch by Sir John French in which he wrote,

'I cannot speak too highly of the devoted manner in which all chaplains, whether with the troops in the trenches or in attendance on the sick and wounded in casualty clearing stations and hospitals on the line of communication have worked throughout the campaign'. Comment would spoil the simplicity and sufficiency of this deserved tribute to the work of the Chaplains at the Front. It seems desirable, however, to call special attention to Sir John French's hope that 'a further increase in their personnel may be found possible'. (39)

Chaplains under the jurisdiction of the Church of England, including the Irish chaplains were officially not permitted to go beyond the base camp, whereas Catholic chaplains could accompany the troops to the front. Many chaplains such as 'Woodbine Willie' disregarded this rule, and it was mostly disregarded as the War continued. (40)

The duties of a chaplain were many, varied, and totally undefined. Many were unprepared for the situation they found themselves in.

To ask what exactly he was supposed to do, faced with the smoky tumult of such a place, is to pose the problem of the padre in extreme form... They were the first of their kind ever to be involved in a situation of total war, and they went untrained and unprepared from the parochial round, the common task... Chiefly, the charge preferred against the chaplain seems to have been one of inadequacy... Pressures of circumstances in that war could easily transform him into a combination of entertainments manager, welfare officer, and undertaker, and often did. He could be, all too easily, made to appear and feel useless. like a man wandering round a burning ship exchanging pleasantries with the fire parties. (41)

Leonard expands on this.

He held church services and was also available for private counselling. His function of boosting morale became increasingly demanding as the War progressed and the fatalism of the troops increased. As an officer, his duties included censoring outgoing letters and writing to bereaved relatives. His quarters served as a supply centre: he distributed cigarettes, sweets and socks... The Protestant chaplain worked with the Y.M.C.A. and the Church Army to run clubs, concerts and canteens... A chaplain would appear at courts martial to defend deserters and other offenders. One of his most important roles was



that of upholding morality: keeping troops out of brawls and brothels. (42)

This was the situation that Hannay found himself in, having landed in France and travelled by a circuitous route to the Base Camp where he was stationed.

Our camp occupied the place of a reservoir in a city's water supply. The men and officers flowed into us from many sources, stayed a while and flowed out again through the conduits of troop trains when the insatiable fighting army, perpetually using and losing men, turned on its taps, demanding fresh supply. (43)

Hannay was the first chaplain that the camp had had. It took him quite a while to settle down and to become familiar with his duties.

There are, or used to be, people who believe that you can best teach a boy to swim by throwing him into deep water from the end of a pier and leaving him there. If he survives, he has learned how to swim and the method has proved its value. If he drowns, his parents have no further anxiety about him. The authorities who are responsible for the religion of the army believe in this plan for teaching chaplains their business. (44)

However, he did settle down, and one of the first places he discovered in the camp was 'Woodbine Hut'. It was a Church Army hut, made of wood and corrugated iron. Activities within included letter-writing, games of various sorts, and concerts. At one end there was a bar where the men could buy food, drink (strictly non-alcoholic), and tobacco. At night there were informal prayers, and a voluntary service on Sundays. It was in this hut that Hannay carried out most of his duties outside formal religious services. The British part of

the war area in France was dotted with huts like 'Woodbine', built by the Y.M.C.A. and the Church Army. They were recognisable by the presence of a red triangle, symbolising the needs of the three parts of man, body, mind, and soul. Another institution in this first camp was the Y.S.C. or Young Soldiers Club. This club was set up to cater for those who had enlisted but were under age; these boys were sent to the Base Camp from the ports into which they had arrived, or back from the trenches if they had managed to get that far. Hannay estimated that there were nearly one thousand of them there in 1915. (45) Their presence in the camp was a menace to discipline.

Officially they were men to be trained, fed, lodged, if necessary punished according to the same scheme designed for, and in the main suitable to men. In reality they were boys, growing boys, some of them not sixteen years of age, a few -the thing seems almost incredible - not fifteen. (46)

The difficulty was that no-one knew how to treat them. They were a nuisance to the officers and men. They were getting no education and no physical training. An Irish surgeon, Major McCabe, and Hannay, set about trying to organise the boys. The Y.M.C.A. gave them the use of a building, and the Young Soldier's Club was formed. This was a place where the boys were to be held in check by moral influence, not military discipline, and a place where games, letter-writing, boxing classes, and concerts were organised, with lectures on various

topics thrice weekly. A lady called Miss Nettleton was recruited from a nearby Y.M.C.A. camp and given charge of the boys.

Miss Nettleton was born to deal with wild boys. The fiercer they are the more she loved them, and the wickeder they are the more they loved her. (47)

One of the most distressing duties that a chaplain had to perform was to inform families of the loss of a young man. Before he went to France Hannay had some experience of communicating with grieving relatives. In October 1915, three months before he left for France, he corresponded with Rudyard Kipling, who had received word that his son was missing in action. Hannay sent him a copy of Robert's diary. Robert had been in the same battalion as John Kipling. His father wrote to Hannay,

Nothing that you could have sent would have delighted us more than your boy's diary - because it is just the sort of thing we always wanted to know. John's letters gave us few details - mostly of his experiences on the ship - but, as you can imagine, every light thrown on the [?] and life of the battalion in France is of inestimable value to us. (48)

A few weeks later Hannay received another letter from Kipling thanking him for sending some of Robert's letters. His own son had still not been found and was presumed dead.

These are most vivid and illuminating letters of the daily life of our battalion....I like the lad's simple explanation of his feelings under fire....by all I can make out, it seems as though our boy was wounded pretty badly....they

all agree he was doing his work up to the last and led his men decently. (49)

In the summer of 1916 Hannay was moved from his base camp to Boulogne. Here he was in charge of three camps. The first was inhabited by older soldiers, chiefly of the original expeditionary force. These men were deemed unfit for further active service thorough wounds or disease. The second camp was again a Base Camp. The third was a convalescent camp, capable of containing three thousand men. Hannay's workload was enormous, but he did have the support of the Y.M.C.A. and the Catholic Women's League, both groups running recreation huts. However the latter, in Hannay's opinion, made little attempt to cater for the amusement of the men.

They discouraged personal friendships between the workers and the men. They aimed at a certain refinement in the equipment and decoration of their hut. They provided food of a superior kind, very nicely served. I think their efforts were appreciated by many men. On the other hand the workers in the Y.M.C.A. hut there as everywhere made constant efforts to provide entertainments of some kind. (50)

One of the Y.M.C.A. workers that Hannay met in this camp was Miss Rosamund Leather, who was in charge of the canteen in the Base Camp and for whom Hannay had a deep admiration. When he returned to Ireland, his youngest daughter, Althea, went to France as a volunteer worker, and worked in the canteen under the guidance of Miss Leather.

In March 1916, Hannay had appeared on the 'Irish Clergy Roll of Honour' in the *Church of Ireland Gazette*.

The Reverend Canon James Owen Hannay ('George A. Birmingham') Canon of St. Patrick's Cathedral, and for many years Rector of Westport, Co. Mayo, was appointed Chaplain to the forces in January. He is at present stationed at a base camp in France. His eldest son, Second Lieutenant Robert Hannay, obtained a commission in the Irish Guards last year, and has been at the front with the Second Battalion since August. (51)

One year later, his period of service ended, early in 1917. Though he left the camps where he had been stationed with much regret, he was feeling ill.

There was no glory or romance about it. I was not wounded or gassed. I did not even suffer from shell-shock or a nervous breakdown. With me it was simply and most prosaically stomach. I suffered almost constant pain. (52)

It was pointed out to him when he came home that his hair had turned from brown to completely white. This change he attributed to the month of April 1916.

We heard the news of the Rebellion in Dublin in Easter week, 1916. That is to say we heard that it had happened. Then silence came down like a dense fog, lit only by occasional lurid rumours. We heard that Dublin had been burned to the ground. We heard that it had been looted by rioters, that it was being shelled into ruins by artillery. We heard that Rebel armies were marching to Dublin from Wexford, from Mullingar and from elsewhere. Rumours grew wilder and wilder. No letters came to us. Telegrams remained unanswered. There was no way of getting news. Those of us who had wives and families in Dublin or the neighbourhood lived from day to day in miserable anxiety....When at last the Censor removed his ban, letters from my family came to me in a flood....I learned to my immense relief that I need not have been so desperately anxious. (53)

This is the only reference Hannay made to the Rising in his autobiography. There is no other evidence of his opinions or feelings about what had taken place in his surviving papers. I have not been able to trace any articles by Hannay on the subject. A plausible explanation would be that when he returned in 1917 he had missed the emotional reaction to the executions of the leaders of the Rising, and thus, his reaction to the Rising itself, would have been limited to anger and disappointment at how extreme Nationalism in Ireland was doing its utmost to injure the Allied cause, in which he was personally involved. Also, because he did not have firsthand knowledge of what had taken place, it is probable that he did not feel himself to be in a position to write about it. When he did return in 1917, he concentrated on writing about the Convention which was being organised in the hope that some political settlement would be agreed on. However, he did write to Matthew Nathan after his departure from Ireland in the aftermath of the Rising. Nathan replied,

It was good receiving your kind letter and I greatly hope that my departure from Ireland does not mean the definite end of an intercourse which you say you enjoyed and which gave me very real pleasure. (54)

In 1917, a collection of essays was published under the title, *The Church in the furnace*. All seventeen essays were by Anglican chaplains serving or having served in France and Flanders. Hannay was among those who wrote

for the collection. His essay was entitled, 'Man to man'. He wrote on the difficulties of the chaplain's work. On the spiritual side there was the problem of how to make religion and spirituality meaningful to the soldiers in the midst of war.

The padre is remote, not because he wears a Sam Browne belt, but because he is suspected of being unable or unwilling to discuss plain matters 'man to man'. Exactly the same difficulty existed in civil life. (55)

He argued the same point of view in *A Padre in France*.

The padres themselves, the best and most earnest of them, are painfully aware that the ordinary pulpit sermon is remote, utterly and hopelessly, from the lives of the men....And the padres, again the best of them, are not content to be just padres. They feel they ought to have a message to deliver, that they have one if only they can disentangle it from the unrealities which have somehow got coiled up in it. (56)

Many soldiers had been converted from the Protestant faith to Catholicism during the War. In 1917 one Catholic priest claimed the number was thirteen thousand; The following year the *Tablet* estimated the number at forty thousand. (57)

Many converts were men disillusioned with the wartime jingoism of the Church of England. Postwar church attendance fell in Britain. 'Woodbine Willie' had warned that this would happen: 'We suffer badly from dry-rot in the pulpit'....The war's effect on the Protestant churches in Ireland was less damaging. Attendances at Church of Ireland services fell in the postwar years; but wartime casualties and emigration prompted by the War of Independence and the establishment of the Irish Free State probably accounted for this. Returning chaplains were given a War Bonus; and Archbishop Crozier called for 'the practical christianity of the trenches to be applied to the home front' as the

Church's contribution to national reconstruction. (58)

On his return to Ireland, Hannay spent some time recovering from his illness, a complaint that wasn't finally cured until he returned to live in France in 1922. However, he did not remain idle. Hannay had characterised Ireland at the turn of the century as a seething pot, and this description was still relevant. When he returned early in 1917 the repercussions of the Rising were still being felt. The extreme element of the Sinn Féin movement had become dominant during the War years, and had gained in prestige and strength from its association with the Easter rebellion.

Constitutional Nationalism was fading in strength. This was evident at the beginning of the year with the first of what would be a series of successful by-elections, in North Roscommon. The entry of America into the War in 1917 brought pressure to bear on the British government to find a solution to Irish problems. When an offer of immediate Home Rule for the twenty-six counties was rejected, Lloyd George

...seized on a suggestion of Redmond's that a conference or convention of Irishmen should be held in the hope that they might be able to work out their own salvation. (59)

Hannay followed these developments with a keen interest and resumed his role as a commentator on Irish affairs. In March he wrote to Althea, his daughter who was working in Boulogne as a canteen volunteer,



They had Trinity sandbagged yesterday in expectation of another rebellion. The O.T.C. boys were on duty day and night, and a certain number of regular soldiers with them. They also, I am told, had guns on the roofs. However the rebellion did not come off. Seems almost a pity when everybody had taken so much trouble. (60)

Hannay wrote for both the Irish and English papers on the political developments in Ireland. One of his first major articles was an attempt to interpret the recent Sinn Féin victories.

How are we to understand the recent victories of Sinn Féin at the polls? Has Ireland 'gone Republican'; and must we reckon in the future with a demand for complete independence? Or has the Irish voter simply got tired of the party which has represented him so long and made up his mind to get rid of it? Most intelligent critics of our affairs incline to the latter alternative. (61)

Hannay himself judged that the success of Sinn Féin was more than an ordinary swing of the political pendulum.

Ireland is getting rid of parliamentarians altogether and giving their places to men who will have nothing to do with Parliament, who will not go to Westminster, who refuse to play the political game according to the recognised rules. The Irish electors are not merely putting the other side in - the recognised procedure in the political cricket match; they are smashing the wickets, digging holes in the pitch, and declaring that they no longer want to watch either batting or bowling....How long will it be before the rest of the United Kingdom follows our example? This is the true significance of East Clare and the victories which preceded it. (62)

In relation to the Convention, both Sinn Féin and the Ulster Unionists were faced with dilemmas. Ulster Unionists had demanded to be left out of a self-governing Ireland, whatever the form of government

took. Unless this position changed, Hannay wrote, the labours of the Convention would be in vain. He went further and asked had Ulster considered what her demand really meant for herself. If she was to be left out of Ireland then she would become part of England.

The Belfast workingmen and the sons of the farmers in Antrim and Down will at once become liable for military service as Englishmen are. Do they want this? The Ulster clergy will resign their pleasant positions as autocratic managers of primary education and hand their schools over to popularly elected boards. The householders of Ulster will pay a school rate, a form of taxation which exists in England but not in Ireland. Will the clergy and people like this?....If Ulster appeals to the Union, to the Union she ought to go; but it must be a Union complete, logical, just, with all un-English privileges swept away. (63)

Sinn Féin also refused to take part in the Convention, and, Hannay observed, asked,

...that Ireland's future shall be decided by the European Peace Conference when it meets. This is an odd demand from a party whose watchword is 'Ourselves, ourselves alone'....Will the Sinn Féiners be content to accept the decision whatever it is? The Irish people will have little, if any, part in making it. It will be the result of give-and-take bargaining among plenipotentiaries, most of whom will care little or nothing about Ireland. Sinn Féin ought surely to consider whether it is wise to let Ireland's future depend on a game played by astute foreigners. Our Convention even if its Constitution is not the best possible will at least consist of Irishmen. (64)

Hannay's views were not popular with the Unionist papers. The *Belfast Newsletter* observed,

The latest appeal to Ulster to withdraw its demand for exclusion comes from Canon Hannay, and it takes a form that does no credit to him. He states that if Ulster is excluded it will become part of England for all purposes....But

when has Ulster demanded any privileges, or refused to share with England the burdens of the Empire ? The Ulster Unionist members have asked that conscription should be applied to Ireland, and educational reform has been desired for many years. Ulstermen fear none of the things with which Canon Hannay threatens them. They have made many sacrifices, and they are willing to make more; but this clergyman, whose duty is to hold high ideals before the people, thinks it consistent with his position to appeal, in the interests of his Nationalist friends, to selfish motives. he urges them to take the narrowest view of their personal interests, and put them before the welfare of their country and the very existence of the Empire. He will appeal in vain. Ulstermen generally have a higher sense of duty than 'George A. Birmingham'. (65)

The *Belfast Evening Telegraph* was altogether more critical of Hannay than the *Newsletter* had been.

In a few hours the fateful Irish Convention will enter upon its deliberations. It is possible, perhaps probable, that a few hours later its deliberations will come to an abortive end. Rev. Canon Hannay, turning from his customary comicalities to jeremiads, dolefully declares that unless Ulster changes her attitude the Convention will be in vain. It does not seem to have occurred to him that a change of attitude on the part of the Nationalists would be at least equally effective in producing agreement. It is a strange and ironical circumstance that in moments of the greatest seriousness men like Canon Hannay, who have no real function except to add to the gaiety of nations, will persist in butting in with inanities which they fondly believe to be pearls of wisdom. The humourist in Ireland is always at his best during a 'wake'. Nature never intended Canon Hannay to be a contributor to the stock of political wisdom and experience. He ought to recognise that fact and comport himself accordingly. (66)

Hannay continued to print his opinions. In the *Nation* in August, he argued that the Rising of the previous year taught Irishmen that it was their business, as it

was the business of the Convention, not to ignore facts but to face them.

We have either got to discover a constitution for Ireland which Sinn Féin will support and Ulster consent to, or we have got to try a Unionism complete and logical in which Ireland will be as England is, equally governed under exactly the same laws....We cannot go on as we are going, with no sane system of government, neither ruling ourselves nor being ruled by others, (67)

In a further article for the *Daily Mail*, entitled 'Purrs and Claws' Hannay compared Belfast and Sinn Féin to the mythical monsters, Scylla and Charybdis, guarding jealously the straits through which the convention had to pass. However, he admitted that thus far Belfast had welcomed the delegates when they had visited that city, and Sinn Féin had also been unexpectedly moderate, in no way passionately anxious for a shipwreck.

The rest of the public which is neither Belfast nor Sinn Féin is purring softly. It cherishes a hope that the Convention may devise a constitution for Ireland under which we shall escape paying for the war....Meanwhile, when everyone else is purring the Government, - is it civil or military? - is showing claws. It has been seized with a lust for arresting people. there may be good reasons why men are being suddenly captured, court-marshalled and condemned. Perhaps the authorities think there is going to be another rebellion. But these arrests and trials are exasperating things. And continued exasperation leads to violent outbreaks. If there were anyone who wanted to wreck the Convention and destroy the chance of an Irish settlement his best plan would be to goed some corner of the country into another and more hopeless Easter week rebellion. (68)

Writing to Althea in France where she was working as a canteen volunteer shortly afterwards he told her that

The country is at present flooded with journalists, all bent on solving the Irish problem and rather hoping (for professional reasons only) for a new rebellion. (69)

In May 1918 Hannay wrote to Sir Edward O'Farrell, sardonically congratulating him on the unmasking of the 'German plot'.

The announcement of the Lord Lieutenant's action in arresting the leading Sinn Féiners in Dublin and his appeal to loyal Irishmen (which appears in today's paper) moves me to write a letter to you. It seems to me that quite the right thing has been done and that you now have just a chance of saving Ireland from drifting into utter disgrace and suffering all kinds of misery. I believe that if you can prove to the Irish people that these men have really been guilty of intriguing with Germany, you will rally the vast majority of our countrymen to the cause of the Allies. The mass of the Irish people is not pro-German and does not want a landing of German troops in Ireland. Most of them would even now be ready to fight for the Allies if only they saw that the Allied cause was the cause of true Irish patriotism. (70)

However, he also warned against the repercussions of such action.

But the Irish people will not take your word for it, nor the word of Lord French, nor anybody else's word that DeValera, Arthur Griffith, and the rest of them are guilty of the crime you lay to their charge. You have got to prove your accusation or else your action in arresting these men will be worse than useless. What I mean is this, if you merely imprison these men, deport them to England, and hush the whole thing up - the course of action adopted with the arrested suspects after the 1916 rebellion - you will make things worse, if possible, than they are at present and in the end you will have to release them as you released Madame Marckievicz

and Darrell Figgis two years ago. If you try them by some secret tribunal, publishing the findings of the court and the penalty inflicted, but not publishing the evidence you will create a condition of fury infinitely worse than that which followed the death of Ashe. (71)

This letter was not followed by a series of articles in various newspapers, as would have been the case in the past, but just two, which were published in the *Liverpool Daily Courier*. Hannay dealt with the complexities and problems of contemporary Ireland, and attempted to explain in a clear and logical manner to the English public what had been happening in Ireland since the War had begun, the development of Sinn Féin, the demise of the Parliamentary Party, the Easter Rebellion, the question of conscription, the Convention, the position of Ulster, and the arrest of the leading Sinn Féiners. Concluding his protrait of Irish affairs, he simply asked, 'What is going to happen next?' The title of the series was, aptly enough, 'The Irish Conundrum'. (72)

There do not seem to be any further publications from Hannay until the declaration of a Republic in Ireland and the setting up of Dail Eireann in January, 1919. The following month he wrote a lengthy piece for the *Sunday Express*, 'Sinn Féin or Bolshevism. Does Ireland want a Republic?' Described in the by-line as 'one of the shrewdest observers of the trend of events in Ireland', he once more attempted to analyse the events

which surrounded the development and growth of Sinn Féin to the point of winning the 1918 election. However Hannay still doubted that Ireland as a whole was committed to Sinn Féin's claim of an independent republic. He gave credit to the Irish labour movement for providing the motivation which underlay the success of Sinn Féin party, and predicted that the latter would find themselves in 'the uncomfortable position of Cadets in Russia when Labour's demands become vocal'.

Then the struggle will be between an Irish Bolshevism and the Roman Catholic Church; for though the Church can afford to avoid an open conflict with political Sinn Féin, it must face the other fight, if and when it comes....Sinn Féin cannot afford to treat moderate middle-class opinion as negligible. Nor can it afford to disappoint Labour. Nor will it desire to antagonise the Church. Such are the dangers within the household of Nationalist Ireland. Outside there is Ulster. It is, of course, possible that Sinn Féin may get something - an expression of a pious opinion, perhaps - from the Peace Conference. If not - then, in spite of the real ability and the undoubted honesty of the Sinn Féin leaders, the movement will go the way of political idealisms in a world of warring facts. So no one guesses at the future, remembering the past. (73)

After this, however, his output of articles decreased quite noticeably. At the height of the War of Independence, the Treaty, and the beginning of the Civil War, a period from 1918 to 1921, when Hannay left Ireland, there are exceedingly few articles in comparison to his earlier output, during a period when one would have expected, given his earlier

productivity, a barrage of articles and essays, not to mention lectures. One explanation for this seeming barrenness, aside from his ill-health, may be that Hannay was beginning to feel isolated and estranged from Ireland. As I have pointed out, his writing was more and more confined to publication in the English press, and directed towards the English public, a trend that began to become increasingly apparent after the war, although it is discernable previous to 1914.

In terms of Birmingham's fiction, too, by 1918, only three novels had been published since the production of *General John Regan* in 1913. These were *The Lost Tribes*, (1914), *Gossamer*, (1915), and *The Island Mystery*, (1918). The war interrupted his novel writing, naturally enough, and it has to be considered that he was also occupied writing about his war experiences, *A Padre in France*, published in 1918. Four more novels were published before he left Ireland. *Up the Rebels !*, (1919), *Inisheeny*, (1920), *Good Conduct*, (1920), and *The Lost Lawyer*, (1921). The three novels published between 1913 and 1918 to a large degree dealt with Hannay's experiences in America and his travels on board the transatlantic liners. *Up the Rebels !* was a satirical and farcical portrayal of Irish affairs, dealing with a failed Nationalist rebellion. It ridicules the Irish Parliamentary Party, but also the extremest attitudes



of the Sinn Féin party. The heroine, Mona Connolly was evidently based on Maud Gonne McBride. Mona, the daughter of a highly placed Government official, was tall, beautiful, and passionately interested in the cause of Irish independence. She is extremely strong-willed and starts a rebellion, against the threat of conscription, which was summarily squashed, without bloodshed. This novel shows none of the consideration and seriousness of his early political novels, but it is a clever if sardonic and satirical portrait of contemporary Ireland. It is one of his last novels which dealt directly with Irish affairs, with the exception of *The Lost Lawyer*, which is a comic and farcical tale of life in Ireland during the war of independence, and a lawyer who disappears. Thus in his fiction, too, one can detect a retreat from his earlier preoccupation with Irish affairs exclusively. He does not abandon his interest in Irish issues, as we have seen in relation to his writings on the Convention, for example. There is the sense that events were moving too rapidly, too much had changed, that Hannay was no longer able to grasp fully the complexities of this new Ireland to which he had returned in 1917. One attempt he made to come to terms with this new Ireland was the publication, in London, in 1919, of the non-fictional *An Irishman looks at his world*. This book was, as its title suggests, Hannay's

or Birmingham's (as it was published under his pseudonym) view of his contemporary Irish world. However, much of what he wrote in this book is an echo of what he had been writing and saying for years. The tone seems more historical than contemporary. He dealt with topics such as Irish politics, religion, education, the Irish aristocracy, the farmers, the middle classes, and, of course, the Gaelic League and the I.A.O.S. In each case he traced the history and development of the subject he was writing about. Of the League, he wrote, that in the early years of the twentieth century,

Ireland changed. The Gaelic League itself wrought the change. Its influence spread far beyond the widening circles of its membership, and Irishmen of all classes, creeds, and parties learned to look at Ireland in a new way. The belief that it is possible to make us into Englishmen disappeared....This is the great work, which the Gaelic League has accomplished.  
(74)

He did not allude to his own involvement in the League. He recognised that Ireland had changed, but did he yet recognise that he himself had not changed with it, or at least not in the same direction. His voice in this book is the voice of the detached observer, the impartial commentator, a voice that he had been developing in all his writings, fiction and non-fiction since 1906, when his personal involvement with the League ended. However, in the concluding

chapter of this book, Hannay, somewhat wearily, commented on his attempts to write about Irish issues.

A writer is over-sanguine who expects that his book will be read; but he can comfort himself with the reflection that it will certainly be criticised if he has been fool enough to write about Ireland...Indeed I am more interested in Ireland than in anything else and I love every sod of it. But for a solution to the problem, an answer to the riddle, a scheme of settlement, I have no such thing to offer...And why should I try? It is the business of the statesmen and politicians to arrange constitutions and set them working. That is their job. We pay them to do it. My business is to live, as best I can, under the governments which they devise. (75)

The essential question was, would he be able to live in the Ireland that he found himself occupying in the immediate years after the war?

When Hannay returned from France he had set about looking for a parish and a church of his own, with the resolve to live, once more, in Ireland. Early in 1918 he found what he had been looking for. It was a very small parish, Carnalway, in Co. Kildare. However, it was quite enough for Hannay at the time. He recalled in *Pleasant places*,

I had not at the most one hundred and fifty parishoners. But I should, at that time, have been afraid to take a bigger parish even if it had been offered me. My miserable pains worried me and I did not think that I was ever going to get well again. (76)

Carnalway was quite close to the Curragh geographically, and spiritually. As Hannay described it, 'Carnalway, and indeed all that part of Kildare, was devoted to the cult of the horse'. (77) This was a

change for the enthusiastic sailors, but they became accustomed to the passion for horses which surrounded them, and Althea, who shared this passion, settled in very comfortably, when she returned from her position as a canteen worker in Bolougne, France. The head of society was Mr. Percy La Touche, of Harristown, a direct relation of the La Touches that Hannay had met while a young curate in Delgany.

However, in his location, in Kildare, Hannay was geographically removed from the Ireland that he had known in Westport. He ministered to a landed gentry, who, though their numbers were shrinking, still occupied an important position in society. From a parish which had been Irish in character, he now found himself in what can be fairly called an Anglo-Irish society, which dwelt inside what had once been the Pale. Although he and Ada enjoyed their brief time in Carnalway, it is evident that they never really settled down there as they had when they were in Westport. It seems that when they left Ireland in 1913, they could never truly return. The Ireland that Hannay had come back to in 1917 was a very different one from the one he and Ada had known and loved. Their children were, with the exception of the youngest, Seamus, finished their education, and grown up. Hannay himself was still in ill-health. However, there were two other important factors which influenced them to

make a decision to leave. The first was the wave of crime and terrorism which swept Ireland, during 1920 and 1921.

This prompted Hannay to write articles for the *Liverpool Daily Post*, and the *Daily Express*. For the latter he wrote pieces which were partially fictional, but not farcical, for example, '"On the run" in Ireland', 'A hold-up in Ireland'. (78) Equally serious were his articles in the *Post*, in which he examined the problems of crime and terrorism in the country.

'What is the matter with Ireland, any way? Why can't she lie down and keep quiet like every other country in the world?' The questions are natural enough, but they are based on a mistake. Ireland is not the only country in the world just now which refuses to lie down and keep quiet....But they are not altogether the same. In Ireland men rob and sometimes murder exactly as they rob and murder in England. But in Ireland there is also robbing and killing of a different kind - of a kind which many Irishmen do not call criminal. Masked and armed men enter houses at night and take away any firearms that they find....Policemen are shot, and men much more highly placed than policemen are shot at...because they are representatives of a Government which many Irishmen regard as an illegitimate tyranny. (79)

He offered no solutions although he continued his analysis of the problems in a six-part series of articles for an English periodical called *Time and Tide* during the summer of 1920. (80) At this time he was also in contact with Lord Monteagle who had sought his support on behalf of the Irish Dominion League, founded by Plunkett the previous year. Hannay replied

that there was nothing he would like more than to be associated with Monteagle and Plunkett in any effort for the welfare of Ireland, but, although he thought that Dominion Home Rule was probably the most desirable constitution for Ireland, he also thought

...that the present time is singularly unsuitable for trying any constitutional experiments....I see no prospect of achieving any sort of unity by means of Plunkett's Constituent Assembly Plan....I should like you and Plunkett to know that I do not stand apart from your movement without careful thought and strong conviction. (81)

In July of 1920, Hannay received a letter summoning him to attend a meeting for the purpose of setting up the Dail Eireann Arbitration Courts in South Kildare, as a clergyman for the parish of Carnalway. There is no evidence, in his surviving letters or later, in his autobiography, to suggest that he attended this meeting. In October, Ada received a letter from the editor of the *New Statesman*, Desmond McCarthy, who had been invited to visit them. He wrote of his distress at the developments in the country and hoped that it would not be as a war correspondent that he came to stay with them. (82) Hannay's family were not directly threatened by the forces on either side, but Hannay himself recalled that he was 'once very nearly shot by one of the so-called "Black and Tans" in Dublin.

The man was in plain clothes and it was impossible for me to know that he had any authority, from either side, to hold up passing pedestrians....Men in his position were in constant danger, even in the streets of Dublin,

and naturally enough he was a good deal 'rattled'; but that seemed, to me at least, an insufficient reason for his putting a bullet through my heart, which for a minute or two it seemed quite likely he would do, either out of zeal or by accident. (83)

However, it was not the dramatic events but everyday hardships which played a large part in the Hannay's decision to leave. He recalled in his autobiography that,

Outrage succeeded outrage. The news of murders, sometimes of our friends, reached us constantly. Post-offices were raided, until all small offices were closed, and we had to go eight miles to buy a postal-order or to send a telegram. Roads were rendered impassable by trenches dug across them and by the felling of trees. Motoring, even where it was possible, was rendered difficult by the necessity of obtaining a police permit for even a short drive. Private cars were stolen, disabled, and burnt. There was strict censorship of letters... (84)

Ada recorded in her diary instances of these difficulties. Thursday 26 May 1921, 'Trees cut all around here, one of ours, just above gate, blocking road.'. Friday 10 June, 'All Post Office bicycles have been seized by Sinn Fein, so post worse than ever'. (85)

All this made life difficult, but the family were not threatened in any way. However, they knew those who were. A young man, whom Hannay did not name, but who worked for him as a chauffeur sometimes, was warned to leave the country within twenty-four hours, or risk being shot. Why he received this warning which he showed to Hannay, the latter did not know. The young

man had served in the army during the war, and tried to ignore the threat, but after three weeks, he could not stand the strain of waiting to be taken and shot, as an Archdeacon Finley, of a neighbouring parish had been. With Hannay's help, he left the country. Hannay does not provide any more detail than this in *Pleasant places*, but he did declare, 'I think that what finally forced us to go was my extreme indignation at the treatment of' this young man. (86)

However, there were other factors involved in their decision to leave. Hannay had not regained his health. Both Annette and Percy La Touche had died, with no successors. Harristown fell into decay.

'Of a truth many houses great and fair shall be desolate'. So the prophet said long ago about the land of Judah. He might have said it, with even more poignant grief, about Ireland, had he foreseen those latter days. The loss of the La Touches made a great gap in the parish, as well as in our lives. They, their household, and their dependents, formed an appreciable part of my parishioners. Soon there was another loss which was almost as serious. The Talbot-Ponsonbys left Ireland to live in Devonshire. their hunting establishment was broken up and their house was left empty....It seemed wiser and better that what was left of the parish should be joined with another... (87)

The Hannays left Ireland in the autumn of 1921. They went to live in Dinard, Brittany, for a year, where Hannay regained his health. There were many English people living in Dinard, mostly retired. Hannay's cousin, Claude and his wife Elsie had retired there also. At first Hannay helped the English chaplain



there on Sundays, but after a while he again grew restless to have his own church, and re-opened a small chapel which had been closed since the war, at St. Lunaire. It was in Dinard that Hannay met the Bishop of Northern and Central Europe, who was responsible for the members of the Church of England living on the Continent. It was he who asked Hannay to go to Berlin, to relieve a chaplain that was ill.

Subsequently, Hannay was asked by Bishop Bury, successor to the title of Bishop of Northern and Central Europe, to go to Budapest, to minister to the British Legation there. His mission was to 'gather together the scattered remnants of the pre-War English colony and to restart the English Church.' (88) This was a difficult task. The economy had been depressed since the war. Hannay had no church to minister from. His parish was Hungary itself. Eventually he secured the loan of a lecture hall in a Calvinist college for Sunday services. Fifty or sixty English people attended each week, with a mixture of other nationalities, quite a few Hungarians also attended, of various faiths, to learn English. (89)

Hannay and Ada stayed for two years in Hungary, but Ada fell into ill-health, and Hannay though he did not wish to leave his work undone, wished to remove Ada from Hungary. At this time, quite unexpectedly, Sir John Horner, of Mells, Somerset, wrote to Hannay

offering him the parish. (90) Hannay accepted and they began their journey as soon as Ada was well enough to travel. He later published his experiences in Budapest in a book called *A Wayfarer in Hungary*. They settled down quite happily in Mells and spent the next six years working within the English Church. In 1929, however, the rectory caught fire and burned down, with the loss of many of their possessions. No doubt many of Hannay's personal papers were destroyed, and this is a possible explanation for the gaps, and missing years, in his correspondence. Ada's health improved somewhat, but never completely, and she died on 31 January 1933. There are a series of verses in Hannay's personal papers, written shortly after Ada's death, in which he tried to express his grief and sorrow. He left these verses to Althea, 'to burn, or do with as she wishes'. (91)

Throughout all these years, Hannay had continued to write, as George A. Birmingham, novels, producing at least one every year, sometimes two or three, right through the years abroad, the years of the second World War, even one in the year of his death, aged eighty-five. However, only one of these dealt with Irish themes.

This was a novel called *Wild Justice*, published in 1930. The plot centres around the murder of an Irishman, Sweeny, living in England. The investigation

of the murder produces a suspect, another Irishman, Colgan, who though he claimed he received a letter from Sweeny to come from Ireland and meet him, did so, and found him dead, was nonetheless convicted and executed. During the course of the novel, in which there is the character of the narrator, an English country parson, there are comments from the mouths of characters on what had happened in Ireland since the troubles. Most of the characters are English, and speak of, for example, "the fate...of those unhappy Irish loyalists, who had been ...cast to the wolves" by the establishment of the Irish Free State.' (92) The narrator, pondering upon the murder, came to the conclusion that Sweeny and Colgan had been planning to murder the Prime Minister, 'You remember the way Sir Henry Wilson was shot', but that his accomplice and he had had a row and Sweeny was slain. (93) Devenish was the only other non-English character. He had been an Anglo-Irish country gentleman. He informs the other characters of what life in Ireland had been like.

Things in Ireland were pretty bad then. They were murdering policemen right and left. The Government seemed even more idiotically helpless than Governments usually are....I'd never been mixed up in politics on one side or the other. I liked the people around me and I believed they liked me....So far as Ireland was concerned we were insignificant people. We didn't matter. It's the people who don't matter who are safe in revolutions. (94)

At the end of the novel the truth is revealed. Sweeny, and Colgan had been comrades in Sinn Féin, were responsible for the death of Devenish's wife, Molly. Devenish planned his revenge, murdered one, and framed the other for the crime, resulting in the latter's execution. After confessing, Devenish declared,

'You English made terms with the men who murdered Molly. You signed a treaty - you called it a treaty - with them. You praised them. You made heroes of them. You treated them as if they were the equals and might be the friends of decent men. You slanged the Germans and poured abuse on them. But the Germans were knights of chivalry compared to those'. (95)

A great deal of what the characters say may not represent Hannay's opinion. However, as he had always used his novels, whether serious, moralistic, comic, satirical, or farcical, as vehicles for expressing his opinions, it is reasonable to assume that some of the disgust, and bitterness, at the events in Ireland during the years 1918-23, which are freely expressed in the novel and without any rebuttals, were felt by Hannay also.

There exists in the collection of Hannay's papers in Trinity College, Dublin, a series of letters between Hannay and an individual called Edward Knoblock. This correspondence concerns a collaboration between the two to write a play entitled 'Parnell'. A copy of this play exists in Hannay's papers but seems to have had no stage history, and there is no other relevant

information about it that I have been able to find.

(96)

Therefore, *Wild Justice* is the only indication we have of Hannay's true feelings towards the changes in Ireland after he left, from the hope and energy in the last decade of the nineteenth century, and first decade of the twentieth, to the bitterness and acrimony, rebellion, and war, which played a major part in his decision to leave.

In 1934, Hannay was asked by the Dean of Westminster to take charge of the parish of Holy Trinity, Prince Consort Road. He accepted, and he was to remain in this parish, working and writing, until the end of his life. An account of Hannay at this time was written and published by Hilda Martindale, an old acquaintance that he had first met in Westport.

To his parishioners and members of his congregation, he was always available, nothing was too much trouble especially if they were ill or in sorrow...He took into his flat at the close of the war as housekeeper, a young woman with three young children who found it impossible to find other accommodation...His concern for the members of his congregation during the bombing was great. I remained in London until 1941 and returned in 1943. He wrote to me several times to enquire how I was and offering to come and see me. During the 1939-45 war he preached every Sunday morning and evening to a dwindling congregation and even on the Sunday after a building close to his church and flat had been demolished a service was held...  
(97)

In 1946 Trinity College, Dublin conferred upon Hannay the degree of D. Litt (*honoris causa*), and he was

greatly pleased to find in the Public Orator's address recognition of his early work on Church history, which he valued in spite of the great success of his novels'. (98)

Hannay died in February 1950. As Rev. F.G. Landon Cruce wrote in an address to the parishoners of Holy Trinity parish,

To many of us, it was not altogether a surprise, because for some months we have watched with anxious eyes the slow and persistent failing of physical strength....What were the salient traits of his character ? He was a man of great charm and ripe scholarship, sincere, honest, and fearless, with a wonderful zest for living....Brotherliness was his supreme characteristic. He was the big brother of the young and of older people whose sorrows and joys he shared. He was, at times, perhaps, a little impatient and was not given to 'suffer fools gladly' and he would brook no interference from anyone... (99)

According to Hilda Martindale, Hannay wrote in January 1950, one month before he died,

We have passed through a period of great change. We have seen old things vanish and a new social order struggling for birth with many pains, and yet with the promise of new life. How is it to end ? Stillborn hope or a new vitality ? We do not know and cannot guess, only of this we are sure. A world is passing away with its dreams and lusts, but the word of our God liveth forever. In this as Christians we place our trust with the calm certainty that though the course of human passions rage horribly yet the Lord is King and in the end His will is done. (100)

## Conclusion

Rev. Canon James Owen Hannay M.A. D.Litt., 'George A. Birmingham', was born in 1865, and died in 1950. He was a participant in, and a spectator at a time when Ireland was experiencing a period of growth, renewal, and hope, in the early years of the century. He was also there when Ireland was experiencing revolution, war, bitterness and hatred. More importantly, he recorded his observations, in many articles, essays, and books, under his own name, and in fictional form, as George A. Birmingham.

When Hannay died in 1950, his last novel had just been published, bringing the total to sixty novels or books of short stories, and two published plays. In addition there were numerous volumes of essays, books of travel and reminiscences, studies of Irish people and Irish life, theological and biblical works. Of articles in newspapers, periodicals, and journals, one can only guess at the true number. Just over four hundred are listed in the catalogue of his papers in Trinity College, Dublin, drawn up by R.B.D. French, and this is not complete. In the course of my research I have come across many other articles not included in this list.

Hannay was also, as we have seen, well known as a lecturer and public speaker.

As 'George A. Birmingham', Hannay wrote, between 1905 and 1913, fourteen novels which had Irish themes.

Between 1914 and 1921, he published only three which had primarily Irish themes. Of these seventeen novels, six were serious in tone, dealing with the themes of regeneration and reconciliation in contemporary Ireland. The others were more farcical and satiric in style, a style that became more pronounced in each novel.

Hannay's novels were very popular in their time, many of them being reprinted again and again. Sadly, all but two or three are now out of print and extremely difficult to unearth. This type of 'popular' literature, as Catherine Candy has pointed out in her thesis, 'Popular Irish Literature in the age of the Anglo-Irish Revival: four case studies', (Unpublished M.A. thesis, St. Patrick's College, Maynooth, 1987), has generally been paid slight attention, due to a combination of factors. There is, as I have pointed out, the difficulty of tracing old novels. There is also the ambiguous position which 'popular' literature, or fiction which does not fit into the category of literature proper, occupies. There is the tenuous grip which much of this type of literature seems to hold on the historical world of hard, cold facts.



The aim of this thesis is to examine historically Hannay's experiences while living in Ireland, and his accounts of those experiences, to provide some insights, through his writings, into contemporary Ireland and to explore Hannay's disenchantment with the issues and organisations he had passionately believed in, resulting, ultimately in his estrangement from Ireland.

I have examined his development from an Ulster Unionist background to being an ardent supporter of the Gaelic League and advocate of Home Rule, and have attempted to ascertain why it was that he, like, and yet essentially unlike, so many Irish Protestants, felt alienated in the Ireland which he observed in 1921, and decided to leave. His life and duty as a minister of the Church of Ireland, and later, the Church of England, was his true vocation. His writing never really took precedence over this vocation, with, perhaps, one exception in 1913 when he resigned his parish in Westport to embark upon a literary tour of America. However, shortly afterwards, he once more took up ministerial work, helping out the rector in Beaulieu, Hampshire, where he and his wife, Ada, had rented a house. His life as a Church of Ireland minister in Ireland during the last decade of the nineteenth century, and the first decade of the twentieth century is interesting and worth studying in its own right. In his capacity as a minister, he acted as a chaplain to the forces in France during the first

world war. He also worked as a minister of the Church of England in Germany and Hungary during the early twenties.

However, Rev. Canon James Owen Hannay, George A. Birmingham, is also an important figure in Irish history.

As I have pointed out, he was involved in the Gaelic League. He was its champion in the press. He defended its interests in lectures and private correspondence. He urged Irish Protestants to follow his example and become involved in the League's work. Regrettably, he was also held up as a victim of the League's sectarianism. He refused to accept this role. Rather, it becomes apparent, he was the victim of Roman Catholic power, and of his own creations, for it was two of his novels, *The Seething Pot*, and *Hyacinth*, which earned him the enmity of certain Catholic priests who expressed this enmity through the Gaelic League, the League not being strong enough, in the opinion of its leaders, to take a stand on Hannay's behalf against the Catholic Church. This betrayal by the League increased Hannay's determination to work for those organisations and issues, the League, the I.A.O.S., Home Rule, Sinn Féin, Women's suffrage, which provided a challenge and alternative to Roman Catholic power in Ireland which Hannay saw as essentially detrimental to the development of the country and his hopes for the reconciliation of classes

and creeds. Ultimately, however, it was not the Roman Catholic Church caused Hannay's disillusionment, alienation and exile. It was rather the development of extreme Nationalism, which found expression in opposition to the Allied cause during the war, the Rising in 1916, and the subsequent War of Independence. To these developments, Hannay made a valiant attempt to reconcile himself, but found that he was unable to. There were, however, other considerations which prompted him to leave, his bad health, diminishing parishoners, and the diocesan decision to amalgamate his parish with another larger one.

For all the reasons outlined, a study of Hannay's Irish experience makes for a worthwhile and interesting thesis. It is a study of Irish life, politics, and society through, firstly, Hannay's own experiences, and secondly, through the writings of an acclaimed contemporary observer and popular, and in later years, much beloved novelist. In the introduction to the 1973 edition of *The Search Party*, William Trevor recalled,

As a child in provincial Ireland, I lived within the reality of the Birmingham world, a reality that has since changed in many superficial ways. I remember Birmingham people: old Zeb Millar, a canon of the Church of Ireland who was said to eat only Fox's Glacier Mints, and Sergeant Beven down in the barracks trying to learn Irish, and young Ned Watson who used to swim miles out to sea, his red head bobbing on the waves....Ned Watson became a Church of Ireland curate: he could easily have been the adventuring cleric of *Spanish Gold*.

Rev. Canon James Owen Hannay, M.A. D.Litt, George A.  
Birmingham, clergyman, novelist, playwright, and public  
speaker, and above all, an Irishman.

Hannay thy worth betrays well whence thou'rt  
sprung,  
And that honoured name thou dost not wrong,  
As if from Sorbie's stock no branch could sprout,  
But should with ripening time bear golden fruit.  
Thy ancestors were ever worthy found,  
Else Galdus' grave had graces no Hannay's ground  
Thy father's father, Donald, was well knowne  
To th' English by his sword, but thou art showne  
To them by pen, (times changing) Hannays are  
Active in acts of worth be't peace or warre  
Goe on in vertue, aftertimes will tell.

Sonnet by John Marshall to his much respected friend  
Master Patrick Hannay, c.1624, (Hannay papers, T.C.D. MS  
3457 ph 92)

THE CHURCH MILITANT



## CHAPTER ONE

### ENDNOTES

1. George A. Birmingham, *Pleasant places* (London, 1934), p. 1.
2. Emrys Jones, *A social geography of Belfast* (London, 1965), pp 39-58.
3. Patrick Buckland, *Irish unionism 2 Ulster* (Dublin, 1973), p. xxvi.
4. *ibid.*, p. xxviii.
5. *ibid.*, p. xxviii.
6. *ibid.*, p. xxix.
7. Birmingham, *Pleasant places*, p. 1.
8. Family tree of the Hannay family of Kirkdale, (Hannay papers, T.C.D., MS 3457 ph 99)
9. Excerpt from the *Irish Times*, 7 Aug 1937, (Hannay papers, T.C.D., MS 3457 ph 97)
10. Birmingham, *Pleasant places*, p. 3.
11. *ibid.*, p. 9.
12. John Anderson, *History of the Belfast Library and Society for promoting knowledge, commonly known as the Linen Hall Library* (Belfast, 1888), p. 118.
13. Birmingham, *Pleasant places*, p. 15.
14. *ibid.*, p. 12.
15. *ibid.*, p. 1.
16. Ian Budge and Cornelius O'Leary (ed.), *Belfast: approach to crisis* (London, 1973), p. 75; hereafter cited as Budge and O'Leary.
17. *ibid.*, p. 75: for a detailed account of the riots see pp 75-97: Andrew Boyd gives 1835 as the date for the first sectarian riot, in *Holy war in Belfast* (Dublin, 1969), pp 9-10; hereafter cited as Boyd.
18. Budge and O'Leary, pp 78-9
19. Quoted in Budge and O'Leary, p. 79.
20. Boyd, p. 13.
21. Quoted in *ibid.*, p. 13.
22. Budge and O'Leary, pp 79-80
23. *ibid.*, p.81
24. *ibid.*, p.81
25. Birmingham, *Pleasant places*, p. 3.
26. *ibid.*, p. 8.
27. *ibid.*, p. 5.
28. *ibid.*, p. 17.
29. *ibid.*, p. 20.
30. Stanley J. Kunnitz and Howard Haycraft, (ed.) *Twentieth century authors, a biographical dictionary of modern literature* (New York, 1942) pp 611-12.
31. Birmingham, *Pleasant places*, pp 21-2.

32. *ibid.*, p. 23.
33. *ibid.*, pp 24-5; Dermod O'Brien, grandson of William O'Brien, Young Irelander.
34. Birmingham, *Pleasant places*, p. 28.
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37. Birmingham, *Pleasant places*, p. 35.
38. *ibid.*, p. 37.
39. *ibid.*, p. 37: His great grandfather was Owen Wynne, Hazlewood, Co. Sligo, MP; see Adrian Kelly, 'Owen and John Arthur Wynne' (Unpublished B.A. thesis, St. Patrick's College, Maynooth, 1990).
40. Birmingham, *Pleasant places* p. 39.
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43. R.B. McDowell and D.A. Webb, *Trinity College, Dublin 1592-1952: an academic history* (Cambridge, 1982), pp 324-5; hereafter cited as McDowell and Webb.
44. W. MacNeile Dixon, *Trinity College, Dublin* (London, 1902), pp 265-6.
45. McDowell and Webb, p. 331.
46. Birmingham, *Pleasant places*, p. 42.
47. *ibid.*, p. 43.
48. *ibid.*, p. 42.
49. McDowell and Webb, p. 285.
50. Birmingham, *Pleasant places*, p.41.
51. *ibid.*, p. 48.
52. *ibid.*, p. 55.
53. Canon J.J. Robinson, MA (1851-1916); educated at St Columba's College, and Trinity College, Dublin: Ordained in 1875, he spent some time in England before being appointed curate of St Matthias', Dublin, where Canon Wynne was rector: he was rector of Killiskey from 1884-88; he was appointed a Canon of Christ Church Cathedral, Dublin in 1886, the same year that he was editor of the Church of Ireland Parochial Magazine: he became rector of Delgany in 1888: see Rev. J.B. Leslie, 'Fasti of Christ Church Cathedral, Dublin' (R.C.B. library, MS 61/2/2) p. 128.
54. Birmingham, *Pleasant places*, p. 56.
55. *ibid.*, pp 57-8.
56. *ibid.*, p. 58.
57. *ibid.*, pp 58-9.
58. *ibid.*, pp 59-60.
59. Judith Flannery, *Between the mountains and the sea; the story of Delgany* (Select Vestry of Delgany parish, 1990), pp 41-6; hereafter cited as Flannery;

according to the Census returns of 1901 the population of the parish of Delgany was in total, 1985 persons; of these 1000 were Roman Catholic, and 854 were Protestant.

60. *ibid.*, p. 46.

61. *ibid.*, p. 46.

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64. *ibid.*, pp 61-2.

65. *ibid.*, p. 63.

66. *ibid.*, p. 65.

67. *ibid.*, pp 65-6.

68. *ibid.*, p. 68.

69. Quoted in Flannery, p. 109.

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71. *Wicklow Newsletter* 3 May 1890.

72. *ibid.*, 21 Sept 1889.

73. Birmingham, *Pleasant places*, p. 74.

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78. *Wicklow Newsletter* 21 Dec 1889.

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82. *Wicklow Newsletter* 5 Dec 1891.

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86. *ibid.*,

87. *ibid.*,

88. *ibid.*,

89. *ibid.*,

90. *ibid.*, 5 Dec 1891.

91. *ibid.*, 21 Nov 1891.

92. Flannery, p. 110; Flannery does not provide footnotes or endnotes.

93. Birmingham, *Pleasant places*, pp 178-9.

94. *ibid.*, p. 61.

95. Canon Robinson to Hannay, 1904, 1905, 1911, (Hannay papers, T.C.D., MS 3454 90, 220, Hannay papers, N.L.I. MS8271)).

96. Baptismal Record, 1890, (Church of Ireland Parochial Records, P.R.O.I. MS 75/1)



## CHAPTER TWO

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2. Alan John Megahey, 'The Irish Protestant churches and social and political issues, 1870-1914', (unpublished D.Phil. thesis, Queen's University, Belfast, 1969), p. 55; hereafter cited as Megahey.
3. Returns of Census of Ireland, 1901; total population of Westport, 12515; Roman Catholics, 11795; Protestants, 590.
4. George A. Birmingham, *Pleasant places*, p. 96.
5. Thomas Flynn, *Westports of the western world* (Westport, Ireland, 1987), p. 33.
6. *ibid.*, p. 36.
7. *ibid.*, p. 42.
8. Birmingham, *Pleasant places*, p. 97.
9. L.A.M. Priestly, 'George A. Birmingham: the Irish humourist', *Great Thoughts*, 1917.
10. Birmingham, *Pleasant places*, p. 80.
11. *ibid.*, p. 82.
12. *ibid.*, p. 109; see also R.B.D. French, 'J.O. Hannay and the Gaelic League', *Hermathena*, 102 (1966) p. 27; hereafter cited as French.
13. Birmingham, *Pleasant places*, p. 138.
14. Minute book of the Protestant Orphan Society, Westport, Co. Mayo, 1888-95 (R.C.B. library, MS 310)
15. Patton, p. 248; see also H.C.G. Moule, *The real presence : what it is not and what it is* (London, 1900), *Thoughts on the spiritual life* (London, 1899), *Brethern : chapters on pastoral life and work*, (London, 1892).
16. Birmingham, *Pleasant places*, p. 78.
17. *ibid.*, p. 152; Dom Cuthbert Butler to Hannay, 1903-04, (Hannay papers, T.C.D., MS 3454 80. 81, 83, 86, 98, 103, 106).
18. Birmingham, *Pleasant places*, p. 152.
19. Tom Ruttledge was the estate agent for George Moore, Moore Hall, Co. Mayo.
20. Birmingham, *Pleasant places* p. 84.
21. *ibid.*, pp 89-90.
22. 'Connor clergy succession list' Canon J.B. Leslie, (R.C.B. library, MS 61/2/3/1-2), 1, p. 201.
23. *Belfast Newsletter*, 21 Feb 1898.
24. McDowell and Webb, p. 550.
25. J.P. Mahaffy to Hannay, 24 Nov 1900 (Hannay papers, T.C.D., MS 3454 51); in fact Mahaffy wrote '1900-1', which was the wrong date, it should have been 1901-2.
26. *ibid.*, 1902 (T.C.D., MS 3454 71).
27. *ibid.*, 19 Feb 1903 (T.C.D., MS3454 75).

28. *Daily Chronicle*, 10 April 1903.
29. *Leigh Chronicle*, 1 Nov 1901.
30. *ibid.*,
31. *All Ireland Review*, 25 Oct 1902.
32. *ibid.*,
33. John Coolahan, *Irish education: its history and structure* (Dublin, 1981), p. 33; hereafter cited as Coolahan.
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35. *ibid.*, p. 32.
36. E. Brian Titley, *Church, State, and the control of schooling in Ireland, 1900-44* (Canada, 1983), p. 17; hereafter cited as Titley.
37. *ibid.*, p. 18.
38. *All Ireland Review* 21 Nov 1903.
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40. Titley, p. 23.
41. *ibid.*, p. 8.
42. *ibid.*, p. 13, quoting L. Paul-Dubois, *Contemporary Ireland* (trans. T.M. Kettle) (Dublin, 1908), p. 502; hereafter cited as Dubois.
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48. *ibid.*,
49. *ibid.*, pp 67-8.
50. *ibid.*, pp 66-7.
51. *Church of Ireland Gazette* 19 Aug 1904, although Hannay does not state which diocese he is referring to, it is assumed that it is his own diocese, Tuam.
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53. *ibid.*,
54. Megahey, p. 55.
55. Birmingham, *Pleasant places*, p. 158.
56. *ibid.*, p. 159.
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58. T. Sackville Martin to Hannay, 7 Mar 1905 (Hannay papers, T.C.D., MS 3454 174).
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61. Birmingham, *Pleasant places*, p. 159.
62. Diary of Ada Hannay, 3 Mar 1905 (T.C.D., MS 9234).
63. George A. Birmingham, *The Seething Pot* (London, 1905), pp 1-2.
64. *ibid.*, pp 9-10.
65. Therese Law, 'The fiction of George A. Birmingham' (unpublished D. Phil. thesis, University of Dublin, 1966), p. 20; hereafter cited as Law.

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70. *ibid.*,
71. *ibid.*,
72. *Uladh*, April 1905.
73. *Morning Leader*, 4 April 1905.
74. Birmingham, *Pleasant places*, p. 160.
75. Rolleston, p. 37; a reprint of a letter that C.H. Rolleston received from Hannay while writing his father's biography.
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90. T. Sackville Martin to Hannay, 7 Mar 1905 (Hannay papers, T.C.D., MS 3454 174).
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93. Birmingham, *Pleasant places*, p. 162.
94. *Law*, p. 37.

## CHAPTER THREE

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5. Roy Foster, *Modern Ireland 1600-1972* (London, 1988), p. 431; hereafter cited as Foster.
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7. R.V. Comerford, 'Nationalism and the Irish language' in Thomas E. Hachey, Lawrence J. McCaffrey, (ed.), *Perspectives on Irish Nationalism* (United States, 1989), p.18; hereafter cited as Comerford; see also John Hutchinson, *The dynamics of cultural nationalism* (London, 1987); hereafter cited as Hutchinson.
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23. Boylan, p. 294.
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32. For examples of conflicting opinions see the following; Foster, p. 448; Dunleavys, p. 10; Boyce, pp 126-7; Lyons, *Culture and anarchy*, p. 42; Hutchinson, p. 163.
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47. Cleary, p. 401.
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62. *ibid.*,
63. *ibid.*,
64. *ibid.*,
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67. *ibid.*, p. 182.
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74. *ibid.*,
75. *ibid.*,
76. *ibid.*,
77. Hyde to Hannay, 26 May 1904, (Hannay papers, T.C.D. MS 3454 112).
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80. *ibid.*, p. 184.
81. *ibid.*,
82. *Church of Ireland Gazette*, 3 June 1904.
83. *ibid.*,
84. *ibid.*, 20 May 1904.
85. *ibid.*,
86. *ibid.*,
87. *ibid.*, 3 June 1904.
88. *Kilkenny Journal*, 27 Aug 1902, quoted in Comerford, p. 30.
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91. *Church of Ireland Gazette*, 17 June 1904.
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93. *Church of Ireland Gazette*, 17 June 1904.
94. French, p. 31.
95. Birmingham, *Pleasant places*, p. 183.

96. Quoted in Diarmuid Coffey, *Douglas Hyde* (Dublin, 1938), p. 52.
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99. *ibid.*, 24 June 1904.
100. *ibid.*, by the term 'independence' it is assumed he is speaking in the religious sense not the political sense.
101. *ibid.*, 1 July 1904.
102. *ibid.*,
103. *ibid.*, 8 July 1904; see Hyde to Hannay, 26 May 1904. (Hannay papers, T.C.D. MS 3454 112).
104. *Church of Ireland Gazette*, 8 July 1904.
105. *ibid.*, 15 July 1904.
106. *ibid.*,
107. *ibid.*, 22 July 1904.
108. *ibid.*,
109. *ibid.*,
110. *ibid.*,
111. Hyde to Hannay, ? Oct 1904, (Hannay papers, T.C.D. MS 3454 133); French sees the controversy in the pages of the *Gazette* as attacks upon Hyde at the hands of Mr Graham. This is, I feel, too strong a term.
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114. French, p. 31.
115. Hyde to Hannay, ? Oct 1904, (Hannay papers, T.C.D. MS 3454 134).
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130. Birmingham, *Pleasant places*, p.184.

131. *Irish Peasant*, 9 June 1904.
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136. Hyde to Hannay, 17 Dec 1904, (Hannay papers, T.C.D. MS 3454 156).
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168. Hickey & Doherty, p. 103.



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171. *ibid.*,
172. Hannay to Hyde, ? May 1905, (Hyde papers, N.L.I. MS 18252)
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