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THE LIFE AND TIMES OF THOMAS KETTLE

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THE LIFE AND TIMES OF THOMAS KETTLE

Ph.D. Dissertation
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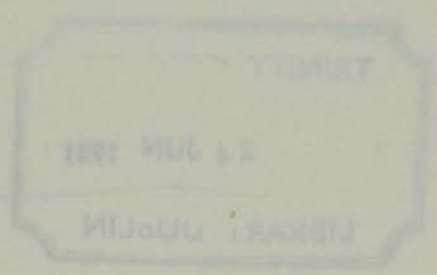
Richard S. Sutherland

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or any other university. It is entirely my own work.

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Richard S. Sutherland

March 31, 1980

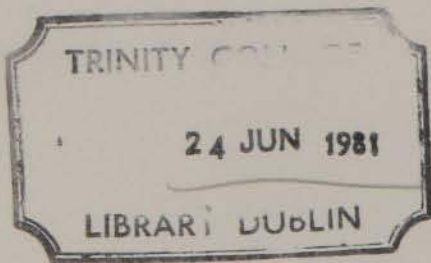


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Richard S. Richardson

Richard S. Richardson

March 21, 1980



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The Life and Times of Thomas Kettle

Doctoral Thesis by Richard S. Sutherland

Thomas Michael Kettle (1880-1916) has always been an enigmatic figure in the history of early twentieth-century Ireland. Today he is half forgotten, but in the works of historians of his times, Kettle has established a tenacious, if shadowy existence. This is due in part to his personality and his gift for friendship, both of which were remarkable enough for him to have featured in numerous volumes of reminiscence by his contemporaries. Kettle's is also an unavoidable presence for the historian because of the position he took regarding the First World War. He is considered the symbol of and spokesman for that - by historians neglected - majority of Irish Nationalists in arms in 1916 fighting in the British army against Germany.

There is a more significant reason for studying Kettle's life and interaction with his times in detail. For Kettle, Irish Nationalism provided the experience by which he opened himself to the larger moral issues of human existence. For many of his contemporaries, Irish Nationalism became a means of blinding themselves to such questions.

Kettle was born in Artane, North County Dublin, the third son of Andrew J. Kettle, one of Parnell's most devoted followers and a founder and principal organiser of the Land League. At University College, Dublin, Kettle was one of the most brilliant of a brilliant generation of students. He was called to the Irish Bar in 1905 but the profession had little appeal to him. As editor of the Nationist, author of the Philosophy of politics and first president of the Young Ireland Branch of the United Irish League, he demonstrated a natural aptitude for the political life. He entered parliament in 1906 after a hard fought by-election as MP for East Tyrone. A gruelling tour of America in 1906, a distaste for the internal politics of the United Irish League, financial hardship and emotional difficulties contributed to his decision to resign. In 1910 he became first professor of National Economics at University College Dublin. He played a prominent role in the Dublin lock out of 1913 as chairman of the Industrial Peace Committee and in 1914 was on the Provisional Committee of the Irish Volunteers. In Belgium on an arms smuggling mission in 1914 for John Redmond, he witnessed the German invasion that commenced the First World War. Appalled at what he had seen, he returned to Ireland and flung himself into the recruiting campaign for the Allied cause.

In September 1916, he was killed at Ginchy in the battle of the Somme.

CONTENTS

CHAPTER ONE The making of a Nationalist	
1. <u>Kettle's family background and childhood</u>	1
2. <u>Kettle at University College, Dublin</u>	11
CHAPTER TWO A radical young man	
1. <u>Introduction</u>	56
2. <u>The Nationist</u>	58
3. <u>The Philosophy of Politics</u>	78
CHAPTER THREE The apprentice politician	
1. <u>Introduction</u>	100
2. <u>The East Tyrone by-election</u>	103
CHAPTER FOUR The strange ailments of Irish America	
1. <u>The Background</u>	134
2. <u>Kettle's American tour</u>	142
CHAPTER FIVE The practice of politics	
1. <u>Kettle at Westminster</u>	177
2. <u>Kettle and the United Irish League</u>	204
3. <u>Kettle's resignation from parliament</u>	224
CHAPTER SIX An activist academic	
1. <u>Kettle as economist</u>	242
2. <u>Kettle as teacher</u>	251
3. <u>Kettle's private life and unhappy state of mind</u>	257
4. <u>Kettle and the Dublin Lock-out of 1913</u>	266
5. <u>Kettle and the Irish Volunteers 1913-14</u>	278
CHAPTER SEVEN The last crusade	
1. <u>Kettle's attitude to the outbreak of the First World War</u>	294
2. <u>Kettle and the recruiting campaign in Ireland</u>	301
3. <u>Kettle and the Easter Rising</u>	308
4. <u>The last crusade</u>	312
BIBLIOGRAPHY	

1. Kettle's family background and childhood.

Thomas Michael Kettle was born on the night of February 1860 in Ardena, County Dublin. He was the third son of Andrew J. Kettle and his wife,

Margaret. Kettle's family tree had deep and tenacious roots in the fertile, agreeable countryside to the north of Dublin between the Liffey and the Boyne.

CHAPTER ONE

The making of a Nationalist

When, as frequently happens, the escarpment of the Wicklow Hills to the south-west blotted out by mist, the inspiration of this flat, yellow, foggy

landscape appears Dutch or East Anglian rather than Irish. There had been Kettles in North County Dublin for as long as anybody could remember. The

census of 1836 registered four generations of Kettles residing in the local farmhouse at Swords, ranging from the infant Andrew J. Kettle to his 30-year

old great-grandfather, Thomas. Dr. Sigerson, the eminent Dublin folklorist and Irish scholar, assured Andrew J. Kettle that the name was Viking in origin

and that the first Kettles came to Ireland from Denmark. There was also a tradition that said that the Kettles came originally from the adjacent

counties of Ireland and that the name was a corruption of O'Keathley. However, over the truth of the matter, Tom Kettle opted for the picturesque account

of the adventures of his clan, informing Oliver St John Gogarty that 'When we came up out of the sea along the Black Beach, we were all before us. We were it with our kettle ears. We have been in the neighbourhood ever since

Photographs of Kettle show him to have been a most unlikely Scandinavian with a long, Celtic head and broad, deep sunk eyes set in a face of that

starkly resplendent pallor so characteristic of the darker type of Irish

Oliver St John Gogarty, 'Thomas M. Kettle', script for a radio talk, Kettle papers.

1. Kettle's family background and childhood.

Thomas Michael Kettle was born on the ninth of February 1880 at Artane in County Dublin. He was the third son of Andrew J. Kettle and his wife, Margaret. Kettle's family tree had deep and tenacious roots in the fertile, agreeable countryside to the North of Dublin between the Liffey and the Boyne, an area of rolling, coastal plain merging almost imperceptibly into the sea. When, as frequently happens, the escarpment of the Wicklow Hills to the South West ^{is} blotted out by mist, the inspiration of this flat, mellow, foggy landscape appears Dutch or East Anglian rather than Irish. There had been Kettles in North County Dublin for as long as anybody could remember. The census of 1836 registered four generations of Kettles residing in the family farmhouse at Swords, ranging from the infant Andrew J. Kettle to his 96-year old great-grandfather, Thomas. Dr. Sigerson, the eminent Dublin folklorist and Irish scholar, assured Andrew J. Kettle that the name was Viking in origin and that the first Kettles came to Ireland from Denmark. There was also a tradition that said that the Kettles came originally from the midland counties of Ireland and that the name was a corruption of O'Keathley. Whatever the truth of the matter, Tom Kettle opted for the picturesque account of the antecedents of his clan, informing Oliver St. John Gogarty that 'When we came up out of the sea along the Black Beach, we won all before us. We won it with our battle axes. We have been in the neighbourhood ever since.'¹

Photographs of Kettle show him to have been a most unlikely Scandinavian, with a long, Celtic head and brooding deep sunk eyes set in a face of that startlingly translucent pallor so characteristic of the darker type of Irish-

¹Oliver St. John Gogarty, 'Thomas M. Kettle', script for a radio talk, Kettle papers.

man. The 'Black Beach' to which Kettle referred was a strand to the north of the city of Dublin, Baldoyle, or in the Irish language, Baile dhu Gall, the settlement of the dark strangers. Gogarty assumed, with Kettle, that the name referred to the Danes who, it was believed, were darker in complexion than Norwegian Vikings. At any rate, Kettle showed from an early age an awareness of the mixed origins of the Irish nation and a feeling for the historical dynamic behind its formation. He also stood in a certain proprietary relationship to the city of Dublin, a scant twenty miles or so from the Kettle home, and discernible as a bluish grey reek of chimney smoke against the southern skyline. Dublin, although transformed during the eighteenth century into a city of gracious Georgian squares, owed its origins to the Viking sea kings who had come ashore in 852 and amongst whom Kettle liked to number his ancestors.

Andrew J. Kettle had extensive agricultural interests in North County Dublin. Through his wife, Margaret, née McCourt, the daughter of an agricultural produce factor, he acquired the farm of Newtown, St. Margaret's. He was also the tenant of three holdings at Kilmore, Artane, where Tom was born. But the family home was the farmhouse of Millview, set beneath Feltrim Hill which rises gently to an eminence of 190 ft., two or three miles to the south west of the seaside town of Malahide. Malahide set in a flat unspectacular coastline affords easy access to some of the finest links in Ireland and the young Kettle grew up an enthusiastic golfer. The area was also, thanks to its excellent rail service, home to a prosperous community of businessmen and members of the professional classes who commuted from their seaside villas to offices in Dublin. It was doubtless due to his friendships amongst this largely Anglo-Irish circle that Tom Kettle was initiated into the mysteries of the thoroughly un-Irish game of cricket and retained for the rest of his life his connection with the Malahide club.

The Kettle home at Millview was a rambling structure, actually two houses knocked into one, set in ten acres of farmland. A.J. Kettle was one of the first farmers in County Dublin to bring an application for a rent reduction against his landlord to the Land Courts set up under Gladstone's Act of 1881. Lord Talbot de Malahide, from whom A.J. Kettle rented, was determined to make a fight of what was largely regarded as a test case. He claimed that Millview was a gentleman's residence with just enough land for such a residence and so did not fall within the scope of the Act. A.J. Kettle claimed that the house was necessarily large because his family was numerous - There were five sons and six daughters - and he won his case when Lord Talbot's land surveyor admitted that the house was 'a dilapidated old structure'.² Nevertheless, from the photograph reproduced in A.J. Kettle's posthumously published memoirs, The material for victory, Millview farm house appears to have been a pleasant dwelling place filled with character and charm, a residence that any gentleman would have been pleased to own.

Andrew J. Kettle was a hard man, of imposing physical presence and stern moral demeanour. He was idolised by his son, as Padraic Colum the poet, who became a friend of Tom Kettle's when the latter was a student at the King's Inns, recalled:

'He was a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night to the farmers of the County Dublin,' Tom said, when speaking proudly of his father. Afterwards when I met this sombre old father, I thought the smouldering and flaming image appropriate. He had little leniency in him, however. When the brilliant results of his examinations were shown him he said to Tom, 'You haven't done well in arithmetic' - or something.³

²Laurence J. Kettle, 'Biographical note', in A.J. Kettle, The material for victory (Dublin 1958), p. XII.

³Padraic Colum, 'Tom Kettle: a memory', in Dublin Magazine, July-Sept. 1949, pp. 29-30.

His father was young Tom Kettle's first teacher in Irish history imparting to his son a lively sense of the role of the Kettle family in Ireland's struggle for national self determination. Andrew J. Kettle's maternal grandmother, an O'Brien from Turvey, North County Dublin, had belonged to a family who maintained a staging post on the main road to Dublin which was used to conceal guns and pikes for the Rising of '98. His maternal grandfather, a Kavanagh from Swords, had commanded the United Irishmen in that area and had spent time in jail after the failure of the Rising. On the paternal side of the family his grandfather, another Andrew Kettle, was a noted athlete and senachie who instructed his young namesake in practical farming and introduced him to the plays of William Shakespeare. Although the worst ravages of the famine of 1846 passed North County Dublin by, Andrew J. Kettle retained vivid memories of his mother rescuing his cousins from the poorhouse and distributing food she could ill spare to destitute women and children. Thus, Tom Kettle from an early age became almost unconsciously an initiate in the history of Irish Nationalism, a history infused into the countryside of his childhood and to which he was attached by ties of family and tradition.

Tom Kettle, it might be said, imbibed politics in the cradle. His childhood was spent amidst the reverberations of the great events of the 70s and 80s, in which his father played a considerable part. The incarnation of Fintan Lalor's belief that Irish independence could be won only by making farmers independent of their landlords, Andrew J. Kettle typified the agrarian radicalism that was the backbone of the renewed Nationalist agitation of the 1880s. His political base was amongst the tillage farmers of County Dublin, who, threatened by the decline in cereal prices and the consequent shift to pasturage farming that characterised the Irish agricultural economy in this period, had begun to band themselves

into Tenants' Defence Associations. Andrew J. Kettle entered public life by joining, in 1868, the committee of Isaac Butt's Tenant League, a precursor^{or} of the Home Government Association, and he claimed to have been successful in winning Butt's endorsement of the three Fs. The confluence of agrarian and Nationalist agitation was accelerated by the Ballot Act of 1872 which introduced secret voting and Kettle, as honorary secretary of the County Dublin Tenants' Association, was instrumental in securing Parnell's nomination as Home Rule League candidate in the general election of 1874. Although Parnell lost this contest, it marked the beginning of a life-long political association between the two men. The onset of serious agricultural distress in 1879 saw Andrew J. Kettle attempting to organise a rent strike in County Dublin and his growing reputation as a leader of the Tenant Right issue led to his being asked by Parnell and Davitt to chair the meeting that inaugurated the Irish National Land League.

Andrew J. Kettle was an independently minded but loyal follower of Parnell. It might be said that his understanding of politics began and ended with Parnell, with the militant, uncompromising Parnell of the pre-Kilmainham period. Certainly Kettle always disparaged politics that were merely parliamentary and not rooted in agitation in Ireland, and he paid the penalty for this attitude by never being fully taken into the confidence of the party leaders. At the crucial juncture of the parliamentary party's fortunes in 1881, Kettle proposed bringing the party back to Ireland to launch a no-rent campaign and to fight coercion, and afterwards he always believed that the party's failure to implement this 'Sinn Fein' policy meant that it never again regained the initiative. It was perhaps naive of him to believe that the parliamentary party could ever have acted with the unanimity to make such a policy effective. Kettle was an unsuccessful candidate for Cork County in the general election of 1880 where he found

himself, not for the last time, up against strong clerical opposition. He was imprisoned with Parnell in Kilmainham in 1881 and his active political career virtually ended when, ten years later, loyal to the end to his chief, he was the unsuccessful Parnellite candidate in the Carlow by-election.

Andrew J. Kettle was an indifferent public speaker; in discussions on matters that did not touch in the land issue he was acutely aware of his defective education; in spite of his having stood in two by-elections to oblige Parnell, with a numerous family to support, he never really could have afforded to have become a fulltime politician. He preferred to do his political work behind the scenes, to work through other men. Therefore politics did not impinge directly on the Kettle children beyond, as Laurence Kettle remembered, 'The occasional visits of political personages to dine in our house, and the turn-out of the local band to play in front of our hall door'.⁴

Politics, nevertheless, exerted a powerful indirect influence, subtly pervading the Kettle household in that family attitudes, the household ethos, was moulded by the events of the 70s and 80s. Like most Parnellite families, the Kettles were devoutly Catholic but sceptical about the role of the Church in political matters. The struggle for the Irish land had been the consuming passion of Andrew J. Kettle's political life and his interest in the practical economics of improved agricultural yields was reflected in the eagerness with which he acquired new and, to his children, fascinating, pieces of agricultural machinery. A quite scathing contempt for the sheer inefficiency of the British administration of Ireland was combined with a hard-headed practicality about taking advantage of any concessions that could be won. These attitudes of Andrew J. Kettle were typical of the moderately well-off tillage farmers who had benefited most from the agrarian struggle. Andrew J. Kettle belonged to

⁴Laurence J. Kettle, 'Biographical note', in A.J. Kettle, The material for victory (Dublin 1958), p. XVIII.

the generation of Irish Nationalists for whom the traumatic events of the 1840s in Ireland - starvation, evictions, and rack renting - were still a living memory and who by their own determined efforts had attained a modicum of security and even of prosperity. For the Kettle children it was a duty to get on in the world, to consolidate this achievement by education, to work towards the day when landlordism and alien rule would be extinct. It is significant and appropriate that Andrew J. Kettle was much given to quoting the poetry of Burns.

There is no evidence that Tom Kettle ever met Parnell, but he was the recipient of Andrew J. Kettle's reminiscences and thus acquired much inside knowledge about the great man's personal idiosyncracies. A close friend of Kettle's at University College remembered that he seemed 'consciously or unconsciously to model himself on Parnell,'⁵ and that he frequently referred to a book he would someday write, 'an impressionist study of the Chief'.⁶ 'Impressionist' would appear to be the mot juste for this projected enterprise as Kettle was given to reproducing some of Parnell's eccentricities in his own life, which startled his colleagues on the Nationist magazine.

He may not have been really superstitious but he certainly liked to affect that pose. When the Nationist was being started, Kettle and one or two more were working together one night in a room imperfectly illuminated by candles. Suddenly Kettle exclaimed, "My God, there are three candles lighting," and, springing up despite all remonstrance he blew out one of them, thus considerably enhancing the gloom - and incidentally the difficulties of bringing out the first issue.⁷

The most vivid recollection of Kettle in childhood comes from Oliver St John Gogarty who remembered him as a schoolboy of eight or nine years of age at the Christian Brothers' school Dublin's North Richmond Street,

⁵Willie Dawson, 'Kettle memorabilia', Kettle papers.

⁶Ibid.

⁷Ibid.

He came...in what was called a governess trap, that is, a little open carriage with seats on which two could sit on each side facing each other. It had a little door at the back...I can see him moving restlessly before the trap stopped. He was dressed in dark grey, in the short trousers of the school-boy with three buttons at the end of the leg on each side. He moved about, not to gather his satchel or his books, but because his energy kept him restless. He would not ^ahil you though his eyes looked here and there. It was as if he had things in his mind that were beyond school. I don't remember seeing him in the playground at lunch time; and I saw him only once or twice when he was called for to be driven home. He was the only one who came to school in a trap because, for the most part, the school taught the sons of working men. It was the best primary education available in Dublin at the time. My father knew this, and so did Andy Kettle, the father of Tom.⁸

Gogarty saw little of Kettle at North Richmond Street for he was two years Kettle's senior and in a higher grade. In 1894, Kettle entered Clongowes Wood College, the Jesuit school at Sallins, County Kildare. Again Gogarty was on hand to record his impression of Kettle.

Occasionally we met in the bicycle shed. Tom had a bicycle and that made him so envied that we, the 'have nots', played cruel tricks with it when his back was turned. I regret to this day my part in that mean business. Tom's eldest brother, Andy, was a well-known and successful racing cyclist. With this example before him Tom became our authority on cycle racing. His enthusiasm and his power of expression which was noticeable even in his boyhood, infected me for one with ambition to shine as a racing cyclist. Round the sports ground went a cinder track. On this Tom could be seen speeding or 'scorching' along with his long arms bent at the elbows and his long legs pushing power into the pedals. Round and round he went. He must have been granted a dispensation from the compulsory games of football because, now that I am bringing our boyhood back to mind, I do not remember him running on the football field. What comes up under my eyelids is the moving picture of him, a grey clad figure bent over the handle bars and his brown face bright with exercise and the glow in his great, dark eyes that could light a room.⁹

⁸Oliver St John Gogarty, 'Thomas M. Kettle', script for a radio talk, Kettle papers.

The curious personal magnetism that made Kettle a centre of attraction throughout his life was already in evidence at Clongowes.

Here it is fitting to give an account of him in his boyhood when he was between fourteen and fifteen years of age. In stature he was as big as the general run of the boys; but his limbs were longer and better shaped than most. Under a low, broad forehead which a lock of black hair made lower, those dark, kind eyes of his in which there was always a playful smile made his a remarkable face. I did not know then that I was looking as surely at the eyes of genius as if I were looking into the eyes of Robbie Burns...His were the genial glow, the warm heart and the courageous, liberal and chainless soul...Though I was two years older, I took to imitating him. His honesty and enthusiasm could influence anyone.¹⁰

J.J. Horgan, who was a contemporary at Clongowes, was struck by Kettle's characteristic facility for 'grasping a complicated subject and condensing it in a happy phrase',¹¹ and noted that 'he was always ready to take issue on behalf of a good cause.'¹² It was at the Clongowes debating society that Kettle first showed his talent for oratory. Arthur Clery, another Clongowes friend, retained a vivid memory of Kettle getting into hot water over a speech he made in one of those schoolboy debates. 'He maintained that the man who died on the battlefield died better than the man who died in his bed with the consolation of religion. In those days the sentiment caused a sensation, and he found it necessary to make a recantation.'¹³ One decision Kettle made at

¹⁰ Oliver St John Gogarty, 'Thomas M. Kettle', script for a radio talk, Kettle papers.

¹¹ J.J. Horgan, Parnell to Pearse (Dublin 1948), pp. 201-2.

¹² Ibid., p. 202.

¹³ Arthur Clery, 'Thomas Kettle' in Dublin essays (Dublin 1919), p. 7.

Clongowes was to have an important bearing upon his future intellectual development. He became one of the few boys in the school who substituted for Latin or Greek the study of German. This, in conjunction with his mastery of French, provided him with the skills basic to his future extensive explorations in European literature. His Jesuit schoolmasters also considered him to be an extremely promising young mathematician. In 1896, Kettle took first place in all Ireland in the senior grade of the Intermediate Examinations.

2 Kettle at University College, Dublin

University College, Dublin, in 1897 when Kettle commenced his studies there, was graciously, if inadequately, housed at Nos. 85 and 86 St Stephen's Green. No. 86, with its imposing Grecian portico and luscious plasterwork ceilings, had been the home of the notorious eighteenth-century rakehell, Buck Whaley. This colourful profligate was famous for having won a wager of £20,000 by travelling to Jerusalem and back again within a year to play a game of handball against the Wailing Wall. The Buck's father, Richard Chapel Whaley, had resided at No. 85 St Stephen's Green and had built No. 86 to provide himself with an even more imposing home. Richard Whaley was popularly believed to have extorted his fortune by vigorous resource to the Penal Laws and was known in Dublin by ^{the} unflattering sobriquet, 'Burnt Chapel' Whaley. Tradition maintained that 'Burnt Chapel' had sworn a terrible oath that no Catholic priest would ever darken the door of his house. The presence of the Jesuit teaching fathers in these two opulent Georgian town houses was rich in historical irony and symbolic of the expropriation of power from one declining Irish elite by another, doggedly rising.

The role of University College in Irish national life was thoroughly ambiguous and its curious status as a centre of higher learning provided its students with abundant evidence of the half-finished business of Ireland's struggle for self-government. On the college at St Stephen's Green were centered the hopes of Catholic, Nationalist

Ireland of a university of its own, for its own. The protracted failure of University College to secure from the state either a direct financial endowment or recognition of the degrees its administration would have liked to award meant that the circumstances of undergraduate life there were at once physically and mentally cramped. The main role of the Jesuits was to prepare their students to take the degree examinations of the Royal University. The Royal University was a compromise born of the protracted conflict between the mainly Presbyterian advocates of non-denominational higher education in Ireland and the Catholic adherents of the denominational principle. When Kettle entered University College, this apparently intractable dispute had been going on for forty-three years, reflecting faithfully both the cultural gulf separating Ireland and England, and, more ominously, the political and sectarian divisions within Ireland.

The abyss between British and Irish aspirations on the matter of higher education was a significant illustration of the basic Nationalist contention about the uniqueness of the Irish way of life and the hopelessness of British attempts to impose their norms of government upon the Irish nation. The guiding principle of successive British governments on the issue of higher education had been that the state should not provide financial support for the denominational teaching of the laity. The insistence of the Catholic hierarchy in Ireland that it should have a decisive say in higher education and the willingness of the Irish Catholic laity to be guided by the clergy in this matter spoke volumes about the underlying assumptions of Irish Nationalism. In so far as the Catholic Church was the embodiment of the single

greatest qualitative distinction between the Irish way of life and that of Ireland's British neighbours, the right claimed by the Church to exercise a decisive influence on behalf of the nation in educational matters was not likely to be seriously challenged by any substantial body of Irish Nationalist opinion. To the extent that the struggle over higher education appeared to be the struggle between two civilisations, Irish and British, then Irish Nationalists would side loyally with the Catholic Church. Although few, if any, of the students at University College would have been interested in following in detail the labyrinthine complications of the Irish university question, by opting to study there they felt that they were affirming Nationalist Ireland's continuing commitment to a distinctively Irish solution to a distinctively Irish problem.

It was a matter of some pride to its students that University College had its origins in Newman's Catholic University. This nobly intended but ill fated foundation had been established in St Stephen's Green in 1845 as the Catholic hierarchy's answer to Sir Robert Peel's non-denominational Queen's Colleges. The Catholic University, financially unendowed and its degrees unrecognised, declined rapidly and Newman resigned as rector in 1858. The saintly and intellectual author of The idea of a University was, anyway, a rare avis amongst the robustly Philistine clerical politicians of the mid-nineteenth century Irish Catholic Church. His ideas had not fallen however upon entirely barren ground. The Jesuits, most cosmopolitan of Catholic educators, took over the college in 1883. As far as they were able, under the conditions imposed upon them by the requirements of the Royal University, the Jesuits kept faith with Newman's ideal by encouraging their students

to embrace the material world in the spirit of enlightened, modern Catholicism. This sense of a European, progressive dimension to Catholicism was inherently attractive to Kettle. When, in later life, he had to define the type of university that he sought for the Catholics of Ireland, Kettle held up as an ideal the great continental universities of Strasbourgh and Louvain, where Catholic scholars had extended the frontiers of science and philosophy.

Despite the best efforts of the Jesuits, University College was a wretched compromise when measured against these lofty ideals. Kettle and his contemporaries amongst the minority of students who combined intellectual gifts with a patriotic historical and social consciousness experienced a lively sense of frustration when they considered the inadequacy of their university education. Under the Royal University system, the college in St Stephen's Green had many of the worst characteristics of a cramming school. The finances of University College were dependent upon the revenue brought in by teaching fellowships offered by the Royal University. The Jesuits had secured fifteen of these twenty-nine fellowships, giving University College a revenue of £4,500 per annum. Beyond that sum, the college had no endowment of any kind. '...no provision for buildings or equipment; for rent, taxes or maintenance; for salaries for the president and other executive officers, for scholarships, exhibitions and prizes'.¹ This system of endowment of Catholic higher education by the back door reinforced the Jesuits' determination to extract brilliant performances from their students in the degree examinations to justify the claim for a Catholic university. Students trained by the Jesuits had always demonstrated a

¹William Delany, S.J., Irish university education, a plea for fair play (Dublin 1904), p.9.

remarkable facility for passing examinations. To win a scholarship or a fellowship was all too often the only way a bright young Irishman could finance his education and the Jesuits imparted the necessary skills with thoroughness. As the students of University College were already the cream of the Intermediate system, it is not surprising that within the structure of the Royal University, they made a brilliant showing. By 1904, University College, besides consistently outperforming rival colleges in the academic honours lists, had won the only two studentships ever awarded by the Royal in biological science, the only two gold medals ever awarded for Latin verse, and four of the six medals for English prose composition. It seems reasonable to surmise that Kettle, who had demonstrated in the Intermediate that he could pass examinations with ease, found himself bored by the sterility of these academic exercises.

Certainly Kettle's university career was not made notable by any demonstration of formal academic brilliance. According to Arthur Clery, 'As the result of bad health and bad management in choosing courses he failed to repeat the academic distinction of his schooldays.'² In 1901 he was awarded an undistinguished B.A., in mathematics and philosophy. James Joyce, the most brilliant Irishman of his generation, who entered the college in 1898 and graduated in 1902, likewise did 'well enough to pass, but had not bothered to excel'.³ Patrick Little, one of Kettle's circle of friends, remembered that 'we felt the atmosphere of the College was like that of a cramming institution nearby, so we contemned, to our subsequent cost, exams.'⁴ Little expressed a wide-

² Arthur Clery, 'Thomas Kettle' in Dublin essays (Dublin 1919) p. 7.

³ Richard Ellman, James Joyce (London 1959), p. 98.

⁴ Patrick Little in James Meenan (ed.), Centenary history of the literary and historical society of University College, Dublin (Tralee 1955), p.92.

spread feeling of frustration amongst his generation of students.

I came to University College in 1903...Newman's Idea of a University had been on the Senior Intermediate course in our time and had a revolutionary effect on us...We knew very well that by coming to University College we were making a big sacrifice where Trinity had such prestige and the common life of a residential university. It intensified our national feelings, although none of us were very ardent Gaelic Leaguers, yet the language movement and the weekly journal, the Leader reinforced our thinking.⁵

Despite its cramming-school atmosphere, University College began to demonstrate in the 1890s that its students were at least the equals in intelligence and originality of their contemporaries at the more academically illustrious Trinity College. The composition of the student body reflected the advances made by the predominantly Catholic Irish Nationalism that was now consolidating the gains made in the agrarian and political struggle of the 1880s. In 1898, local government in Ireland was placed on a representative basis and the new administrative elite thus created had a keen appreciation of the virtues of higher education for their sons and daughters. A former student recalled that, 'Thereafter the college began to be peopled with students whose fathers had assumed the administration of county, burgh and regional affairs.'⁶ The students of Kettle's generation looked forward with confidence to playing important roles in the administration of the new Ireland to be created when, as seemed inevitable, Irish Home Rule would finally be established. The 200 or so students of University College had, not surprisingly, a sense of their own importance in the continuing struggle for national autonomy and the very drawbacks of life in University College acted as a stimulus to originality.

⁵Ibid., p.90

⁶W.G. Fallon in Meenan (ed.), Centenary history, p.95.

Newman, the putative founder of University College, had laid considerable emphasis on the informal aspects of university education - education by debate, by conversation, by random reading, by exposure to current ideas.

When a multitude of young men, keen, open-hearted, sympathetic and observant as young men are, come together and freely mix with each other, they are sure to learn from one another, even if there be no one to teach them; the conversation of all is a series of lectures to each, and they gain from themselves new ideas and views, fresh matter of thought, and distinct principles for judging and acting day by day.

Newman's insight was amply confirmed in the non-academic activities of the students debouching out of the cramped, book-lined corridors of No. 86 into the park on the Green or idling around the steps of the National Library in Kildare Street, the reading room of which functioned as an unofficial annexe of the college. The chief vehicle for the regeneration of undergraduate life was the college literary and historical society. This debating society, a feature of Newman's university, had been allowed to lapse during the politically traumatic events of the Parnell split. Irish politics seemed to be invariably in a sensitive condition and Newman himself had imposed an embargo on the discussion of contemporary political issues. This restriction, carried over into the revived literary and historical society, was much honoured in the breach by the student debaters. Indeed it would have been impossible to prevent current political events from impinging upon the life of the undergraduates for, University College, with its very limited facilities, was above all a Dubliner's university and Dublin

⁷Newman, 'Idea of a university', (Discourse VI) in Kevin Sullivan, Joyce among the Jesuits (New York 1958), p. 148.

Students had no desire to be cut off from their politically vital city. One of Kettle's friends remembered with nostalgia the pleasures of friendship and intellectual stimulation offered by the shabbily gracious Hibernian metropolis of the 1890s.

The boundaries of the city of Dublin were then the Royal and Grand canals. The vast majority of students lived inside these boundaries, within easy walking distance of the College. Only two tramlines were electrified. The motoring age had not arrived. The streets sank to silence much earlier than today. Talk, merging into discussions of the problems of the day or of the theatre or of the more abstract topics of the lecture-room, went on easily, walking across St. Stephen's Green or homeward from the L&H debates or from the closing of the National Library.

Dublin in the 1890s was astir with intimations of cultural and literary revival. Although the energies of Nationalist Ireland's parliamentary representatives were sapped by the largely self-inflicted wounds sustained during the Parnell **scandal** and although it was impossible to exert political leverage on a Unionist government devoted to killing Home Rule by kindness, the idea of nationalism was very much alive. The protean nature of its appeal was amply demonstrated in the rash of new movements dedicated to exploring the implications of a separate Irish identity. Kettle's was the first generation of University College students the landscape of whose mental lives was shaped by the appurtenances of a full-blown and vital cultural nationalism. The Gaelic Athletic Association, the Gaelic League, the Irish Literary Theatre, the radically nationalistic journals - the Leader, and the United Irishman - provided the materials for a rich and stimulating extra-curricular education. This background accounts for the remarkable

⁸Felix Hackett in Meenan (ed.), Centenary history, pp. 50-51.

tenor and range of Kettle's intellectual activities at University College. His involvements were distinguished by an earnest self-consciousness about being an Irishman at all, yet his omniverous intellectual explorations, variations on a theme of national identity, were guided always by the moral lodestone of his Catholicism.

Kettle became auditor of the literary and historical society in 1898, in his second year at University College. The society was rapidly becoming the focal point of student opinion and was beginning to attract to its debates a diverse and interesting assortment of young men amongst whom Kettle rapidly became a dominant figure. Constantine Curran recollected of Kettle that 'even at a distance his magnetism drew us towards him and his intellectual ascendancy remained unquestioned.'⁹ This ascendancy was remarkable because in the circle of students attracted to the society's debates were to be found some of the sharpest intelligences and not a few of the most vivid personalities of that generation of Irishmen who were to bring about the demise of British rule and who would preside over the fortunes of the new Irish state. Amongst Kettle's friends who naturally gravitated towards the literary and historical society were also numbered some of the most notable casualties and exiles of the train of future events in Ireland. There was James Joyce whose frail, down at heel appearance and iconoclastic energy already presaged the avant garde genius of European letters. Advanced political ideas were represented by Kettle's predecessor as auditor, Frank Skeffington, a thin figure swathed in Donegal tweed, non-smoking, teetotal, vegetarian and a tireless crusader

⁹C.P. Curran in Michael Tierney (ed.), Struggle with fortune (Dublin 1954), p.227.

for socialism, pacifism and women's rights. The Gaelic League found its champion in Arthur Clery, a shaggy bearded, choleric orator prepared to anathematise all the work of Anglo-Saxondom. Although never happy in the cut and thrust of debate, the withdrawn and shy Patrick Pearse took his first steps as an orator advocating the language revival at meetings of the society. Hugh Kennedy and Constantine Curran who were to attain high rank in the judiciary of the Irish Free State were frequent speakers as was Rory O'Connor, one of the most notable Republican prisoners to be executed by that state.

Kettle's unique standing amongst this singular group of young men was evidence of a remarkable personality. He gave to all who met him the impression of one who was educating himself in a powerful and directed way. Constantine Curran remarked on this.

His was the most brilliant intelligence of his generation and he had the most widely stretched and vigorously exercised mind in our student group. All his studies were focussed on contemporary politics, and they carved a great field - sociology, history, law and literature. They provided rich, sudden reinforcement to his passionate eloquence and a weight of metal that lent singular driving power to the shafts of his epigrams.¹⁰

Nevertheless, as Curran also observed, Kettle wore his learning lightly and humorously and was the most sociable of individuals. 'He subjugated any chance company, not by his exceptional wit merely, but by fellowship.'¹¹ He was completely without arrogance, that flaw in character that so frequently attaches itself to brilliant young men. Amongst his friends, he 'deplored our over-plus of critical intelligence and our dearth of creative effort'.¹² There was a melancholy side to his character that suggested that with all his talents he was struggling

¹⁰ C.P. Curran in Michael Tierney (ed.), Struggle with fortune (Dublin 1954), p. 227.

¹¹ C.P. Curran, Under the receding wave (Dublin 1970), p. 146.

¹² C.P. Curran, Ibid., p. 146.

with 'an inevitable sense of indirection',¹³ A certain innate fastidiousness of taste in intellectual matters coupled with a well developed flair for the dramatic made Kettle something of a dandy in his social life, aiming frequently for the exquisite effect, no matter how disconcerting to those around him. He was, for example, punctiliously unpunctual. Willie Dawson remembered Kettle during this period of his life.

He was expected to dinner at a friend's house. The other guests were assembling when a wire was placed in the host's hands. It was from Kettle and contained the laconic query, "Is it dress?" An affirmative reply having been dispatched, Kettle eventually arrived. He confided afterwards that his real object in writing was to show that he was coming,¹⁴ as he was well aware he would be hopelessly late.¹⁴

To women, especially of the lower classes, he behaved with an almost exaggerated politeness, even going so far as to habitually remove his hat when purchasing a button hole from the flower girls in the Dublin streets. In the interminable discussions that he carried on with his friends on the steps of the National Library in Kildare Street, he demonstrated a dandyish facility both for coining epigrams and a near obsessive preoccupation with adapting religious symbols to mundane and humorous purpose. The words wine and chalice 'dropped continuously from his lips'.¹⁵

But it was perhaps less the style of Kettle's speaking that accounts for the impact he made in the literary and historical society than the content. Willie Dawson retained a memory of a certain awkwardness about Kettle's speaking style.

¹³C.P. Curran, *Ibid.*, p.144.

¹⁴Willie Dawson, 'Kettle memorabilia', Kettle papers.

¹⁵Willie Dawson, 'Kettle memorabilia', Kettle papers.

My recollection of Kettle at this time with which the public was later to become familiar, sounded affected in a boy of eighteen, while the sarcasm and irony which were to delight and hurt legislative assemblies ⁱⁿ days to come, grated rather in those early days.¹⁶

Dawson also remembered Kettle's boldness in circumventing the ban on political discussion in the society.

During the early stages of the Boer War anti-British feeling ran high in the society and Kettle made many speeches in favour of the South African republics. During the period of repeated British reverses he remarked one night, 'And, Mr. Chairman, if I may quote a phrase that has become stereotyped as a headline in our newspapers, I regret to state,¹⁷' Loud cheers drowned the finish of the sentence.

Another former member of the society recalled of Kettle that, 'in manner and especially in form he was first, but he had a poor delivery. He bent forward and swayed his body backwards and forwards.'¹⁸ Kettle's curious bodily stance and abstracted manner when speaking was also commented upon.

He spoke with his body bent slightly forward, and had a peculiar little mannerism or raising his right hand quickly to his head and then withdrawing it slowly as if taking a pencil or a cigarette from above his ear. His measured pace and thoughtful manner gave the ^{impression}₁₉ that one could see his mind working.

This style of speaking, as if he were thinking out the speech and sharing his thoughts with the audience as he **went** along, was a characteristic of Kettle's that remained constant in a career much of which was to be spent on the public platform.

In November 1899, Kettle gave his inaugural address as auditor of the literary and historical society. He had chosen to speak on 'The Celtic note in literature', a topic which allowed him to air some of

¹⁶ Willie Dawson in Meenan (ed.), Centenary history, p.45.

¹⁷ Willie Dawson, 'Kettle Memorabilia', Kettle papers.

¹⁸ James Fitzgerald-Kenny in Meenan (ed.), Centenary history, p. 55

¹⁹ Thomas Bacon in Meenan (ed.), Centenary history, p. 69.

his most characteristic preoccupations. It was in a spirit of patriotic elan and with not a little moral earnestness that he approached the Sargassoan tangle of nationalism, literature, politics and religion into which he was led by his theme. Strongly evident were his awareness of European literary tradition and his distaste for the works of W.B. Yeats and his colleagues in the emergent Anglo-Irish literary revival.

The literature of a country was the treasure store of the best thoughts of the country and men of letters ought to be the nation's most useful citizens. They must lead, not lag behind. In England, Germany and France they found great philosophic poets and metaphysicians but in Ireland which had fallen from its splendid historical reputation, which was neither commercially prosperous, mentally cultured, nor socially happy, its literature was narrowed down; it was not healthy and did not justify its existence. In it they found no love of home, no confidence in knowledge. It told its message not to the men of its own race and name but to the dilettantes of the drawing rooms of London. It groped in the past for the sorry tinsel of folklore and legend to dress them up for the delight of the stranger.

The Anglo-Celtic renaissance had in it no manly vigour, no spring of action; and since it was retrospective, speculative and exclusive, it had for the Irish no fruit but dead-sea fruit. Therefore, they, as a people should²⁰ repudiate it as an instrument of national revival.

Kettle's anger was aroused by what he took to be the artificiality of Yeats's use in his work of Irish themes and incidents from Irish history. For Yeats, boldly planning his aesthetic offensive upon the redoubt of modern literature, the feelings and sensitivities of the actual Irish people counted for little. The ends of Yeats's Nationalism were literary. His dreamy, unearthly visions of Ireland were parts of a poetic strategy to help the poet resolve his own crisis of cultural

²⁰Felix E. Hackett in Ibid., pp. 53-4

identity. In Kettle's view, an aesthetic practice not somehow rooted in the moral consciousness of the community was unthinkable. For the eighteen-year old Kettle, the question was, how best could the poet or artist serve Ireland? This blunt idealism was to be expected given Kettle's solid Catholic nationalist background. His family had played its part in agrarian and political struggles that were still within living memory. The Yeats circle seemed preoccupied with the fairy world of the Celtic twilight, whereas Kettle felt, with some justification, that the tragic and dramatic aspects of recent Irish history would have provided more robust themes for patriotically inclined poets. Not surprisingly, Kettle's audience shared his sense or priorities and his low opinion of the literary revival. Nevertheless, Kettle was far too intelligent to expect literature simply to be the handmaiden of Nationalism. Yeats had irritated Kettle into the discovery of what was to be one of his major areas of intellectual preoccupation, an exploration of the intersices between private inspiration and public responsibility.

The preoccupation with literature and the arts which he was to show again and again in the literary and historical society followed naturally from his religious and patriotic concerns. Nationalism and Catholicism are exceptionally demanding creeds, if taken seriously, and Kettle took them both very seriously indeed. In the Royal University, courses in religion received no official recognition and the attempts of the Jesuits to attract students to classes in the subject by awarding medals or cash prizes met with scant success.

Father Delaney, the head of University College, alleviated this situation as best he could by regularly attending meetings of the literary and historical society and interjecting references to Aristotle and Aquinas into the proceedings. Perhaps his efforts were not completely ineffectual. Kettle used to discuss Aquinas with Joyce, who later approvingly cited Kettle's observation that, 'The difficulty about Aquinas is that what he says is so like what the man in the street says.'²¹ Kettle appreciated the aesthetic implications of Thomism, the ideal that beauty as an intimation of transcendental reality is a part of human nature and that the need to seek out this transcendence is a principle of human activity. The idea of life itself as a kind of sacred quest for the true and beautiful appealed to Kettle and inevitably coloured his views as a Nationalist. If religious instruction was ignored in the Royal University, then modern history fared little better being 'merely tacked on to other subjects, as Philosophy, Jurisprudence or Economics... [or] to the study of English'.²² In the absence then of a sound historical education, it was scarcely surprising that the political vision of young Nationalists like Kettle should have been coloured by epiphanies and symbolism that were theological and eschatological in origin.

Kettle and his friends from the literary and historical society figured prominently in the disturbances that greeted the premier of Yeats' play, the Countess Cathleen, which was performed in the ^tAncient Concert Rooms on 8 May 1899 to inaugurate the Irish Literary Theatre. Yeats had observed in an article publicising the forthcoming performance that the inspiration for such a theatre sprang from his recognition that

²¹Richard Ellmann, James Joyce (London 1965), p.64.

²²The Jesuit Fathers, A page of Irish history: story of University College, Dublin 1883-1909 (Dublin 1930), p.216.

'the intellect of Ireland is romantic and spiritual rather than scientific and analytical.'²³ The truth of this remark was amply illustrated by the stormy reception his play received from its predominantly Catholic and Nationalist audience. Of Yeats's many critics, Kettle was by far the most acute, because of his inherent appreciation of the power of literature to reflect the most profound characteristics of a nation.

Kettle recognised that Nationalism shared with Catholicism an apprehension of the world that was basically poetic in its nature, a quasi-mystical union of sentiment and intellect. Nationalism and Catholicism are alike prone to the eschatological view of human development and consequently tend to be history obsessed, seeing in the fortunes of the past generations the reflection and working out of certain moral truths which the present generation ignores at the peril of its soul. It was this instinctively holistic view of Nationalism that had inspired Kettle's criticism of the literary revival. A literature that did not keep faith with the moral imperative underlying the Nationalist view of Irish history and which did not uplift the energies of the Irish people to undertake the next phase of the national struggle was but 'dead sea fruit'. Kettle sought to justify this view of literature by an adaption of Aquinas' idea of human nature which emphasised the individual's innate predisposition to act on principles of a transcendent supra-rationalism. Initially the truths of Catholicism and of Nationalism can only be apprehended by the private believer, but are inherently social in their implications and once grasped, necessitate a public commitment or demonstration of belief. In Kettle's view, the most significant demonstration of the moral health or vigour of a nation lay

²³ W.B. Yeats, 'Plans and methods', in Beltaine, May 1899.

in its literature, the most far reaching and the most comprehensive demonstration of private inspiration. And amongst the forms of literature, drama, in its direct involvement with an audience took on the character of a sacrament.

At this time there was considerable interest amongst the members of the literary and historical society in what may be called the politics of literature. On 11 January 1899, Kettle and Joyce had taken the negative in a debate on the proposition 'that in the last decade of the 19th century English literature has reached a very low ebb'. In March, the society had listened to a paper on 'The theatre - its educational value' by Arthur Clery which was to lead indirectly to Joyce's celebrated peroration 'Drama and life' defending Ibsen. Much of this interest in drama was doubtless stimulated by the excitement surrounding Yeats' announcement of his intention to put the Countess Cathleen on a Dublin stage. This play, which had been published in 1892, may have been in Kettle's mind when he gave his paper on 'The Celtic note in literature'. Certainly the Countess Cathleen had become the subject of controversy in Dublin intellectual circles some months before the play was performed. Frank Hugh O'Donnell, a former M.P. who had been expelled from the Irish parliamentary party by Parnell and who for obscure reasons of his own had conceived a violently irrational hatred of Yeats, had denounced the play in the Freeman's Journal and in January 1899 had published a pamphlet Souls for Gold, accusing Yeats of delivering a blasphemous insult to the Irish nation.

An Irish audience was bound to be highly sensitive towards the subject

matter of the play. Set ostensibly in the sixteenth century, it was symbolic in intent but aroused the bitterest memories of the famine of 1846 and 1847. The play's rather unlikely plot dealt with the plight of a group of superstitious, famine-crazed, Catholic peasants reduced to selling their souls to the Devil in exchange for gold to buy food. From this singularly unpleasant situation, the wretched peasants are rescued by the intervention of a, presumably Protestant, aristocratic lady, the Countess Cathleen. By selling her own soul to the Devil, this Yeatsian heroine redeems the souls of the peasantry and becomes a Faustian scapegoat for the Irish nation. In the original text of the play, modified for the Dublin production, the stage directions called for a peasant to kick into pieces a shrine of the Blessed Virgin. A farther outrage to Catholic susceptibilities was offered in a scene in which the Devil stuffs into the same bag the soul of a priest and the soul of a pig. The cast of this first production of the new Irish Literary Theatre consisted entirely of English actors and actresses and the proceedings were presented under the watchful eye of a number of Dublin policemen whose presence Yeats had requested to ensure order during the performance.

On the play's opening night, Kettle was amongst a group of students from the literary and historical society and the central branch of the Gaelic League who expressed their disapproval of the proceedings. Seamus Sullivan, the poet, described the protest.

I was, by chance, in the gallery, and at the fall of the curtain a storm of booing and hissing broke out around the seats in which I and a few enthusiasts were attempting to express our appreciation of the magnificent performance.²⁴

²⁴ Seamus O'Sullivan, Rose and bottle (Dublin 1946), p.118.

The conduct of the protestors aroused a mixed reaction in the audience. James Joyce, who was present, held himself ostentatiously aloof from his friends, and the reporter from the Freeman's Journal shared his disapproval.

A small knot of less than a dozen disorderly boys, who evidently mistook the whole moral significance of the play, cast ridicule upon themselves by hissing the demons under the impression that they were hissing the poet. But the audience, representative of every section of educated opinion in Dublin, was most enthusiastic, recalling the actors and the author again and again cheering loudly.²⁵

A letter from T.W. Rolleston to the Freeman's Journal felt this account of the disruption was excessively harsh to the protestors.

It happens that I was sitting close to the 'dozen disorderly boys'...It appeared to me that their expressions of disapproval were not exactly 'disorderly'...They expressed their sentiments with vigour, but in a perfectly gentlemanlike manner. They flung no insults at the author or the company, they made no attempt to seriously interfere with the performance, and they applauded as vigorously as anyone, nay, they even led the applause at some of the fine and touching passages in the play... The impression left on my mind by the whole affair was that a representative Dublin audience had splendidly vindicated, in the teeth of bitter prejudice and hostility, an author's right to a fair hearing for his work, and also that the hostile element in the audience had expressed itself in a manner, which, if one is permitted to be hostile at all, had no trace of malice or stupid violence.²⁶

Further support for the protestors was forthcoming from Cardinal Logue who, without having seen it, wrote a letter to the Daily Nation offering it as his opinion that 'an Irish Catholic audience which could patiently sit out such a play must have sadly degenerated both in religion and patriotism.'²⁷

²⁵Freeman's Journal, 9 May 1899.
²⁶Freeman's Journal, 10 May 1899.
²⁷Daily Nation, 10 May 1899.

Kettle and his companions returned, immediately after the performance, to University College and there drafted a letter to the Freeman's Journal explaining their objections to the Countess Cathleen. The substance of their case was:

The subject is not Irish. It has been shown that the plot is founded on a German legend. The characters are ludicrous travesties of the Irish Catholic Celt. The purpose of Mr. Yeats's drama is apparently to show the sublimity of self-sacrifice. The questionable nature of that self-sacrifice forced Mr. Yeats to adopt still more questionable means to produce an occasion for it. He represents the Irish peasant as a crooning barbarian, crazed with morbid superstition, who, having added the Catholic faith to his store of superstition, sells that faith for gold or bread in the proving of famine.

Is Mr. Yeats prepared to justify this view of our national character...? Has Mr. Yeats thoroughly considered the probable effect of presenting this slanderous caricature of the Irish peasant...?

We have no personal quarrel with Mr. Yeats, we know him only from his books. We recognise him, further, as one endowed with the rare gift of extending ^a ~~an~~ infinitesimal quantity of the gold of thought in a seemingly infinite area of the tinsel of melodious meaningless verse...we feel it our duty, in the name and for the honour of Dublin Catholic students of the Royal University to protest against an art, even a dispassionate art, which offers as ^a ~~a~~ type of our people a loathsome brood of apostate.

The letter was probably, in large part, the work of Kettle. It was he who would have been most likely to draw the parallel with German literature. Constantine Curran claimed to have detected Kettle's hand in the style employed.

The letter of protest now reads to me as a composite and hurried performance with Tom Kettle as the most evidently single influence. Certain sentences and phrases bear his unmistakable stamp - I can hear his voice leaning in characteristic fashion ^{on} ~~on~~ the vowel sound of the "crooning barbarians".²⁹

²⁸Freeman's Journal, 10 May 1899.

²⁹Constantine Curran, Under the receding wave (Dublin 1970), p.104.

Yeats, as might be expected, was quick to spring to the defence of his play and at a dinner given in the Shelbourne Hotel on 11 May to celebrate the success of the production, addressed himself to the criticism directed at the Countess Cathleen. The claim, probably Kettle's, that the play's theme was not Irish, particularly rankled.

A very ingenious antagonist was anxious to prove that the play was not Celtic, and therefore looked to a country which by common consent was not Celtic, and pitched upon Germany. Well, as a matter of fact, a well-known writer told them that it was an Irish story, and in Mr. Larminie's book, West Irish Folk-Tales and Romances, it was, he believed, stated that the story was one of those imaginative fables which go through all countries and belong to no country.³⁰

Yeats then turned to the charge of blasphemy, not, incidentally, one that had been levelled at him by the students, and stated amidst laughter that apparently 'the utterances of the demons and lost souls had been described as the beliefs of himself.'³¹ He vigorously rebutted the charge that he had calumniated the character of the Irish peasantry.

The charge that he had slandered the country was worked out with great ingenuity. It was said Mr. Yeats had made the peasants thieves and the women false to their husbands, and it was asked, is that Celtic? Well he was ready to admit that nobody ever robbed in Ireland, and that no woman was ever false to her husband. That might be true, but it was perfectly irrelevant, for, after all, it was nothing against the truth of a thing to say that it never happened (laughter and applause).³²

This was a wittily ironic appeal to the sense of realism of his audience, who well knew that the Irish peasantry were not necessarily paragons of every Catholic virtue. But unfortunately for Yeats's argument, his play had not been written in the spirit of realism, as

³⁰Daily Express, 12 May 1899.

³¹Ibid.

³²Ibid.

became clear when he went on to explain to his audience the underlying aesthetic of the Countess Cathleen.

His play, of course, was purely symbolic, and as such it must be regarded. Literature was the expression of universal truths by the medium of particular symbols: and those who were working at the National Literary movement and at all such movements were simply trying to give to universal truths the expression which would most move the people about them. In all countries where suffering had made patriotism a passion they had found literature turning to that patriotism as to its most powerful re-echo...This was the great sword that had been put into their hands, and what they had to do was to spiritualise the patriotism and the drama of this country.³³

Kettle was well aware of the power of symbolism. Indeed it was the symbolism in the play that had aroused his critical indignation. The hapless peasantry of the Countess Cathleen might have been acceptable in an Ibsenite social drama about rural class warfare. But in the play Yeats had written, his peasants were symbolic figures embodying the essential, poetic reality of the Irish peasantry as Yeats' mind conceived it. Their role in the symbolic drama was scarcely an edifying one. Yet, in fact, the Irish peasantry within living memory had undergone the actual, non-symbolic horrors of a real famine, without becoming noticeably depraved and remaining conspicuously faithful to their religion. If Yeats's symbolic play was intended to illustrate a fundamental truth about the effect of Irish history on Irish character, the selection and use of symbol in his play, to say the least, seemed idiosyncratic in a patriotic poet.

The letter from the students of University College protesting about the play was a hurried composition and did not fully reflect the extent

³³ Daily Express, 12 May 1899.

of Kettle's disagreement with Yeats. Kettle was particularly irritated by Yeats's tendency to adopt an aristocratic or omniscient stance towards the mind and soul of Ireland, to which he assumed himself to have, as a poet, unique and privileged access. To Kettle, Yeats's vision of Ireland reeked of the decadence of the demi-monde of London's literary bohemia. Padraic Colum, the poet, who met Kettle some years later, recalled his attitude to Yeats.

Between the student, Kettle, and the poet, Yeats, there was already a feud. With a body of students he had opposed the production of the Countess Cathleen. That was not to his credit; he did not care to speak about it. But he was serious about the artist's duty to the community, the duty of one who had the gift of expression and the influence that came with it to be thoughtful as well as temperamental: recollect that this was the period in which Yeats went around quoting Villiers de l'Isle Adams's 'As for living our servants can do that for us.' A debate at University College at which Kettle presided and Yeats spoke stays in my memory. I was to speak after Yeats...A note was handed me from Kettle. 'I wish you would say in your speech that personality has its duties as well as its rights.'³⁴

Colum's contention that Kettle was somehow ashamed of his part in the Countess Cathleen protest is belied by an article Kettle wrote a number of years later in the United Irishman in a review of Yeats' play Where there is nothing. This article, 'Mr Yeats and the freedom of the theatre' summed up Kettle's objections to Yeats and Yeatsian theatre.

A word first as to the grounds on which the Countess Cathleen was so warmly received. As one of the writers of the letter in which we justified ourselves, I assure Mr Yeats that he is either mistaken or mistakes our criticism. We did not put about the opinions of his demons as his own opinions, nor interpret the scheme of the play in such a bat-eyed literal fashion as to

³⁴ Padraic Colum, 'Tom Kettle, a memory' in the Dublin Magazine, July-September 1949, p.30.

find it subversive of all sound theology, nor did we call it unpatriotic for an Irish writer to introduce soul-sellers among his Irish personages. What we thought and said, though not perhaps with perfect clearness was this: Here is a play the circumstances and background of which is the conduct of Irish Catholic peasants under the stress of famine and of temptation to sell their faith for food. In order to secure the utter blackness against which may shine forth in all its beauty the white soul of Cathleen, these peasants are pictured as universally faithless. Now, we said, you have chosen for your framework, not ideal but actual quantities. The Irish Catholic is a type that has a determinate historical value, the Irish Catholic in face of famine is a battle that has not only in fact been joined, but has been joined so recently as to possess, as well as historical definiteness, intense emotional significance. What then is to be our judgement of a play in which these realities are so treated as to be changed into their opposites? The play we said then, and I will repeat now, is artistically bad and in relation to its audience is quite unacceptable. It will be well for Mr Yeats when he comes out of his rationalistic whimsies and understands the sanctity and compulsion with which the Catholic religion has established itself in the imagination of Ireland. Then the last veil will have fallen which now³⁵ shuts from his vision her inmost passionate heart.

It must be emphasised that Kettle was not criticising Yeats for having written an anti-Catholic play, or failing to have written a pro-Catholic play. Rather, the burden of his criticism was that having set out to write a play on a religious theme, Yeats had failed utterly to understand the religious beliefs of the people about whom he was writing. This was fair criticism and pointed to the predominant source of tension in Yeats's writing as a whole - that as a self-proclaimed nationalist poet, Yeats was, in his poetic themes, aesthetically and morally at odds with the vast majority of his countrymen who made up the Irish nation. Yeats marched to a different drummer. It is doubtful if the poet himself yet understood the nature of his aesthetic quandary. The play

³⁵ T.M. Kettle, 'Mr Yeats and the freedom of the theatre', United Irishman, 15 November 1902.

Where there is nothing was a particularly extreme example of Yeats' contempt for conventional morality, an inebriating mélange of nature worship, theosophy and nihilism. Kettle briskly called him to account, insisting that if Yeats were to be a Nationalist he should be a proper one and discipline his muse accordingly.

It seems to me that Mr Yeats will find a disciple if anywhere he finds a man who is just a creative instinct and nothing more; or if anywhere he finds a man content to be a sounding-box of changing and contradictory moods, none of which he troubles to make his own and act upon - in short a sentimentalist. This temper of mind is an outgrowth of despair, a withdrawal alike from action and from the authentic business of thought; and the day of its flourishing will be a sorry day for Ireland. Let our poets sing of action, heroic-doing, the arduous virtues, be the circumstances ancient or modern. This melancholy analysis of the prescriptive, the traditional, can be harmlessly indulged only when we have reached our full growth as a nation. Let us climb out of the pit before we aim at scaling the stars.³⁶

Kettle's criticism of Yeats was perhaps harsh in so far as it was not based on purely literary premises. But Yeats, after all, had invited Kettle's type of criticism by insisting on the significance of the Irish Literary Theatre for Irish Nationalists. Kettle, unlike Yeats' clerical critics and indeed unlike many of his supporters, paid the poet the compliment of thinking deeply about the play. Poetry and imaginative literature of all types had an especial significance for Kettle, but his deepest concerns lay elsewhere, in the realm of ethics rather than in that of artistic creation.

Kettle's writings whilst he was at University College chart the course of an unusual and original mind evolving rapidly to maturity. The chrysalis of adolescence is represented by his first recorded

³⁶ Ibid.

attempts at poetry in 1899. These poems are evidence of Kettle's adolescent romanticism rather than of any outstanding poetic gifts. Nevertheless, certain lines presage the mature stylist. A poem entitled 'To young Ireland' yields the following verse:

The sheathed blade rusts foully, through
 bitter, barren years,
 And harp and pen are bond slaves,
 thrall to thy children's shame.
 We garner cockle harvests, vain words
 and little fleers.
 From waste lands sown with rancour,
 search them with proving flame!³⁷

'We garner cockle harvests, vain words and little fleers' has the compression, elegance and verbal ingenuity that was to become Kettle's stylistic trademark. Less happy stylistically but illustrating another abiding concern, the interrelatedness of spirituality and nationality is a verse from another early poem, 'Dreams and duty'.

The stranger heard and mocked us from
 the usurped throne,
 Reeled in his scornful laughter, eater of
 hearts, blood-blown.
 But the Lord God heard and heeded,
 therefore we do not moan;
 For He has whispered to us, "The
 secret shuttles fly,
 Ye know not warp or weaver, yet neither
 swerve or sigh,
 The eater of hearts shall wither, the
 drinker of blood shall die.
 I have set you labour, work it; I will
 give you increase,
 For first is winter-ploughing, after, my
 guerdon, peace;
 Ye shall pluck strength from sorrow,
 ripe when the sorrows cease;
 Ye shall win strength and wisdom to
 break the stranger's rule,
 But if ye slink and babble ye are but
 as the fools,
 Ye are but as the stranger, fit for the
 thorny schools."³⁸

³⁷T.M. Kettle, Poems and parodies (Dublin, 1916), p.24.

³⁸T.M. Kettle, Poems and parodies, (Dublin 1916), pp.26-27.

The ludicrous badness of the above poem lies in its being set out as a poem at all. What it is, in fact, is a sermon, albeit a somewhat bloodthirsty one. As much of Kettle's idealism was based on Catholicism, blood sacrifices were bound to feature prominently in his imagery when his thought was overcome by emotion. He had run into the problem confronting any self-consciously Nationalist and Catholic poet of the period, that of finding a form that could balance both preoccupations, the religious and the national without toppling into rhetorical excess.

In 1903, Kettle by now studying for the bar at the King's Inns but still very much involved in the life of University College, became editor of St. Stephen's, the college student magazine. A poem, written by Kettle in 1902, to commemorate the execution at the hands of the British of Commandant **Scheepers**, the youthful leader of the Cape Dutch in the guerilla stage of the Boer War, appeared in this paper. He had by this time learned the wisdom of narrowing the range of his poetry and of addressing it to specific occasions. His increasing skill in handling poetic metre is evident. The sacramental nature of his theme was unchanged. The second and fourth verses are representative.

'Weak you thought him, sickness-vanquished, given to your
eager hate,
So you played with him and you slew him with your feline
shows of state.
Weak and lo! the sanctifying touch of death has made
him great.'
'Hill and plain and stream shall guard it, town and
fireside,
phrase and song;
Young men's unsubdued aspiring, old men's striving wise
and strong;
And though hope die, Hatred may not for remembrance
of his wrong.
Murdered leader - may God fold you in the mercy of his
temple,
Sleep as sleep our unborn children, bravest hero and
example.
Float the flag or sink for ever, your red eric shall be ample.'³⁹

³⁹ T.M. Kettle, Poems and parodies (Dublin 1916), pp.30-31.

Kettle's was a poetic temperament but he was not by nature a poet. He could produce occasional verse and had a gift for parody. He would, at moments of extreme stress throughout his life resort to the catharsis of poetic composition. But his intellectual concerns demanded the spaciousness of prose for their full working out, and his most absorbing interest was in philosophy rather than in poetry, his true literary talent in the essay rather than in verse. It was in the epigram rather than in the metaphor that he achieved his most telling effects.

Kettle was concerned, above all, with spiritual vitality. It was not as an artist that he considered literature, but as a moralist. If his poetry was rather morbidly preoccupied with dying for one's beliefs, his essays were concerned with the more complicated business of celebrating the richness of human existence. Celebration became possible when then interrelatedness of all aspects of human existence was grasped. Kettle's Catholicism and his Nationalism were each enhanced and invigorated by contact with literature, just as literature at its most profound and vital became infused with the values of religion and by a sort of spiritualised patriotism. In February 1903, Kettle dealt with these ideas in a paper on the poet, Lionel Johnson, which he read before the literary and historical society. Johnson, a County Sligo Protestant had spent most of his life in London and had died there in 1902. He had, however, handled patriotic themes in his poetry and before his death had converted to Catholicism. Tracing the sources of Johnson's inspiration, Kettle was led to consider how the poetic and the religious views of the world complemented each other.

Poetry is an independent art with laws and conditions of its own, and only as subjected to these do traditional forms or facts become worthy of its consideration; and moreover, since the Catholic religion claims to be an explanation of all human experience, its poetry cannot be limited, as the popular mind limits it, to 'religious' subjects. Every spiritual fact, at one with itself, every natural thought, mood, affection, duly⁴⁰ expressed is, in a very true sense, Catholic.

The type of Catholicism that Kettle was putting forward was both bold and broad as well as impatient of the strait jacket of orthodoxy. It was, in fact, the Catholicism of the literary man, appreciative of the peculiarities and divergences in modes of apprehending the world, which were, after all, the raw material of literature. Catholicism offered a viewpoint of human existence that was elevated, sacramental and all inclusive and which appreciated the symbolic aspects of life. The religious mode of thought, in its concentration on the irrational and the suprarational afforded also a means of sidestepping the merely logical critique of Irish Nationalism offered by economists or Unionist politicians.

Nowhere has love of country been so idealised as in Ireland; in vain do the economists reduce her drams to terms of the Agricultural Department, in vain do the masters of the inner life assure her that political subjection is but a veil which, withdrawn, will give to her eyes the riddle of earth still unsolved. Ireland refuses to distinguish politics from poetry; and Kathleen ni-Houlihan is not only the historical Ireland Militant, but is also the human spirit struggling against the inimical gross clay, the 'iron negation' which is gathered under the image of England.⁴¹

⁴⁰T.M. Kettle, 'Lionel Johnson' in St. Stephen's, February 1903.

⁴¹Ibid.

There can be seen in Kettle's spiritualised approach to literature the influence of the rhapsodic French aesthete, Guyau, who he was reading at this time. The notion that Ireland's struggle towards national freedom was the expression of a transcendental, creative principle at work in history owed much to Hegel. Certainly the image of England as 'iron negation' is Hegelian. Kettle's emphasis on religion and literature as discrete activities operating under autonomous laws yet fundamentally in harmony with each other, even complementing each other, shows the influence of the scholastic theology of Aquinas. Kettle's impulse in intellectual debate was, then, to argue from the general to the specific, from the universal to the particular. He viewed life as a progressive journey to individual spiritual fulfillment and history as the record of the struggle to fulfill the deepest spiritual aspirations of national communities. In an Irish context, he was an unorthodox Catholic, disposed to a broad tolerance in cultural matters and impatient with the complacency of conventional Irish Catholic piety. In 1905, in a paper 'Catholicism and modern literature', he issued a summons to modern, Catholic Ireland to revitalise itself by paying attention to the achievements of nineteenth-century European letters.

The question of the moment is, how is the Church to relate herself to the literature of a century whose mind has gone so far apart from her? Is the great bulk of the imaginative stuff of the century to go brusquely down among the works and pomps which, when the candles are lighted after Retreat, we promise to renounce? That is the attitude of the comfortable and conservative, but it seems to me tainted with a certain smugness which is not to be endured. If Catholicism is to live it must grow, it must show itself to be able to assimilate the wholesome elements of contemporary culture.⁴²

⁴²T.M. Kettle, 'Catholicism and modern literature' in St Stephens's, February 1905.

Kettle's concern in this paper was social and ethical rather than aesthetic.

Art for Art's sake is mere idolatry, just as Morality for Morality's sake is mere idolatry. The same confusion resulted as results in Psychology from erecting a faculty, which is merely one activity of the complex human unit, into something having a separate and quite fictitious existence. It is not Art for Art's that must direct the future, but Art for Humanity's sake. That brings Art immediately under the over-Lordship of Ethics.⁴³

An ethical or moral code that ignored art was ignoring the very stuff of life itself and was doomed to stagnation.

Adherents of established things like ourselves, are prone to fall into a formulary drowse, a slumber from which all freshness has evaporated, and which deserved the epithet of bourgeois in its harshest sense. What is to shake us out of this but art? Art whose function it is to live out to its full the concrete, vanishing moment, to break up old moulds, and bring us back to the vital, throbbing stuff of sensation and feeling. And this is the service that the "Art for Art's sake" movement can render us. The valiant though erring masters, who are so often dismissed with unjust harshness, have something to teach us, as well as a great deal to learn from us. They have established for all time that a novel may be as serious an undertaking as a limited liability company, a fine picture created, or even contemplated, more serviceable than a metaphysical treatise, a lyric, a⁴⁴ spiritual experience higher than any sermon.

Kettle's lofty idea of culture meant that he found little of interest in either the Anglo-Irish literary revival or in the Gaelic League's attempts to revive the Irish language. He attended a few Irish classes at University College but, as a friend remembered, rapidly

⁴³T.M. Kettle, 'Catholicism and modern literature' in St Stephen's, February 1905.

⁴⁴Ibid.

succumbed to boredom and gave up the subject. ' "Here we are," he mused, "Learning Irish on the threshold of becoming accomplished speakers of English." ⁴⁵

Although he was a confirmed Nationalist in politics, in matters cultural Kettle revolted against the narrowness, parochialism and crudity of Ireland. He had little patience with the artificial 'Celticism' of the literary revival. The Gaelic movement, estimable in its intention of developing a deeper awareness of Ireland's cultural heritage afforded sparse nourishment to an intellect preoccupied with the problems of contemporary civilisation. Kettle's tendency to argue from first principles naturally led him to consider the European dimension to his abiding interests, Catholicism, literature and Nationalism. An important element in any justification of Irish Nationalism lay in its being part of a European movement; Irish Nationalism was one nationalism amongst many. There was no Irish movement that did not have its counterpart on the continent and Kettle would put the mind of Ireland to learn from the mind of Europe. In 1904, Kettle made his first trip abroad.

This trip had its genesis in personal tragedy. Padraic Colum recollected that in the Kettle household 'there was that Irish scourge - tuberculosis'. ⁴⁶ In 1904, a younger brother of Kettle's to whom he was deeply attached, died. Kettle's nerves were already stretched to breaking point by overwork and this tragedy precipitated a collapse in his health. He had to withdraw for a year from University College and he went to the Tyrol to recuperate.

⁴⁵W.G. Fallon in Meenan (ed.), Centenary history, P.96.

⁴⁶Padraic Colum, 'Tom Kettle: a memory' in the Dublin Magazine, July-September 1949, p.30.

Kettle spent the spring and summer of 1904 at the University of Innsbruck attending lectures in philosophy and theology. In spite of his depression and nervous exhaustion, his stay in Innsbruck was exhilarating. His wife afterwards claimed that on this trip 'Europe laid her spell on him.'⁴⁷ That the experience was a crucial one in his mental development can be seen in the exuberant article that appeared in St Stephen's in November 1904 in which he described his experiences. Amongst his other gifts, Kettle had that of being a good traveller. His reportage from the Tyrol. in its detail and good humour reveals the sunnier side of his disposition.

The Tirolese capital resembles Rome in at least one respect, it was not built in a day, and, consequently, consists of an old city and a new city. You have your choice between splendid hotels, shinningly modern, streets that might be anywhere in Europe, organised sight-seeing, waiters who speak a little eating-English, in short the usual tourist equipment, between that and Old Innsbruck, with its Golden Roof, its frescoed walls, its old Gasthauser or Inns, with their arched doorways, heavy beams, electric light curiously ubiquitous, religious pictures on the eating room walls, and crucifixes on the landings, for Catholic Tirol is very proud to publish its Catholicity, its medieval gassen, so narrow that lovers living in opposite houses do not need to waft kisses as in the stories, but can personally deliver them from the upper windows, its shops under an arched gallery, its odour of antiquity which on hot days recalls certain verses of Coleridge, its swinging signboards, sausages and beer at nine, ineffable goulashes, the doggerel "welcomes!" painted on the walls and printed on the beer-pads, frauleins made happy by a tip of two kreutzers, which is nearly a half-penny, convivial choruses which cease at one, church bells which begin at four! I chose Old Innsbruck. At a certain cross all four corner houses are Inns; Goethe had put⁴⁸ up at the "Red Eagle", I stayed at the "Golden Stag".

⁴⁷ Mary Kettle, Memoir in T.M. Kettle; the day's burden (Dublin, 1968) p.24

⁴⁸ Ibid.

The theological faculty of Innsbruck University was run by the Jesuits. There Kettle attended lectures given by some of the most distinguished theologians and moral philosophers of the day, although none of them seem to have been distinguished enough to escape the mantle of obscurity that time has laid over their reputations.

I had heard and seen some eminent persons. There was Hunter, whose books on moral theology are used in all our Irish seminaries - a small, physically noteless man who, crouched in his rostrum, divided right from wrong with the cleaving keenness of a veritable sword of justice...There was Pastor, whose "History of the Popes" is a world-wide authority - a little disappointing in the lecture room. There was the leonine Michael, another historian, who today is known all over Germany and German Austria; tomorrow will be known all over Europe.⁴⁹

Kettle was impressed with the cosmopolitanism of the Tyrol. He observed with interest the generally constitutional and relatively peaceful way in which national differences were sorted out within the ramshackle structure of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. There was much, he thought, in this civilised country for English and Irish to learn from each other. There was even a Tyrolean university question, which, along with an appalling accident to his Dean of studies brought Kettle's course of study to an abrupt end.

The Italians demand an Italian university at Trieste. The Government refuse it, not being anxious to ripen South Tirol for plucking by Italy, and forces them to go to Innsbruck. The Germans declare that the thoroughly German character of Innsbruck must be maintained: trouble follows. There was a riot during my stay...[The Italian students barricaded the Germans in their quarters and each side sang patriotic songs at the other.]...the Senate closed the University for the term to avoid further bloodshed, or at least huskiness. The dean went to Switzerland, where he

⁴⁹ Ibid.

was killed mountain climbing, and my course of lectures came to an end.⁵⁰

In one of his rare surviving letters - worth quoting because Kettle was a notoriously dilatory correspondent and wrote few letters - he described his most memorable experience in the Tyrol. This was a mountaineering expedition undertaken with an Irish ex-theological student named William O'Brien with whom Kettle had struck up an acquaintance in Innsbruck. O'Brien was devoting his energies to climbing all the peaks around Innsbruck and he took Kettle with him to ascend the second highest, the Sarles-Spitze. The two men travelled to Matrei, 12 miles outside Innsbruck and stayed the night at a monastery on the lower slopes of the mountain. The monastery church, dedicated to a local saint, Maria Waldrast, was a popular place of pilgrimage and the path leading to it was marked by the stations of the cross. This ascent in the clear mountain air made a profound impression on Kettle. The next morning at dawn, they commenced the ascent.

I had bought or borrowed the full Alpine rig - it is quite indispensable and you should have seen me! Knickerbockers, collarless flannel shirt, huge boots, Alpine stock, or, as it is called here berg-stock, ruck-sack = a canvas knapsack strapped on the back, and an Alpine hooded cloak strapped behind. In the ruck-sack we had of course to carry all the food and drink needed for the next 10 or 12 hours. This comprised a litre of wine = $1\frac{3}{4}$ pints, cold ham, cherries, chocolate, and bread...The morning air was something delightful beyond expression and I felt, in spite of the climb, infinitely better than I have been since I came out. At 8 o'clock we reached the saddle. Here we cooled our wine in a bed of snow, of which there are large patches at this altitude, made a second meal and O'Brien went

⁵⁰T.M. Kettle, 'The land Tirol' in St Stephen's, November 1904.

on for the top. He was three hours and a half away, and while waiting I shinned about the rocks a bit and got my eye accustomed to the look of things from this immense height. I also suddenly remembered that it was the 12th of July. I felt quite fresh after a long rest at the saddle and determined, having come so far, to go the whole way.

Result: when O'Brien came down about 11 o'clock I told him I felt bad about going back. He grew enthusiastic at the idea of my going the whole way and after a meal we set out together for the top. The look of it is appalling at first sight, and if I could show you it you would find it hard to believe, not that I, but that the most expert foot in Tirol could mount it. Of course there is no vegetation; it is a vast pile of gradually rising rounded terraces of rock, covered over everywhere with an immense drift of shingle. Going up it gives a grip for your feet, and if you slip prevents you from rolling far, coming down you slide through it guiding and supporting yourself with your Alpenstock. In places the rock rises almost as sheer as a wall - at least it seems to do so, of course it is not so bad. You negotiate them by taking not a straight but a winding cork-screw path, or in three very stiff spots by chains and iron bars which have been fixed there to prevent accidents. Well, to make a long story short, I got up, and at 12 o'clock on the anniversary of the Battle of the Boyne I was standing on the crowning plateau, the Spitz, at a height of 2,719 metres = 8,910 feet = about a mile and three quarters, looking down and round on the most marvellous sight I have ever seen - towns, rivers, church-spires, innumerable chains of snow covered glaciers, all bathed in the most lucid sunlight - and understanding why when the Devil sought to tempt our Lord he brought him up on a mountain.

I don't know what they will say at home, whether it was prudent or not to go up. But all I know is that three weeks ago in Dublin I was in a state of the most frightful collapse, two days ago in Innsbruck I was hardly a whit better, but yesterday on the mountains I felt like a new man. If I suffer no ill after effects I will spend most of my time climbing.⁵¹

A rather mysterious occurrence involving Kettle during his stay in the Tyrol was his arrest by the Austrian police who mistook him for an Italian anarchist. He was speedily released when it was established

⁵¹Kettle to 'Jamie' (Probably James Meenan), 18 July 1904, Kettle papers.

that it was a case of mistaken identity, but his University College friends made the most of the story and circulated alarming reports about his fate and his supposed offences. Kettle referred obliquely in St Stephen's to this incident: 'I will not touch on an episode garbled to my discredit by some, who no doubt had their motives...[but]... I am not writing a monograph on the Austrian prison system.'⁵²

He returned to Dublin to finish his law courses on a note of triumph, winning a Victoria Prize and being called to the Bar in 1905. At the King's Inns he was distinguished also for his conviviality, and was, as usual, a leading figure amongst his student companions. He had little temperamental affinity with the legal profession and still less for its formal trappings which were overshadowed by the symbol and ritual of the British crown. Willie Dawson remembered Kettle's indignation when at a special dinner at the King's Inns, the royal toast was proposed.

Kettle found himself very reluctantly compelled to rise with the rest. He was very indignant. When the Attendance Book was brought round at the end of the dinner, according to rule, for signature by the President of the tables it was suggested that the incident should be recorded. The following limerick was promptly composed by the company and inscribed in the book, where it is still extant.

We six of us dined at the Inns
 Of liquors we sampled the binns
 They proposed the King's health
 And we drank it - by stealth 53
 May Ireland forgive us our sins.

Kettle's lack of respect for the dignity of his chosen profession was also demonstrated on another occasion when he and some friends attending a debate at the King's Inns became bored with the proceedings

⁵²T.M. Kettle, 'The land Tirol', in St Stephen's, November 1904.

⁵³Willie Dawson, 'Kettle memorabilia', Kettle papers.

and adjourned to warm themselves at the brazier in the main hall.

They did not care to leave as their votes were required later on some matter of private business. To while away the time Kettle suggested that they should turn the effigies of distinguished lawyers, which ornament the staircase, with their faces to the wall. The idea was quickly carried out. It so chanced that the next day Lord Justice Fitzgibbon, President of the Law Students' Debating Society was showing a number of ladies over the building. Advancing up the stairs he exclaimed, "Here we see the familiar features of my old friend, Jonathan Henn." A titter from the group caused him to look up and discover that only a back-view of the eminent lawyer was available. His wrath was Homeric and forthwith he wrote a letter to the Society threatening to deny it the use of the building if the offender were not brought to justice. A vote of censure was passed on 'the person or persons unknown' who had perpetrated the outrage and it is alleged ⁵⁴ that Kettle supported the motion with his vote.

Another outlet for Kettle's conviviality was the Cui Bono Club. This was a dining club that had been formed amongst University College undergraduates and which was restricted to a membership of twelve. In fact no additions were ever made to the original membership amongst whom were Skeffington, Clery, Dawson and Constantine Curran. The club existed to discuss literary and artistic matters and excluded politics from its agenda. 'It had no fixed abode, no settled time of meeting and no President or Chairman.'⁵⁵ As the fortunes of its members prospered, the club's meetings ceased to be held, with the accompaniments of cups of tea, in student lodgings, and took place over dinner and wine in some of Dublin's better known hotel dining rooms. In this company, as well as his wit and capacity for story-telling, Kettle's rather studied eccentricities were much in evidence.

⁵⁴Willie Dawson, 'Kettle memorabilia', Kettle papers.

⁵⁵Ibid.

He had a certain casualness of manner. On one occasion two or three men of the Cui Bono having obtained some money prizes at examinations, Kettle invited the remainder and the prize-winners to dine - at the expense of the latter. The "guest-hosts" (as he termed them) although they stood in with this somewhat audaciously given entertainment showed a lack of cordiality and the dinner proved rather a failure.⁵⁶

1905, the year in which Kettle completed his formal education and said goodbye to student life, ended in a modest but, given his Nationalist convictions, heartwarming blaze of notoriety. The annual conferring of degrees by the Royal University had been increasingly accompanied by student protests. There was not, of course, a university in the British Isles where the conferring of degrees was not made the occasion of some horseplay. In Ireland though, such ragging carried with it political implications. On October 27, scenes of turbulence unprecedented in the history of the Royal University took place in its unlovely barrack-like building in Dublin's Earlsfort Terrace where degrees were being conferred. These events became known, at least in the Unionist press, as the 'God save the King riot'.

That the 'riot' achieved such prominence was perhaps due to the fact that, as Lord Meath the chancellor of the Royal University, revealed in a speech made in its aftermath, 'for the first time in the history of the Royal University and he thought in the history of any university, reporters had been present.'⁵⁷ If this was the case, the reporters were following their sound journalistic instincts for the conferring promised to be newsworthy. In 1904, a phalanx of policemen had unsuccessfully tried to keep students out of the audience at Earlsfort Terrace and in

⁵⁶Ibid.

⁵⁷Belfast Newsletter, 24 November 1905.

the subsequent pandemonium, the Earl of Meath had swept off the stage before the proceedings were completed, a major breach of protocol. In 1905, it was planned that admission should be by ticket only, tickets being kept out of the hands of students save for those receiving their degrees. This restriction does not seem to have been effective and possibly worsened things for a small group of students formulated an ingenious plan to circumvent such precautions.

Prior to the proceedings, they concealed themselves in a small room off the organ gallery in the great hall of the Earlsfort Terrace building. Their intention was to prevent the organist playing 'God save the King' at the close of the ceremony. Kettle's close friends, Cruise O'Brien, Eugene Sheehy and Patrick Little were amongst the ringleaders of the group. Press accounts of what actually took place during the conferring were conflicting, depending upon the political viewpoint of the paper concerned. The Irish Times, considering the politics of that journal was surprisingly gentle in its treatment.

The gallery, or at least one portion of it, was occupied by students, whose boisterous, but good-humoured shouts rendered it impossible at times to hear what was said on the platform. They infused a lively spirit into the proceedings, which was pardonable, and not altogether unwelcome. Their running comments on the candidates for degrees evoked laughter, and as they avoided personalities, they were all the more appreciated. A regrettable scene which marred⁵⁸ the enjoyment of visitors occurred later on.

If the Irish Times was inclined to play things down, the Belfast Newsletter painted on altogether grimmer picture.

Unlike the custom in former years, no formal address was delivered by his Lordship, who, no doubt, felt

⁵⁸Irish Times, 28 October 1905.

from previous experience that it was useless to make remarks which were drowned by the undergraduates. As Sir James Creed Meredith read out the names he was frequently interrupted, and it was with difficulty that those upon whom degrees were to be conferred knew when to approach the platform. When about half of the list had been gone through a pane in the balcony window was smashed. This caused a momentary lull, all eyes being directed to the spot, and it was thought that a strong force of police would have to be sent for to preserve order. No step, however was taken by the Chancellor or the members of the Senate and the malicious act was allowed to pass unnoticed... shortly before the close the organ gallery at the back of the platform was besieged by the malcontents. They gained entrance thereto through the music room and rushed up the stairs as if taking the place by storm. For a minute or two nothing could be heard above the din, and some people feared that, by the boldness of⁵⁹ their attack, they were about to eject the Senate.

Patrick Little, one of the demonstrators, believed that their action was much more restrained.

...at a given signal we all descended from the back gallery of the big hall and passed through a covered-in passage that emerged at the side or back of the platform and we just all stood there and did not allow the unfortunate organist to play the anthem... Afterwards I intensely disliked the 'Rags' at conferring as disorderly and unintelligent⁶⁰ and a degrading caricature of our own conduct.

All accounts agree that the students informed the audience that there would be 'no playing of God save the King'. The students on the platform then led their friends in the audience in several rousing choruses of 'God save Ireland' and the 'Boys of Wexford' proving to the satisfaction of the Belfast News Letter that they were 'animated by no mild disaffection but by disloyalty of the true Fenian type'.⁶¹ The members of the university senate on the platform put up no show of resistance but simply left the stage in as dignified a fashion as they could

⁵⁹Belfast News Letter, 28 October 1905

⁶⁰Patrick Little in Meenan (ed.), Centenary history, p.91.

⁶¹Belfast News Letter, 13 November 1905.

manage. The audience milled out of the hall and according to the United Irishman, anti-enlistment literature was distributed at the exits. The United Irishman also contributed a somewhat fanciful picture of the scene outside.

...a loyal and halfpenny paper had a sandwichman parading under the eyes of the Professors with boards before and after and the legend, "Police attacks on the University, outrageous conduct". A barrel organ now began instead of the stationary one. And "God save Ireland" was sung until the Professors lost patience and dispersed their pupils right and left with the ferrylae. Thus ended the "Conferring of Degrees".⁶²

Kettle was involved neither in the planning nor the execution of the demonstration. Cruise O'Brien did, however, bear a certain physical resemblance to Kettle and was mistaken for him. According to Arthur Clery, Kettle, 'having like Alan Breck Stuart, the special advantage of being innocent, immediately took up the running'.⁶³ The day after the conferring, Kettle appeared at a meeting of students and announced his intention of burning his own degree on the steps of the Royal University if anybody was prosecuted by the university authorities. Lord Meath presided over a special meeting of the senate to decide what action to take over what he described as,

...a distinct and successful effort made by a body of students to repudiate all allegiance to the gracious Sovereign, who, since his succession to the throne has shown himself to be a model constitutional ruler, and whose wise and lovable conduct has already obtained for him the respect and admiration of the world.⁶⁴

The senate resolved 'to take decided action in the matter'.⁶⁵ The 'decided action' involved summoning four students to appear before the senate for disciplinary action. The students summonsed were Thomas

⁶²United Irishman, 11 October 1905.

⁶³A.E. Clery, 'Thomas Kettle' in Dublin essays (Dublin 1916), p.6.

⁶⁴Freeman's Journal, 4 November 1905.

Kettle, Sarsfield Kerrigan, John E. Kennedy and Thomas J. Madden. The Freeman's Journal which had no sympathy to spare for the Royal University observed that of the students summonsed, 'Mr Kettle is the only graduate of the Royal University. Messrs. Kerrigan and Kennedy are undergraduates. Mr Thomas J. Madden is not a member of the University at all...[but holds] ...a diploma from the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland.'⁶⁶ The response of the students came in a letter which each sent to the senate and a copy of which was given to the press. The letter had obviously been drafted by a legally trained mind, and of the students involved, Kettle's would appear to be the hand behind it.

Sirs - I have received by registered post a document purporting to be issued by you as Secretaries of the Royal University of Ireland by which I am summoned to attend the Standing Committee of the Senate...to explain my behaviour at the public meeting of the University on October 27th., 1905, it having been reported to the Standing Committee of the Senate that certain persons of whom I am allegedly one, were guilty of 'riotous and disorderly conduct.' ...In making this statement I deny absolutely the right of your Committee or of the Senate to review and pass judgement on my conduct, in public or private. I make it simply to protect myself from the defamatory statements which have been put in circulation by your body. I warn you that these statements must not be repeated, and in view of the wide publicity which they have already received I intend to publish this letter in the press.

I do not intend to present myself before your Standing Committee in response to your summons. I entirely deny your jurisdiction to issue such a document or to adjudicate upon such a charge. The Statute and the Charter from which your body derives its authority confers no such powers as you attempt to exercise. Your University is not a true University in the right sense of that word. Your functions are not governing but merely administrative. Your duties are confined to conferring a Degree...Might I suggest that your Committee apply themselves within this limited sphere of usefulness and refrain from the issue of documents containing wholly unfounded and insulting allegations, which have no sanction behind them, and which 'go forth without authority and return without respect'.⁶⁷

⁶⁵Freeman's Journal, 4 November 1905.

⁶⁶Freeman's Journal, 8 November 1905.

A crowd of jeering students gathered to greet the Senators as they arrived at Earlsfort Terrace for the disciplinary meeting. The students summonsed did not appear. Instead, a 'Memorial' with the signatures of over eighty graduates and undergraduates of the Royal University was delivered.

We, the undersigned Graduates and Undergraduates of the Royal University of Ireland cordially endorse the actions of those of our colleagues who prevented the rendering of the English National Anthem at the Conferring of Degrees of October 27th. We desire, as they desired, to protest against the unjust, wasteful and inefficient government of which that air is a symbol.

We present this memorial mainly to render futile the attempts to single out for punishment isolated individuals who merely gave forcible expression to what is the reasoned conviction of us all.⁶⁸

There was little the senators of the Royal University could do to discipline the students except to send a report to the Law Officers of the Crown. This body examined the charter of the Royal University and in late November came to the conclusion that it was impossible to discipline the students. Certainly they could not be expelled from the Royal for nobody could be barred from sitting the examinations of that body. The onus of disciplining the students fell upon the authorities of University College and Kerrigan and Kennedy were duly reprimanded by Father Delany. Kettle and Madden, of course, were outside the jurisdiction of either the Royal or University College.

Kettle might have expected the matter to end there, a mere student prank. It was accepted by the Nationalist press that the protest had not been intended as an insult to the King, but had been directed against the injustice of the situation of Catholic higher education in Ireland. Nevertheless in Ulster the Liberal Unionist Association passed a series of resolutions condemning the students of University College. A counter-petition to the one sympathising with the demonstrators gained the signatures of over 275 graduates

⁶⁸Freeman's Journal, 8 October 1905.

of the Royal University. The Belfast News Letter warned its readers that lawlessness and disloyalty could be expected if ever 'a sectarian university under clerical control'⁶⁹ was established and said of University College that 'the continuance of a state grant to this hotbed of sedition is intolerable.'⁷⁰ Kettle would have agreed with the acerbic analysis of the editorial writer in the Leader who wrote:

The quarrel of this country is not with the King, but part of the quarrel is certainly with the anti-Irish crowd who use the King as their party cry. The warriors of this party have not the pluck to stand up manfully and fight their own corner; they take hold of 'the King', and when these Irish people who do not wish to have any quarrel with the King, but who desire, and justly desire, to fight the garrison, make a forward move against the garrison, the mean garrison cuddles 'the King' and takes up an attitude of 'Hit me now and the King in my arms.' It is a contemptible attitude.⁷¹

Nevertheless, as Kettle left his students days behind him, these harsh northern voices were to play a larger role in his future than he could have imagined, challenging the confident assumptions of Ireland's Nationalism and Ireland's Catholicism upon which his education had been so brilliantly focused.

⁶⁹Belfast News Letter, 13 November 1905.

⁷⁰Ibid.

⁷¹The Leader, 11 November 1905.

CHAPTER TWO

A radical young man

¹ Mary Finkle, 'Memoir' in *The Life of James O'Brien*, 1903, p. 26.

² J. M. Gifford, 'Memoir of James' in *ibid.* p. 27.

³ *ibid.* p. 27.

⁴ *ibid.* p. 27.

1. Introduction

The practice of the law held few charms for Kettle. He had little temperamental affinity with the legal profession. He was at once too sensitive and too imaginative. His wife recalled that, 'He had that uncanny gift of seeing everybody's point of view with equal intensity of vision. Such a gift makes for a very loveable personality but a lawyer should only see the point of view for which he is briefed.'¹ Kettle himself was to observe that, 'seven or eight days in an Assize Court help one to understand the anarchist and his attitude towards crime.'² Although he had the skill in debating so necessary for the successful barrister, Kettle's elequence was inspired by a humanitarian and philosophical temperament and the high flown rhetoric that he could deliver so effectively from the public platform would have become sadly entangled in merely forensic setting.

Neither was a career in politics immediately attractive to Kettle although he was to remind his future constituents that, 'All his friends knew that if he had an ambition of going into Parliament he could have been there three years ago without going through a contest at all.'³ Constantine Curran, in his volume of reminiscences, recalled that in 1904 Kettle was invited by Redmond and John Dillon to fill a parliamentary vacancy in North Kildare but that 'in the event he did not go forward for this contested seat.'⁴ As Kettle would have been a mere 23 years of age at the time of that offer it was a tribute to what the Irish leaders must have considered exceptional ability.

¹Mary Kettle, 'Memoir' in The day's burden (Dublin, 1968), p.26.

²T.M. Kettle, 'Reveries of assize' in *Ibid* p.75.

³Irish News, 9 July 1906.

⁴Constantine Curran, Under the receding wave (Dublin, 1970), p.147.

The eagerness of Redmond and Dillon to get Kettle into parliament is also indicative of their concern that the party was losing touch with the younger generation of Nationalists. As Alfred Webb, the party treasurer, wrote to Redmond in 1906:

I am greatly impressed with the character of the support being given to the Gaelic League, Dr. Hyde and the Sinn Fein movement, as compared to the character of the support we are receiving. The cream of the youth and spirit of the country are being gathered into these movements.⁵

In an attempt to acquire a leavening of bright young men in the organization the parliamentary party chiefs gave every encouragement to the Young Ireland Branch of the United Irish League. Kettle was first president of the branch which was founded in 1905 with a membership largely made up of University College graduates. The Young Ireland Branch proved to be something of a mixed blessing to the parliamentary party as, from its inception, it followed a militantly independent line on Home Rule regardless of any embarrassment it might cause to the leadership **of the party.**

Kettle, although active with his father in the local politics of North County Dublin and in spite of addressing the United Irish League national convention on the subject of Irish industries in 1905 was under few illusions about the effectiveness of the parliamentary party. He would enter parliament only if he could make his own, distinctive, contribution to the political debate. What that contribution was likely to be can be ascertained by following Kettle's activities immediately prior to his entry into the political arena and by examining in detail his editorship of the Nationist and the views expressed in his inaugural address as president of the Young Ireland Branch, The philosophy of politics.

⁵Joseph V. O'Brien, William O'Brien and the course of Irish politics 1881-1918, (California, 1976), p.174.

2. The Nationist

The Nationist, like all effective independently minded political reviews was the product of a small circle of friends. The nucleus of the Kettle circle if we may so designate such a collection of distinctive individuals was to be found in the group of young men who were regular visitors to the home of David Sheehy M.P. at no. 2 Belvedere Place, Dublin. David Sheehy was Nationalist member of parliament for Meath and presided over a crowded, happy, intensely political household. The Sheehys, like the Kettles, had prospered modestly as a result of the Nationalist advances in the eighties and nineties. In a land where the wealthy and aristocratic were Unionist the Sheehys represented in their modest, middle class, high minded way the type of elite from which it seemed reasonable to expect the leaders of the new Ireland might spring. If the Jesuits at University College had educated the sons and a few daughters of this rising middle class so that they might be ready to assume the burden of leadership than David Sheehy's wife, Bessie, played a supporting role in this process by running her household as a salon for the best and brightest University College graduates. Conor Cruise O'Brien, her grandson, has written that, 'My grandmother intended, quite consciously I believe to preside over the birth of a new ruling class: those who would run the country when Home Rule was won.'¹

The Sheehys had six children, two sons, Richard and Eugene, and four daughters, Mary, Hanna, Margaret and Kathleen. The attraction at no. 2 Belvedere Place for Kettle was Mary Sheehy, a romance that flourished under the benevolent eye of Bessie, who saw in the young man 'a likely future prime minister in a home rule government.'² The atmosphere at

¹Conor Cruise O'Brien, States of Ireland, (London, 1974), p.62.

²Ibid., p.62.

no. 2 Belvedere Place was, however, jollier than it might appear if viewed solely through the distorting prism of Bessie Sheehy's dynastic ambitions. Every Sunday night was open night and the livelier students from University College were encouraged to visit. James and Stanislaus Joyce were regular visitors as was Frank Skeffington who had married Hanna Sheehy in 1903 and added her surname to his in accordance with the feminist principles to which they both subscribed. For Mary Sheehy, James Joyce experienced 'a small, rich passion which, unsuspected by her, lasted for several years',³ an infatuation which was to ensure her of immortality in Joycean criticism as the writer's first sweetheart.

The Sheehy daughters were independently minded and intelligent, and on discovering that, in spite of their intelligence, the social system remained obstinately prejudiced against their sex, became feminists. Much of the time of the Sheehy's open nights was spent in singing, dancing, or playing games. Charades and burlesques of operas and plays were especially popular, the guests avidly seizing the opportunity for displays of allusiveness and wit. The effect of the Sheehy open nights upon the young men who attended them was like that of any salon-as self-confidence grew and brilliance was polished to a brighter lustre the consciousness grew of belonging to an elite. No. 2 Belvedere Place developed in Kettle a certain insouciance and gaiety and a wholly unconscious arrogance. These qualities were faithfully reflected in the pages of the Nationist.

It was symptomatic of the hiatus of parliamentary politics and the rise of cultural politics in Ireland's first decade of the twentieth century that a new type of Nationalist journalism should have flourished - the weekly review. Both Kettle and Sheehy Skeffington were avid readers of this type of publication and had long toyed with the idea of starting their own paper. As Kettle observed

³Richard Ellman, James Joyce, (London, 1965), p. 52.

'If one had taken the precaution to have a father who had accumulated sufficient wealth to allow his sons the caviar of candour, nothing could be more entertaining than to start a paper.'⁴ Lacking a wealthy father Kettle found a patron, or employer, in the person of Mr. B. Keily of Rathmines, a Dublin publisher in a small way. In an overcrowded market where every shade of the spectrum of Nationalist opinion appeared catered for by its own newspaper, Keily's venture was, to say the least, precarious. Editors like D.P. Moran of the Leader, Griffith of the United Irishman, and T.P. Kenny of the Irish Peasant were already vigorously applying themselves in the cause of an Ireland economically, politically and culturally self-sufficient. There was little room for a new paper and it is doubtful if Kettle expected his time on the Nationist to be anything but brief.

In fact the Nationist lasted a mere six months from September 1905 to February 1906 and Kettle's tenure of the editor's chair came to an unhappy end after an eventful three months. But the opportunity of editing the paper was what mattered to Kettle and the Nationist became a forum for his University College friends and the members of the Young Ireland Branch. The paper was to be distinguished by its wide-ranging interests, its sometimes strenuous intellectualism and, in an Irish context, by its extreme liberalism. A rival journal acidly remarked in an oblique reference to the educational background of the Nationist staff, 'There was once a time when the problem was, "What shall we do with our boys?" but the day is coming apace when Ireland must face the dread question: "What shall we do with our B.A.s?"'⁵

The unusual title of the new paper was inspired by Kettle's engagingly grandiose interpretation of Nationalism. 'Reckless even of its material interests, it will vindicate against you a principle which is the source of

⁴Nationist, 7 December 1905.

⁵Leader, 9 December 1905.

all generous effort and all well-being, material or otherwise and will drag you down even though the grapple brings worse evils on itself.'⁶ The protean characteristics of this Nationalism called for a more recondite title than the familiar sounding Nationalist. 'Nationalist was inadequate; it had been narrowed and cheapened down almost to blank nothing. We cast about for a fresher word; none offered and we were compelled to invent one.'⁷ In retrospect the invention was not a happy one in so far as it has confused otherwise careful scholars into crediting Kettle with editorship of the Nationalist (sic).⁸

The Nationist's political position was essentially that of the Young Ireland Branch. Although the Nationist first appeared in September 1905 and the Young Ireland Branch was founded in December of that year, the month of which Kettle was dismissed from the editor's chair, Nationist contributors formed the nucleus of the Branch and Kettle was its first President. The policies of the Young Ireland Branch were then, previewed in the Nationist. Young Ireland members were supporters of the parliamentary party but in their refusal to accept anything less than Home Rule they intended also to be the party's conscience. As the somewhat critical heirs of the older generation of parliamentarians, the Young Irelanders also intended casting around for some new departures of their own. They were critical of a Nationalism that seemed permeated with the dogma of a peculiarly narrow and parochial Irish Catholicism; they sought a rapprochement with Protestant Ulster and they were concerned with Ireland's future after Home Rule had been granted. 'We are aware that a great many, perhaps the majority of those who take part in the Constitutional movement, limit their demand to Home Rule. It is one view of things, and we shall be heartily glad to work with the holders of it, for although we desire to go farther, we are going by the same road. As regards political developments,

⁶Nationist, 21 September 1905.

⁷Ibid.

e.g. ⁸Bonnie K. Scott. 'Thomas Kettle 1880-1916', in Journal of Irish Literature,

we accept Parnell's declaration that no man has the right to lay fetters on the future.'⁹

In spite of their adherence to this dictum of the lost leader, the Nationist staff could not be described as much imbued with the spirit of Parnellism. Kettle had a poetic appreciation of Parnell but he was well aware of the disastrous impact of Parnell's inflexible urge to dominate his party. 'A Parnell dictatorship, a Healy vendetta are, we may confidently hope, alike impossible of repetition.'¹⁰ If there was one figure amongst the elder statesmen of Irish Nationalism who had won the unqualified approval of the Nationist then that was Michael Davitt. The great achievement of Davitt, the radical cast of his thought and his ill-concealed impatience with the guiles of parliamentary manoeuvre made him something of a hero to the younger generation. Moreover, Kettle's prime collaborator, Sheehy Skeffington, shortly to be Davitt's biographer, insisted on infusing the paper with radical content. Kettle somehow prevented Sheehy Skeffington's plethora of causes from taking over the paper - he was a pacifist, a feminist, a vegetarian, an anti-vivisectionist, a crusading anti-smoker, an agnostic free thinker and a socialist - and confined the enthusiastic radical to his own column, 'Dialogues of the Day'. Here Sheehy Skeffington displayed humorous gifts unexpected in one so earnest and turned the burning issues of the day into a series of satirical dialogues that were ultimately to contribute to Kettle's, and his own, downfall.

Apart from Kettle and Sheehy Skeffington, contributors to the Nationist included Richard and Eugene Sheehy, Cruise O'Brien, Arthur Clery, Willie Dawson, Richard Hazleton, Tom Madden, James Creed Meredith, William Fallon, Bulmer Hobson, Eoin MacNeill, and Kettle's brother, Laurence. From its offices at 58

⁹Nationist, 21 September 1905.

¹⁰Ibid., 14 December 1905.

Middle Abbey Street, the weekly penny paper charted a sometimes idiosyncratic editorial policy between the competing schools of Nationalist thought. Although it published articles in Irish, its support of the Gaelic League lacked the fervour of that shown by the Leader or the United Irishman. Sheehy Skeffington, notoriously in Dublin, thought the Gaelic movement reactionary and antiquarian. Kettle's enthusiasm for the Gaelic language was severely qualified by his proud identification with his native Dublin, where Gaelic had never been much spoken except by rural immigrants. At a later stage of his career when accused by a correspondent of the Leader of speaking English with a 'West British' accent, Kettle's pride in his Dublin identity stung him into the following angry response.

Dublin English is my language and it will continue to be so as long as that language is a necessity to my life. It is a language of which I fear you are not a master, for geography was not generous to you - and which has almost died out in Dublin under the invasions of provincial Ireland. But it is good enough for me, and a great deal too good for most people.¹¹

Nevertheless Kettle admired the work of the Gaelic League as a sign of renewed national vitality and in his view the possession of a distinctive national language **bolstered** Ireland's claim to sovereignty.

Kettle also admired the vitality of Griffith's Sinn Fein programme although on practical grounds the Nationist found the 'Hungarian doctrine' utterly unfeasible. Kettle had already subjected Griffith's doctrine to detailed criticism in an article in the New Ireland Review of February 1905, entitled 'Would the Hungarian Policy Work?'. In that article Kettle had concluded that 'unless the advocates of the "Hungarian Policy" realise the vastness of their project, the need for exact design, and the natural inertia of established methods, their campaign will produce nothing but anger and hard words.'¹² Claiming that Griffith's book, The Resurrection of Hungary:

¹¹Leader, 6 March 1909.

¹²T.M. Kettle, 'Would the Hungarian Policy Work?' in New Ireland Review, February 1905, p.322.

A Parallel for Ireland read like 'a fairy tale', Kettle pointed out the relative poverty and military powerlessness of Austria as compared to Great Britain; **the ramshackle** quality of Austrian government he contrasted with the administrative sophistication of Westminster; the relative isolation of Ireland in Europe he compared with Hungary's strategic position of importance. The balance of these antitheses was such he felt as to make Griffith's parallel dangerously misleading. The absence of Irish Nationalist M.P.s from Westminster would not seriously impair the government especially as Ulster Unionists would continue, doubtless, to attend. The real administrative machinery of Ireland would remain intact, its members would continue to be loyal to the Union and to provide effective service. Most damaging of all to Griffith's case in Kettle's eyes was his assumption that the Act of Union was somehow illegal. On the contrary, asserted Kettle, the supersession by the Irish parliament of the Renunciation Act of 1783 was perfectly legal for any sovereign parliament could abrogate any of its Acts that it chose to, even if by so doing it went into liquidation.

Kettle had subjected the tactic of abstentionism to the same clear-eyed practical analysis that O'Connell and Parnell had brought to the matter and his conclusion was similar. On other than pragmatic grounds, however, Kettle welcomed the idea. The ambitiousness of Griffith's thought he admired. In Kettle's opinion 'There has been going forward among us a cult of mean ideas; but we must not be afraid of ideas because they happen to be great. It is no blemish of the "Hungarian Policy" that it makes great demands on us all; it is on the contrary its highest merit.¹³ Now that the possibility of a Liberal government was emerging, Kettle felt that enthusiasm like Griffith's could revitalise the parliamentarians. The visionary but impractical Griffith

¹³Ibid.

represented the heart of Irish Nationalism, the parliamentarians its head. Comparing Sinn Fein and the parliamentary party, Kettle found 'the one having a political ideal but no policy, the other a policy indeed, and an indeterminate ideal, but an insufficient enthusiasm and driving force to make it work.'¹⁴

This sort of criticism the parliamentary party could accommodate and was even prepared to welcome the critic. But by condemning the practicality of the Sinn Fein programme, Kettle created a gulf between Griffith and the Nationalism of the Nationist and the Young Ireland Branch that was unbridgeable. Kettle's attack on his policy elicited from the editor of the United Irishman the surprising claim that in a war between Great Britain and Ireland the Irish could count on the support of twenty million Irish emigrants and so 'a simple sum in arithmetic informs us that the preponderance of Great Britain over Ireland in fighting strength is not quite so great as the preponderance of Austria over Hungary during the years of Hungary's struggle for independence.'¹⁵ In general though, Griffith chose to ignore the detail of Kettle's criticism and retaliated with a general denunciation of the parliamentary party and Nationist.

Our contemporary the Nationist speaks of a "quarrel" with us in its last issue. Now we never quarrel with children, whether they take the good advice we give them or not. The Nationist is unable to digest the advice we give it - and, having looped the loop, announces its discovery that Irish Nationalism is a "party" and that we are grandiose because we can't see it, and say so...the Nationist is a curious illustration of the manner in which Parliamentarians has warped and Anglicised the minds of its supporters until they are incapable of thinking of Irish nationalism in aught save terms of British politics.¹⁶

¹⁴Ibid.

¹⁵United Irishman, 16 February 1905.

¹⁶Ibid., 28 October 1905.

The Nationist, whilst repudiating 'Hungarianism' was an advocate of Sinn Fein policy. Indeed it would have been hard to find an Irish Nationalist who was not a supporter of Sinn Fein in the broader sense of the word meaning economic self reliance. In common with other Irish nationalist weekly papers, the Nationist assiduously promoted the cause of Irish industry and publicised a wide range of Irish products from soap and matches to boot blacking and bicycles. On the broader issues of stimulating Irish industry, Kettle's brother Laurence contributed a series of articles on 'Our Electrical Resources'. For the moral rehabilitation of the Irish people Kettle wrote angry denunciations of gambling and of boxing and the paper advocated temperance, although in milder terms than those used by the Leader whose editor, D.P. Moran had made the cause uniquely his own. The University Question was thoroughly debated with particular reference to the plight of woman undergraduates and the paper gave the most informed account of the aftermath of the 'God Save the King' riot justifying the students' action in storming the organ gallery. On this latter issue Kettle made a statement that, allowing for youthful exaggeration, may be taken as providing the leitmotiv of the Nationist's editorial policy. 'The essential point to remember is that in Ireland, as in Russia, the intellectuals, the unbribed intellectuals, are bitterly hostile to the tyrannies under which both are compelled to live. May the same success lie before them both.¹⁷ And it was by taking his stand for the critical freedom of the intellectual that Kettle brought about the demise of his editorship.

The vague yet aposite term 'liberal Catholicism' in Ireland's first decade of the new century is best understood less as a doctrinal set of beliefs or even as a theological description than as an attitude to a series of controversies

¹⁷Nationist, 9 November 1905.

that disturbed the intellectual life of Nationalist Dublin. The Nationist's role in these troubles is best understood by subsuming the paper's editorial policy under three categories - the aesthetic, the political and its attitude to the cause célèbre that became known as the Portarlington controversy. On 2 November 1905, there appeared in the Nationist an article 'Lex Credendi, Les Orandi' by Michael Gahan criticising Irish Catholicism from an aesthetic standpoint. Gahan declared that Irish Catholicism as practised was not the natural expression of either the Irish personality or indeed of the Catholic religion. He found that Catholicism in Ireland had been vitiated by the harsh doctrine of Jansenism. The result was that 'conventions have been thrust upon us alien to our nature; we have accepted habits of expression mean in themselves, however noble they may be in their aim; we have surrendered ourselves passionately to an environment of vulgarity.¹⁸ He criticised the 'almost furtive and timid privacy of the popular form of devotion',¹⁹ and saw in the meagre aesthetic standards of Irish religious art and architecture a reflection of the stunted spirit of Irish worship. Gahan's recommendations for combatting the blight of Jansenism were vague enough but essentially, and like Kettle in another context, he appealed to energy and boldness - the 'life force'. 'Open the windows and air the room, let us live, think and speak boldly...Our old Catholic artists confronted life boldly, and however limited their technique they found terms to think it out, each in his own art. It is what the modern novelist is doing in the most comprehensive art form of our day and doing in a field that should belong to us.'²⁰ This latter example was perhaps unfortunately chosen as Dublin's best known 'modern' novelist,

¹⁸Ibid., 2 November 1905.

¹⁹Ibid., 2 November 1905.

²⁰Ibid., 2 November 1905.

George Moore, had carefully cultivated a reputation for sexual immorality and in 1903 had created a sensation by converting from Catholicism to Protestantism the better to pursue his art.

Gahan's article was enough to send a frisson of disapproval through one excessively pious body of lay Catholics, the Young Men's Society of the Immaculate Heart of Mary whose paper, the Catholic Young Man, promptly denounced the Nationist as an immoral publication. Kettle's reply was unsparing of the susceptibilities of the Catholic Young Man.

As for those contentions of ours which this newly-arisen guardian of Catholic truth found it a painful duty to anathematise, they are on record and we have no intention of repeating them...But when it comes to a question of Catholic truth, we take the liberty of refusing to be psalmodised out of the fold. Might we suggest, by the way, that to associate the methods of the Nationist with those of the person called "Mike the Catholic" is to fall a little below the high courtesy of the saints? We cannot but regret that our infidelities laid such a tax on the columns of our contemporary that no space could be found to explain why the Catholic Young Men's Society of Queenstown imported a billiard table from England, and why the Catholic Young Man is printed at a non-Catholic house. It does seem a little inconsistent.²¹

Kettle was not anti-religious, simply impatient with cant and his impatience was the greater because of his openness to progressive ideas. The essence of liberal Catholicism was summed up by Kettle thus: 'Because Catholicism lives it evolves, and you cannot marry it inseparably to any social order. It can adjust itself to any order in which the duties, as well as the rights, of men are insisted upon, and that is almost a definition of democracy. Where is the redemption of society to be found if not in democracy - democracy with the poison of irreligion eliminated - and what power can eliminate that poison if not the Catholic Church?'²² This stance should have

²¹Ibid., 30 November 1905.

²²Ibid., 7 December 1905.

been conciliatory enough to ensure an anxious reader that on Catholic matters the Nationist was basically sound. But these were not ordinary times for Irish Catholics. In 1905 the Catholic world was shaken to its foundations when the French government disestablished the Catholic Church in that country. The French clergy lost all official status, monastic life was prohibited and Church property was transferred to local government bodies. Although Catholic Ireland was outraged, the Nationist accepted this turn of events easily enough and even welcomed it as an opportunity for the regeneration through adversity of the **religious** impulse in France. (Sheehy Skeffington of course welcomed the disestablishment of the French Church for quite the opposite reason.) Whilst Irish Catholics closed ranks in support of the French Church, the Nationist continued to mock the more extravagant manifestations of belligerent Catholicism. In 'Dialogues of the Day' Sheehy Skeffington managed to suggest that the newly formed Catholic Defence Society wished really to exterminate Protestantism and that it was also a purely materialistic organisation to provide jobs for Catholics. Farther offense to Catholic susceptibilities was caused by an ostensibly political issue but one with strong sectarian overtones, the Nationist's attitude to the Independent Orange Order.

The emergence of this deviant brand of Orangeism confirmed Kettle in one of his great idees fixes, that Ulster Protestants were about to decamp from Unionism and embrace Nationalism. The formation of the Independent Orange Order showed that Ulster Protestants had made a significant step in the direction and the Nationist now urged the Nationalists of Ireland to meet this advance. An article, 'The New Ulster' by Bulmer Hobson described this potential new departure in visionary terms. Hobson claimed that 'the two Orange Orders have assumed a new attitude; they have discovered that they have a country, and the pride of citizenship will stir them to service for Ireland.'²³

²³ Ibid., 30 November 1905.

In Hobson's view what prevented Protestants from making common cause with Nationalists was their fear of the priest in politics. 'They fear that an independent Ireland would be an Ireland dominated by the cleric; and the cleric in politics - especially when he is of the opposite camp is their pet aversion, and the one point on which they still refuse to be tolerant or just. But for that fear of clericalism the Protestant North might be as republican as their grandfathers.'²⁴

Hobson then went on to describe a Nationalism that in intensity of vision and imagery seemed to subordinate both Catholicism and Protestantism to a new quasi-religion. 'That force is the **National Idea**. **Before it, as at a shrine**, dissensions must be hushed and hatreds forgotten and hands joined in brotherhood. Make not the religious or political party, but the National Idea supreme in Ireland, and the Protestant North will lead the van for nationhood.'²⁵

Hobson, a Quaker, concluded his article by proposing a non-sectarian system of primary education, the very idea of which was anathema to the Irish clergy. Not surprisingly then, the Nationist's liberalism ran afoul of the habitual distaste that Nationalists felt for Orangemen and the unthinking popular identification of Nationalism with Catholicism. This Nationalism found its most vigorous expression in the pages of the Leader and D.P. Moran turned his well developed powers of invective upon the youthful newcomers to the world of weekly journalism. The Leader drew its readers' attention to the undoubtedly sectarian utterances made in the past by J. Sloan of the Independent Orange Order and went on to make the unwarrantable

²⁴Ibid., 30 November 1905.

²⁵Ibid., 30 November 1905.

inference that Sloan and his followers simply wished to cash in on the Irish industrial revival - a feeble enough growth in reality but a cause to which Nationalists were devoted.

A few fellows like Mr. J. Sloan, late of the steps of Belfast Custom House, do not want to "out of it", and they have, consequently, titivated themselves out with some bogus green ribbons, and, as was to have been expected, a few of the inevitable greenhorns on the Irish side - whom like the poor we have always with us - a few of these greenhorns are taking the Sloanites as Irish patriots in the making. Sloan and Co. dimly seeing that it is not business for them to be palpable and undisguised foreigners in this country in these days or Irish Revival commence to spout, "Ireland, Ireland" and some of our "national" papers dream dreams of converted orangemen.²⁶

Whatever the validity of the Leader's long-term political judgement about the Independent Orange Order, Moran struck his invariable note of sectarian inventive when he described Kettle and his associates as 'National sheep clothed in lions' skins who would be afraid to say ma-a-a before an anti-Irish sourface',²⁷ and the real burden of his concern emerged when he attacked what he discerned as the dangerous tendencies of the Nationist with regard to religious matters.

...we would like to cry a halt to a tendency to abuse the word "Nationality" by some of those would erect it as a thing above and independent of religion - as if, logically, anything could be above religion. It would be simple enough for some to use "Nationality" as many French revolutionaries attempted to use "Reason". "Reason" as a goddess was used to hit religion and "Nationality" may be engineered by certain people, aided by a few well-meaning but muddled greenhorns, to hit the Church in Ireland, and weaken its wholesome influence on the country. We cannot conceive any real conflict between the true interests of Irish nationality and the true interests of the Church; but we can conceive - and we would like to put honest people on their guard against them - we can conceive designing people raising the catch-cry "Nationality" as a lever to squeeze and damage the Church.²⁸

²⁶Leader, 9 December 1905.

²⁷Ibid., 9 December 1905.

²⁸Ibid., 9 December 1905.

Moran's warning may have had some validity if applied solely to Hobson's article but the picture he painted was a travesty of the Nationist's attitude. But travesty or not, it was a travesty that struck a responsive **chord in the** popular consciousness and in particular in the consciousness of Mr. Keily, the Nationist's publisher who was evidently increasingly concerned by the scandalous nature of Kettle's editorship. Therefore Kettle's treatment of the Portarlington Controversy came as the precipitating factor which led to his dismissal from the Nationist.

The Portarlington Controversy ran its tortuous course from its beginnings in 1905 to its inconclusive end in 1907 in a series of episodes that at one time or another sent spasms of contention through the press, the Gaelic League and the Catholic hierarchy. Its most notable casualties were T.P. Kenny and W.P. Ryan, successive editors of the Irish Peasant and the editor and staff of the Nationist. Under the influence of T.P. Kenny its gifted editor, the Irish Peasant had established a reputation for liberal weekly journalism tinged with anti-clericalism. The unlikely locale for such a liberal paper was the country town of Navan, where a printing works had been established by the late Nationalist M.P., James McCann as part of a co-operative colony he had set up in his native county, Meath. Under Kenny's editorship the Irish Peasant which had initially functioned only as a local journal broadened its coverage to deal with national affairs and began to take a particular interest in the nearby seminary of Maynooth.

In December 1905 Kenny was dismissed as editor and was succeeded by W.P. Ryan who met with the same fate a year later when the paper ceased publication after it had been denounced by Cardinal Logue who accused it of anti-clericalism and prohibited the reading of it in his archdiocese. Ryan's crime in Logue's eyes was to have advocated the greater involvement of the

Catholic laity in Irish primary education and to have questioned the wisdom of the Irish parliamentary party in becoming involved on the side of the Catholic interest in controversies over the British Education Bill of 1906. The underlying issue was the question of the role of the Catholic laity in the Church and the extent of the control that the clergy should exercise over lay affairs. Kenny and Ryan followed a liberal Catholic line, summed up by Kenny in the Nationist as 'Complete deference to the priest in all things of religion, and complete indifference to him in all things else'.²⁹ The explosion of clerical wrath that ended the life of the Irish Peasant occurred when Ryan was editor but the fuse had been effectively laid by Kenny in his coverage of the Portarlinton Controversy and because the issue was particularly dear to the heart of the younger generation of Nationalists, Kenny found a forum for his views after his dismissal in the pages of the Nationist.

The controversy began when Father O'Leary the parish priest of Portarlinton objected to the Gaelic League holding mixed night classes in the town and suggested that the real aim of the Gaelic League girls attending these classes was to make assignations with the opposite sex. To prevent this, Father O'Leary organised separate classes for the female League members in a nearby convent. The officials of the Portarlinton Branch protested in church one Sunday morning against this clerical interference and a prolonged period of hostilities ensued. Father O'Leary and his curate were expelled from the Portarlinton Branch and Dr. Foley the Bishop of Kildare compounded the bad feeling by emphasising the moral danger of mixed classes. The Irish Peasant and Sinn Fein got hold of and published copies of a circular letter sent out

²⁹Nationist, 14 December 1905.

by Father O'Leary to his brother priests warning of the anti-clerical influence in the Gaelic League as a whole and recommending a strategy for an electoral ^a assault by clerics on the League's Executive Committee. Father O'Leary recommended that, 'The remedy for this unfortunate state of affairs is to have the objectionable elements removed from the executive, or rendered harmless; and a number of good Catholic laymen, with a fair representation of the priests placed on the Executive Committee. The priests have it quite within their power to effect this.'³⁰ Father O'Leary was also bellicose and unpolitical enough to declare that 'we won't allow our religion to be insulted by any Douglas Hyde.'³¹ This illiberal attitude which ran counter to all the ideals of the Gaelic League was successfully resisted and O'Leary and his fellow conspirators failed in their attempt to gain control of the Executive Committee. But it was all too much for the proprietors of the Irish Peasant and under pressure from Cardinal Logue the McCann family dismissed Kenny in December 1905.

Kettle immediately invited Kenny to contribute to the Nationist and, writing under his nom de plume, 'Pat', the dismissed editor produced an article entitled 'Pat, the Peasant and some Priests' in the issue of 14 December. Understandably, Kenny wrote in a vein of some bitterness about the 'reactionary clerics [who] have deprived me of the means to earn my livelihood, not to mention the immoral volume of lying abuse that has been kept up against my personal character.'³² He then reaffirmed the liberal Catholic critique of the role that religion continued to play in Irish affairs. 'The great sectarian evil of Ireland arises neither from Catholicism nor from Protestantism, but from the organised misuse of both; and the obvious way to

³⁰W.P. Ryan, The Pope's green island, (London, 1912), pp.107-8.

³¹Ibid., p.112.

³²Nationist, 14 December 1905.

better things for our country lies through Catholics and Protestants cultivating some higher conception of Christianity than has yet resulted from their professional moralists on either side.'³³ This apparently unexceptionable article proved the last straw for the long suffering Mr. Keily who, on 21 December, wrote Kettle a letter of dismissal - a letter which, in mentioning the activities on the Nationist of Kettle's old University College friends Clery, Dawson and Sheehy Skeffington, struck a note of plaintive bewilderment.

Dear Mr. Kettle,

I don't think what you say justifies your having published "Pat's" article. It was almost blasphemous, certainly irreverent in one part, and the tone all through, was outrageous and much more likely to increase rather than remove the abuse of ecclesiastical authority which he complains of. I am not accusing you of "dishonourable" conduct. I simply cannot see how it was that you did not foresee how pained and annoyed I should be, by having an article like that published in a paper of mine. However, there is not much use in talking any more about it.

Of course the accounts you sent in will be paid. If anyone is not paid in full please let me know. I see an item of 10/6 down to Mr. Clery. Was not the arrangement that Mr. Clery and Mr. Dawson were to be paid £1.1.0 a week on condition that they provided at least one article? Or is this item for something else? I most sincerely hope that your connection with the Nationist has not led to any permanent disagreement with your people. I should be most distressed to think it had.

Mr. Kenwell said something about the amount due to Mr. Skeffington not understanding how long he was acting as sub-editor.

in haste,
Very sincerely yours,
B. Keily 34

Doubless Keily's letter was not unexpected by Kettle and the Nationist of 14 December contained in addition to Kenny's article, Kettle's editorial

³³Ibid., 14 December 1905.

³⁴Kettle Papers.

farewell. This took the form of a counterattack upon the Leader which had enthusiastically sided with Father O'Leary over the Portarlington Controversy. The Leader in a veiled allusion to the Nationist had published a satire in which Moran playfully assumed that his office boy was to start a 'weekly' magazine to be entitled either the Non-Catholic Young Man or the Well Groomed Platitude. 'It will be full of crisp commonplaces, hidden truisms, recondite ineptitudes, academic nothings and paradoxical obviousness. We wish it the success it deserves.'³⁵ In the article 'The Cowardly Leader', Kettle asked 'Could it be that the editor of the Leader had heard of approaching changes in the conduct of this paper? Could it be that he supposed himself to be attacking a man who was no longer in a position to make a public reply? If so his fortune played him false; he made a miscalculation of just one week.'³⁶ And, in a valediction, Kettle at once expressed his contempt for Moran's type of nationalism and looked to the dawning of a new, and more humane type of nationalism of which the Nationist had been the avatar.

The reactionaries who are always afraid of trusting the future have called us rash, inexperienced and callow. But the younger generation is with us and Maynooth is at their head. The movement of which we have been but a voice from the crowd is gathering volume and consolidating itself. The editor of the Leader recognises that as clearly as anyone else. He has played in our regard, not the man's part, but the coward's part. There is but one excuse for him. What else could he do?

In journalism and religious politics he stands for a dying tradition, and the last thing we expect of a dying tradition, is that it should be just, sane or even clean spoken.³⁷

It was left to Sheehy Skeffington to provide the definitive condemnation of Moran's style of journalism in 'Dialogues of the Day' repaying the editor

³⁵Leader, 9 December 1905.

³⁶Nationist, 14 December 1905.

³⁷Ibid., 14 December 1905.

of the Leader in his own stylistic coinage. Sheehy Skeffington described the Leader's 'drivelling, brainless and utterly melancholy humour', its 'low, cynical outlook on life', its 'ignoble policy of cringing to royalty', its 'choice combination of the bully, the coward and the sneak', and its 'bitter attacks upon unoffending Protestants with its atrociously vulgar nicknames'.³⁸

³⁸Ibid., 14 December 1905.

3. The Philosophy of Politics

The Nationist however was far from being the only expression of Kettle's political interests at this time and his inaugural address as first president of the Young Ireland Branch in December 1905 gave him the opportunity to express the speculative, philosophical side of his nature which had been the underpinning of his editorial policies. The essay that Kettle read on this occasion in the Mansion House and which was later published gave his basic ideas on politics, ideas that he subsequently developed but never fundamentally changed. Detailed attention then must be paid to The philosophy of politics not only as an indication of Kettle's beliefs on the eve of his entry to the arena of practical politics but also for some understanding of his personality and character.

One of the more remarkable aspects of Irish Nationalist thought is its lack of coherent philosophy. Nationalist debate in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries tended to focus upon tactical issues and although a philosophy of Irish Nationalism might be inferred from a reading of disparate sources, the profounder aspects of that Nationalism are seen as secondary to pragmatic and strategic concerns. Where Kettle's contribution was unique was in its concentration upon the state and politics as subjects worthy of study in their own right and not simply as adjuncts of Ireland's unhappy history. This at once separated Kettle from thinkers like Mitchel , Pearse and Connolly and filled a conspicuous void in the theoretical armoury of the Irish parliamentary party. This approach to Irish Nationalism which bore evidence of Kettle's considerable reading in philosophy, coupled with a prose style that owed much to the influence of the Anglo-Irish Patriot parliamentarians makes his essay a curious and compelling, if ultimately unconvincing, production.

Kettle began by reminding his audience of the necessity for a political society like the Young Ireland Branch to take 'an occasional bath in the sea of fundamental political ideas.'¹ This necessity was due not only to the fact that one of the objects of the Branch was to educate and to raise the standard of political information amongst younger Nationalists by frequent lectures and debates. It was due also to the ubiquitous and unavoidable nature of the role played by politics in society. 'Call yourself a non-politician as loudly as you will, you will never succeed in ignoring politics; therefore of necessity, an attempt must be made to understand them'.² Kettle's notion of politics transcended the mere rationalism of the Utilitarian model and its derivatives and revealed the extent of his reading in continental philosophers. His knowledge of German historical philosophy, and it must be remembered that he spoke and read German fluently, led to his insistence that 'reason is but one faculty of a many-facultied being; that what used to be brusquely dismissed as mere sentiment, mere instinct, mere enthusiasm, are inseparable elements of human nature.'³ Kettle saw human life as more complex than any theory of it and yet insisted that theory had its role to play, political science being in his analogy as 'a chart to an ocean'⁴ or 'a mathematical **formula to the path of a planet**'.⁵ Politics were for Kettle powerful, ubiquitous and symbolic of deeper forces in society. The notion of determinism, of evolution, of humanity fulfilling itself in the historical process, these perceptions with their concomitant emphasis on the importance of sentiment, feeling and imagination in the individual informed Kettle's address from the start. The expansive optimism so characteristic of post-Darwinian Victorian thought was congenial to Kettle and was strengthened by his reading in German historical

¹T.M. Kettle, The philosophy of politics, (Dublin, 1906), p.3.

²Ibid., p.4.

³Ibid., p.3.

⁴Ibid., p.4.

philosophy and also, doubtless, by the metaphysical bent of his Catholic education. Thus he could declare with Hegel and indeed with **Aquinas** that 'ethical principles are, of course, invariable; but the formal enactments in which they are imperfectly embodied form a system, developing, as we hope, towards a fuller realisation.'⁶ He acknowledged his debt to Darwin and Spencer by declaring that 'It is the thought-climate, called in a large way evolution, and so characteristic of the nineteenth century that has given us this point of view.'⁷ The result mélange, which might be called metaphysical liberalism was more consistent, lucid, witty and free from the smell of scholarly lamp oil than its origins might have suggested.

Kettle's endeavour, and as an individual in the grip of history that endeavour was necessarily limited, was to give a rational account of the forces which operated in society. In politics he found the most direct and pervasive expression of these forces. Political science he thought differed from physical science because it was non-predictive due to 'the stupendous complexity of the subject matter...'.⁸ Nevertheless, he discerned certain principles which 'seemed to approach the certainty of physical laws'.⁹ He cited as an example the principle that in an elective system of politics the will of the majority of representatives must prevail, allowing for due safeguards for individual freedom, over the will of the minority. On these grounds, he attacked the Conservative government's dilatory attitude to the question of a new university for Catholic students.

⁶Ibid., p.8

⁷Ibid., p.8

⁸Ibid., p.4

⁹Ibid., p.4

He [Mr. Balfour] said, you will remember, that no Bill could be introduced to realise this reform unless there was absolutely unanimity among all interested parties in Ireland. Had he applied that maxim consistently to English political life, to political life anywhere, the result would be that no government could continue twelve hours. In proclaiming it Mr. Balfour was proclaiming himself as Anarchist.¹⁰

The principle was by no means as certain as it appeared to Kettle and was a particularly dangerous one for an Irish Nationalist to employ. Balfour was not insisting that the entire United Kingdom adopt a unanimous position on the Irish University question but merely the Irish part of it which Balfour did not concede to be a nation with the right of self-government. From Balfour's point of view the will of the majority was prevailing over the minority. Indeed, in Unionist eyes, the Irish party under Parnell had been exactly the type of fractious minority deplored by Kettle and had been accused of reducing Westminster to anarchy. Irish Nationalists were a minority within the United Kingdom, Irish Unionists were a minority within Ireland - so far from clarifying issues by revealing a principle that operated with a certainty approaching that of a physical law, Kettle's insight simply restated the political problems of the day. What Kettle had discerned as a scientific law of politics rested upon a prior assumption of an ethical nature; namely that Ireland was a nation and therefore a moral entity with the right of self-government. But was Ireland a nation? Kettle, of course, argued that it was, paraphrasing the line of reasoning followed by the German political economist, Friedrich List, whose National System of Protection was then enjoying a vogue in Dublin and had already deeply influenced Arthur Griffith. Following List, Kettle listed the attributes of national identity:

¹⁰Ibid., p.5.

A distinctive language, a characteristic national temperament and outlook on life, a history, a sentiment of unity in the present, common memories, common interests, a geographical area large enough to constitute an independent state - is there a single one of these elements that we do not possess?¹¹

By these criteria Ireland was a nation, but one with a particularly thorny minority problem. It may be doubted whether Irish Unionists had much of a 'sentiment of unity' with Irish Nationalists, perhaps less doubtful but open to question if Ulstermen shared a 'temperament and outlook on life' with their brethren in the other provinces of Ireland and the 'common memories' and 'common interests' as stated by Kettle were sufficiently vague and imprecise to be of little value as practical concepts in a philosophy of politics. Reduced to its essentials, Kettle's argument was a commonsense one reflecting the received Nationalist opinion of his day. The majority of Irishmen wanted self-government and had the economic resources to sustain self-government, therefore they should have self-government. There would be little enough remarkable in the Philosophy of Politics had Kettle not gone on to draw from this commonsense approach a philosophy that elevated the common man of the masses into a receptacle of the true wisdom of the ages. History, metaphysics and evolution in their most significant aspects were to be seen in the sometimes irrational, frequently sentimental and contradictory ordinary man. Kettle embraced mass democracy with fervour. The common man in his role as citizen, family man, worker and pleasure seeker was the measure of all things. Kettle's view of human nature was similar to that of James Joyce. One feels that he would have applauded Joyce's creation of Leopold Bloom and that Bloom himself would have found Kettle's philosophy congenial.

This most characteristic theme of his philosophy Kettle introduced by posing the fundamental political question - what is the purpose of politics? Kettle agreed with the fundamental textbooks that the object of politics is the ordered control and management of public affairs and of the relationship

¹¹Ibid., p.11.

between government and governed. But the narrow definition of order as a lack of disturbance did not suffice for the purpose of his philosophy. 'The cry of "Order for Order's sake" is as ruinously foolish as that of art for art's sake, or money for money's sake.'¹² In the course of his essay, Kettle was moving towards an alternative definition, of order as a natural or moral system with definite tendencies and with an implied mandate of an historico-ethical nature. Order was not and never could be an end in itself. Its justification, he told his audience, was to enhance the quality of life. 'Behind order there is life, and it is only in so far as it tends to increase the sum and improve the quality of life, that any system of government, any scheme of positive law is ethically justifiable.'¹³

The drawback of this statement as Kettle recognised was a certain philosophical wooliness. For philosophical purposes, to take as the criterion of good government that it enhance the quality of life was at once to claim too much and too little. On the level of ethical philosophy the fundamental proposition could be widely accepted but its detailed analysis would inevitably result in widely divergent points of view. Without scaling the heights of ethical philosophy and from within his own subjectivity, the individual could find the statement irritatingly vague and divorced from the practical issues of life as a citizen. Nevertheless, Kettle insisted that 'the average man possesses a sufficiently clear notion for practical purposes of the conditions that make life desirable, beautiful, and worthy to be lived.'¹⁴ This statement, coupled with Kettle's insistence that his postulate about the quality of life be applied as a general touchstone 'in your attempt to

¹²Ibid., p.6.

¹³Ibid., p.6.

¹⁴Ibid., p.6.

gather together in some binding idea the currents of effort that make up contemporary Ireland'¹⁵ whilst removing none of its philosophical vagueness suggests its very special relevance to the political situation prevailing in Ireland. As he applied the 'test of life' to the movements and institutions then current in Ireland, it became apparent that for Kettle national liberation and personal liberation were intertwined. For Kettle, Irish freedom was not simply a political ideal but a psychic necessity.

In his idea that national liberation was a necessity for the full psychic development of the individual, Kettle was undoubtedly responding to the intellectual influence of cultural Nationalism. The idea that Ireland was mentally enslaved to England was one widely enunciated in such journals of advanced nationalism as the Leader, the United Irishman and An Claidheamh Soluis. The disillusioned years following the Parnell split had seen the growth of the language movement, the Gaelic Athletic Association and the literary revival, all of which sought a rediscovery of the Irish character by freeing Irish men and women from the bondage of alien forms of expression. Beneath the false persona of Anglified Ireland it was assumed lay the real, authentic, Irish character with a fuller and richer mental reality. Michael Gahan, in his Nationist article 'Lex Credendi, Lex Orandi', had applied the same assumption to Irish Catholicism. Here also perhaps is one of the impulses that was to lead Joyce to explore the interior reality of his characters' lives. In 1906, Freudianism had not reached Ireland and the parallels between psychoanalysis and the cathartic nature ^{of} cultural Nationalism need not be laboured. But the freedom that Kettle sought for Ireland was far more than the type of freedom ensured by formal enactments of the law; it was nothing less than a moral imperative that the nation and the individual

¹⁵Ibid., p.6

be made whole again. That Ireland was not free was an affront to human nature. 'There is not a Chancellery in Europe but recognises that where there is an historic nationality, unexpressed so far in the form of a visible state, there is contradiction of human nature which cannot last.'¹⁶ And Kettle found the source of Irish nationality 'in that need for self-realisation which is also the source of all individual morality'.¹⁷

There is surely something of a generational conflict underlying Kettle's embrace of the 'life force' as a test of political doctrine. James Joyce, whose diagnosis of paralysis in all aspects of Irish life Kettle largely shared, also invoked the 'life force' as moral imperative. In the climactic passages of A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man, Stephen Dedalus writes in his journal, 'Welcome, O life! I go to encounter for the millionth time the reality of experience and to forge in the smithy of my soul the uncreated conscience of my race.'¹⁸ And Joyce's biographer assures us that though 'Joyce was like Stephen aware that big words can make us unhappy...he and his hero adopt the florid capital L for Life without fear'.¹⁹ It would perhaps be too crude to suggest that in the affirmation of life with a capital L, that in the concentration on the psychic release of Nationalism as an antidote to the paralysis of life in Irish society, Kettle, Joyce and the younger generation of those who were influenced by cultural Nationalism were premature Franz Fanons exploring the negritude of an Irish colonial mentality. But much of the vigour of Irish Nationalism seemed to have been buried with Parnell and the older generation of Nationalists did not inspire young men. The fathers had bequeathed to the sons a world of numbing,

¹⁶Ibid., p.10.

¹⁷Ibid., p.11.

¹⁸James Joyce, A portrait of the artist as a young man, (London, 1979), p. 228.

¹⁹Richard Ellman: 'The Politics of James Joyce' in New York Review of Books, May 1977.

paralysing boredom. Hence Kettle's impatience in the Nationist with the deadening conventional pieties of Irish Catholicism. His Philosophy of Politics was an attack on the repression of the Irish nation by the English but was also a blow against the consequent repression of the individual condemned to live out his life in a society that depressed and thwarted his natural impulses. Into the conduit of cultural Nationalism this frustrated energy naturally flowed.

By no mere accident is it that the Gaelic League which started with language has gathered round it games, singing, dancing, and all the arts of friendly intercourse. These all stand for life, joyously realising itself under benign conditions. It has been said that all government exists to hang a fowl before the Sunday fire of every peasant. Dancing is less necessary than eating, and more beautiful. It represents the free energy of a life that has not merely withstood but has conquered the hostility of external circumstances, and you will understand the sense in which I say that all contemporary Irish movements exist in order to set a boy and girl dancing at a Sunday ceilidh.²⁰

Kettle's example of dancing as an example of the unfettered joy of life was of course a thinly veiled allusion to the Portarlington Controversy. Another young nationalist, Sean O'Casey, gave vent to a similar impatience when he observed that 'It was a stingy republicanism that wouldn't fight for the right to dance with a girl in the open light of day'.²¹

Whatever its attractions for youth in revolt against the older generation, the 'test of life' is a somewhat blunt philosophical instrument, all too easily coarsened into an uncritical worship of energy for its own sake. Kettle amplified and strengthened his idea of the 'test of life' with a set of presuppositions that may be referred to as the 'test of awareness'. It is plain that Kettle belonged to the school of political philosophers that believes in the fundamental goodness of human nature and consequently advocates

²⁰The philosophy of politics, p.7.

²¹Sean O'Casey, Drums under the window, (London, 1973), p.146.

the most widespread participation possible in the exercise of political responsibility. The problem for Kettle, as for all political philosophers who take this fundamentally benign view of human nature is to explain mankind's perverse and apparently infinite capacity to create and acquiesce in unrepresentative and oppressive institutions of government. For this reason, a theory of history and its concomitant, a developmental theory of human nature, are unavoidable necessities for the political theorist of liberal or progressive persuasion. Kettle's view of history was, in every sense of the word, progressive. History showed not merely political and economic progress but the evolution of human feeling and sentiment.

We realise life in its concrete richness, and man as a complex of remembrances, instincts, intuitions and emotional needs. The historical studies of the last century, the romantic movement, and the vast development of psychology, both in formal studies and in art of every kind, especially the novel, have rehabilitated that vast area of consciousness which used to be derided as "sentiment".²²

The study of history, psychology and literature can lead us to realise that by feeling correctly we are thinking correctly; or to put it in another way, thought and feeling must be in harmony. Unless these conditions are satisfied, we cannot feel free and our sense of life will be diminished. This is what Kettle meant when he based his claims for nationalism on 'that need for self-realisation which is the source of all individual morality'.²³ As an individual attains congruence between thought and feeling so he maximises his freedom and his sense of life is enhanced. The congruence between thought and feeling in the individual was paralleled in Kettle's view both by the congruence between thought and feeling in society and by the application of the 'test of life' to politics. Kettle could not explain the driving force

²²Philosophy of politics, p.10.

²³Ibid., p.11.

of history in scientific terms any more than he could explain consciousness or life itself, and life of course was a mystery. But if life in its complexity confounded any single theory of it, a reading of history could give a picture of the evolutionary progress of human awareness. The role of rational thought in Kettle's philosophy was to give an account of the ideas and visions of mankind which were an indicator of the underlying, mysterious dynamic of history.

This view was a version of Hegelianism, idealist and evolutionary. A complete congruity of thought and feeling would lead either to stasis or to paradise, neither of which eventualities Kettle foresaw for mankind. Awareness was always incomplete, rationalism could never satisfy the emotional, sentient side of human nature. Yet in the sentient side of mankind could be found the imminent idea, the spur to the next step in the progress of society. It follows from this that the state is simply the envelope in which these ideas are contained, a shadow of the positive laws of life. 'But once grasp the idea of the state as a living, developing thing, and this expectation of finality is seen to be a pure illusion.'²⁴ Kettle quoted with approval the dictum of Louis Kossuth that 'it is in active national sentiment not in political forms that we are to look for the secret of government.'²⁵ Because the structure of consciousness in humanity is universally similar, the development of sentiments and ideas in society at large are the best indicators of human progress. Thus Kettle could talk of popular opinion as 'that corporate reason, that perception of the conditions needed to conserve and increase life which are the source of all positive law'.²⁶ The tendency of human awareness in history was morally progressive and thus in the modern age oppressors and despots were to be found increasingly intolerable. What mankind might have endured in the

²⁴Ibid., p.8.

²⁵Ibid., p.10.

²⁶Ibid., p.7.

eighteenth century was insufferable in the twentieth. Kettle's 'test of life' can then be seen as a test of public awareness, as a test of public opinion, an appeal made to the masses in the confidence of the correctness of the judgement of the masses.

The historicist mode of thinking inevitably implies an amount of ruthlessness and violence against those who stand in the way of the zeitgeist and at times Kettle came close to suggesting that might was right. He saw the law and the law courts as biased in favour of the landlord interest in Ireland and condemned 'the ermine and lawn, and the judicial apparatus, and the sham majesty of anti-social laws...'.²⁷ Such a legal system and its minions were enemies of life. Kettle's impatience with the law was summed up by his statement that 'Popular movements are often stained by rashness and corrupted by designing self-seekers, but in this country they have always been essentially right, essentially on the side of life. In ninety-nine cases out of a hundred if you enter a court which is handling judicially one of our great problems you will indeed find law on the bench, but it is to the dock you must go if you are looking for morality'.²⁸ In Kettle's defence, it must be remembered that he did not slavishly acquiesce in general ideas but sought rather to explain them. Kettle was prepared to accept the masses, warts and all. Nationalism and democracy which Kettle saw as 'the two supreme facts, the two shaping forces of the nineteenth century',²⁹ were, historically considered, progressive ideas and they had been particularly influential in Ireland. It would have been inconsistent for Kettle to have championed democracy without trusting the masses and Nationalism is not and never has been a milk and water belief. Therefore, inevitably, he struck a Jacobin note of warning to the instruments of English rule in Ireland.

²⁷Ibid., p.7.

²⁸Ibid., p.8.

²⁹Ibid., p.9.

...if an individual persists in so using the property which society allows him to control, as to base his personal comfort and prosperity on the misery and degradation of others, if he persists in that while a cleaner way of living is open to him, then society has both the right and duty to break his selfish monopoly. He has declared war on society; he has violated the obligations of the social bond, and he must be swept out of the way.³⁰

Jacobinism, the threatened or attempted resort to violence in the name of democracy against aristocracy, was an essential component in the awareness that Kettle took for granted in his Nationalist audience when he asked them to apply the 'test of life' to politics. It was, moreover, a curiously Irish form of Jacobinism in that Kettle appealed to the Catholic tradition of justified social revolution by citing the work of the theologian, Naudet, whose Premiers principes de sociologie catholique had been published in Paris in 1904. Naudet had emphasised the doctrine of various medieval Popes that if landlords did not make proper use of their property, they could be dispossessed in the interests of the Christian community as a whole. It is clear that Kettle was addressing a political tradition quite different from that of Britain. British political thought in the nineteenth century had been much preoccupied with the question of whether the British people could be entrusted with greater democratic power and this preoccupation had exercised the minds of an already solidly established ruling class. Because the Irish nation lacked an established ruling class, all Irish leaders had to refer their decisions back to the Irish people or at least make a show of so doing. Faith in the judgement of the Irish demos was an unquestioned part of the Nationalist political tradition. Thinking as he did within this tradition, Kettle naturally assumed a homogeneity in the Irish nation that a later historian would find highly questionable. But political sentiment not only blurred political reality in Kettle's discourse - he came perilously close to asserting that political sentiment was political reality, or at any rate imminent reality.

³⁰Ibid., p.7.

The political philosophy enunciated by Kettle was generous in its democratic postulates yet enfeebled by a fatal narrowness of perspective. It suffered from a kind of passionate myopia. In this Kettle's philosophy was a casualty of the times. Denied the exercise of its rational faculties in the sphere of government, the emotional, sentient aspects of Irish Nationalism to which Kettle appealed, coloured all aspects of Nationalist discourse. Nationalist politics were the politics of opposition, not the politics of administration.

The powerlessness of Nationalists to form a government meant that they were denied the bracing realities of administration and Nationalism itself began to take on certain dream-like aspects. Politics bedevilled all aspects of Irish life because politics were diffused everywhere. Unable to form a government Irish Nationalism had created a culture, a culture that was optimistic, on its own terms progressive, inherently democratic, and in the final analysis, mystical. The assumptions of this culture formed the common bond of awareness between Kettle and his audience. Kettle's statement that 'a nation is before all things a spiritual principle whose source and charter is to be found in history'³¹ was unlikely to be challenged in Irish Nationalist circles. It would not have occurred to a Unionist to talk of either England or Ireland in such terms and such an idea about Ireland would have been condemned as typical Nationalist preciosity, or worse, as sedition. The spirit of the age is a concept of little use to practising politicians who have attained government status but to an opposition (or to a government that has liquidated all opposition) it can be a sustaining myth. Here a pun, with the shifting concepts of meaning implied in that figure of speech may be illuminating. A different light is shed on Kettle's philosophy if we assume that the state Kettle discussed in his philosophy was less a self-governing

³¹Ibid., p.10.

entity in the political sense than it was a psychological entity - a state of mind.

Kettle's trust in democracy was based upon his assumption that in the individual the spirit of the age was made manifest; in the individual was recapitulated the historical awareness and aspirations of the nation and that in this sense nationalism was the highest form of the zeitgeist or spiritual principle of the world. An umbrella term for this combination of awareness and aspiration would be sentiment. Under this dispensation then individual worth is measured in terms of nationalist feeling, of correct feeling as opposed to disloyal or incorrect feeling. The individual therefore had ceased to be an individual and had become instead a symbol of the collectivity. Those with disloyal or incorrect feelings need not then be taken into account. This unconscious authoritarianism was perhaps scarcely surprising. The Irish nation, deprived of self-government was more symbol than reality and it was appropriate that the symbolic nation should have a symbolic citizenry. Condemned to opposition the aspirations of Irish Nationalism could be seen by its adherents as the spirit of the age. But the National^list consensus had never faced its own inherent dissensions except on a polemical level. Thus sentiment could be seen as zeitgeist. Those who did not share in the sentiment of Nationalism could be anathematised as historical fossils, relics of bygone age, or more dangerously as traitors and heretics. Denied any validity to their viewpoint, the enemies of the symbolic Irish nation themselves attained symbolic status. At its worst an implicit political Manichaeism marred Kettle's discourse, and this was to lead to some of his more remarkable utterances on the hustings of East Tyrone.

At its best, by advocating a form of Nationalism that sought to live for Ireland rather than dying for her, Kettle's Philosophy of Politics was

genuinely life enhancing. The weakness of his philosophy lies in its method which was assertive rather than reasoned, creative rather than analytic. It was as if the youthful thinker, not content merely to be a philosopher of politics and history, had ended by staking a claim for himself in a shadowy area between poet and psychologist as a philosopher of the feelings. It was perhaps inevitable that in spite of his resources of learning, wit and eloquence Kettle should have ended up in this intellectually ambiguous position. It cannot be too strongly emphasised that for the nationalist the struggle to establish the identity of the nation is also an attempt to establish a personal identity. Personal identity is of course inseparable from the life of the emotions. To make the world over so that it is in accordance with one's feelings shows an engaging naivety in a young man. Certainly a naivety is detectable in the overtly political content of Kettle's discourse yet he also sounded a darker note of sometimes disturbing profundity that is at variance with the frequently facile progressivism of Sheehy Skeffington and other jeunesse dorée members of the Young Ireland Branch.

The sensitive reader of the Philosophy of Politics will detect immediately in Kettle's elaboration of the 'test of life' and its relation to the questions of national and personal identity a sense of the author's brooding unhappiness. The 'test of life' is at once a political touchstone and an invitation to his readers to free themselves from the shackles of a society that thwarted and depressed the natural impulses - to experience life 'joyously realising itself under benign conditions'.³² The question of how to achieve authentic national identity was for Kettle inseparable from the question of how the individual could be redeemed from frustration and unhappiness. Psychological liberation was to be achieved through the catharsis

³²Ibid., p.7.

of nationalism. And yet how does one measure freedom or happiness, and to what extent is emotional or psychic release a chimera for imperfect humanity struggling in an imperfect world? In his reservations on this subject Kettle reached the parameters of the concept of the 'test of life' and revealed the stoic pessimism of an innately religious mind.

For Kettle politics were a guide, a chart to the deeper currents of the river of life, only this and nothing more. If it was impossible to ignore politics nevertheless he was insistent that political activity had its limits. 'It is not co-extensive with life; there are vast areas of life into which it would be tyranny for it to intrude.'³³ Politics attained their full significance only when seen in the light of history. Therefore he recommended that in a free Ireland the schools would concentrate on history. 'It is the fashion to disbelieve in the practical value of ideas and enthusiasms, but a democratised Ireland will understand human nature better. The chief channel of instruction will naturally be history - modern history.'³⁴ This is consistent with Kettle's evolutionary humanism and his belief in the zeitgeist. A concomitant of the belief was his sense of the smallness and powerlessness of the individual. He recommended that aspiring politicians could do worse than take as their motto Spencer's statement: 'What I need to realise is how infinitesimal is the importance of anything I can do, and how infinitely important it is that I should do it.'³⁵ Disillusion in politics was, thought Kettle, inevitable and this was precisely because all human endeavours contained merely the illusion of finality. There was to be no ontological finality or redemption in any human activity. Here then was the limit of the 'test of life'. Unhappiness, strife and conflict were elements inseparable from life. The sort of liberation and psychic release afforded by nationalism and

³³Ibid., p.15.

³⁴Ibid., p.14.

³⁵Ibid., p.15.

the individual's realisation of his identity were not an answer to but merely a mitigation of the agony of life.

Out of the tension between the very limited nature of the fulfillment to be gained from the catharsis of politics and the absolute importance of achieving and understanding that fulfillment, Kettle had fashioned a remarkable piece of political discourse. It is remarkable because rare for a youthful political neophyte addressing an enthusiastic audience of like-minded contemporaries to dwell, as if in anticipation, on the inherent disillusionment of the political life. Kettle put the question, 'In what spirit should one approach the actual work of politics?', and answered it thus, 'I speak only for myself, but I think that one should take enthusiasm for the driving force and irony as a refuge against the inevitable disappointments.'³⁶ Such anticipation of disillusionment in a young man on the threshold of a career in politics is evidence either of exceptional maturity or of an innate pessimism. That Kettle's mind was inherently contemplative can be seen by the care with which he structured his philosophy to allow of a spiritual dimension both in politics and in the inner awareness of individuals. Politics he seems to treat as a calling or a vocation. The role of the politician is not merely the exercise of power for its own sake but the development of an understanding of the real nature of the world so that it can be changed in accordance with a plan that is more than the plan of mere men. Hence the tension between hope and despair, disillusion and achievement, tensions that can be resolved ultimately only by seeing human aspirations as part of a scheme that, if not divine by nature, is certainly more than merely human.

Disillusionment is so commonly the fifth act of political agitation, mainly because of the illusive finality I have spoken of. But when elderly, wise people come to you and say that your ideas are very creditable, very beautiful,

³⁶Ibid., p.15.

but that you will at the first shock of actual experience be as disillusioned as time has left them, you can reply, "Yes! you have found out illusion, but you have not found out that it is an inseparable part of the game, nor that the game must be played according to its rules." Politics is the province not of the second-best, as has been said, but of the second worst. We must be content, or try to be content, with little. But we must continue loyal to the instinct that makes us hope much; we must believe in all the Utopias.³⁷

That Kettle's was an inherently pessimistic disposition is shown by the amount of thought he devoted to staving off despair. By making despair a philosophical impossibility and by recognising a superhuman controlling power at work in the development of human awareness, Kettle's work can be seen to be suffused with religious faith. He regretted the impracticality in the climate of modern thought of the medieval idea of a church universal but believed that progressive, democratic thought could not for long remain hostile to religion as such for, 'no form of government can appease the thirst for communion with God.'³⁸ The personal significance for Kettle of the pessimistic strain in his thinking with its complementary Christian stoicism is shown by the changes he made in the original text of The Philosophy of Politics when he republished the essay in a collection of pieces, The Day's Burden in 1910. In his discussion of disillusion, we find the following passage inserted.

The first lilac freshness of life will, indeed never return. The graves are sealed, and no hand will open them to give us back dead comrades or dead dreams. As we look out on the burdened march of humanity, as we look in on the leashed but straining passions of our unpurified hearts, we can but bow our heads and accept the discipline of pessimism. Briucriu must have had his hour as well as Cuchullin. But the cynical mood is one that can be resisted. Cynicism, however excusable in literature, is in life the last treachery, the irredeemable defeat.³⁹

³⁷ Ibid., p.15

³⁸ Ibid., p.13

³⁹ T.M. Kettle, 'The Philosophy of Politics' in The day's burden, (Dublin, 1910), pp. 14-15.

Kettle's speech received with applause and immediately printed in pamphlet form, established him as the most important spokesman of the younger, university-educated generation of Irish Nationalists. He represented a renewal of the liberal democratic strand in Irish nationalism and the hopes of the Irish leaders at Westminster that parliamentary Nationalism had sunk deep roots in the consciousness of the younger generation. In the light of Kettle's discourse, the attempt of the parliamentary party to establish itself in the eyes of young Ireland, not as a party of ageing followers of Parnell, but as the strongest and most natural tradition of Nationalism was less successful than might have superficially appeared to be the case.

For the Philosophy of Politics was a most idiosyncratic production, witty, brilliant, but for the work of a young man, redolent of a certain world weariness that a political career could never fully assuage. The issues in Kettle's philosophy were mostly philosophical rather than political. Where the rhetoric of past spokesmen for young Ireland, Emmet or Davis for example, had burned with passionate resentment, Kettle's tone was gently mocking. It is impossible not to conclude that the fundamentally reforming climate of Unionist rule under Salisbury and Arthur Balfour had ameliorated the wilder excesses of Nationalist rhetoric, and that the accrual of a younger generation of politicians would not necessarily mean a surge of vigour to the parliamentary cause. In 1906, the fires of Irish nationalism spluttered fitfully under the dross of internal disarray and piecemeal patrician reform. The times were weighted in favour of politics as philosophy rather than for politics as swift, decisive action.

This is not to say that Irish Nationalism was in any way an enfeebled, introspective growth. So far from weakening the overall position of Irish Nationalism, the post-Parnell lacuna had actually strengthened it. Since the death of Parnell, the Nationalist assumption - that the destiny of the Irish

nation was separatist - had not been seriously challenged and had hardened into an orthodoxy. For Kettle's generation, growing up in the shadow of the great struggles of the eighties and nineties the presuppositions of Irish Nationalism had been bred in the bone. Like the majority of Irishmen, Kettle did not doubt the inevitability of Home Rule and, finding hope where Unionists found fear, had no doubt that Home Rule was the preliminary step in the direction of complete autonomy. But independence by instalment, whatever its practical merits as a political strategy was not by 1906 an idea capable of generating much passion in Nationalist breasts. Rather it was seen as an inevitability. The idea of Ireland as a nation, however, retained its potency and Kettle typified the progressive Nationalist thought of his period by believing passionately that Irish identity had to be more than an administrative category created out of political compromise with Westminster. Indeed the excessive emphasis placed upon national identity by Irish intellectuals involved in the cultural renaissance in the nineties and the first decades of the twentieth century is remarkable. Kettle exemplified this trait by what can only be described as his emotional overinvestment in the national question. By making Ireland's struggle towards independent political status a paradigm for the personal, psychic liberation of the individual Irish man or woman, Kettle dangerously overloaded the concept of nationality. Ireland's cause was at once the exemplar of historical progress and the embodiment of rationality itself; indeed Kettle even usurped for the idea that shadowy area of human consciousness that we call mystical. Ultimately, in Kettle's thought nationality took second place to religion but this was by no means to divorce the two concepts. Religion and politics operated in a kind of tandem arrangement forever linked as a progressive, historicist force. If politics is the art of the practical, then compromise is the highest political art. Yet what compromise was there possible for a

Nationalist like Kettle for whom nationalism was a total world view? To compromise on the national issue would be to risk personal identity and even rationality itself. Life certainly would be possible if the nation did not fulfill itself but it would be a maimed half-life, a via dolorosa. Perhaps Kettle instinctively realised that the politics of parliamentarianism were for the idealist almost certain to produce disillusion and despair but a politics without idealism were for him unthinkable. Therefore he spoke more wisely than he perhaps knew when he announced his intention of proceeding with 'enthusiasm for the driving force and irony as the refuge against the inevitable disappointments'.

CHAPTER THREE

The apprentice politician

Through the work of Duffie's father in the Young Ireland League suggested
 that his early days in a political career was underway. He played little part
 in the general election of 1905 when Young Ireland League
 member in the general election was Richard Duffie who fought an unsuccessful
 campaign against the Liberal Unionist Party in North Dublin City and who
 was subsequently returned for North Dublin City. Kettle campaigned in
 Duffie's behalf in North Dublin, but at this stage had understandable
 reservations about becoming a professional politician. His education at
 the University had given him an idea of the need to take up a career and have
 long experience in his work, if only for financial reasons. In 1905 several
 of parliament were, as yet unreturned and because the funds of the Irish
 parliamentary party were limited, a young man entering parliament with no
 private resources would have subjected himself to very unpleasant financial
 circumstances. Indeed, given the lack of progress towards Home Rule, would
 it not have been more rewarding both intellectually and emotionally to enter the
 field and work to help regenerate the Irish cultural identity?

That Kettle agreed with this idea is not surprising. On 3 February, 1906
 when the general election was in full swing, he was in correspondence with
 Alice Maffey O'Connell, the historian, whose interest in the Gaelic League he
 had been facilitating. She told him the prospect of his work with her as
 an administrative assistant.

Dear Mr. Kettle,

Thank you for the information. There are two or three things
 which I was wondering for Ireland.

One is the system of Sunday schools, which I greatly want to

1. Introduction

Whereas the tone of Kettle's address to the Young Ireland Branch suggested that his entry upon a political career was imminent, he played little part in the general election of 1906. The most prominent Young Ireland Branch member in the general election was Richard Hazleton who fought an unsuccessful campaign against the noted Unionist, Walter Long in South Dublin City and who was subsequently returned for North Galway City. Kettle campaigned on Hazleton's behalf in South Dublin, but at this stage had understandable reservations about becoming a professional politician. His editorship of the Nationist had come to an end and the need to take up a career must have been uppermost in his mind, if only for financial reasons. In 1906 members of parliament were as yet unsalaried and because the funds of the Irish parliamentary party were limited, a young man entering parliament with no private resources would have subjected himself to very straitened financial circumstances. Indeed, given the lack of progress towards Home Rule, would it not have been more rewarding both financially and emotionally to stay in Ireland and work to help recreate the Irish cultural identity?

That Kettle toyed with this idea is not surprising. On 3 February, 1906 when the general election was in full swing, he was in correspondence with Alice Stopford Green, the historian, whose interest in the Gaelic League he had been facilitating. She held out the prospect to him of work with her as an administrative assistant.

Dear Mr. Kettle,

Thank you for the information. There are two or three things which I want considered for Ireland.

One is the system of Holiday Schools, which I greatly want to

see here. I believe that something might be inaugurated by the Gaelic League on these lines which would be the most powerful means of instructing Irish children in an Irish way. I want you or someone else to see the schools and understand the system. A propaganda might be set going in this way which, while the League is not thwarted, would be hard to destroy afterwards. The cost would be very small, and one or two experiments might be made.

(2) I want to make arrangements for an Irish Congress in July, and I should greatly welcome a little help in necessary correspondence.

(3) There is the historical work.

So you see for all these reasons a visit to London might be of great use...Mr. Sidney Webb has two secretaries whose business is to collect material for him - he gives each a salary of £120 a year - this might serve as a basis of discussion for a salary for your work, according to the amount of time you wished to give and so forth.

Yours sincerely,

A.S. Green¹

Yet his editorship of the Nationist and his experience with the Young Ireland Branch indicated that Kettle was instinctively at home in the milieu of politics and that his considerable talents would never have been fully engaged within the coterie of revived Gaeldom. Kettle's interest in the cultural implications of Irish Nationalism did lead to his joining in May 1906 at the invitation of Edward Martyn, the committee of the Theatre of Ireland. However much Kettle may have enjoyed the company of his fellow committee members, Patrick Pearse and Padraic Colum, the selection of two plays a year absorbed merely a fraction of his energies. His father's

¹A.S. Green to Kettle, 3 February, 1906, Kettle papers.

influence must also have been brought to bear to persuade him to go in for politics. Much of Andrew Kettle's political activity had been as an organiser, operating in the background to promote the careers of men we considered better qualified than himself. He could not have failed to recognise the potential in his son and to have encouraged it. Whilst Kettle pondered his future, it must have caused him some amusement to read that the Unionist candidate in East Tyrone was eloquently reminding his audiences that 'recently they had the Dublin students at the Royal University mobbing the platform when the National Anthem was about to be sung in accordance with an immemorial and time-honoured custom, and this was no boyish freak, but premeditated and sanctioned by those in authority over them.'² It may also have strengthened his resolve to pursue the struggle against what he had come to conceive of as a Unionism that was, almost by definition, reactionary, stultifying and untruthful.

²Northern Whig, 11 January 1906.

2. The East Tyrone by-election.

On 15 June 1906, after a short illness, Mr. P.C. Doogan, M.P. for East Tyrone died at his home in Lisbellaw Co. Fermanagh. He had held the seat for the Nationalists since 1895. Doogan was the representative for East Tyrone during a period of Unionist domination of British politics and of Unionist advance in his own constituency. In 1895 Doogan had won the seat by a majority of 152. The election of 1900 saw his majority reduced to 76. In the great Liberal triumph in the election of 1906 the Nationalists only held East Tyrone by 31 votes after an exceptionally hard fought struggle. In East Tyrone, as a local paper noted, the polling was the closest in the United Kingdom 'but the Nationalists had the advantage by polling 98 per cent to the Unionist 95 per cent.'¹ Declining health did not permit Doogan to take up his seat in the new parliament. Instead he went to Dublin where he placed himself under the care of Dr. Thornley Stoker of that city. Dr. Stoker's attentions were unavailing and the unfortunate Doogan retired to Fermanagh, where the end duly came.

Doogan's political history is briefly recapitulated. When he won the seat in 1895, he could look back upon a career first as a teacher and principal of the Model School, Galway, and then as an inspector under the National Board of Education. Retiring from that post he had been a gentleman farmer at Lisbellaw at the time of his nomination. Doogan's parliamentary career had been marked by diligence rather than by flair or by any talent for self publicity. In this unremarkable personality lurked only two minor eccentricities. He was one of the rare teetotalers in the far from abstemious ranks of the Irish parliamentary party and he was an avid enthusiast of the works of Oliver Goldsmith. Stephen Gwynn has left a recollection of Doogan on what was to be the veteran M.P.'s last campaign.

¹Dungannon News, 21 June 1906.

...when we finished up, I was left in a hotel at Coalisland with two members of that while lot, the Irish Party. One was Duggan [sic], the other Mr. Jeremiah Jordan, whose name nobody could be unaware of. These two elders were well known in the little hotel and got a great welcome - and assurance that all was waiting for them as usual. So it was: warm slippers by the fire, and hot barley water. Both were teetotalers, Jordan a Methodist shopkeeper from Enniskillen. We spent the evening discussing the poetry of Oliver Goldsmith - of which old Duggan had a great knowledge and appreciation.²

The above-mentioned Mr. Jordan paid tribute to his late companion emphasising Doogan's excellent record of attendance at parliament and his self-effacement. 'He (Mr. Jordan) came home again and again, but Mr. Doogan remained there, and one would think he was screwed to the benches. He gave no trouble to the Irish party and never wished to push himself egotistically forward.'³ Doogan was loyal and useful rather than brilliant. The Dungannon News recalled that 'His attendance was hardly surpassed by any member of the party, even by the whips. He, so to speak, lived in the House of Commons during the sessions.'⁴ The Belfast News Letter in a respectful if lukewarm obituary directed its readers' attention to the impending by-election. 'It is believed that Mr. W.J. M'Geogh M'Caw, who made such a good fight at the general election, being only defeated by 32 votes will again stand in the Unionist interest. His chances of success are excellent as there is a Unionist majority on the register.'⁵ Against this formidable challenge and in contrast to the colourless Doogan, the Nationalists selected in Kettle, a youthful and controversial candidate.

² Stephen Gwynn, Experiences of a literary man, (London, 1926), pp. 278-9.

³ Irish News, 20 June 1906.

⁴ Dungannon News, 21 June 1906.

⁵ Belfast News Letter, 16 June 1906.

The contrast between Doogan and Kettle was symbolic of the dilemma of the Irish party, indeed of Irish Nationalism in the period between the death of Parnell and the introduction of the Third Home Rule Bill. The aging, unassuming, unquestioningly loyal Doogan was typical of the Nationalist back benchers. To put it harshly, he was lobby fodder. The youthful, ambitious, critical Kettle was representative of the younger, rising generation of Irish Nationalists who, by and large, tended to shun parliamentary politics. Kettle was then, one of the few of his generation to subject his Nationalist ideals to the pragmatic ordeal of an election. It was to be the beginning of a thorough education in the mechanics of the political process.

As late as 22 June 1906, the Northern Whig, a Unionist newspaper and not therefore privy to the inner secrets of East Tyrone Nationalists speculated that Stephen Gwynn would be nominated to succeed Doogan. Gwynn, an ally and close friend of Kettle's throughout his political career was eventually returned in the by-election in the Galway City constituency later in the year when the sitting Unionist member, Martin Morris, was translated to the House of Lords on the death of his father, Lord Killanin. Speculation as to the identity of the Nationalist candidate in East Tyrone was ended when on 27 June over two hundred delegates crowded into the Forestrs' Hall in Cookstown and Kettle was nominated. His nomination, was unanimous, unopposed and the merest formality. James Mullan, ex-president of the East Tyrone executive proposed to the meeting that Kettle 'as the worthy son of a distinguished father, as one who had the approval of the leader of the Irish party, and one who, on his own merits, presented unanswerable claims to their support'⁶ be selected candidate. Kettle's nomination was promptly seconded and he signed the parliamentary pledge to loud applause. That night Kettle returned by train to Dublin, a journey that became something of a triumphal progress. 'Mr. Kettle, accompanied by a few friends, travelled to Dublin in the evening by limited

⁶Freeman's Journal, 28 June 1906.

mail, and when it became known of his presence, at the several railway stations en route greetings were freely exchanged with those on the various platforms who were awaiting the arrival of the delegates.⁷

The constituency for whose representation Kettle would be campaigning was extensive in area, its 6,300 electors spread between Dungannon in the south, to the mountains of Broughderg in the north, and from the hill-lands of Pomeroy in the west, to the lowlands of Lough Neagh in the east. Nationalists were marginally more numerous in the north and west of the constituency and Unionists were slightly stronger in the south and east but there was no clear geographical intersice between the opposing parties and the 3,125 Nationalist voters and the 3,174 Unionist voters lived cheek by jowl in uneasy proximity to each other. Although the Nationalists had held the seat since 1885 the steady attrition of their majorities was due to a strategy of electoral warfare in which an encyclopaedic knowledge of the electoral register and frequent recourse to the Revision Courts were the main weapons. The situation in 1906 was summarised by Stephen Gwynn.

In 1885 when the Irish electorate was almost doubled, a surprise attack by the Nationalists captured Northern positions that could not be maintained. Protestant Ulster's first impulse had been to rely on weapons quite other than votes; but these demonstrations were quelled; and Protestant Ulster, resolute that no more graveyards should be polled, sat grimly down to the business of registration. So did Catholic Ulster. There were no chivalries. Each side would use any advantage that it could gain, fair or unfair, but each side worked under the abiding fear of election petitions. The essential, as each side realised, was to get

⁷Irish News, 28 June 1906.

possible voter on the register first, and afterwards to the polling booth. Ninety-nine per cent of the Catholics and ninety-eight per cent of the Protestants approximately could be relied upon to vote for their natural hereditary side. I think I am right in saying that the percentage of 'rotten Protestants' (it was the term always employed) was appreciably greater than that of backsliding Catholics - who might be known as 'shoneens', 'MacNallys', 'Judases', or simply as 'traitors'. The faculty of independent judgement is more cultivated among Protestants.⁸

The executive of the East Tyrone Branch of the United Irish League were all hardened veterans of this unusually intensive form of political campaigning. Kettle's election agent, John A. Quinn, was a Cookstown solicitor and a member of that burgeoning organisation in East Tyrone, the Ancient Order of Hibernians. W.J. Harbison, also a Cookstown solicitor who chaired the nomination meeting was to be Kettle's right hand man throughout the campaign and became in the process a trusted friend. In addition, Kettle could count on the support of John Muldoon, Nationalist MP for North Donegal, Richard Hazleton MP from North Galway and from Dublin, his frequent host and mentor David Sheehy, MP.

Kettle's experience in the by-election was scarcely calculated to persuade him towards a thoughtful or sympathetic attitude towards Ulster Unionism. With the Nationalists defending and the Unionists attacking a majority of 31 votes, exhortations to the faithful were bound to take precedence over attempts to win the hearts and minds of the opposition by subtleties of debate. Consequently, the combative element in Kettle's rhetorical style was most in demand and his tendency to generalise, to rely upon passion rather than reasoned debate, were assets in such a desperate campaign. We may speculate whether such an approach was not ultimately damaging to his own inner peace of mind, for although the style he employed on the hustings

⁸ Stephen Gwynn, Experiences of a literary man (London 1926), p. 277.

was not the whole man, it undoubtedly corresponded to aspects of a character in which reason was perhaps all too easily overshadowed by emotion. In the circumstances of this by-election, Kettle was seeing the least attractive aspects of Unionism and as representative of the East Tyrone Nationalist community, he inevitably came to share and articulate the prejudices and passions of his constituents. The general election in Ireland had been a quiet affair due in part to the studiously low-keyed presentation by the Liberals of their Home Rule commitment and because Irish Unionists could still look to the House of Lords to crush any such measure and also because, as had been customary in Irish politics, the majority of seats were uncontested. In the marginal constituencies of Ulster, elections had tended to become fiercely localised affairs in which there was a lack of direction from either the Unionist or Nationalist parliamentary leadership. It was all too easy then for the long-term strategy and goals of politics at a national level to become subservient to local passions and resentments and consequently, it crossed nobody's mind in the Nationalist organisation of East Tyrone that diplomacy, tact, or even reasoned argument was necessary in dealing with Unionists. In these circumstances then, the East Tyrone by-election resembled a local brawl, the electoral equivalent of an Irish faction fight, generating much heat and little light.

Unionism was a creed which was in the minds of Kettle and his supporters without any validity. The only honourable and same course that a Unionist could take - for Kettle eloquently insisted from the hustings that Unionism was lunacy - was apostasy. Not surprisingly, the Nationalists seized upon any sign that the Unionist monolith was crumbling. The emergence of the Independent Orange Order in 1905 of seven Independent Unionists led by the land-reforming T.W. Russell was seen by Nationalists as evidence that

Unionism was losing its grip on the industrial workers of Belfast and on the small farmers of Protestant Ulster, the basis of the party's support. A rough electoral alliance between Nationalists, Labour and Independent Unionists during the general election had led to the return of the Nationalist Joseph Devlin for West Belfast, of Sergeant Dodd, a Liberal in North Tyrone and of T.W. Russell for South Tyrone. Independent Unionism was a straw in the wind that caused Kettle and his party to seriously misjudge the political climate in Ulster, and which led Kettle to treat his political opponents with an amount of arrogance that could only be justified by the assumption that Unionism was a historically obsolete force.

The by-election was to be fought on purely party political grounds because, as the R.I.C. noted in their reports on the constituency, there were no overwhelming social issues in East Tyrone to divert the energies of the candidates from the propagation of their respective ideologies in the starkest terms.

The general condition of the people is fairly prosperous and no distress exists. Harvest prospects are good, and potatoes are plentiful. The mills and factories are working full time and good employment is thus ensured. The tone of the press is moderate and there is no organised attempt to spread sedition. The approach of the Election in East Tyrone Division has caused some little revival of party feeling, and the contest will certainly be a very bitterly contested one.⁹

⁹ Inspector General's monthly confidential reports 1906, January-June.

Consequently, the bedrock differences between Nationalist and Unionist were uncompromisingly revealed. The R.I.C. also noted apprehensively that the Ancient Order of Hibernians now numbered seventy branches, two having been founded in the month of July when the by-election was at its fiercest.

Kettle began his campaign at Broughderg on 2 July. To offset the liabilities of his youth and his being an outsider in the constituency, his backers emphasised the role of Kettle's father in the Land League and invoked the spirit of Nationalist solidarity in East Tyrone. Mr John Malone, a local solicitor, referred to 'the son of Andrew Kettle who, twenty-five years ago, accompanied Michael Davitt down to Mayo, and planted the flag of the Land League - one of the finest movements that ever stirred this country and the most successful in its results',¹⁰ and reminded the meeting that 'Mr. Kettle's son came to ask them to carry on the fight, not by the means which their forefathers utilised, but by the force of the energy and intellect of Irish youth to carry into the enemy's camp arguments so sound that Englishmen would be bound to give back to the country the freedom they had stolen from it.'¹¹

¹⁰Irish News, 3 July 1906.

¹¹Freeman's Journal, 3 July 1906.

The Unionist candidate M'Caw had not yet appeared in the constituency having been delayed by business in London - he was a tea importer - and John Muldoon made great play of this.

Mr. Kettle had been called a stranger; but how could the son of a County Dublin farmer and of one who had suffered imprisonment for the cause of the tenant farmers, be called a stranger to them?

A Voice - He is no stranger.

Mr. Muldoon - Who was it challenged him as a stranger?
The supporters of Mr. M'Caw the Indian
tea planter.-

A Voice - The Lion-tamer. (Laughter)

Mr. Muldoon - Yes, the Indian snake-charmer. (Laughter)¹¹

W.J. Harbison introduced a note of revivalist fervour in his exhortation to the voters.

Last week he (Mr. Harbison) had received several letters from absent voters, who expressed their deep interest in the election, and who were determined to turn up to record their votes. One in particular struck him as having the right ring about it. It was from Mr. Michael Barlow, who was, at present, in Newcastle, England. In it he said:- "Dear Sir - Your letter to hand yesterday evening. I was sorry to read of the death of our worthy and esteemed member, Mr. P.C. Doogan, a Catholic and sterling Nationalist. God rest his soul. I am confident we will come out again victorious (cheers) from the struggle, and that the flag of the Ascendancy will never wave its blood-stained folds over East Tyrone (cheers). God enabling me, I will be ready when called on." (loud cheers)¹²

This blood and thunder rhetoric was to be paralleled and indeed exceeded on the Unionist side. A degree of restraint was imposed upon the Nationalists because there were certain minimal subtleties dictated by strategy and Kettle's campaign proceeded upon two fronts. On the one hand, there was the need to rally the

¹²⁻
Ibid.

party faithful, on the other, the presence of a Unionist majority on the register meant that to be certain of victory Kettle had to detach to his side of a certain number of 'rotten Protestant' votes. This was fully realised by Unionists and led to frequent accusations that Kettle was deliberately playing down the Home Rule issue. As the Northern Whig sourly reported of Kettle's meeting held at Cookstown on July: 'The feature of the meeting was that Home Rule was never mentioned.'¹³ The Belfast News Letter later in the campaign published an urgent warning to Unionists to beware of this tactic.

There should be no need at this advanced stage of the contest in East Tyrone to point out the issue that is being fought. It is for and against Home Rule. And there would be no need of emphasising this if the Nationalists were not attempting to hide it. That they are engaged in a deliberate effort to obscure and cover over the question is clear. The very fact that their candidate, Mr. Kettle, in his address has not made the slightest reference to it should make every elector in the constituency who is against Home Rule certain that the danger of supporting him is the greater...The only chance that Mr. Kettle has of being returned is the securing of a few Unionist and Protestant votes. And to that end the waverers, if there are any, must not be alarmed.¹⁴

The emotive phrase, Home Rule, was rarely used by Kettle and his supporters. Instead, reference was made to the progress of the national cause and to democracy, and the institutional embodiment of these specifics was left deliberately vague. Kettle was helped in this tactic by the policy of the Liberal Government which had offered Nationalists in unspecified measure of administrative devolution whilst promising that any bill to introduce Home Rule

¹³Northern Whig, 9 July 1906.

¹⁴Belfast News Letter, 23 July 1906.

would be subject to endorsement by a further general election. So far from allaying the fears of Ulster Unionists, this fuelled their suspicions. They had been badly frightened by the devolution crisis of 1904-05 and Sir Antony MacDonnell was regularly condemned from Unionist platforms as the embodiment of the Home Rule by stealth policy. If Ulster Unionism had to be on the alert lest its greatest ally, the British Conservative Party, fall prey to the insidious work of separatist intriguers, then it was double on its guard against any Nationalist attempt to prevaricate about Home Rule. In any case, there were limits beyond which no Nationalist could go to woo over Unionists. Kettle was not prepared to compromise his position on Home Rule. In his view, Unionism was explicable only on grounds of cupidity, corruption and confusion of mind. He sought rather ^{to} present the Nationalist position in broad outline so that once the potential Unionist convert had grasped the principles of the Nationalist claim, once he had conceded its moral rightness and historical inevitability, then the details of separatist measures could be discussed. Kettle's depiction, in broad, sweeping brush strokes of rhetoric, of the Nationalist position as democratic, liberal and historically progressive was designed to be the most attractive, or at any rate least offensive position an advocate of Nationalism could take given the strategic necessity of winning over Unionist votes without losing any Nationalist ones. It was also, it need hardly be said, a method of argument to which the author of the Philosophy of Politics was especially attached.

Opening his campaign at Broughderg, Kettle articulated what was to be one of the major themes of his speeches - an appeal to all

Irishmen of whatever creed to come together in the spirit of brotherhood. He invited Irishmen to see their nationality as a principle rather than as a political formula.

They were fighting on a platform, not of personalities but of principle, and the main principle they were fighting for was simply this - that the people of Ireland were entitled to have the management of their own affairs in their own hands. (Cheers) And when they did acquire the management of their own affairs - and not until then - Ireland could be made not as she was today, a withering and decaying country, but a free and prosperous one; and everybody could be put in the way of leading the ¹⁵life a human ought to lead. That was their platform.

Home Rule was not mentioned. Instead, and with apparent ingenuousness, Kettle adopted the stance of the original Young Irelanders and later he was even to quote Thomas Davis with some effect.

The word 'ascendancy' had never found a place in the vocabulary of Nationalist Ireland. They had called on their fellow-countrymen of other creeds in every decade of the nineteenth century, in words of friendship and invitation, to draw together in a bond of union and fellowship for their common interests. But some of these men preferred to remain entrenched in bigotry and intolerance, and it was these men that had the audacity to accuse the Nationalists of what was their own radical and characteristic vice. No lines had he ever read with more enthusiasm at a Nationalist meeting than the lines of Davis's invitation, and he could not close with anything better:-

"Then start not Irish-born man,
if you're to Ireland true,
We need not race, nor creed, nor ¹⁶clan,
We've heart and hands for you."

The second major theme in Kettle's campaign speeches was the identification of the Nationalist cause with virtually every advance in progress and democracy that had occurred in Ireland

¹⁵Irish News, 3 July 1906.

¹⁶Irish News, 10 July 1906.

since the Union. In a predominantly rural constituency like East Tyrone, the land question was of overwhelming importance and on this issue it was felt Unionists were especially vulnerable. Kettle asked his audiences:

What had Mr. M'Caw and his friends ever got for the people of Ireland except notices to quit and eviction notices? Every measure of reform, everything that reduced the appalling burden of rent under which the tenants laboured, everything that helped the tenants get into possession of the land they tilled, every measure that built a labourer's cottage or assisted the labourer in any way towards a better and more humane mode of living, that helped the worker in the town, or that tended to make education in the country better and more Irish¹⁷ - every measure of that kind came from the other side.

The third characteristic of Kettle's speeches was an uninhibited abuse of Unionism in which he exercised his inventive powers of language to the delight of his predominantly Nationalist audiences. This scathing ridicule expressed at a superficial level the deeply-felt beliefs of the author of the Philosophy of Politics that Unionism was simply a historical fossil, an empty shell. Thus in his speech at Broughderg he claimed that: 'A cause like the Ulster Unionist cause was really a disease, and there was nothing that disease fled from like daylight. When Mr. M'Caw and his followers withdrew from the daylight of discussion what were they to think of their cause? Ulster Unionism was not a cause to be argued - it was a remnant of bigotry and class exclusiveness.'¹⁸ Again at Dunamore he claimed that:

He did not profess to understand Ulster Unionism; he did not think anybody could understand it except a specialist in lunacy. (laughter) It had no reference to the actual life of the country; it did not propose

¹⁷Ibid.
¹⁸Ibid.

to do anything whatever to make the life of the people any better or any more prosperous. It was founded on bad history and worse morals; it was an absurdity that could not exist in any country except Ireland.¹⁹ Ulster Unionism was not a thing to be argued with.

The generous Nationalism Kettle displayed when he quoted Davis was reserved for converted ex-Unionists. It is hard not to conclude that any effect of the magnanimity on the one hand would be vitiated by the scorn on the other. If any Unionists were to switch allegiance then it was on Kettle's central theme, the identification of the Nationalist party with the solution of the agrarian question that defections would occur.

The Unionist candidate, M'Caw, countered Kettle's ringing assertion of Nationalist democracy with an assertion of Unionist democracy, fiercely resisting Kettle's identification of Unionist with landlordism. If Kettle, the son of a Land League tenant farmer represented one Irish political tradition, then M'Caw the enterprising Presbyterian who had availed himself of the business opportunities offered by the British Empire, represented another, antithetical but equally characteristic. M'Caw, a Cookstown man, was of a long established Tyrone family who had been strong Liberals in the 1880s but who had become Unionists on the conversion of the Liberal party to Home Rule. M'Caw's uncle, Thomas Dickson, had been a noted Tyrone Liberal and in the course of the by-election, M'Caw was accused by the Nationalists of having abandoned all the old Liberal Presbyterian principles of his father. Be that as it may, in M'Caw's platform oratory an uncompromising defence of the Union was undertaken on recognisable Liberal principles. M'Caw made his first public appearance of the

¹⁹ Irish News, 3 July 1906.

by-election on 5 July in Dungannon where he addressed the market day crowd from the back of a brake and obtained his first glimpse of his opponent as Kettle conducted a simultaneous meeting at the other end of the town square. He challenged Kettle's attempted monopoly of patriotic sentiment and with characteristic Ulster canniness based the case for the Union on grounds of cautious pragmatism.

The only appeal deserving the slightest degree of consideration which he had ever heard advocates of Irish Home Rule make was to national sentiment. Now national sentiment was a very good thing. He yielded to no one in his admiration for it. A people with no national sentiment, with no love for their country, its customs and ancient traditions, were not worthy to be called a nation. National sentiment was so deeply imbued in the mind of every true Irishman that there was no chance at all of it every fading away. But...national sentiment, good though it was, would not feed hungry mouths, it would not fill empty stomachs, it would not bring prosperity to places where prosperity did not exist. In other words they had got to be practical nowadays in order that they might live. They could not exist on memories of the past. They had got to be up and doing if they were to hold their places in the world, or even if they were to remain in the world at all.²⁰

In M'Caw's opinion, the Home Rule question would have never arisen had it not been for the land question and he urged his audience to believe that only through the Unionist party could the land question ever be settled. On the land question, M'Caw could be every bit as radical as Kettle and he pointed out the flaws in the Wyndham Act of 1903 with considerable vehemence. M'Caw's campaign demonstrated that in an Ulster context the land question could be used as a popular base for Unionism. Because the Wyndham Act of 1903 was not strictly a party measure, its recommendation having been worked out at a bipartisan conference beforehand, it had come as something of a gift to the political parties. Both sides could, and

²⁰Belfast News Letter, 6 July 1906.

did, claim credit for the Act. Nationalist politicians assured their followers that the Act had been conceded by a British government under pressure from the United Irish League whose campaign of agrarian agitation was in the great Land League tradition. Unionist politicians acclaimed the Act as an example of enlightened government and Ulster Unionists warned their followers that now more than ever they should regard the British government as the guarantor of their property and position in Ireland. United in recognising the merits of the Act, tenant farmers on both sides of the political divide were also united in recognising its defects but each side drew from these deficiencies their own diametrically opposed political conclusions.

By 1906 it was becoming increasingly clear that the purchasing provisions of the Act were seriously underfinanced and the pace of land purchased was slowing down. One means of reinvigorating the Act would have been compulsory purchase and M'Caw did not hesitate to advocate this remedy.

...the one scheme which most affected the welfare of Ireland, always excepting the warding off of Home Rule, was that for placing tenant farmers in full possession of land which they cultivated. The Irish question, as it was called, would never be settled till that be carried out. All men who had studied the question were, he thought, in agreement with regard to that. It must be done effectually and it must be done rapidly. He would fondly hope that it could be done without friction, but should that prove not to be the case, he would not hesitate to advocate compulsion where found to be necessary.²¹

M'Caw went into the financial breakdown of the Act in detail, articulating obviously wide-spread feelings of dissatisfaction in the constituency.

²¹Ibid.

The latest returns showed that about thirty millions worth of settlements had been come to between landlords and tenants. As against that the government had recently raised a loan of seven millions, which at the low rate it was issued, meant about six millions in actual cash, and they stated that they were going to raise no more loans this year. What was the use of going on in this absurd manner? At that rate of progress it would take five years before settlements which had already been arranged were worked off, and these settlements were being added to every week...If the money could not be raised in much larger sums, some other scheme such as the raising of some form of guaranteed stock must be adopted.²²

That the demand for Home Rule was fuelled by grievance over the land question had been realised by the Unionist government that had brought in the Land Act of 1903, to deprive Nationalist leaders of this issue that had been used with such effect as a lever to achieve their goal of self-government. M'Caw, however, insisted that the demand for Home Rule would never have arisen had it not been for the land question thus wildly overestimating the potency of the issue and denying any validity to the Nationalist tradition in Ireland with the same ruthless thoroughness with which Kettle denied any validity to the Unionist tradition. The settlement of the land question gave reality to the social and economic aspirations of tenant farmers, but as a pawn to be played in the larger political game between Unionist and Nationalist, its effect was largely nullatory. A Nationalist farmer was no less of a Nationalist for having secured ownership of his land and Unionists remained equally attached to their own political beliefs, But in rural East Tyrone, the Land Act as the most significant piece of legislation in recent history loomed large and the by-election showed how each side incorporated the Act into their respective party ideologies.

²² Ibid.

M'Caw assured his audiences that the Nationalists were deliberately conspiring to prevent the remedial legislation to remove the deficiencies of the financial provisions of the Land Act in order that the resultant dissatisfaction could be used to sustain the demand for Home Rule. 'The Nationalist leaders for reasons of their own did not want the land question settled till it suited their own purposes and the Radical Government now in power dared not stop them',²³ The 25-year purchase clause in the Land Act was acclaimed by M'Caw as a reason for maintaining the Union, for if the Union were ended, how, he asked his audiences, could a Home Rule Ireland raise the money for land purchase? If money was short would not the government of a Home Rule Ireland show favouritism towards the Gaeltacht areas and discriminate against Protestant Ulster? What M'Caw neglected to tell his audiences was that, in the long run, the Land Purchase Act was already being financed by Ireland and that there was nothing in the limited legislative independence to be expected from a Home Rule Bill to prevent Westminster from improving the terms of purchase. This showed the general tendency by both sides to overestimate the amount of legislative independence to be expected from a Home Rule Bill and the anticipation by both Unionist and Nationalist that Home Rule would merely be the first step in what could turn out to be complete legislative independence.

To the Unionist 'not in inch' was opposed the Nationalist philosophy of 'inch by inch'. Therefore, Kettle countered M'Caw's claims, not by outlining the powers that a Westminster government would retain in the event

²³Ibid.

of Home Rule but by painting a glowing picture of the economic resources of Ireland untrammelled by British government.

He knew Mr. M'Caw had told them that if Home Rule came, and if Ireland acquired the mastery of her own purse and her own household, they would have no money to carry on schemes of land purchase. What were the relations in which England stood to them and to their pockets? Under the financial system that existed at present, and which applied to them and to these anti-Irish Irishmen as well, every day of their lives, every single year that passed England was stealing from the whole of Ireland six million pounds more in taxation than she ought to. Mr. M'Caw told them if the six million pounds was kept in their pockets instead of being filched from them they would not have enough money to carry on schemes of land purchase. That was as much as to say that they could not carry on business profitably unless they had a shopman who was robbing the till.²⁴

But by playing on the unhappiness amongst Unionist farmers about the purchasing clauses of the Land Act, M'Caw was making a deeper appeal to the atavistic fears and prejudices never far from the surface in religiously divided Ulster. For Protestant farmers purchasing their land with the aid of the British government it was more than ever desirable that their investment should be secured against the Catholic element their forefathers had dispossessed. Now more than ever Protestant farmers had a stake in Ulster. Kettle's election rhetoric and in particular his remarks about Unionists being lunatics were swiftly used against him to prove that Nationalists sought to dispossess Unionists. The Belfast News Letter editorialized:

With the irresponsibility of youth and the dogmatism which springs from ignorance he talks of Unionism as a form of mental disease, and of Unionists as persons who need treatment by specialists in lunacy. The Unionist electors of East Tyrone will ask themselves how they would fare if Ireland were governed by men who regard them as lunatics. Nationalist contempt for them would probably express itself

²⁴Irish News, 6 July 1906.

in law declaring themselves incapable of managing their property. An Irish parliament would confiscate the property of Unionists either openly or by means of special taxation. This is one of the objects ²⁵ which Nationalists have in view when they demand home Rule.

By Nationalist and Unionist, the Belfast News Letter meant to imply, as its readers well knew, Catholic and Protestant, but given the time of year at which the by-election was being held barbed newspaper editorials were scarcely needed to inflame sectarian passions and the imminence of the Orange celebrations on 12 July led to some tactical jockeying on the floor of the House of Commons itself. The practice in by-elections was to leave the motion for a new writ to the Chief Whip of the party to which the retiring member belonged, but on 6 July, Colonel E.J. Saunderson, a leading Unionist M.P. prominent in the Orange Order moved that a writ be issued to rescue the electorate of East Tyrone from what he vividly described as their state of virtual disenfranchisement. This brought John Redmond to his feet to oppose him.

He could tell the House exactly what the object of the motion was. The constituency in question showed a pretty even balance at the last election, when they won by only thirty or forty votes. The victory was due, no doubt, to the action of thirty or forty Protestant farmers in the district, who recorded their votes on the Nationalist side. He (Mr. Redmond) was proud of the fact that they owed their victory to the help of these Protestant farmers. Had, however, that election been held on July 12th, or during the few days before or after that date - during the period of excitement when various riots took place - that comparatively small body of quite respectable farmers would have remained at home, ²⁶ and so not voted. That was the object of the motion.

Redmond successfully moved an adjournment on the debate on the

²⁵ Belfast News Letter, 14 July 1906.

²⁶ Irish Times, 7 July 1906.

motion for the writ until 12 July but in East Tyrone fierce controversy had already broken out with the announcement by Tyrone Orangemen that the venue for their forthcoming celebrations would be in the demesne of one Mrs Alexander outside the village of Carrickmore in an overwhelmingly Catholic district. A meeting of local Catholics was held and as a result of their deliberations, the area was placarded with posters alerting residents to the proposed 'invasion'.

The poster stated that:

Owing to the declared intention of the Orange faction to hold their annual carnival this year in the town of Carrickmore, a Nationalist and Catholic stronghold, where Orangism does not count over one per cent of the population and a place which heretofore has been happily exempt from the visits of these unwelcome disturbers, and the belief existing that the Catholic church, which lies in the proposed route of the demonstrators would be likely to be wrecked, and the lives of Catholics endangered; it was unanimously resolved at a public meeting, held in Carrickmore on the 1st inst., under the auspices of the Irish League, and attended by the people of the entire parish, that they would muster all their available strength on that day, the 12th of July next, to look after the protection²⁷ and the lives of property of the people of the district.

On the 12th of July the members of 130 Orange Lodges, with bands playing and banners waving and with M'Caw in their midst to deliver the principal address of the day, approached the village of Carrickmore under the menacing gaze of a strong force of Catholics who, armed with sticks and other weapons, had drawn themselves up in the village and on the surrounding hillside. Between the marchers and their opponents the R.I.C. had flung up a cordon of 400 men and the Orange procession, estimated by the Belfast News Letter as being at least 40,000 strong, abandoned the attempt to march through the village and

²⁷ Irish Times, 3 July 1906.

took an alternate route to its destination. To an audience apparently still smarting from this rebuff, M'Caw in the course of his address spoke of the probable role of the police force under a Home Rule administration.

Another thing would probably be done and that would be to put the Royal Irish Constabulary under the control of the county councils. So long as they had Unionist county councils that would not matter, because the Unionist councils conducted their affairs on strictly business lines; but what might they expect from Nationalist councils which introduced politics and every kind of irrelevant matter? Soon the whole country would be under the heel of the Home Rulers.

The result of the increasingly provocative and hard hitting Unionist electoral tactics was the formation in Tyrone of two new branches of the Ancien Order of Hibernians and the issuing of the writ for the by-election which fixed polling day for the 25th of July. Kettle had, however, inadvertently offered a hostage to political fortune which the Unionists found irresistible and that was his supposed, and by Kettle until this point never denied, participation in the disturbances at the degree conferring ceremony of the Royal University of Ireland. This event which had caused a wave of indignation in Northern Unionist circles was now resurrected by the M'Caw camp. This tactic was particularly damaging to Kettle because the mini-riot in Dublin had been widely interpreted as a slur on the King and any hint of disrespect to the monarchy could be injurious to the Nationalist electoral strategy of winning over moderate Protestants. Kettle's position was that of the traditional Irish constitutionalist - his argument was with the Westminster government, not with the monarchy. Here was an opportunity for M'Caw's campaigners to present Kettle as nothing

less than a republican extremist, a gambit calculated to frighten any wavering Protestant voters back into the narrow path of Unionist orthodoxy.

The Northern Whig in particular dwelt with increasing intensity on Kettle's 'disloyal' behaviour. On 7 July, the newspaper was pointing out to its predominantly Unionist readership in relatively mild terms that:

The Nationalists have shown how badly off they were for a candidate by sending to Dublin for an unknown youth, whose only title to distinction hitherto appears to be that he formed one of the gang of hobbledehoys who created a disturbance and exhibited their disloyalty at the Royal University on last degree day. The action of these noisy young blackguards was repudiated by respectable Roman Catholic members of the University at the time, and steps are now being taken to visit with condign punishment any who transgress again; but apparently the wire-pullers in Dublin thought that anything was good enough for East Tyrone.²⁹

As the campaign proceeded, the Northern Whig in its reports of M'Caw's election meetings gave increasing prominence to references by speakers to Kettle's supposedly anti-monarchist sentiments. Typical of these references was that made on 18 July at Croagh where a M'Caw supporter urged the meeting that since 'Mr. Kettle objected to singing the National Anthem he might object to taking the oath of allegiance to the King which was necessary on taking his seat in parliament. They should not trouble his conscience in this way, and as he was an out and out Home Ruler let them keep him in Ireland.'³⁰ It must be said that Unionists were almost certainly sincere in believing Kettle to have been an instigator of the Royal University

²⁹Northern Whig, 7 July 1906.

³⁰Northern Whig, 7 July 1906.

disruptions because the Nationalist candidate had never denied these charges. Now, however, the Kettle camp made haste to set the record straight and immediately the affair took on a more serious tone. On 14 July, John A Quinn, the Cookstown solicitor who was Kettle's election agent wrote to the Northern Whig.

The attention of Mr. T.M. Kettle, B.L., one of the candidates for the Parliamentary representation of East Tyrone, having been drawn to a sub leader in your issue of the 7th inst., in which grossly false and libellous statements are made and published with reference to him, I am instructed by Mr. Kettle to require an immediate withdrawal of these statements in the same public way in which they appeared in your paper, and an ample apology for having published them. In the event of such withdrawal and apology not appearing in your paper by Wednesday next, the 18th inst., I am to ask you to be good enough to give me³¹ the name of a solicitor who will accept service of writ.

The response of the Northern Whig was to publish in its issue of 18 July the complete correspondence that ensued between Kettle's solicitors and the newspaper and on 19 July to exhume and publish the statement of Lord Meath, Chancellor of the Royal University, which had been made in the immediate aftermath of the riot and which in the context of the by-election was a useful piece of anti-Kettle propaganda. Joseph R. Fisher, the editor of the Northern Whig, in reply to Quinn claimed to be unaware of the precise nature of Kettle's objections to his editorial and referred to Lord Meath's statement.

The Chancellor of the University, speaking in his official capacity, declared that on that occasion 'the platform reserved for the Chancellor, the senators, and distinguished graduates was forcibly invaded by a mob' (of which it was stated that

³¹Northern Whig, 18 July 1906.

Mr. T.M. Kettle was one); that the action of the disturbers 'brought open disgrace on the good name of the Royal University; that 'discipline, good feeling and decorum were outraged'; that 'the honour of the University received a severe blow'; that the outbreak 'constituted a direct and successful effort to repudiate all allegiance' to the King; that it was 'a foolish exhibition of disloyal sentiment'; and that he (the Chancellor) 'received notice from two senators - one a Catholic and the other a Protestant - that they will most reluctantly be forced to resign their positions in the University unless steps be taken to prevent the recurrence of such a disgraceful scene'. And Mr. Thomas M. Kettle was, as I have said, formally charged with participating in this 'foolish', 'disgraceful', 'riotous', 'disorderly', and 'disloyal' performance.³²

Quinn denied specifically that Kettle had participated in the demonstration and warned Fisher that if he did not publish a withdrawal and apology of the charge that Kettle had formed 'one of the gang of hobbledehoyes who created disturbance and exhibited their disloyalty at the Royal University on last degree day' then he would proceed with the writ for damages. The Northern Whig ignored this request considering it an attempt 'to gag the press',³³ and printed instead a full account in its issue of 19 July of Lord Meath's summing up of the situation made immediately after the event and which was highly prejudicial to Kettle's campaign. By doing this, the paper's policy was doubtless one of calculated risk for the Chancellor's statement whilst not in itself libellous, was highly emotional and its appearance at this stage in the proceedings raised the interesting question of why the Northern Whig bothered publishing it at all if the paper's intentions were not libellous.

At any rate, East Tyrone Unionists could now read in the Chancellor's words how a mob, armed with sticks, had taken possession

³²Northern Whig, 18 July 1906.

³³Northern Whig, 19 July 1906.

of the organ gallery and in a 'flagrant exhibition of disloyalty' had prevented the playing of the national anthem. The Chancellor stated that this was 'a distinct and successful effort made by a body of students to repudiate all allegiance to the gracious sovereign who since his accession to the throne had shown himself to be a model constitutional ruler, and whose wise and loveable conduct had already obtained for him the respect and admiration of the world'.³⁴ Although the disturbance may have originated as a prank, the Chancellor's view was that 'owing to the political character given them by the Press and the open encouragement which the offenders have received from a portion of the public the young men have come to regard themselves as engaged in a meritorious campaign of a national character against the British connection.'³⁵ The Chancellor anticipated with trepidation future agitations against the University warning that 'assaults and perhaps bloodshed might ensue'.³⁶

On 19 July, Quinn visited the solicitors of the Northern Whig and served a writ claiming damages for libel against the paper. The Northern Whig's attitude of defiance also prompted Quinn to apply on 20 July for an injunction against the paper under the Corrupt and Illegal Practices Prevention Act. On 24 July, the Northern Whig's solicitors applied to Mr. Justice Andrews and Mr. Justice Kenny of the King's Bench Division who were assigned to deal with the trial of Parliamentary election petitions that the injunction might be discharged. The Northern Whig's solicitors made the morally telling but legally

³⁴Northern Whig, 19 July 1906.

³⁵Ibid., 19 July 1906.

³⁶Ibid., 19 July 1906.

redundant point that Kettle, so far from denying his involvement in the Royal University disturbances had, at the time, appeared to bask in the reflected glory of being associated with the disrupters. In their affidavit, the Northern Whig's solititors pointed out to the judges that:

That on the 3rd November, 1905, the said Thomas M. Kettle, with others, was summoned to appear before the Standing Committee of the Senate of the Royal University on 7th November, 1905, to explain their behaviour on the occasion referred to that the said Thomas Kettle, by letter dated 6 November, 1905, refused to comply with the said summons, and while denying that he had been guilty of riotous and disorderly conduct, as charged in the summons, went on in his said letter to dispute the jurisdiction of the University to adjudicate upon the charge, but in no way denied that he had been present on the occasion. On the contrary, I submit the legitimate inference from the letters is that the writer was present, but refused to answer to the University for anything that had passed, and defended the course of conduct pursued on the occasion...I am informed and believe, that he took a leading, if not a principal part in the agitation carried on by the body of students responsible for the disorder, encouraged them in their conduct,³⁷ and addressed meetings in favour of their movement.

Because Kettle had not at the time denied his involvement and had in fact made speeches supporting the rebels, the Northern Whig felt duty bound to expose 'this gentleman who now wishes to masquerade as a loyalist down in Tyrone'.³⁸ The judges were not impressed with this line of argument and emphasised that the injunction was specifically against repetition of the statement that Kettle had been a member of the band of students who had disrupted the degree conferring ceremony. Accordingly, in view of Kettle's sworn denial that he had participated in the disruption, a denial that the Northern

³⁷Irish Times, 25 July 1906.

³⁸Ibid., 25 July 1906.

Whig now accepted, the judges refused to discharge the injunction, finding that the Northern Whig had made 'a false statement of fact likely to prejudice the election'.³⁹ It is doubtful if the editors of the Northern Whig were particularly chastened by the unsuccessful outcome of their appeal because the election was by now in its final stages and the embarrassment they had caused the Kettle campaign and the effect of their 'exposures' on the electors was not now likely to be undone.

Fine weather on 25 July facilitated and afforded a pleasant backdrop to the last act of the by-election - the demonstration by the Nationalist and Unionist organisations of their superlative skills in delivering voters to the polling booths. Perhaps surprisingly, there were no cases of personation reported but the Belfast News Letter reported that at Cookstown a Conservative Catholic who had previously voted for M'Caw was forcibly carried off by Kettle's agents and had his vote cast on the Nationalist side as an illiterate. To the elation of the Unionists, the colony of Plymouth Brethren who inhabited the Croagh district, and who had hitherto steadfastly refused to vote, yielded to the blandishments of M'Caw's workers. Constituency exiles from England, Scotland, Wales and the United States turned up to record their votes including an indomitable priest, Father Toner, an old associate of A.J. Kettle's who travelled all the way from Pittsburgh to vote, arriving on the 25th and commencing his return journey on the same day. Both sides made extensive use of the motor car, a feature doubtless enjoyed by the several centenarians who

³⁹Ibid., 25 July 1906.

voted and one of M'Caw's cars breaking down at Donaghendry suffered the ignominious fate of being towed back to town by a Nationalist horse and cart. According to the Irish Times, the Unionists polled 100 per cent of the effective vote in Stewartstown, Pomeroy and Croagh and that paper, on the eve of the count, estimated that the former Nationalist majority had been reduced to 5. Large crowds gathered and demonstrations took place on behalf of the rival candidates in Cookstown and Stewartstown and in Dungannon that evening it became necessary for the police to dispel by force a Nationalist procession that went on a window-smashing spree of Unionist houses.

That morning of the 26th saw the courthouse in Dungannon cordoned off by a phalanx of police while the count got under way and as the town square filled with a crowd of restless supporters of the candidates.

During the next hour or so the excitement grew to fever heat, but it was not till close on two that the suspense came to an end. Then the door so rigorously guarded by police was flung open, and a youth dashed out waving his hat wildly and calling, 'Mr. Kettle is in'. The rest of the sentence was lost in a storm of piercing yells, all down the street green flags and handkerchiefs waved aloft, and a brass band that seemed to spring out ^{of} nowhere broke with a crash into 'God save Ireland'.⁴⁰

While the police linked arms and strained to hold back the crowd, Kettle addressed his exuberant supporters from the steps of the Commercial Hotel to vigorous cheering and then, as the victory procession moved off along Irish Street led by the fife and drum band of the Ancient Order of Hibernians, chagrined Unionists began to

⁴⁰ Northern Whig, 27 July 1906.

pelt the Nationalists with stones. This eruption occurred in the midst of an open air market in front of the Ranfurly Hotel and the Nationalists responded to the attack on them by appropriating as missiles earthenware from the stalls. The ornamental lettering on the front of the hotel was damaged and an inoffensive bystander floored with a nasty head wound before 30 police armed with rifles got between the combattants. That night, Dungannon was the scene of further violence and the Inspector General of the R.I.C. reported that the police were 'badly stoned and compelled to charge to disperse the mobs'.⁴¹ In Stewartstown, a Nationalist drumming party came under gun fire when it paraded on the edge of the Unionist area of town and a young Protestant with a fowling piece was arrested. These pleasantries brought the by-election to its expectedly rowdy close.

Unionist commentators in the aftermath of the Kettle victory noted that while their position on the register had actually improved since the general election, giving them a potential majority of 49 votes, M'Caw's share of the poll had declined from 3,022 in January to 3,000 in the by-election. Because the Nationalists were not in as good a position on the register, it was expected that their share of the vote would drop and, as anticipated, the Nationalist poll of 3,053 in the general election fell to 3,018 giving Kettle a winning margin of 18 votes. It was M'Caw's failure to poll as many votes as he had in the general election that gave Kettle his victory. The Unionists drew gloomy conclusions from this. 'It means, in the first place, that there were abstentions from

⁴¹Inspector General's Monthly Report for July 1906.

voting among the Unionists; in the second place it suggests that some few of those who are reckoned Unionists must have voted for the Nationalist candidate.'⁴² Nationalist strategy had then been vindicated, for Kettle had won over enough 'rotten Protestant' votes to secure the seat. Somewhat euphorically perhaps, Kettle declared that 'this election was a victory, in the first place for Home Rule and a victory in the second place for democracy.'⁴³ Beyond the victory for his party, the by-election was a personal triumph for Kettle, perhaps the most dangerous type of triumph in politics - he had come through the by-election with his beliefs and illusions about the nature of Unionism and Irish Nationalism unscathed.

⁴²Belfast News Letter, 27 July 1906.

⁴³Freeman's Journal, 27 July 1906.

CHAPTER FOUR

The strange ailments of Irish America

1. The Background

Kettle's difficulties were the perennial difficulties of the intellectual in politics. Although he possessed both a disconcertingly lucid objectivity about the Nationalist endeavour and a generously poetic instinct for the historical and cultural perspective of Nationalism, perhaps because of these very attributes, he found it intensely wearying to have to contribute so much of his time and energy to the narrowly technical considerations of party politics. His facility with ideas and his ability to express them in pithy and memorable language led him all too often into the impolitic statement. And here he laboured under another serious disability for the milieu in which he was to work. Kettle was a very poor hater. But his epigrammatic brilliance and wit ensured that much hatred was directed at him, and frequently from those who were nominally at least his political allies. The Irish party was at constituency level profoundly conservative. The political situation at Westminster where the Home Rule deadlock continued, coupled with declining enthusiasm for the parliamentary party at local level meant that Kettle's most significant work was to be done, not in parliament, but in Ireland and America reviving the Nationalist organisation. Confronted with the gerontocracy of local UIL leadership, Kettle's never too strongly developed powers of tact and diplomacy were tested to the utmost and frequently lapsed. Nowhere can this be seen more clearly than in Kettle's wholly remarkable tour of the United States which he conducted with Richard Hazleton and which illustrates not merely the weaknesses of Kettle's

political style but which also sheds light on the extraordinary deficiencies of the United Irish League of America.

Kettle and Hazleton's fund-raising tour of the United States was the result of an invitation that in Kettle's words 'had come with a suddenness and unexpectedness that was dramatic'.¹ A worse time to send envoys to America could hardly have been imagined. It was anticipated that Kettle and Hazleton would be in the United States from the middle of October 1906 to the beginning of the following March. But October and most of November would be given over to the campaign for American senate and gubernatorial elections. This surfeit of politics followed by the Christmas celebrations would ensure that the impact of the Irish envoys would be minimal. Moreover Irish politics were in a limbo pending the announcement of the Liberals' promised measure of devolution. Kettle and Hazleton would have a weary time reiterating the old Home Rule rhetoric with the strong likelihood that a less than satisfactory Liberal measure would undo all their efforts. As A.J. Kettle wrote to his son, 'Your mission is so stale it will take a lot of thinking to make it interesting. The ground has been gone over so often.'²

Why then did the United Irish League of America issue their invitation to Kettle and Hazleton? In an effort to understand the thinking behind this ill-considered invitation it is necessary to examine briefly the situation in the United States that led to its being issued. A look at the internal workings of the United Irish League of America invests with rich, if unconscious, irony John Redmond's parting words to Kettle and Hazleton.

¹Freeman's Journal 9 October 1906.

²A.J. Kettle to T.M. Kettle, 4 December 1906, Kettle Papers.

I say that a young Irish Nationalist who has never been in America does not know the Irish question in its full sense and does not understand the power and glory of the Irish race as he will when³ he goes amongst his countrymen across the Atlantic.

The invitation to Kettle and Hazleton came as one result of an important convention of the United Irish League of America that was held in Philadelphia in early October. The titular head of the League prior to the convention was Colonel 'Long John' Finerty, a Galway man, a veteran of the Indian wars, an ex-congressman for Illinois and founder and editor of the Chicago Citizen. Finerty's effectiveness as President of the League may be doubted. He had a reputation as a comic nationalist. His remark when a congressman, on being asked if anything of interest had happened that day in the House, 'No, nothing but American business today,'⁴ had assured him of dubious fame in the annals of American political humour. By 1906 the old fire-eater who had once gravely embarrassed Michael Davitt, with whom he was sharing a platform, by assuring the audience that 'If I had my way I would kill every Englishman that came to Ireland as tyrant or ruler,'⁵ was in poor health. There was doubtless truth in the assertions of his political enemies that he was sliding rapidly into senility.

The effective head of the League was John O'Callaghan of the Boston Globe who was National Secretary. Of O'Callaghan and the Boston executive of the UIL a hostile witness observed, 'Their organisation fitted easily into the corner of a small tap-room. But what a figure they cut on paper!'⁶ If this deliberately unkind remark

³ Freeman's Journal 9 October 1906.

⁴ Thomas N. Brown, Irish-American Nationalism (New York 1966) P.xv.

⁵ Ibid., 163.

⁶ William Bulfin to John Devoy, 14 August 1907 in William O'Brien and Desmond Ryan, (eds) Devoy's Post Bag 1871-1928, (Dublin) p.358.

contained an element of truth, and undoubtedly the first concern of the vast majority of Irish Americans was with the Democratic party rather than with the Irish parliamentary party, then O'Callaghan's sense of his own importance was in no way diminished. The historians's judgement of O'Callaghan must necessarily be harsh. His letters to Redmond, to whom he wrote two or three times a week, are masterpieces of unconscious self-revelation. An Iago-like figure, O'Callaghan was cantankerous, hypochondriacal and obsessively preoccupied with extending his own power, usually by conspiratorial methods. That third rate men like Finerty and O'Callaghan could rise to such prominence in the United Irish League of America was a sign of its inherent weakness. It was then, at O'Callaghan's behest that Kettle and Hazleton found themselves in America and at the mercy of a political machine gravely weakened by his machinations.

The convention in Philadelphia represented a serious attempt by O'Callaghan, the National Secretary, to revitalise the flagging UIL of America. The MPs, T.P. O'Connor and Edward Blake were present as delegates from Ireland and occasionally startled witnesses of O'Callaghan's manoeuvrings. These manoeuvres O'Callaghan set down in gloating detail in a long letter to Redmond. Finerty had announced his intention of retiring as President. He was, according to O'Callaghan, 'an object of pity'.⁷ But in spite of his declared intention of quitting, Finerty was, O'Callaghan feared, disposed to be a somewhat immovable object. 'That he wanted to cling to his place is unquestioned.'⁸ To prevent this O'Callaghan, by a series of cunning moves from the floor

⁷O'Callaghan to Redmond, 13 October 1906, Redmond papers, National Library of Ireland MS 15213

⁸Ibid.

of the convention, succeeded in ousting Finerty from the chair and installed his own protégé, Michael J. Ryan, leader of the Philadelphia delegation in that commanding position. The relish with which O'Callaghan described the details of his coup makes it plain that he was a born intriguer.

To the very last he [Finerty] kept a string on his declination to stand, ready to pull it at the slightest chance of securing his place again. But we outmanoeuvred him at every turn and without 99% of the delegates realising what was happening or Finerty himself being given the slightest chance to complain of harsh or unfair treatment we put him on the greazed (sic) pole and let him slide.

O'Callaghan's remark that ninety-nine per cent of the delegates failed to realise what was happening is, if true, impressive evidence of his political skills, but one wonders if there was not a price to be paid for their exercise in confusion, bewilderment and resentment amongst the delegates. The national secretary, however, had no doubts.

T.P. O'Connor and our Boston crowd applied the term which you once used in connection yourself to my action, that it was Machiavellian. But it was necessary if the organisation was not to die, and the only alternative was the certainty of an open row in the convention in the effort to shake off the old man of the sea.¹⁰

Despite O'Callaghan's self-congratulation one suspects that Machiavelli would have had reservations about the national secretary's performance. For, having eliminated Finerty, it became apparent that O'Callaghan had failed to secure a successor to the presidency. In the absence of any candidates from the convention floor, O'Callaghan

⁹Ibid.
¹⁰Ibid.

decided that Ryan of Philadelphia, the acting chairman, should fill the office. This was evidently a long cherished plan of O'Callaghan's and equally evidently one that Ryan was determined to resist. 'Our great remaining difficulty was then to induce Ryan to accept the nomination for the presidency which he had consistently and determinedly resisted from the beginning.'¹¹ Ryan, a young barrister with a wife and seven children to support felt that, quite literally, he could not afford to be president. While the convention listened to speeches, O'Callaghan, Ryan and the organising committee gathered in a back room to attempt to resolve this impasse. Ryan, with heartfelt eloquence, expressed his reluctance to stand, saying as reported by O'Callaghan that:

He would not serve as president and that if his name was submitted to the convention he would be forced to publicly decline it, and refuse to serve us, as it would mean ruin for his young family, the loss of his business, and general destruction to him.¹²

When O'Callaghan pressed him, Ryan replied, 'John' I can't do it. And if I could tell you all the circumstances you would not urge me further.'¹³

O'Callaghan, by his own account, was equal to the situation and addressed the committee in the following terms.

Let Mr. Ryan as he says he will do, decline his election as President. I shall ask the convention to vote down his declination, and it will be done. Let him decline it again. I shall not ask the convention a second time to force it on him. I shall then, if I have been named for any office on this committee, or in connection with this organisation - of which I know nothing whatever now - and do not inquire, I shall then ask the convention to leave the presidency vacant, I shall then take the floor and make a motion that this organisation of the United Irish League of America

¹¹Ibid.
¹²Ibid.
¹³Ibid.

be dissolved here and now by the delegates to the convention; I shall refuse myself to serve it in any capacity whatever in connection with it, and place the responsibility for the smashing up of this organisation on the very eve of the introduction of a measure of self government for Ireland on the only shoulders where that responsibility belongs - on the shoulders of Michael J. Ryan.¹⁴

To the concern of that kind hearted man, T.P. O'Connor, the luckless Ryan burst into tears. The committee withdrew while Ryan composed himself, then he reappeared and reluctantly accepted the unwanted honour that had been so brutally thrust upon him.

A more tactful man than O'Callaghan might have discreetly remained in the background for the rest of the convention. This however he was not disposed to do and he made yet another crucial intervention in the proceedings, one which was to lead to the sudden and unexpected invitation of Kettle and Hazleton to the United States and which incidentally increased the discomfiture of the hapless Ryan.

While it may look like boasting, I must mention another incident in the convention, which was an exact repetition of what you saw happen at our Boston convention four years ago. The Committee on Ways and Means made only a 'glittering generality' report; recommending no particular sum to be raised. Ryan's gavel was just about to fall on adopting this report when I had to jump up, take issue as jocosely as I could with the committee for being so indefinite and move that we become specific in our pledge. I suggested as the smallest sum we should raise the amount you asked for at the New York convention \$50,000 and urged that we get out and work for that sum. The motion swept the convention so instantaneously that more than \$50,000 was pledged within ten minutes and Darcy Scott moved the amount be raised to \$100,000 which was done. Around \$70,000 was pledged before we got through, and a good share of it paid, and Boston has practically fulfilled its pledge already, except of course it will take a couple of weeks to get it in. It was a great spectacle, and¹⁵ showed that we had got the right man at the head in Ryan.

¹⁴Ibid.
¹⁵Ibid.

To assist in raising this sum of money an invitation was extended to John Redmond asking him to send over Kettle and Hazleton as emissaries to speak at fund-raising functions. The truth was that O'Callaghan had dangerously overextended the resources of the United Irish League of America. Pledging money in the euphoric atmosphere of a convention was one thing, actually raising it was altogether another matter. By November, O'Callaghan was forced to admit to Redmond that,

New York has sent scarcely anything yet of the amount pledged there, although there is not the slightest doubt that substantially the \$20,000 pledged will be forthcoming. I do not think it will fall short at all of that amount. Even here in Boston we have not yet been able to get in what was promised at our meeting although it will be secured within a reasonable time without question. The same is true of Philadelphia which has only sent in about \$25,000 or thereabouts of the amount pledged by the city itself in the convention, which will of course be secured.¹⁶

The situation in America did not then augur well for Kettle and Hazleton. The American UIL had been saddled, thanks to O'Callaghan, with a reluctant president; in Chicago and the West where Finerty was still regarded sympathetically there was little enthusiasm; the sum of money Kettle and Hazleton were expected to raise was unrealistic; even the season was inauspicious. But these were conditions that Kettle and Hazleton would have to ascertain and evaluate for themselves. The departure of the emissaries was celebrated with appropriate ceremony. In Dublin, John Redmond addressed a banquet in their honour and on the quay at Queenstown assembled civic dignitaries and a brass band playing patriotic airs bade them farewell. It was the eleventh of October. They would not see Ireland again for six eventful months.

¹⁶O'Callaghan to Redmond, 2 November 1906.

2. Kettle's American Tour

When Kettle, with Hazleton, landed at New York on 19 October, he had taken the first step in what was to be an exhausting, ill-organised, semi-comical American odyssey. His experiences in America were to contribute to what was to be a progressive disenchantment with a certain level of the political life. Between the two envoys and O'Callaghan there was little in common and the personal foibles of the national secretary soon widened generational, educational and temperamental differences into an unbridgeable chasm. The need to exercise tight supervision over the two envoys was a mental quirk of O'Callaghan's that assumed near morbid proportions. The national secretary was, however, in a poor position to control local branches of the American UIL upon whom the success of Kettle's and Hazleton's mission was largely dependent. Outside of Boston, O'Callaghan's writ did not run. Kettle and Hazleton as elected representatives of the Irish people could be expected to exercise a degree of independent judgement as to how their mission could be best accomplished. Indeed O'Callaghan's lack of coherent planning soon made this imperative. The farther the two envoys got from Boston the slacker O'Callaghan's grip became and the more Kettle and Hazleton found themselves dealing with local men. In the West, John Leahy of St Louis, no friend of O'Callaghan's, whom the national secretary stigmatised as 'one of the Finerty gang' became Kettle's most valuable contact. Hazleton soon opted for Ryan, the new president, as his closest colleague. O'Callaghan became the implacable enemy of Kettle and Hazleton and the story of their tour is inevitably coloured by his violent denunciations of them to John Redmond.

Confusion as to the schedule Kettle and Hazleton were to follow bedevilled their entire tour. Initially they were to speak in New York and Massachusetts, appearing on platforms with Edward Blake and T.P. O'Connor, and on the return to Ireland in early November of the latter two delegates it was anticipated that a series of engagements in the mid-West would be arranged for the young MPs. Joe Devlin who was on a mission in Australia would be returning to Ireland via San Francisco in the new year with his travelling companion John T. Donovan, a prominent Belfast Hibernian. O'Callaghan intended that in February or early March Kettle, Hazleton, Devlin and Donovan would speak at a major rally of the American UIL in Washington. Devlin's assent had not however been obtained for this latter project and Kettle's and Hazleton's plans became dominated by hasty and last minute improvisations.

Kettle's introduction to the fanatical divisions of Irish American politics began almost immediately. His arrival in the United States had been watched with interest by John Devoy and Clan Na Gael, especially since the Gaelic American claimed that Andrew J. Kettle had been a Fenian 'in the old days'.¹ To young Irishmen of Kettle's generation Fenianism was a topic of almost academic interest as when, in the course of a speech in Chicago celebrating the Manchester martyrs, Kettle embarked upon a digression claiming that 'Fenianism was the fountain from which all subsequent Irish movements had sprung.'² He even ventured to suggest that had the Fenians 'lived till today they might perhaps - it was a matter of speculation - not now be associated with the men

¹Gaelic American 27 October 1906.
²Chicago Citizen 1 December 1906.

and the methods deliberately chosen and at every renewed opportunity of choice re-adopted by the national will of Ireland'.³ For Kettle, Fenianism had been swallowed up in Parnellism, Parnellism had given rise to the present Irish party and the entire physical force movement could be safely relegated to history. Kettle's analysis was not unreasonable. A recent historian has drawn attention to an RIC report of 1887 which estimated that '21 out of 83 listed Parnellite MPs were believed to be Fenians, 4 were believed likely to support Fenian designs, while 2 were regarded as ex-Fenians.'⁴

But by mentioning Fenian or neo-Fenian involvement in the Irish parliamentary party Kettle had hit upon a topic that was embarrassing to both the Clan and the UIL of America. In America Fenianism was alive and well, if reduced in numbers, and to constitutional Nationalists of O'Callaghan's generation more dangerous, detested and better known enemies than ever the English were. Kettle's intellectual willingness to debate the Irish question in all its aspects and O'Callaghan's awareness of the mischief-making capacity of the Clan led to the first open breach between the two men and illustrated their fundamental antipathy. The rather unlikely instrument of the first rupture between Kettle and O'Callaghan was a Hindu gentleman, Mr Muhammed Barakatullah of Bhopal, India.

When on the Sunday evening of 21 October, O'Connor, Hazleton and Kettle arrived at Carnegie Hall, New York, to address a meeting, they found that amongst the platform party waiting to receive them were four Indian gentlemen. One of the Indians, Mr. Barakatullah wrote out

³ Ibid.

⁴ Paul Bew, Land and the National Question in Ireland 1858-82 (Dublin 1979) P.229.

a question on a piece of paper and handed it to the chairman of the meeting, Major Rudolph Fitzpatrick, secretary of the Parnell Branch of the New York UIL. Major Fitzpatrick handed the question to T.P. O'Connor who glanced at it and handed it back, saying that he did not think the time appropriate to answer the question. The question, as reprinted in the Gaelic American, read as follows:

Mr M. Barakatullah of Bhopal, India would like to ask Mr O'Connor as a representative of the Irish parliamentary party whether, in the event of the Indian people rising against the oppressive and tyrannical rule of England in India and in case England should concede Home Rule to Ireland, Mr O'Connor would be in favour of the Irish people furnishing soldiers to the British army to crush the Indian people.⁵

Mr. Barakatullah, unsatisfied at the dismissal of his question, handed it over to the Gaelic American who printed it in their issue of 1 December. The Gaelic American also claimed that at a subsequent meeting in New York, Kettle, when taxed with the issue of the UIL's apparent reluctance to deal with the question, had accused the Indian visitors of 'having been invited along by the Clan'.⁶ Furious at having his liberal principles thus impugned, Kettle allowed himself to be goaded into a reply and wrote a refutation of these allegations to Fitzpatrick which the Major passed on to the Gaelic American.

The report in question is an absolute falsehood. No question was put to me with regard to Indian affairs and I made no observation either at the Carnegie Hall meeting or at any other social function with regard to the character of your Indian guests. I have been interested in India for a long time. My attention was first drawn to it by the work of my friend Mr Alfred Webb, ex-MB. In Dublin during the last two or three years I have met a number of Indian students and gained from them some insight into their affairs, and I sympathise with their struggle for freedom - as a member of one oppressed nation must necessarily sympathise with another.

⁵Gaelic American 1 December 1906.

⁶Ibid. 1 December 1906

I shall be speaking at several meetings in this city including one at your own branch and I shall be happy to deal with any question that may be put to me on this or any other branch of national policy.

The Gaelic American affected to be bewildered that Kettle had not written to them directly but had apparently used Major Fitzpatrick as an intermediary. Kettle did not write directly to the Gaelic American because he was already at loggerheads with O'Callaghan on how he and Hazleton should treat Clan-inspired attacks. That friction was developing between the national secretary and the envoys is apparent from a lengthy letter from O'Callaghan to Redmond in mid-December.

The fact is my dear Mr Redmond I think Mr Kettle believes that he is a bigger man than the party and that may be part of the cause of the trouble. I impressed strongly on both himself and Mr Hazleton when leaving here, also, that they should not get into any controversy or entanglement with Devoy, who had been hammering them in his paper. I told them that anything of that kind had better be done if at all by the people here who were conversant with the facts rather than by them who had come here for a different and specific purpose.

The very next week however a letter of Kettle's written to a blatherskite in New York calling himself Major Rudolph Fitzpatrick, in connection with some supposed Indian gentleman who attended there, appeared in Devoy's paper, and the result has been that he has kept it going every week since and I understand from a letter received from St. Paul yesterday, it is being thrown up by Clan men out there as a reason for declining to have anything to do with Kettle.

An ironic sidelight is thrown on this incident by the fact that Kettle would have been perfectly justified if he had, as the Gaelic American alleged, accused Mr Barakatullah of being in league with the Clan. The Indians who attended the Carnegie Hall meeting represented the Swadeshi movement, which aimed to win Indian independence by boycott

⁷Ibid. 8 December 1906.

⁸O'Callaghan to Redmond, 18 December 1906.

of British goods and by encouraging native home industries. The Pan Aryan Society of New York was the American arm of this movement and sought to mobilise United States opinion against the British Empire. At a meeting of the Clan-influenced Brooklyn Gaelic Society in January 1907, Mr. Barakatullah delivered a lecture at which he claimed that the Irish and the Aryans of the East were of the same race and urged that the Irish should support the Sinn Fein movement.

Mr Barakatullah also spoke highly of the Gaelic American claiming that 'it had revolutionised the thought of India'.⁹ Mr Barakatullah subsequently shared platforms with Bulmer Hobson on the latter's tour of New England in 1907 and Swadeshi movement speakers in national dress also enlivened Sinn Fein meetings in Dublin.

When he advised Kettle not to be drawn by the Indian question, O'Callaghan's political instincts were sound but narrowly based. After all, what harm could be done to the Irish cause in America by debating the broader questions of the British Empire? The introduction of the Indians to the Carnegie Hall meeting and the initial attempt by the Gaelic American to conceal the fact that they were Sinn Fein sympathisers was an example of the sort of pointless Machiavellianism that characterised the feud between the two wings of Irish American Nationalism. The Clan had indeed gained a rather oblique victory by poisoning the relationship between O'Callaghan and Kettle. O'Callaghan felt that his authority had been challenged. For O'Callaghan the mandate of the envoys was simply to raise money and rally the faithful of the UIL of America. For Kettle and Hazleton it was to

⁹ Gaelic American 2 February 1907.

awaken Irish Americans in particular and indeed if possible Americans in general to the stirrings of a new political awareness on the other side of the Atlantic.

In their speeches Kettle and Hazleton did their best to convey to Americans the important new changes they saw as having transformed the political situation. They were convinced that they would be returning to Westminster to play a part in dramatic events. The return of the Liberal government had coincided with developments in England and Ireland that they both saw as being particularly favourable to the Home Rule cause. Kettle was particularly struck with the rise of the Labour party and with what he identified as a surge of democratic feeling in England that would sweep away the House of Lords, that entrenched bastion against Irish Nationalism.

The Labour party has inoculated England with the germ of democracy and the result is a fierce revolt against the idea of an unrepresentative, non-elected, hereditary institution such as the House of Lords, controlling legislation. I believe the next question put to the British electors will be, not that the lords will graciously permit this or that bill to pass, but whether the lords shall be permitted to exist in the present shape at all.¹⁰

In Ireland, claimed Kettle, 'the Orange Order has been broken into two branches and the Independent Orange Order is now a wing of the Nationalist party and for Home Rule'.¹¹ As for landlordism, Kettle told his audiences that:

In a decade from today if they wanted to find a specimen of the old-time Irish landlord they would have to go to some Yellowstone Park...in the west of Ireland for the instruction of later generations, and there they would find the last representatives of the Leitrim, the Clanricards, and the De Freynes in a reservation bearing¹² the inscription, 'Irish Animals of Prey - Now Extinct.'

¹⁰ Anaconda Standard 23 December 1906.

¹¹ Butte Evening News 9 January 1907.

¹² Chicago Citizen 1 December 1906.

Although in Kettle's opinion Irish tenants were paying too much for their land in their eagerness to own it, he thought the days of Ireland's dependence upon agriculture were drawing to a close.

Under Home Rule we hope to industrialise Ireland, to raise it up from the mere agricultural country it is today. We want to cover Ireland with industries, industries to employ her people and make it a prosperous country, a country able to support well its large population. American Irishmen can help us in this.¹³

Neither Kettle nor Hazleton seem to have been particularly well briefed as to what they should say in America with regard to the measure of devolution promised by Campbell Bannerman prior to the general election of 1906. Hazleton expected that in February nothing short of a fully fledged Home Rule Bill would be introduced by the Liberals. Interviewed in Chicago he expressed himself thus on the impending measure:

No, we do not expect the new measure for Home Rule will be cast upon the old Gladstone Bill, either of 1886 or 1892; but it will be adequate. Naturally it is not to be expected that the details of twenty years ago will be repeated now; we have progressed in that time and our needs and demands have been in unessentials modified. Even the two measures of Gladstone differed between themselves. Details which were then considered wise may not be deemed so now and vice versa.

Adequate Home Rule however will be granted Ireland by the new measure. The control of her own taxation and education are the two things that must be granted absolutely. Such control will ensure self government in all local matters. Of course we suppose that Ireland will retain a representation at Westminster in the Imperial parliament. We should not wish otherwise. We do not expect that the parliament at Dublin¹⁴ would deal with army and navy and kindred matters.

Kettle was less optimistic, possibly because his father kept him abreast of developments in Ireland but still he expected a major

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid.

measure and anticipated a stormy parliamentary session.

If the party was united, resolute and financially strong so that in the event of a Liberal betrayal it could renew in Ireland that state of civil war which started the Land Act of 1881 for instance, then the Irish government bill of 1907 would be a good bill. If it was known that the party was not rich enough to enter on a campaign, or that it was so hampered by factions in Ireland, well-intentioned or evil-intentioned as to have the point of its effectiveness blunted, then the bill of 1907 would be a bad bill.¹⁵

Both Kettle and Hazleton saw the Liberal party's dropping of its Education Bill in December, after it had been savaged by the Lords as a favourable portent. Kettle told reporters in St Louis that:

There is every indication that the Liberal government will allow the Education Bill to stand and make its fight on the Home Rule Bill, as being the strongest measure of the two. To the Irish people this is the most beautiful irony of all history.¹⁶

Neither of the two envoys were as yet fully aware of how exceedingly slowly the political mills could grind and the sense of the importance of their mission was reinforced by their meetings with the leaders of the two American political parties. Hazleton had an audience with President Roosevelt in the White House and Kettle, travelling west, spent an afternoon in Lincoln, Nebraska, with William Jennings Bryan. Both young Irishmen took to America with an enthusiasm that dismayed O'Callaghan. Kettle was probably the first Irish envoy to America to deliver himself of an impromptu address on the charms of American womanhood. He told reporters in St Louis that American girls

...combine the best qualities of the French and Irish girls...and their features are perfect. While they are beautiful and could hardly be improved upon, I don't believe they possess the poetic tenderness of the best Irish girls. What impresses me most is that the

¹⁵Ibid.

¹⁶St Louis Post Dispatch 3 December 1906.

American women know how to dress, and their taste is admirable. In my opinion women are the most characteristic of all the products of America, and they have the best of all the good qualities America possesses. They possess a great intellectual keenness which is seldom seen in women. I have met many since I arrived¹⁷ in America, and must say that they are really charming.

O'Callaghan complained to John Redmond with his usual bitterness that Hazleton in Rhode Island had shown more interest in attending a boxing match than in meeting local dignitaries. The national secretary also found himself in the unaccustomed role of go-between for the love letters sent by Mary Sheehy in Dublin to Kettle.

On 18 December, O'Callaghan wrote a long pessimistic letter to Redmond warning him that 'no false hopes'¹⁸ should be entertained about Kettle's and Hazleton's mission. The envoys had left Boston for New York on 13 November. To O'Callaghan's chagrin neither Kettle nor Hazleton had kept him informed as to their progress. True, Kettle had written a brief note from Chicago where he and Hazleton, accompanied by Ryan had addressed a meeting. This had not, according to Kettle been much of a success.

Last night's meeting is over thank God! It totalled about \$2,000 (we said in the papers \$5,000). Had it not been for the way in which Mr. Ryan took hold of it¹⁹ and hustled it along it would have been worse frost still.

O'Callaghan received Kettle's note on a bed of sickness and was unable to reply. In the meantime the two envoys made their way to St Louis. At this stage John P. Leahy, the member of the National Executive Committee for St Louis, entered the picture. O'Callaghan entertained

¹⁷ St Louis Post Dispatch 2 December 1906.

¹⁸ O'Callaghan to Redmond, 18 December 1906.

¹⁹ Kettle to O'Callaghan, 26 November 1906, National Library of Ireland MS15213.

feelings of considerable resentment towards Leahy.

My own impression is that Leahy's influence has not been of the best. Leahy had a snout on him at the convention and did his utmost as I previously told you, either to bring about Finerty's re-election or to have an open fight in the convention...I have no doubt that he is partially responsible for Kettle's²⁰ silence, but that is no excuse for Kettle himself.

The element of improvisation that now emerged in the schedule Kettle and Hazleton were to follow was to be a source of increasing frustration to O'Callaghan. After the St Louis meeting, Kettle and Hazleton separated in order to cover as much ground as possible. In Kettle's phrase this was done by 'an Apostolic drawing of lots'²¹ - in fact they tossed a coin. Hazleton accompanied by Ryan took the train east to canvas Ohio and Pennsylvania whilst Kettle, unaccompanied, headed northwest. Ryan of Philadelphia and Leahy of St Louis were by now acting as Hazleton's and Kettle's tour managers. O'Callaghan had asked Kettle and Hazleton to keep in touch with him every three or four days and this they now conspicuously failed to do. He complained that his requests for information as to Kettle's whereabouts 'were only answered by a wire to send Kettle's mail in his care. It would have been just as easy for him to let me know his address after he left St Louis as it would be to let Leahy know it if he so desired',²² This overlooked the fact that Kettle had embarked upon a punishing schedule of travel in the northwest and did not have a permanent address where he could be reached.

There were other difficulties. As O'Callaghan admitted to Redmond, due to the American state elections 'the work of active organisations could not be carried on in advance of their [Kettle's and Hazleton's]

²⁰ O'Callaghan to Redmond, 18 December 1906.

²¹ Irish World 26 January 1907.

²² O'Callaghan to Redmond, 18 December 1906

visit to any great extent'.²³ Nevertheless, O'Callaghan insisted that Kettle's itinerary should be organised by him from Boston. 'Hitherto the plan adopted has always been that I suggested to whoever came out the points which I thought ought to be covered and the order in which they ought to be taken, and then communicated with the local men urging them to prepare for the dates agreed on.'²⁴ It appears, however, from a letter O'Callaghan wrote to Kettle, through Leahy in St Louis on 13 December that Ryan had advised Kettle that nothing could be done in Boston to facilitate his trip. 'I am surprised at what you say about Mr Ryan suggesting there could be nothing done from here towards securing you meetings. That is not at all what I had suggested to him and must be the result of a misunderstanding on his part or somebody else's.'²⁵ There were good grounds for this misunderstanding, if it was a misunderstanding at all. O'Callaghan had written to Kettle in New York on 21 November, before the envoys went west, saying:

It would also be an excellent thing if you took a list of the names and addresses of the men you consider the best workers in each place and let me have them from time to time so that I may know whom to call on in emergencies, as of course I have never had the opportunity and do not expect to have of meeting²⁶ personally the men at any great distance from here.

O'Callaghan's letters to Redmond were now filled with violent denunciations of both Kettle and Hazleton, coupled with admonitions to Redmond to keep his real feelings about the two envoys a secret. 'If you should be writing to Kettle perhaps it would be just as well not to let him know that I feel so indignant about it, because I do not want to have any open friction with him.'²⁷

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ O'Callaghan to Kettle' 13 December 1906, Kettle papers.

²⁶ O'Callaghan to Kettle, 21 November 1906, Kettle papers.

²⁷ O'Callaghan to Redmond, 18 December 1906.

The situation of the American UIL in the western states was far from healthy. On 30 November, Finerty wrote from Chicago to Kettle in St Louis outlining the prospects for the tour and giving him names and addresses of local men known to be sympathetic to the cause. Kansas City was 'no good up to date',²⁸ St Joseph, Missouri had last been canvassed in 1902. Sioux City was 'hardly worth the powder'.²⁹ Minneapolis was 'dead as doornails' and 'not worth a continental damn'.³⁰ The organisation in Omaha had been moribund since Joe Devlin had visited it in 1903. Denver, Colorado was 'no good',³¹ Salt Lake City, advised Finerty, offered 'Cheap talk. No results.'³² The mining town of Butte, Montana was however 'a good Irish city',³³ as was its neighbour, Anaconda. Great Falls, Montana, Finerty thought 'ought to be good',³⁴ and Spokane and Seattle in the state of Washington when visited by Willy Redmond in 1903 had contributed \$1,000. Portland, Oregon was 'Fairly good'.³⁵ California was less promising. San Francisco had been demoralised by the recent earthquake and was also, according to Finerty, 'in the hands of the enemy',³⁶ by whom he presumably meant the Clan. There was no organisation in Los Angeles. Texas was also terra incognita to the UIL. New Orleans was 'excellent',³⁷ but apart from Nashville and Memphis, Tennessee represented the 'corpse on the dissecting table'.³⁸ Finerty's summing up was not encouraging.

This, dear Mr. Kettle, is about the complete list - and really, outside of Butte and Anaconda - Maybe Seattle and Portland - ones labour would be lost in experimenting with them.

²⁸ Finerty to Kettle, 30 November 1906. Kettle papers

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid.

This information determined both Kettle's route and his modus operandi for this stage of his tour. He decided to concentrate his efforts on the northwest, paying special attention to Butte and Anaconda in Montana, to Spokane and Seattle in Washington and to Portland on the Oregon seaboard. He travelled alone and by train, organising his meetings as he went. In a letter from Kansas City, Kettle outlined his plan to O'Callaghan in an attempt to pacify the increasingly querulous national secretary.

I have determined after as much thought as my very limited data allowed, to go N.N.W. as far as Seattle and return by the same route. On the way up I shall act as my own advance agent, have a committee formed and get the press moving and arrange a meeting which I shall take in on the way back. This procedure I hope to apply to all⁴⁰ Irish centres reachable en route from here to Seattle.

Kettle mentioned that he had written to Mayor Fitzpatrick of New Orleans to arrange a meeting there. He would leave California to Joe Devlin to canvas on his way back from Australia and would swing east to New Orleans from Seattle, Washington, a plan that horrified O'Callaghan and formed the subject of another complaint to Redmond.

My own idea in reference to New Orleans from the outset was that we should try to arrange for a visit of one of the two there and at the same time try to prepare for meetings in Mobile and Montⁿgomery, Alabama and Savannah and Atlanta, Georgia...Kettle, however, off his own bat, and without consulting anybody, except possibly Leahy, undertakes to arrange for himself a⁴¹ trip to New Orleans from the other end of the country.

To Kettle, O'Callaghan wrote on 13 December, complaining about the lack of detailed information as to the itinerary.

I fear very much that if the plan you outlined in your note is followed out, the jump from Seattle to New Orleans without breaking the journey in a number of places will be a rather poor plan. I am entirely at a loss to understand why such places as San Francisco, Los Angeles, Pueblo, and one or two other places in that section should be excluded from your present trip west. I do not know who it is that has mapped out the program,

⁴⁰ Kettle to O'Callaghan 8 December 1906 National Library of Ireland
MS15213

⁴¹ O'Callaghan to Redmond, 18 December 1906

but I should say that in addition to magnificent distances they have had a rather⁴² crude idea of what would be best in that direction.

Kettle replied to O'Callaghan on 17 December from Omaha, Nebraska. Clearly he was irritated that O'Callaghan appeared so out of touch with the situation in the west and to Kettle, the impossibility of organising this stage of his tour from Boston was self-evident.

Your letter of the 13th was an invitation to the game of mutual recrimination. I decline to take a hand. On November 30 I wrote from St. Louis to you and Mr. Ryan notifying you that Mr. Hazleton and myself had drawn lots and that I was going west, and asking for advice and information as to my program and asking also whether anything had been done or could be done from headquarters. Mr. Ryan replied on December 3rd sending me a little money and telling me that I would have to reply on my own resources. There is no mistake or misunderstanding on either side about that letter and on the strength of it I assumed that in the west it was the normal thing for an envoy to America to shift for himself...You have been slightly misinformed as to my plan. I am not holding any meetings on my way up, but simply arranging for meetings to be held on my way back...As for New Orleans of course I shall be very glad it if can be associated with the other places in the south. The only limit is that I must be back home by February 25th or so...My plan may seem to you, doubtless very crude and all that. I can only reply that it was the best I could hit on, left to myself.⁴³

The only help that O'Callaghan could offer was to telegraph the various friends of the cause in the cities Kettle intended to visit alerting them to his impending arrival. This kind of improvised arrangement infuriated O'Callaghan, wounding his self esteem and frustrating his pretensions to absolute control over the UIL of America. As he explained to Patrick O'Brien MP, 'It is simply absurd for men to go away and hide themselves as an ostrich does and leave me groping through the country by telegraph and letter to try to discover

⁴²O'Callaghan to Kettle, 13 December 1906, Kettle papers.

⁴³Kettle to O'Callaghan, 17 December 1906, Ibid.

where they are.⁴⁴

Complaining letters from O'Callaghan, worries about his health - both Kettle and Hazleton had succumbed to what was probably influenza in St Louis - the onset of a particularly severe winter, these were the nagging accompaniments of Kettle's long western odyssey. At some stage he must have unburdened himself to his father, because on 21 December, A.J. Kettle sat down and wrote his son a worried and perplexed letter offering him advice and a warning.

I am quite put out by the contents of your letter. I fear you will get very little help or light and guidance from Redmond if you are at loggerheads with Ryan and O'Callaghan. At this distance I do not know what advice to give you or how to help you...it would be terribly awkward should friction continue between you and the American managers.⁴⁵

The old man was in the dark as to the underlying reason for his son's worries. Anxiously scanning the Irish World for an answer, he suggested that Kettle's remarks about the Fenians in Chicago might have made him unpopular. Kettle was probably little wiser than his father. The young envoy jolting in his train seat as he neared the Rocky Mountains could not be aware of the extent of the character assassination indulged in by O'Callaghan in his correspondence with John Redmond. But he had well justified feelings of unease and his father's words of warning were well timed.

Mind of all things the financial part of your work and expenditure. I do not know that you have a real friend in the political arena but Muldoon. So it will not be safe for you to expect either support or sympathy. **If you can, make** any sacrifice short of personal dishonour to keep in line with⁴⁶ the men in office, for the present at least.

⁴⁴O'Callaghan to O'Brien, 20 December 1906, NLI MS 15213.

⁴⁵A.J. Kettle to T.M. Kettle, 21 December 1906, Kettle papers.

⁴⁶Ibid.

An account by Kettle of his journey westwards appeared in the Irish World of 26 January 1907. His route took him from St Louis where he bade farewell to Hazleton, to Kansas City and St Joseph then, leaving Missouri, he entered the state of Nebraska where important stops were made at Omaha and Lincoln. Omaha was a city where Sir Horace Plunkett had large business interests and although he was expected in the city, Kettle narrowly missed meeting Plunkett and therefore, 'did not come into a clash with that curious, though amiable mentality that believes Ireland can be taught to abandon Home Rule by improvements in the breed of chickens'.⁴⁷ At Lincoln he met William Jennings Bryan. The conversation between them provided Kettle with one of his favourite stories in later years and one which illustrates his susceptibility to religious imagery, even in the mundane world of government.

When I met Mr. William Jennings Bryan in his home in Nebraska, I spoke about that famous peroration of his at the Chicago Convention when he was standing for free silver, and in which he said, 'You shall not press on the brow of labour that crown of thorns. You shall not crucify humanity on the cross of gold.' Mr. Bryan said that the most curious thing about that peroration was that nobody had ever noticed it before. I said, 'What?' And he said, 'Yes. That was the fourteenth time I had delivered it and no one had noticed it before.'⁴⁸

After Lincoln, Kettle's next major stop was Butte, Montana where he arrived on 22 December. Kettle would base himself in Butte, spend Christmas there, and make secondary trips to Spokane, Seattle and Portland. Thus far, his expedition had been a success. Meetings had been arranged by Kettle on 20 January in Lincoln, on the 21st in Omaha; he would speak at St Joseph, Missouri on the 23rd and the 25th January would see him addressing a rally in Kansas City. Butte,

⁴⁷Irish World 26 January 1907.

⁴⁸T.M. Kettle, The Economics of Unionism, (London 1912) p.11.

though, was the high point of Kettle's tour. The predominantly Irish population of this copper and silver mining town had earlier in the year provided Douglas Hyde with a rousing reception, and Kettle's mid-winter visit brought to this isolated community a welcome diversion. A typically enthusiastic representative of the men of the Butte met Kettle at the railway station. This was Peter F. Regan who had been a notable lieutenant of William O'Brien's at the inception of the United Irish League in Mayo. Regan, who had been first chairman of the Mayo County Council, had a permanently twisted finger, the legacy of a beating he had received from the Royal Irish Constabulary. The mayor of Butte, the city treasurer, the city clerk and the county attorney were all Irish, and more importantly from Kettle's point of view, enthusiastically Irish. Kettle was somewhat taken aback by his first view of Butte.

I am ashamed to say that I thought Butte was a mining camp; had vague notions of red-shirted prospectors, each with an armory at his hip, planting down ingots on unpainted counters and receiving their goods under the suspicious frown of a 'sixshooter', or as they call it in County Tyrone, a 'sweetheart'. Butte it is true lives on its mines - lives in them both ways, for the shafts open up into the very heart of its crowded streets. But it is not a red-shirted camp. It is a metropolitan city. It is a bleak business spending Christmas six thousand miles away from one's roof and home,⁴⁹ but the hospitality of Butte has salve for any smart.

Kettle himself made a favourable impression upon the citizens of this remote community. The Butte Evening News found the Irish envoy 'a slight built, smooth shaven, youthful appearing, student looking man, with strong rich pleasing voice, and a remarkable command of his

⁴⁹Irish World, 26 January 1907.

subject'.⁵⁰ A more detailed description of Kettle's speaking style is found in a letter from the chairman of the meeting Kettle addressed in Butte's twin city of Anaconda. Mr Dwyer, the superintendent of Anaconda Public School, wrote to John Redmond enclosing the \$322 subscribed at the meeting and providing some slight antidote to O'Callaghan's scurrilous descriptions of Kettle.

In the ordinary sense of the term Mr Kettle is not oratorical. For mere tricks of expression he does not strive; but he takes infinite pains that each sentence contains a thought clearly fixed in his mind, or a reinforcement of an idea which he is developing. His precision of thought and accuracy of expression show that the dreadful grind for the Intermediate examinations, in which he achieved such signal distinction, did not stifle the individuality of Mr. Kettle. Sentence after sentence, luminous and precise, flowed from him. Now with force, invective and measured scorn he lashed the enemies of his country and exposed many tragic features of Irish history; and again with calm deliberation he would marshal an array of facts that impelled each of his hearers to see the absolute and 'sweet reasonableness' of Home Rule. But towards the end of his speech flashes of wit and incisive phrase came from him with marvellous rapidity.⁵¹

On 30 December a successful meeting at Butte raised \$1,500 for the cause. Harrassed by another bout of influenza and attempted disruptions by Clan elements this was something in the nature of a personal triumph for Kettle. It was to be the only one of his tour. In January, winter set in earnest and in Butte temperatures ranged from between 17 to 30 degrees below zero, exceptionally cold even for that part of the world. Kettle left for Portland with 'banked and drifted snow on the ground, a white tumult of snow in the air and rumours of obstructed tracks, railway wrecks and pneumonia on every side'.⁵² He managed a meeting in Portland on 6 January but Spokane

⁵⁰ Butte Evening News 31 December 1906

⁵¹ Freeman's Journal 16 March 1907

⁵² Irish World 26 January 1907.

was not a success and Kettle held no meeting there. He did, however, persuade Edward O'Shea, a prominent Irish American solititor to start a branch of the League. Whilst in Spokane he had a despairing letter from his contacts in Seattle warning him off. Douglas Hyde had spoken in that city the previous spring and had met with comparative failure. 'Many of us have striven to find out the cause of this apathy but we can see no reason other than the great remoteness of this coast from the scene of conflict across the Atlantic. In this case distance does not lend enchantment.'⁵³ It is evident of Kettle's determination that he persisted and held a successful meeting in Seattle. From there he returned to Butte and held smaller meetings in Helena, Montana and Anaconda.

Kettle's trip back east fulfilling the speaking engagements he had made en route to Butte was less than the success he had hoped for. Mayor Fitzpatrick of New Orleans telegraphed Kettle warning him that for various reasons he would not advise Kettle to visit that city. On 20 January, Kettle spoke in Lincoln and on the 21st in Omaha. There he received a telegramme from the UIL in St Joseph where he was to have spoken on the 23rd. The St Joseph organisers' message was simple and to the point. 'Cannot get up meeting here. No use to come.'⁵⁴ Kettle wrote to O'Callaghan after the meeting in Omaha which had raised \$1,000 - a fairly successful meeting Kettle thought - but his spirits were low.

I continue to encounter the same dead weight of listlessness or rather worse...I shall cover up the St. Joseph fiasco by a note in the Irish World saying that I am ill, which is painfully true.⁵⁵

⁵³ John Arthur to T.M. Kettle, 29 December 1906, Kettle papers.

⁵⁴ Telegram, 21 January 1907, Kettle papers.

⁵⁵ Kettle to O'Callaghan, 23 January 1907, NLI MS 15213

Kettle also took the opportunity to chide O'Callaghan for what he claimed were derogatory remarks by the national secretary about the Butte meeting.

I fear that the tone of my last letter was not very amiable but the worry of this business has got on my nerves, and after the fight we had in Butte we were all extremely disappointed at your rather dull and disparaging reference⁵⁶ to our meeting there. No one likes to be 'barged'.

At Kansas City, the western stage of Kettle's tour came to an end and the speech that he delivered there to a meagre audience on 25 January was overwrought and overblown and struck for the first time a note of irritation with the Irish in America.

It is possible that what seems to us the paeon of victory may pass by some malign transformation into the wail of defeat. The cup that Ireland now raises as a festal and triumphant cup may change in the mere passage of her lips to a chalice of agony. The doors that seem to open may close sharply against us; and Ireland, the Mater Dolorosa of the nations, may be doomed to take once more the flinty and wounding path marked by the broken lives and the broken fortunes of so many of the children who died full of despair in the midnight. It may be the selfish interpretation of Irish-American sentiment will prove to be the right interpretation, and that Ireland will be stripped of your succour in her sharpest need.

Let that be as it will be, but of two things be sure. We ask you as Irishmen and as freemen to help us in our fight for Ireland and freedom; but we ask charity of no man. And be just as sure too, that if you were tomorrow to abandon us in weariness and in disgust this battle would still go on...We ask charity of no man. Forget the people from whom you have come; forget the breasts of your mother; cover with derision the hope of Ireland and leave her lonely in the conflict. But of this be sure; that this old flag will still flutter in the front of a nation's battle⁵⁷ as long as there is one Irish arm left to hold it aloft.

Reunited with Leahy in St Louis, Kettle pondered his next move and must also have considered with distaste the prospect of meeting

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Irish World 16 February 1907,

O'Callaghan again. The national secretary had written Kettle an indignant letter denying the charges Kettle had made about the Butte meeting. '...as to my 'barging' or making 'chill and disparaging references to the Butte meeting', I can only say that the suggestion is as gratuitous as it is unfounded.'⁵⁸ In the light of O'Callaghan's correspondence with Redmond, his protestations of goodwill towards Kettle were, to say the least, diplomatic rather than frank.

I know of course, and can make allowances for the worries and disappointments incident to any effort such as you have been making, of going through a hitherto strange country, and realise the anxieties which you must have from time to time had to endure. At the same time I feel that it could serve no good purpose either to the organisation at present, or to its future working, if, in view of the facts, the impression were allowed to remain that proper appreciation of the work, either of yourself or of the good and true men whom you have met⁵⁹ everywhere you have gone, was wanting on my part.

By this time, O'Callaghan was at least as frustrated as Kettle for he had just received word that Joe Devlin was adamantly refusing to have anything to do with the idea of the grand Washington rally. Indeed Devlin refused to address any meetings in the United States. It was Devlin's intention to be back in Ireland by 15 February. Kettle, on the grounds of ill health, also begged to be excused the Washington rally and O'Callaghan had no option but to cancel the Washington meeting. There remained the matter of arranging further meetings for Kettle before his departure.

After conferring in St Louis with Leahy, Kettle suggested to O'Callaghan that he take in Cincinnati and Toledo in Ohio and then swing

⁵⁸O'Callaghan to Kettle, 28 January 1907, Kettle papers.

⁵⁹Ibid.

eastwards to the Great Lakes cities of Cleveland, Buffalo and Detroit. The meetings in Detroit and Buffalo did not materialise however and Kettle experienced near disaster in Cleveland and Cincinnati. This was due in some measure to O'Callaghan. James A. Dailey, secretary of the Toledo Fire Underwriters' Association was the UIL's most reliable organiser in the Great Lakes region east of Chicago. O'Callaghan had given Kettle a list of contacts in Cincinnati and Kettle duly wrote to these people from St Louis. On 31 January, Dailey wrote in alarm to Kettle in St Louis explaining the political situation in Cincinnati and O'Callaghan's dangerous ignorance of it.

Cincinnati has been one of the most hide-bound machine towns in the United States for years, so long that the people like the French, have got in the habit of looking to someone higher connected with some Bureau before they act. Independence and individuality were pretty well suppressed until the last year when a desire was shown to break away from Machine tactics. Now our people in the other movement are very much involved in this state of affairs. I regret that Secretary O'Callaghan gave you the addresses he did, because there is no doubt that they will do everything to prevent an attendance at our meeting. They are likely to attend themselves with the only object of assuming control with the idea of killing the movement. Had I any idea you would communicate with Cincinnati, I would have cautioned you against these men from my last experience with them. My advice therefore will probably be to have you remain in Cincinnati for a couple of days.

This error and the resultant apathetic meetings in Cincinnati and Cleveland entitled Kettle to think that left to his own devices he was at least as efficient an organiser as O'Callaghan. The results of O'Callaghan's blunder dogged Kettle at his engagement in Cleveland where a mere \$100 was raised. He angrily informed Cleveland reporters that 'it would need a Jamaican earthquake to waken some of our friends

⁶⁰ Dailey to Kettle, 31 January 1907, Kettle papers

in this city'⁶¹ and condemning the revolutionary^{party}, referred to it as the party that '...doesn't revolute but only ^etaks about it'.⁶²

Exhausted, Kettle made this his last meeting before returning to Boston and New York. On meeting O'Callaghan in Boston, it was to discover that a fresh crisis had erupted.

The cancellation of the Washington meeting rankled with O'Callaghan and he began to imagine that Devlin, Hazleton and Kettle were conspiring together against him. The Washington meeting had been scheduled for 24 February. Devlin, however, had sent a telegram to O'Callaghan in the last week in January from San Francisco stating his intention of traveling directly to New York and leaving the country on the first steamer he and Donovan could conveniently catch. This telegram O'Callaghan had shown to Hazleton, by now returned to Boston. According to O'Callaghan, Hazleton had wired Kettle to tell him that Devlin had cancelled the Washington meeting and this was the reason that they in turn announced their reluctance to go to Washington.

He [Hazleton] is here in the office every day, to all appearances perfectly friendly but he has been doing this back-door work with Kettle and thinks I am not aware of it. By the merest accident a telegram from Kettle in reply to Hazleton's...was unintentionally opened by Miss Delaney the stenographer before I reached the office one morning, and it let the cat out of the bag about the colloquing between the two. Hazleton does not know yet that I know anything of it, although it is nearly a week ago.⁶³

On the face of it, there was no reason why Hazleton should not be in touch with Kettle but the 'conspiracy' assumed immense proportions in O'Callaghan's mind, and he hastened to warn Redmond about the two envoys.

⁶¹Cleveland newspaper clipping, untitled, Kettle papers.

⁶²Ibid.

⁶³O'Callaghan to Redmond, 30 January 1907, National Library of Ireland MS 15213.

Between you and me, in confidence, and I speak with perfect frankness, young men who can develop these traits it is no harm to keep an eye on within the party, for if they are liable to act in this instance they are capable of doing similar work behind your own back if the occasion required or if the opportunity presented itself. That is my sizing up of both gentlemen. ⁶⁴

O'Callaghan also complained, an echo of his grudge against Kettle, that Devlin was concealing his movements from him. This dereliction of duty on Devlin's part O'Callaghan linked to the 'conspiracy' and found therein the motive for the envoys' eagerness to be homeward bound.

My idea is that he [Devlin] fears if he were to come in contact with the others here and they all returned together, the glory would not be enough to round. They, on the other hand, from the moment they found out he was returning, have been exceedingly anxious to get back, either ⁶⁵ ahead of him or with him, I suppose for the very same reason.

An alternative explanation for the envoys' eagerness to return is that they were finding it increasingly impossible to work with O'Callaghan.

The national secretary's letters to Redmond after his discovery of what he took to be the plots being hatched amongst the envoys reveal a mind at best with a seriously impaired sense of proportion, at worst prey to dark and vindictive forebodings. As to the success of Hazleton's and Kettle's mission, he observed that

I suppose they have done the best they could with their limitations but I want to say frankly for myself that not alone have they been the rankest failures who have ever come in a representative capacity to the country but that not even my interest in the cause itself could induce me to tolerate on any future occasion such action ⁶⁶ as theirs from anybody coming here in a similar capacity.

He advised Redmond that 'whenever any future missions are undertaken it is better not to send boys to do men's work. This is all the more

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁶ O'Callaghan to Redmond, 19 February 1907

imperative when the boys are snobs.⁶⁷ Hazleton in particular aroused O'Callaghan's ire, perhaps because he saw more of him than Kettle.

Humming a snatch from the latest opera and smoking a contemptible looking little pipe, seemed to be his main contribution to the work of organisation except whenever he got a meeting already prepared and could shine as an orator.⁶⁸

In a splenetic vignette, O'Callaghan dismissed the detested Hazleton.

Mr Hazleton may think that carrying around his little box of special Lipton's tea from hotel to hotel because he could not drink the tea he could get here, may constitute statesmanship but I doubt if he would find many of those interested in the cause here who have met him who did not think something else needed.⁶⁹

Kettle's personality O'Callaghan found 'except when he gets into arguments with people, which he is very prone to do, is not as repellant as the studied coldness of Hazleton'.⁷⁰ But even this faint praise O'Callaghan was forced to retract when a major row broke out between him and Kettle.

The occasion for this latest outbreak of hostilities was provided by Kettle's erstwhile journalistic colleague, Bulmer Hobson.

Hobson arrived in New York in the middle of February. His itinerary began with a New York meeting on 15 February to be followed by speaking engagements in Brooklyn, Philadelphia, Cleveland, Indianapolis, Chicago and St Louis. According to the Gaelic American, Hobson had not come to the United States on a fund raising tour but to establish branches of the Sinn Fein organisation. He would return to Ireland in the middle of March. Asked by the Cleveland Plain Dealer if he had come to America to counter the influence of the parliamentary envoys, Hobson replied, 'No, I am not here to offset Mr. Kettle's remarks, though of course

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

I oppose him. I am here to try and undo all the mischief that may be done by John Bryce's coming here as ambassador.⁷¹ This was, of course, a reference to the appointment of the former Irish chief secretary. Hobson's reluctance to attack Kettle personally was reciprocated and the courteous nature of their exchanges was incomprehensible both to Hobson's Clan backers and to O'Callaghan and the Boston UIL. The resultant mood of baffled rage amongst the leaders of both sections of the Irish American leadership owed much to the approach of one of the most important dates in the expatriate political calendar - the birthday of Robert Emmet. Both the Clan and the American UIL were eager to make the best use of their visiting speakers.

To this end, O'Callaghan had persuaded Kettle and Hazleton to postpone their return to England. The envoys would remain in America until the arrival of Devlin and his companion Donovan and all four would embark from New York on 13 March. In the case of Hazleton, a further inducement was an interview with President Roosevelt which took place on 28 February. Hazleton's visit to Washington also involved his attendance at a committee meeting of the UIL of that city and as the Irish World somewhat disingenuously reported

Through some inexplicable agency the committee meeting developed into a general meeting of the League sympathisers and supporters so that when the Good Samaritan Hall opened its doors at 8pm on that evening, several of the most prominent ladies and gentlemen of the city of Washington were found in attendance, and their deliberations graced by the unexpected attendance of the Irish envoy Richard Hazleton.⁷²

This was the faint echo of the grand Washington rally upon which O'Callaghan had set his heart. There remained the Emmet rally in Boston

⁷¹Gaelic American 9 March 1907.

⁷²Irish World 16 March 1907.

on 4 March and it was decided that Kettle would be the principal speaker at this event.

After a wearying fortnight spent with Hazleton addressing meetings in Rhode Island, New Hampshire, New York, Connecticut and Massachusetts, Kettle arrived in Boston on 3 March. Waiting for him at the railway station, flanked by half a dozen members of the Boston executive of the UIL, was O'Callaghan. This was Kettle's first encounter with the national secretary since the trip west. O'Callaghan and his welcoming committee accompanied Kettle to the Essex Hotel. In Kettle's hotel room O'Callaghan expressed his concern about Hobson. Although Hobson was by this time in Chicago, he would return to Boston to address a meeting on 10 March and the Clan had secured a major coup against the UIL by securing the presence of Mayor Fitzgerald on their platform. As Boston was de facto the capital city of Irish America, this was a challenge that O'Callaghan had not only to fight off but, if possible, crush.

For what took place at the conference in Kettle's hotel room we have only O'Callaghan's version as recounted by him to John Redmond. It appears that Kettle took exception to the national secretary's doubtless vivid denunciation of Hobson because to O'Callaghan's surprise Kettle interrupted him and said that: 'Hobson was all right and doing excellent work in his own way.'⁷³ O'Callaghan asked Kettle to elaborate on this statement and he replied that Hobson was 'converting his co-religionists of Belfast to the national movement'.⁷⁴ When the by now indignant O'Callaghan expostulated, Kettle 'waved his hand and said we did not understand the situation'.⁷⁵ Michael Maynes, one of O'Callaghan's cohorts from

⁷³O'Callaghan to Redmond, 9 March 1907

⁷⁴Ibid.

⁷⁵Ibid.

the Boston executive and an emigrant from Tyrone retorted that 'he understood Tyrone before Kettle was born, better than he understands it now himself'.⁷⁶ The following dialogue then took place between Kettle and O'Callaghan.

Kettle said, 'Hobson is a personal friend of mine and I shall not allow anyone to attack him.'

I said, 'How much of a personal friend of yours is Hobson, or how much do you know him.'

He said, 'He used to contribute to my paper.'⁷⁷

There the matter rested until the next day when Kettle visited O'Callaghan's office and sat down to read through back issues of the Gaelic American. In the issue of 27 October 1906, he came upon the first of a series of articles describing how Bulmer Hobson and Dennis McCullough were organising Sinn Fein branches in East Tyrone. The fullest coverage was given in the issue of 8 December and the typographically ambitious headline arrested Kettle's attention.

Sinn Fein invades Kettle's district - while the junior envoy addresses thin audiences in America his constituents in Tyrone are flocking to the new movement - Orange and Green uniting - Fine meetings at Coalisland - Speeches by Bulmer Hobson, McCullough and McCartan.⁷⁸

It is difficult to believe that this was the first Kettle knew of the situation in Tyrone. While it is unlikely that he saw any copies of the Gaelic American in snow-bound Butte when the Clan paper was making the most of the Sinn Fein activity in his constituency, he had almost certainly read earlier stories. Because he was a man they respected, Hobson and McCullough had refrained from making personal attacks on Kettle. Hobson and Kettle thoroughly understood each other's political positions. Political life in the Dublin milieu frequented by Kettle

⁷⁶Ibid.

⁷⁷Ibid.

⁷⁸Gaelic American 8 December 1906

and Hobson was not yet poisoned by the rancorous hatreds that disfigured the American scene. Yet Kettle held his seat by a precariously narrow margin and the intervention of Sinn Fein, if Hobson persisted in these tactics, would ensure that East Tyrone would be won by the Unionists in the next election. The corrosive effect of practical politics on friendship doubtless saddened Kettle. But the effect of a lecture on the practical realities of politics from O'Callaghan sufficed merely to stiffen his resolve to behave in accordance with the high standards of his own ethical code. According to O'Callaghan when Kettle had finished reading the papers:

...he seemed to change his mind somewhat, for he said, 'I did not know before what Hobson had been saying and I did not know that he had gone into my constituency in East Tyrone talking Sinn Fein against me.' So he then declared he would deal with the Sinn⁷⁹Fein policy in a general way himself at the meeting.

To O'Callaghan's disgust, Kettle did not mention Hobson at the meeting. The national secretary more than made up for this omission in his own address attacking Hobson's religious beliefs and wondering aloud on the Gaelic origins - if any - of his name. Kettle confined himself to policies, likening the critics of the parliamentary party to 'a crowd of political mosquitoes'.⁸⁰ He set out to demolish the policy of Sinn Fein by pointing to its lack of popular support in Ireland.

But it was the criticism of the great generation of Parnell and Davitt that revolted...most of all. They are to get it into their minds to teach it to their children, that Parnell weaned Ireland from the gospel of self-reliance and taught her to place her faith in the Westminster parliament. That was the new politics. The blank ignorance, the black ingratitude of the thing!

⁷⁹O'Callaghan to Redmond, 9 March 1907.

⁸⁰Irish World 9 March 1907.

We are told that the Irish party is a party of incompetents. We are told that we have no results to show and that our principles amount to a betrayal of the national dignity of Ireland. I have dealt with the charges by opposing facts to phrases. But I answer them in an ample and a better way by simply saying to you that the principles and policy⁸¹ that were good enough for Parnell are good enough for me.

In spite of this vigorous speech, O'Callaghan reported to Redmond that he found it significant that Kettle had said to him privately that 'he was pretty certain the character of the new self-government bill would be such that it would quickly make Sinn Feiners of us all'.⁸² O'Callaghan also claimed that Joe Devlin had told him that on his return to New York 'Kettle had still been humming and hawing in a manner friendly to the Sinn Fein gang'.⁸³ Devlin and Donovan had arrived in New York on 12 March and - possibly because he saw very little of them - had made a favourable impression upon the national secretary. At any rate the two envoys from Australia made a useful stick with which to beat Kettle and Hazleton. 'The contrast between himself [Donovan] and Devlin and the two young sap-heads was so marked that even the dullest intellect could not fail to draw the distinction.'⁸⁴ It can be inferred from O'Callaghan's letters to Redmond that he was doing his best to sow dissension between the two sets of envoys.

Devlin said that neither of the two young men really had their hearts in the work and intimated quite plainly that they are a pair of 'cods' which opinion I share to the fullest possible extent. It would not surprise me at all if the two delegations should have had rather warm exchanges on the way across the Atlantic and if their relations in the future remain as they were when leaving New York, there is very little love lost between the two sets of envoys.⁸⁵

The rancorous relationship between Kettle and O'Callaghan continued

81

Ibid.

82 O'Callaghan to Redmond, 19 March 1907

83

Ibid.

84

Ibid.

85

Ibid.

until the moment of departure. The question of his and Hazleton's expenses remained a constant source of **acrimony**. Hazleton in Philadelphia had run up a bill of \$100 for dental treatment and on a subsequent visit to Boston had refused to stay in the hotel O'Callaghan had booked him into and had checked into a grander establishment. Kettle on the New York quayside had to borrow \$25. Financially Kettle's and Hazleton's trip had been a moderate success. Whilst they had been in America, the UIL had raised another \$10,000 of the money promised at the Philadelphia convention, bringing the total to \$40,000 - nearly half the total amount that had been pledged. The presence of Kettle and Hazleton had assisted indirectly in keeping that money flowing by ensuring continuing publicity for the Irish cause. By their own efforts, Kettle and Hazleton had raised \$9,325.36. Their expenses came to \$978.79.⁸⁶ Any gratitude that O'Callaghan might have felt towards the two young envoys, however, evaporated in the heat of his anger at Kettle's farewell speech.

In New York's Hoffman Hotel, on the eve of their departure, a farewell meeting was held for the four envoys. They would embark in the early morning hours of 13 March aboard the SS Baltic of the White Star Line. This final American meeting was an understandably emotional occasion, although for Kettle and Hazleton, the predominant emotion was probably one of relief. In his speech, Kettle unburdened himself of his deep feelings about Irish America, feelings that had obviously matured during the vicissitudes of his sojourn in this vast, alien land. It was the occasion for a heartfelt, farewell **indiscretion**. He said:

⁸⁶ Reception in Redmond papers MS NLI 15213

...I must be perfectly frank with you tonight and so I say that when I have told our people all this in Ireland, I shall also tell them that your marvellous progress here and the position which our countrymen in America have reached are but additional reasons why our young men and women should remain at home and work to make our own green isle of Ireland as happy, prosperous, contented and free as are the people of America. In that way I think it is possible to do the best service to Ireland and it is not that I love America less but that I love Ireland more that I feel that the old land is after all the place for the Irishman or Irishwoman to live and prosper if only the blighting influence of foreign rule can once be lifted from our shores.⁸⁷

Not only physically but in spirit also Kettle was turning his back on America. It was typical of O'Callaghan that he took offence at Kettle's speech whilst at the same time missing its point. Kettle had also observed, and his own experience provided abundant evidence of this, that not all Irish Americans were welcoming to visiting speakers from the parliamentary party. This was a truth that O'Callaghan would have preferred not to hear and he reacted with typical petulance.

With his usual lack of tact Kettle in his closing speech in New York said that they had been warned when they came here that they would find men to oppose them and their work, and to even turn them from their doors when they sought assistance from Ireland, and he said that very thing had been done to them. I do not believe it is true in even a single instance myself, but even if it had been, the lack of tact of a man who would make such a statement and give the Clan an opportunity to retort that he admitted having been turned from the doors by his countrymen who had grown⁸⁸ tired of subscribing to the movement needs no comment.

Had O'Callaghan only the intelligence to see it, what Kettle was saying about Irish America was much more damaging to the pretensions of the UIL of that country. In Kettle's view, the Irish of America had opted to live in a different civilisation and were therefore no longer Irish.

⁸⁷Irish World 23 March 1907.

⁸⁸O'Callaghan to Redmond, 19 March 1907

Undoubtedly most native Irish politicians shared this insight - but they refrained from articulating it. It was the measure of O'Callaghan's limitations that this criticism completely passed over his head. Kettle returned to this theme when the envoys were interviewed at Queenstown harbour on their return.

In our speeches we tried to pay some sort of tribute like this to American institutions and we concluded always by appealing to our people there to set their faces against any more emigration from Ireland. America has reached a civilisation of one kind. Ireland is destined it seems to me to realise a civilisation of a very different kind which is at least as indispensable to the world. As for unpleasant impressions, I think, as contrasted with Ireland, one has in America a continual sense of hardness, a sort of metallic glider as it were, which is impossible between ⁸⁹the soft green of our soil and our cloudy and tender skies.

Whatever his misgivings about Irish America, it is clear that Kettle was prepared to enjoy American civilisation on its own terms. Observing that 'the lucidity that in France is devoted to literature, in America is devoted to industry and commerce', ⁹⁰ he extended practical economic advice to his countrymen.

It is a curious fact, quite contrary to the general belief, that America has made very few inventions in industry, but she has always shown a marvellous faculty for keen and sympathetic application of new ideas. I could not think of a better holiday for an Irishman than a visit to New York. He should study the details of his own line of work and he will find ⁹¹suggestions for making it cheaper at every turn.

The ethnic plurality of American society with its obvious implications for culturally divided Ireland impressed Kettle. 'I do not think that there is a single problem with which modern nations have to deal which has not been most suggestively handled by some one or other of the

⁸⁹Freeman's Journal 22 March 1907

⁹⁰Ibid.

⁹¹Ibid.

innumerable self-governing communities in America.⁹² Characteristically, Kettle took an interest in American Catholicism and thought that the American situation disproved the old canard that Catholicism could not be a loyal national church. On the contrary, the American Church was imbued with the spirit of republicanism and democracy. In the final analysis, what America provided for Ireland was an example. Kettle thought that significant material aid from America to Ireland was unlikely.

I spoke everywhere I went to people about that project that I see has been so much before our minds of getting Irish-American capital invested in this development of Irish industries. I do not believe that Ireland can count on any aid of any account from that source, because capital carries much too high a rate of interest⁹³ in America to make its transfer to Ireland at all possible.

Kettle's experiences in America then, confirmed him in his belief that Ireland's cause was best advanced by Ireland's own efforts and left him with a pronounced distaste for the politics of the Irish diaspora. Returned to Dublin, he received from her Westminster address an intuitively sympathetic letter from Alice Stopford Green.

I am looking forward very much to having a talk with you on all you have seen and exchanging our impressions of the various situations. I hope you will let me know at once when you come over here. You must have had a very exhausting time and I suspect you do not care to see that country again. You have probably seen all it has to give you.

I do wish we could manage Irish affairs without the perpetual references to three foreign powers - America, Rome and England. I cannot imagine a more unfortunate state for a people to be in than to be squinting at all these foreign opinions when they ought to be making up⁹⁴ their own minds. It is pretty demoralising and weakening.

The historian may take for granted Kettle's heartfelt assent to those sentiments.

⁹²Ibid.

⁹³Ibid.

⁹⁴Kettle papers.

1. Kettle at Westminster

Mary Kettle claimed that in parliament her husband was 'an instant success'. There is no reason to doubt her word. The mother of parliaments has always appreciated a good debater which Kettle certainly was, and as a witty and fluent Irishman, he presented a satisfactory incarnation of one of the more benign stereotypes of Irishness in Edwardian England. Kettle was no doubt a most welcome recruit to the House of Commons in its aspect of being the best club in Europe. He appears to have mastered early the technique of gaining the ear of the House. **This has changed** but little in its essentials from the early days of Disraeli to the present. The successful parliamentarian should have two strings to his (or her) bow. First of all master an issue in all its complex detail and make sober, lengthy, responsible and slightly dull contributions to one selected sphere of interest. Although Kettle could never be even slightly dull, he impressed the House of Commons with his command of economic detail and his contributions to debates on Irish financial matters were listened to with respect. Secondly and more difficult to achieve, the effective backbencher should have the capacity to make brief and vigorous incursions into debates on a wide variety of issues to back up the main speakers of his party. Wit, combativeness and succinctness are the requirements for this type of parliamentary warfare. Kettle could condense an issue to its essentials in a few words and then go on to elaborate brilliant epigrams for the discomfiture of the Irish side's opponents.

In a House that contained an exceptional number of gifted speakers and accomplished wits, Kettle's bons mots nevertheless stood out. Examples of Kettle's gift for the apparently impromptu epigram are given by Mary Kettle and in her version retain much of the sparkle that is dulled by the sober paraphrase of the Hansard reports. Remarkably concise was Kettle's prejudiced

definition of the two major British parties. 'When in office the Liberals forget their principles and the Tories remember friends.'¹ Of Balfour's difficulties with the Tariff Reformers in the Conservative Party, he remarked 'They have nailed their leader to the mast.'² He was also capable of a broader wit that depended for its effect upon dramatic delivery and split second timing. He was remembered by Stephen Gwynn, on the second reading on one of the Woman's Suffrage Bills:

'Mr. Speaker,' he said in his rich Dublin accent and almost drawling intonation, 'they say that if we admit women here as members, the House will lose its metal power.' He flung a finger round the packed benches: 'Mr. Speaker,' he continued, 'it is impossible.' The House roared with laughter. 'They tell me also that the House will suffer in morals, Mr. Speaker I don't believe that is possible either.'³

Kettle's mastery of the rolling period and the oratorical flourish does survive the embalming process of the style used by the official reporters of the parliamentary debates as does his obvious delight in verbal aggression. Thus of Ulster Unionism he observed:

Ulster Unionism was not a Party; it was only an appetite. If they took away from them the people who held office, the people who hoped for office, the people who had canvassed for office for other people, and who were pushing the claims for office of their brothers and their brothers in law, and sons and nephews, the Ulster Unionist Party would be represented by about two Members.⁴

In an attack on Sir Edward Carson, Kettle told the House that 'He was not surprised that the right honourable and learned gentleman, the senior Member for Trinity College demanded coercion. Why, he graduated in coercion courts! They formed the milk tap from which the infancy of his profession was fed and from which he had grown to such fatness and dignity.'⁵ Kettle could also adopt with telling effectiveness that well-tried debating stance of Nationalist

¹Mary Kettle, 'Memoir' in T.M. Kettle, The day's burden, (Dublin 1968) p.30.

²Ibid.

³Ibid.

⁴Parliamentary debates, fourth series, vol. 183, 4 February 1908, p.809.

⁵Ibid., p.811.

Members, an affectedly weary lecture to their English counterparts educating them in the realities of Irish life.

In Ireland the policeman was everything but a policeman. Frequently he was an author, the producer of threatening literature. Sometimes he maimed cattle and got innocent men sent to gaol. The constabulary were now and again described as an army of occupation. It was really an army of no occupation. In his official capacity the Irish policeman was a mixture, of about equal parts of soldier and spy. He hoped the House and the British people would realise that resolute government in Ireland was considerably more expensive than the most generous form of Home Rule.⁶

Kettle took a deep interest in oratory and in 1915 published Irish Orators and Oratory, an anthology of examples of speeches made by distinguished Irish patriots and statemen from Edmund Burke to John Redmond. It is not surprising that his wife, in composing her 'Memoir' of Kettle, should have quoted from his introduction to this volume.

The sound and rumour of great multitudes, passions as hot as ginger in the mouth, torches, tumultuous comings and goings, and, riding through the whirlwind of it all, a personality, with something about him of the prophet, something of the actor, a touch of the charlatan, crying out not so much with his own voice as with that of the multitude, establishing with a gesture, refuting with a glance, stirring ecstasies of hatred and affection - is not that a common, and far from fantastic conception of the orator.⁷

What we notice immediately in the above is Kettle's fine sense of the dramatic but for Mary Kettle's purpose - that of eulogising her husband's performance in parliament, the passage is less satisfactory than a cursory reading might lead one to suppose. To read Kettle's introduction in its entirety is to be struck by the tension underlying the dramatic imagery employed to describe his cast of patriotic orators and his sense of the transience of the orator's role. Thus the passage quoted by Mary Kettle is immediately preceded by the observation that '...oratory is...complex, diffuse, netted beyond release in impermanent details. Its triumph is of the moment, momentary.'⁸

⁶ Ibid., vol. 184, 20 February 1908, p.1170.

⁷ Mary Kettle, 'Memoir' in T.M. Kettle, The Day's burden, (Dublin 1968), p.29.

⁸ M. Kettle, 'Irish orators' in Ibid., p. 82.

The passage concludes:

But when the fire is become ashes and the orator too; when the crowd no longer collaborates; when the great argument that transfigured them is a paragraph in a textbook, yawned over by schoolboys, the task of the resurrectionist verges on the impossible.⁹

By omitting from her quotation those passages alluding to his sense of the transcendence of the orator's art, Mary Kettle has contributed to a subtle distortion of her husband's actual attitude towards politics. For all his poetic language, Kettle did not strive to emulate the great speechmakers of Irish history. His appreciation of them was poetic, philosophical, perhaps most of all, academic. Kettle's own bent as a practising politician was towards the pragmatic and he was fascinated by the intricacies and opportunities of administration. It is the use that Kettle, as a practical man, made of the Irish tradition of parliamentary oratory that is of more than passing interest.

When, after his death, Kettle was remembered by his contemporaries, his oratorical performances played a large part in the reminiscences. Yet we may doubt if any of his posthumous eulogists paid much attention to the actual content of his speeches, apart from the quotable witticisms. Moreover, by concentrating on the dramatic descriptive imagery used by Kettle in his discussion of oratory, his various eulogists have tended to confuse the man with his perceptions of the orator's art. The result of this fallacy has been a picture of Kettle, at worst a parliamentary windbag, at best a kind of depressive poet of the impromptu public utterance. If Kettle had been simple-minded enough to identify wholly with the role of orators as defined in Irish Orators and Oratory, he would in all probability have never left parliament.

The importance for Kettle of oratory lay in the role of the orator whom he

⁹Ibid., p.83.

saw as representing 'the warm thought of his time, as the newspaper represents generally the tepid criticism, and the Act of Parliament the cold performance'.¹⁰ Kettle claimed that the student of Irish history, by reading the speeches of Grattan or O'Connell, of Butt or Davitt, would come 'closer to the focus of reality than [by] much bemused grubbing in Blue Books'.¹¹ Ultimately Kettle claimed for the orator artistic status. The best speechmakers were 'workers in a difficult and potent art'.¹² In his discussion of the art of oratory, Kettle went on to give much practical advice to the would-be practitioner and to provide his own terms of aesthetic reference for evaluating the effectiveness of individual speeches by his selected orators. It is clear that what Kettle valued in the figure of the orator was his symbolic role.

Thus, whilst admitting the vulgarity of much of O'Connell's rhetoric and Liberator's cavalier way with facts, Kettle claimed that 'he was content to be right in the gross and was little troubled at being wrong in detail. But he took his people by the twenty and the two hundred thousand, and shouted slaves into the status of manhood'.¹³ Grattan, in Kettle's version of his achievements, 'touched with fire the lips and the heart of Ireland; fusing old with new, he made her a nation'.¹⁴ Parnell 'spoke like an invoice, definite to the third decimal point, and final ...he died with half his music in him'.¹⁵ In his leader, John Redmond, Kettle found 'an unequalled power of exposition, a style in which every word is meant, a grave self-control which no interruption can perturb [that] have made him one of the two or three recognised masters of the English House of Commons'.¹⁶

¹⁰Ibid., p.84.

¹¹Ibid., p.85.

¹²Ibid., p.85.

¹³Ibid., p.85.

¹⁴Ibid., p.86.

¹⁵Ibid., p.87.

¹⁶Ibid., p.88.

Kettle's description of his orators gives us a sort of shorthand version of Irish history seen through Nationalist eyes. The spokesmen of the nation are reflecting the thought and ideas of their times. They are exemplars and symbols of the aspirations of their age.

The outer histrionic shell does not in the end count for very much. To Byron, Grattan was a harlequin; to others Burke was a majestic bore; Flood had the air of a broken-beaked vulture; Hussey Burgh bellowed; O'Connell tained the winds with his perspiring vulgarity; Sheil piped in a thin falsetto. In the memoirs of any period - those admirable creations of malice, vanity and garrulous old age - you will find in the pictures of any public man a good deal more of the artist than of the model. No two interpretations will agree; you are driven back, whether you will or no, to the man himself, to the things he did and the things he said. Whether in any particular circumstances he looked like a sneak thief, as one witness testifies, or like a senator of Rome after Cannae, as another avers, does not amount to a row of pins. His value, in the judgement of posterity, will depend on his share in impelling the civilisation in which he lived towards its assigned goal of freedom and justice.¹⁷

Kettle saw the political process and political institutions in a poetic and symbolic fashion. He was drawn to this point of view not as an aesthete or as a poet but as a preeminently practical man. It seemed to Kettle that nothing could be more practical than the belief in a transcendent reality manifest in human existence. That reality was mediated through objects, processes or institutions that attached^{to} themselves an altogether deeper significance than their apparent or immediate function. Kettle had a keen sense of the poetry of everyday life and of the poetry of everyday language. Parliament made him acutely aware of the symbolic resonances of the language and procedures of political life. This awareness gave a special flavour to Kettle's contribution to parliamentary debates and to his perception of parliament. He developed a style of public utterance that exploited certain rhetorical opportunities that the Irish parliamentary party had left largely undeveloped.

It is one of the most over-exploited commonplaces of the rhetoric of

¹⁷Ibid., p.92-3.

British politicians to refer to the House of Commons as the Mother of Parliaments. Equally stale and overused are references to parliament as being somehow the embodiment of the English-speaking world's striving towards civilisation and freedom. Nevertheless these images contain, and not merely to the nineteenth-century historical thinkers whose preoccupations they embody, an evocative model for a far ranging discourse about the evolution of political liberty. Irish Nationalists might have been expected to counter, in appropriate symbolic language, this bland model of parliamentary evolution, but in fact, their contribution was surprisingly meagre. To be sure, from a Nationalist point of view, parliament might stand as an image of eight hundred years of oppression but this was a cursory identification in which parliament and its history was scarcely distinguishable from the depredations of Plantagenet and Tudor, of Jacobean undertaker and rapacious landlord. Parliament was a symbol of English oppression and nothing much more. The full richness of Irish symbolic language was confined to Ireland and her woes. So although they participated fully in the politics of Westminster, Irish parliamentary orators, as a token of their alienation from English government, made little play with the symbolic aspects of the parliament in which they found themselves.

Parliament made an immediate appeal to the dramatic side of Kettle's nature. He imbued parliament with a definite role in a symbolic drama of Ireland's relations with England. He did not love parliament; he seems frequently to have hated or despised it, but he was always deeply, if ironically, appreciative of the House of Commons. This institution represented for him in its dealings with Ireland not merely oppression but confusion, misunderstanding and farce, although he would concede to it in its slow and partial remedy of Ireland's ills a certain tarnished glory. It also stood as a stage on which large and significant themes of Irish history had been played out. Parliament, then, in Kettle's mind was an organising symbol around which centuries of English and Irish history could be grouped. The floor of the House of Commons repre-

sented a stage; the lineaments of the drama were given by Irish history, the effects of which were compressed and encapsulated in the problems which confronted the legislators as they grappled towards a resolution of this centuries-old legacy of ill will and animosity.

Ireland, Kettle observed, in an essay written when he was an M.P. was 'the spectre at the banquet of the Empire' and he went on to ask, 'But was a banquet ever dramatically complete without a spectre?'¹⁸ Developing this imagery, he saw himself accompanied on his journeyings across the Irish Sea to Westminster by a phantom procession of Irish and English antagonists.

The Company would be rich, indeed, if all the ghosts that hurry restlessly back and forward across the Irish Sea were amenable to the ticket-office! Strongbow, the first filibuster, with MacMurrough, the first traitor; Kildare, the masterful earl; Shane O'Neill going in saffron pride to greet Elizabeth as a king greets a queen; Sarsfield passing to exile and death in France; the highwaymen-bishops of the eighteenth century; Castlereagh, O'Connell, Balfour, Parnell...the very names are an epic and a litany of desolation.¹⁹

These ghosts also walked the floor of the House of Commons and Kettle resorted to appropriate charnel house imagery to describe London and Westminster.

Tonight there will be the million globes of London to look at, gleaming through the fog like monstrous and sinister oranges in some garden of life and death. Tomorrow afternoon we shall be in the House of Commons supping full of old calumnies and hatreds.²⁰

Because symbolism is the stock in trade of poets, of religious thinkers, and of philosophers, and is also the hallmark of much dubious political rhetoric, its usefulness in dealing with practical problems is not immediately apparent. Kettle's use of the symbolic was nevertheless in the cause of a robust common-sense approach to political problems. His colourful imagery was devoted to the clear expression of the Nationalist view of Irish history as a counterpoint to

¹⁸T.M. Kettle, 'On crossing the Irish Sea' in The day's burden, (Dublin 1968), p.73.

¹⁹Ibid., p.74.

²⁰Ibid.

the British view of Irish history. What successive British governments would have described as the evolution of a progressive policy towards Ireland, Kettle presented from the Nationalist standpoint as a series of government defeats and triumphs for Irish Nationalism demonstrating the reasonableness and inevitability of Home Rule. This argument of Kettle's only achieved its full force in the context of the long sweep of Irish and English history. Therefore the condensation of symbolism was an appropriate method for him to employ. What was at stake here, after all, was not remedial legislation but a just acknowledgement on the part of Britain of Ireland's nationhood. This underlay Kettle's claim that the driving force of Ireland's case was to be found in the speeches of Irish patriotic orators rather than in parliamentary Blue Books. A fine example of this taut, condensed method of argument is to be found in The open secret of Ireland which was published in 1912 but summed up his experience as an M.P.

This, then, is the essential wisdom of Irish history: Ireland has won all along the line. The Normans did not Normanise her. The Tudors did not exterminate her. She has undone the Confiscations, and drawn a cancelling pen through the Penal Laws. The Act of Union, so far from suppressing her individuality or overwhelming it, has actually brought it to that full self-consciousness which constitutes the coming of age of a nation...No other people in the world has held so staunchly to its inner vision; none other has, with such fiery patience repelled the hostility of circumstances, and in the end reshaped them after the desire of her heart. Hats off to success, gentlemen! Your modern God may well be troubled at sight of this enigmatic Ireland which at once despises him, and tumbles his faithfullest worshippers in the sand of their own amphitheatre. Yet, so it is. The Confederate General, seeing victory suddenly snatched from his hands, and not for the first time, by Meagher's Brigade, exclaimed in immortal profanity: "There comes that damned Green Flag again!" I have often commended that phrase to Englishmen as admirably expressive of the historical role and record of Ireland in British politics. The damned Green Flag flutters again in their eyes, and if they will but listen to the music that marches with it, they will find that the lamenting fifes are dominated wholly by the drums of victory.²¹

²¹T.M. Kettle, The open secret of Ireland, (Dublin 1912), pp.45-6.

One reason, then, that Kettle made his mark on the House of Commons was his striking style of speechmaking in which the marriage of style and content was absolute. His use of heightened symbolic reality in the imagery which shaped his speeches lent depth, urgency and poetic resonance to his oratorical presentation of Ireland's case. In this case the style was very much the man and if Kettle's elusive and complex personality were to be defined in a phrase then the task would be well accomplished by describing him as a practical symbolist. An awareness of the dramatic possibilities inherent in the most mundane of human concerns and a readiness to resort to the dramatic gesture to show forth the long historical gestation of the commonplace characterised all his involvements in the public life of his times. But for all that, speeches were not likely to change anything and Kettle had not come to Westminster to be merely a distinguished ornament of the debating chamber. It was as true of Kettle as of his fellow members of the Irish party that, at Westminster,

...they were at bottom intruders with only a transient interest in the passing scene and with only a momentary opportunity of influencing the events which were daily enacted before their eyes.²²

Therefore the full measure of Kettle's bitterness and anger was directed not at Ireland's historical wrongs but at the contemporary administration of Ireland.

With a merciless eye for detail, Kettle observed the working of parliament. For the unwritten constitution, such a source of self-congratulation to English theorists of jurisprudence Kettle had only disdain. Acclaiming Dicey's Law of the Constitution as 'a masterpiece of romance',²³ Kettle pointed out that 'this myth of an unwritten English constitution, with its whole virtue residing in the fact that it was unwritten, was invented by an Irishman,'²⁴ and went

²²F.S.L. Lyons, Irish parliamentary party 1890-1910, (London mcml), p.224.

²³T.M. Kettle, 'On written constitutions' in The day's burden, (Dublin 1937), p.120.

²⁴Ibid., p.44.

on to wonder why if 'Edmund Burke invented it because it happened to give him a good debating-point against the French Revolution...should our radical legatees of the French Revolution cling to it as tenderly as to a memory of their childhood?'²⁵ His summing up of the English Constitution was designed to jolt the consciousness of English politicians into an awareness of the implications of their own recent history.

Toryism has imagined the vague, unwritten regime, which is its opportunity, as a natural and organic growth. But change the image. Say instead that it is like music-hall patter, made up as one goes along. Say that it is like an extempore speech, and that extempore speeches are always bad. Say that it is, so far, the mere nebula and protoplasm of freedom to which this age must give clear articulation and definite form. All the tides are flowing in that direction. Within the last ten years England has made constitutions for Australia, for the Transvaal, for the Orange River, for United South Africa. It is time that she made a Constitution for herself, guarding liberty with a quantitative formula. And that will help us all to join in making a Constitution for Ireland.²⁶

Kettle gave much thought and attention to imperial affairs, a promising area for Irish Nationalist polemics. Britain, having acquired her Empire, in Seely's phrase 'in a fit of absence of mind', politicians were inclined to give little attention to imperial matters on the floor of the House of Commons. This insularity Kettle was determined to shake, describing Home Rule as '...a biped among ideas. It marches to triumph on two feet, an Irish and Imperial foot.'²⁷ He went on to assert that, 'If there were in Ireland no demand whatever for self-government it would, nevertheless be necessary in the interests of the Empire to force it on her.'²⁸ This statement Kettle justified on the grounds that the practical administration of the Empire was clearly beyond the competence of the House of Commons. Indeed he dismissed the competence of the House of Commons even to provide efficient

²⁵Ibid., p.44.

²⁶Ibid., pp.45-6.

²⁷T.M. Kettle, The open secret of Ireland, (Dublin 1912), p.120.

²⁸Ibid., p.120.

government for England.

All this turns on the inadequacy of the time of the House of Commons to its business. But the distribution of such time as there is, is a revel of ineptitudes. It resembles the drawing of a schoolboy who has not yet learned perspective. A stranger dropping into the Chamber will find it spending two hours in helping to determine whether Russia is to have a Czar, and the next four hours helping to determine whether Rathmines is to have, let us say, a new sewer. The affairs of India, involving the political welfare of three hundred millions of human beings, get one day; Egypt, that test case in international ethics, has to be content with a few scattered hours. And, despite all this, local questions are not considered at sufficient length or with sufficient knowledge.²⁹

The idea of imperial federation appealed to Kettle. As he pointed out, it had been proposed by O'Connell in the 1840s and Parnell and John Redmond had both given their assent to an Irish presence in the Imperial parliament.

...a Home Rule assembly, functioning in Dublin, may well furnish the germ of the reorganisation of the Empire. If so, let it be remembered that it was not Mr. Chamberlain but Daniel O'Connell who first in these countries gave to Imperialism a definite and articulate form. In any event Home Rule is the only tonic that can restore to English public life its old vigour of independence.³⁰

To a man of Kettle's practical bent, the government of Ireland as observed by him at Westminster presented a dismal picture. We also can guess from Kettle's description at the idleness and boredom that must have frequently overcome Nationalist members as they went through the motions of participating in the formulation of Irish policy.

Three days - or is it two? - are given to Irish Estimates, and on each of these occasions the Chamber is as desolate as a grazing ranch in Meath. Honourable members snatch at the opportunity of cultivating their souls in the theatres, clubs, restaurants, and other centres of culture in which London abounds. The Irish Party is compelled by the elemental necessities of the situation to speak with one voice on matters regarding which there would properly be at least two voices in an Irish Parliament, precisely identical personnel. Ulster Unionism presents a similar solidarity.³¹

²⁹Ibid., pp. 123-4.

³⁰Ibid., pp. 128-9.

³¹Ibid., pp. 129-30.

Frustration and bitterness underlay Kettle's description of the legislative process in the House of Commons. Ireland was 'swamped in the Westminster Parliament like a fishing-smack in the wash of a great merchantman'.³² The idle hours that Kettle spent on the back benches afforded him the leisure to indulge his literary gift in passages of acerbic description.

Whenever a point of any novelty is made, the Chief Secretary's secretary slips over to one of the Irish Officials who on these occasions lie ambushed at the back of the Speaker's chair, and returns with the elation of a honey-laden bee. His little burden of wisdom is gratefully noted on the margin of the type-written brief which has already been prepared in Dublin by the Board under discussion, and, entrenched behind this, the Right Honourable gentleman winds up the debate. Sometimes his solemnity wrings laughter from men, sometimes his flippancy wrings tears from the gods, but it does not in the least matter what he says. The division bells ring; the absentees come trooping in, learn at the door of the lobby, each from his respective Whip, whether his spontaneous, independent judgement has made his a Yes! or a No! and vote accordingly in the light of an unsullied conscience. The Irish officials, with a sigh of relief or a shrug of contempt, collect their hats and umbrellas and retire to their hotels to erase from their minds by slumber the babblings of a mis-spent evening. And the course of administration in Ireland is as much affected by the whole proceedings as the course of an 80 h.p. Mercedes is affected by a cabman's oath.³³

It was clear to Kettle that Irish government depended not upon parliament but upon the administrative Departments operating under the aegis of Dublin Castle. Properly speaking, this was not a government at all in the political sense of the word which implies co-operation and discussion between ministries. Rather it was a system of bureaucratic hegemony with the Chief Secretary, nominally all-powerful, in fact reduced by the very scope of his powers to a kind of Pooh-Bah figure 'Lord High Everything Else to the Mikado of Japan'.³⁴ Being the source and fountainhead of all administrative power in Ireland, the Chief Secretary was bound to end up at the mercy of competing, incompatible

³²Ibid., p.133.

³³Ibid., p.131.

³⁴Ibid., p.135.

interests, or, as Kettle put it, 'in perpetual contradiction with himself'.³⁵ Dublin Castle was then, 'a bureaucracy which had usurped the throne of the nation.'³⁶

Kettle found that the misgivings he, as a Nationalist, held about British rule in Ireland were amply confirmed by his experiences at Westminster. It seems strange then that Mary Kettle should have come to the conclusion that 'to me, looking back, it seems not his going in, but his coming out of Parliament, that was wrong.'³⁷ For Kettle, Westminster had but one role to play with regard to Ireland that could have justified his attendance there. Whatever its deficiencies as an administrative and deliberative assembly, only from the Westminster parliament could originate the bold and broad measure of legislation that would give Ireland Home Rule. Nor surprisingly, then, Kettle used the shortcomings of the British administration to insist upon Home Rule. But the constant reiteration in parliament of this demand whilst it gave rise to some striking oratorical flourishes on Kettle's part was not enough of a programme to satisfy his own administrative bent. Kettle would dearly have loved to tinker with the nuts and bolts of administration and in a Home Rule Ireland, he would have achieved Cabinet rank with little effort. Deprived of administrative opportunity, he was forced to take the high road of political discourse and found himself speaking at length on broad issues of political philosophy and political morality. The principled if somewhat abstract tone of his speeches doubtless gave Mary Kettle a satisfying retrospective image of her husband in parliament. He himself, however, found his position far from gratifying. Kettle was all too aware of the transitory nature of oratorical performances and he was impatient for a Home Rule bill to be passed so that the real, solid work of building the

³⁵Ibid., p.134.

³⁶Ibid., p.140.

³⁷Mary Kettle, 'Memoir', p.30.

new Ireland could begin. This impatience, indeed the imperative nature of the vision he entertained of an Ireland free, or freed at least from the shackles of Dublin Castle administration, can be seen very clearly in his contribution to the Commons debate that greeted the announcement of the government's proposals to settle the question of higher education for Irish Catholics.

Kettle's objections to Trinity College were founded upon that institution's political Unionism, its neglect of Irish studies - 'Trinity College had existed for 300 years and the first lecture on Irish history was delivered in 1905'³⁸ - and its concentration on a classical curriculum. He spoke with some feeling of:

...the teachers of Latin in Trinity who spent their valuable lives in removing the textual corruptions of Juvenal and inculcating his moral corruptions in their full integrity [and who] said that any ancient Irish literature they had was silly if not indecent, or indecent if it was not silly.³⁹

Kettle felt that Trinity, where, as he claimed, 'the classics filled the whole field of University training,'⁴⁰ would be a disastrous model for any new College or University in Ireland to emulate. Someday, Kettle hoped, Trinity would 'come down from the Olympian heights which it had occupied and take a useful and profitable part in the twentieth century.'⁴¹ In the meantime, Ireland required facilities for scientific and technical education. Kettle turned to France and the University of Strasbourg to illustrate his vision of what Catholicism and Nationalism could achieve when given access to the best scientific education and to counteract the identification in the British mind of Catholicism with backwardness.

³⁸Parliamentary debates, Fourth series, Vol. 177, 14 July 1907, p.894.

³⁹Ibid., p.894.

⁴⁰Ibid., p.894.

⁴¹Ibid., p.895.

What did they understand in in modern times by a University education of a scientific character? Let them go to France and study the career of such a man as Pasteur who was the very best type of the modern University man. They would not find such a man employing his time in correcting Greek and Latin texts. Pasteur was a Catholic - a man whom hon. Members from Ulster would describe as living in the bonds of mental slavery and in the fetters of Catholic belief. What they wanted to see in Ireland was such men as Pasteur, trained in their own University. What had Pasteur done? He laid the foundations of the science of bacteriology and his researches had been turned into practical use by his students and followers. The vine in France was attacked by a ruinous disease; Pasteur discovered a means of fighting it and saving the wine industry. The whole silk industry of France was threatened by a disease amongst the silkworms; Pasteur by his scientific investigations, provided a remedy. By means of those discoveries Pasteur presented to his native country a sum equal to the indemnity which France had to pay to Germany after the Franco-Prussian war. That was what they wanted for the Catholic people of Ireland.⁴²

The quality of Kettle's contribution to Commons debates was recognised immediately by the leaders of the parliamentary party. F.S.L. Lyons has described the situation prevailing amongst the rank and file members of the Irish party.

Some twelve or twenty speakers formed the debating strength of the party and when men spoke of the Irish members it was these men whom they had principally in mind. Various factors prevented a greater number from speaking - the exigencies of the political situation, the lack of knowledge amongst the rank and file, the conservatism of the leaders - and this restraint had upon the whole an unfortunate effect upon the majority of members. They indeed were permanent back benchers often sitting through session after session without even participating in debates; their primary duty, indeed almost their only duty, was to be in their places and to vote when and how they were told by the Whips.⁴³

The fate of these back benchers Kettle largely escaped and was privy to many of the policymaking decisions of the party leaders. Kettle was particularly close to Dillon and shared his interest in Imperial affairs. As early as 1906, Dillon was writing to Kettle asking him if he knew of any

⁴²Ibid., pp.895-6.

⁴³F.S.L. Lyons, Irish parliamentary party 1890-1910, (London mcml), p.224.

likely candidate amongst his acquaintances to take up the post of editor of one of the leading Egyptian nationalist newspapers. Kettle recommended a young employee of the Congested Districts Board named W.J. Maloney although the job eventually went to Fred Ryan, a member of the Young/Ireland Branch and friend both of Kettle and Sheehy Skeffington. Ryan's regular letters from Cairo to Sheehy Skeffington in Dublin show his own disillusion at the incompetence and vanity of Egyptian Nationalist politicians and throw some light on the extent of Kettle's involvement with Egypt. Writing in July 1908 of the disarray and intrigue in Egyptian Nationalist ranks, Ryan went on to make a revealing remark about Kettle.

But I correct myself by reflecting that perhaps it is only what an observant Egyptian might have thought had he been planted in Dublin in the years after the Parnell split and been able from behind the scenes to observe Healy, O'Brien, Remond and the rest with the paint off. However don't say that to Kettle who is a daily subject in the Egyptian press now - French, English and Arabic - and whose mystic enthusiasm it is necessary to preserve as an asset.⁴⁴

There were many points of similarity between the roles of Ireland and Egypt in the British Empire. Each had been the cause of much soul searching and anguish by the Liberal party and its leaders, an essential part of whose creed was a bedrock dislike of imperialism coupled with a predilection for experiments in self-government by local groupings within the Empire. Ireland and Egypt had alike been, according to one's point of view, benefactee or victim of British exercises in enlightened administration. There were marked similarities in the quality of emotional misunderstanding which Ireland and Egypt seemed to generate between native and administrator and the mode of government in both countries tended to oscillate between coercion and conciliation. Between 1906 and 1910 the similarities between Ireland and Egypt were particularly marked.

⁴⁴Ryan to Sheehy Skeffington, 13 July 1908, NLI MS 21, 619(1).

In June 1906, Anglo-Egyptian relations were badly shaken by the Denshawai incident, an event in its political impact comparable to the Amritsar massacre of 1919 in India. A group of British officers had gone shooting near the village of Denshawai in the Nile Delta. In the village economy, pigeon farming was an important activity and between the inhabitants of Denshawai and British sportsmen there was an unhappy history of tension and conflict. On this occasion, a threshing floor in the village caught fire and the villagers, angered by the pigeon shooting, blamed the sportsmen. Angry words were exchanged and then blows and the accidental discharge of a shotgun belonging to a member of the shooting party injured three local men and a woman. An English Captain who had been badly beaten died of concussion and heatstroke whilst on his way to fetch help. An Egyptian who found his body and was trying to revive him was seized by a party of British soldiers and murdered. The whole sorry business, a result of misunderstandings caused by the highhandedness of the British military climaxed in the sentencing of fifty Denshawai villagers by a hastily constituted special tribunal. Four of the villagers were executed, two received life sentences and the remainder suffered fifty lashes in the village square, a spectacle the rest of the villagers were forced to watch. The resultant outcry in England and Egypt probably precipitated the breakdown in his health that led to the resignation of Lord Cromer as Consul-General in 1907. The Liberal government appointed Sir Eldon Gorst as his successor and announced that his first duty would be to prepare the way for Egyptian self-government as rapidly as possible.

Egyptian Home Rule, therefore, was a topic under intense discussion in 1907 and 1908 and Kettle was prominent amongst the Irish contributors to the issue. When the Irish party moved to object to the award of £50,000 to Cromer in recognition of his services to Egypt, Kettle remarked that the Denshawai incident showed that '...after twenty-five years of English administration they had once more been obliged to have recourse to the whip

and the lash in order to terrorise the Egyptians into an acceptance of our rule.⁴⁵ Over a chorus of protests from backbenchers Kettle indulged his penchant for arithmetical calculation. 'There had been 400 lashes given to innocent Egyptian villagers. They were asked to give Lord Cromer £50,000 which was a little more than £100 per lash.'⁴⁶ The Denshawai incident was not, of course, as Kettle well knew, a sign of incipient revolt on the part of Egyptian Nationalists, but it was an excellent illustration of the fundamental alienation of the Egyptian fellaheen from the administration. It was an illustration also of the violation of what Kettle took to be the fundamental principle of Nationalism, self-government.

Lord Cromer had got a dominant influence over the administration of Egypt. He had devoted his energies to an attempt to Anglicise the administration of Egypt and especially education. He had devoted himself to undermining the influence of the native responsible rulers. The Prime Minister had referred to the introduction into Egypt of ideas drawn from Western civilisation. Was it really suggested that nobody could keep a set of books properly and observe ordinary commercial honesty, unless he had the advantage of service under an English administrator? Lord Cromer had not shown the slightest originality in anything he had done in Egypt. Every idea with which his name was associated was laid before Egypt by the Old Egyptian National Assembly. The emancipation of the fellaheen, the abolition of forced labour, the rehabilitation of finance, and the purification of justice - every single item in Lord Cromer's programme would have been carried out by Egyptian administrators.⁴⁷

Kettle concluded by announcing that:

...he would always rejoice in two things: that they had failed in Egypt in crushing the National movement, as they had failed in Ireland, and that as an Irish member he had the opportunity of voting and speaking against this subordination, and against this donation and dole to a retired despot.⁴⁸

⁴⁵Parliamentary debates, Fourth series, Vol. 179, 30 July 1907, p.870.

⁴⁶Ibid., p.871.

⁴⁷Ibid., p.871.

⁴⁸Ibid., p.873.

Throughout his career in parliament, Kettle retained a keen interest in Egypt, maintaining that, 'We in Ireland have discerned in that country something that seemed in certain respects, at any rate, parallel to our own experience - in each case high aspirations, in each case, deep views.'⁴⁹ Kettle's foremost contact amongst Egyptian Nationalists seems to have been Muhammed Farid Bey, leader of the Watani, or Nationalist, party. According to Ryan, Kettle and Farid Bey had become 'close friends'.⁵⁰ Farid Bey, who was born in 1868 and who was to die in exile in Geneva in 1919 acclaiming the Bolshevik Revolution as an example to Egypt, was in 1908 a moderate constitutional Nationalist. He had succeeded to the leadership of the Nationalist party in 1908 on the death, at the tragically early age of thirty-four of its founder, the charismatic Mustafa Kamil. The appeal of the Nationalist party to the youth of the country was particularly strong and the insistence of the so-called Young Egyptians that a British evacuation be a primary step in any settlement was, in its pristine simplicity, akin to the Young Ireland Branch insistence on the primacy of Home Rule for Ireland before any lesser issues could be considered. Farid Bey's movement, predictably enough, came to nothing against the Egyptian Khedive's reluctance to see his own power diluted by the devolution of real authority to a representative assembly, by the extreme caution shown by other Nationalist groupings and by the subtlety of the British in playing off Nationalist leaders against each other.

In June 1908 the Egyptian Khedive visited England and Kettle at Question Time in the House asked Sir Edward Grey whether '...His Majesty's Government proposes to discuss with the Khedive the petition, bearing more than 40,000

⁴⁹Ibid., Fifth series Vol. 17, 15 June 1910, p.1370.

⁵⁰Ryan to Sheehy Skeffington, 21 July 1908.

signatures recently presented to him by Mohammed Farid Bey, leader of the Egyptian Nationalist Party, praying for the grant of a Constitution and a representative Assembly.⁵¹ Kettle was told that the visit was of a private nature and the government would make no statement about it. The question that Kettle had asked had sprung from his meeting with Farid Bey who had travelled to England to counter the effect of the Khedive's visit. Farid Bey was Kettle's guest on the terrace of the House of Commons in early June and Kettle set down his impressions of Egyptian Nationalism in an article in the Freeman's Journal. The foreign policy of the Liberal party was, he observed, 'their main difficulty and disgrace'.⁵² He went on to say of British imperialism:

You cannot moralise theft; and the British Empire was created, not, as Sir John Seely has said, in a fit of absence of mind, but in a chronic condition of absence of morals. There are sporadic outbursts from the Radicals in assertion of the rights of Egypt, of Macedonia, of India; but these outbursts are easily suppressed, Sir Edward Grey remains at the Foreign Office and the machine of Imperialism grinds heavily on.⁵³

What Ryan had described as Kettle's 'mystic enthusiasm' for Egypt revealed itself in the panegyric to which he treated Farid Bey as they sipped tea on the terrace.

Egypt, remember, is no new thing in the world, but the cradle of civilisation. She possesses in Arabic a language the colour and passion of which makes its love lyrics among the greatest in the world, the wonder and admiration of scholars like Adolphe Thalasso. The Arab genius has left its deep traces on science and philosophy. One may almost call it the native tongue of medicine; and as for metaphysics, if you take out of its history names like Avicenna and Averoes, you have lost a necessary link between the Greek world and the Renaissance. With the long tradition before her, with her resources of material

⁵¹Parliamentary debates, Fourth series, Vol. 191, 25 June 1908, p.85.

⁵²Freeman's Journal, 10 June 1908.

⁵³Ibid.

wealth and moral afflatus, with her sure plasticity to modern ideas, Egypt is surely one of the countries that can look to the future with uplifted and confident eyes.

So I say to her envoy Mohammed Farid Bey on the Terrace of the English House of Commons. "That is so," he replies. For the present he will be content to set Radicals thinking about Egypt.⁵⁴

The friendship with Farid Bey was renewed when, in September 1909, Kettle attended the Congress of the Jeunesse Egyptienne in Geneva. This gathering was instigated by Egyptian students attending European universities and to it were invited representatives of the three principal Egyptian Nationalist parties and some European sympathisers. Kettle was there as an observer on behalf of the Irish parliamentary party and Keir Hardie represented the British Labour party. Kettle, the traveller, had a keen eye for local colour and an instinctive gift for journalism that led him to enliven his political reporting with impressionistic detail. In Young Egypt there was much to excite both his curiosity and his respect.

Decidedly, whatever you may call the Young Egyptians, you cannot call them uneducated or irresponsible. On the contrary they manifest every sign of wealth, culture, knowledge of the world, and a courtesy suave beyond expression. There is a wide range of racial types, from the noble Arabian profile to something that seems almost Ethiopian. In social intercourse one is impressed by the fact that they have all gone to a good tradition for their manners and to a good tailor for their clothes. One is impressed still more by evidence of firmness of character. Hardly any of them touches wine. Most of them do not seem to smoke... Whether this abstinence has any religious sanction at the present day is a matter difficult to determine. One hardly thinks so; and yet I have a picture of a stout and amiable pasha at the Congress slipping his rosary beads through his fingers with incredible industry, with a murmur for each bead of "Allah!"⁵⁵

⁵⁴Ibid.

⁵⁵T.M. Kettle, 'Young Egypt' in The day's burden, (Dublin 1937), p.74.

There were stormy scenes at this conference as the Egyptian parties represented ranged from 'fierce extremists to somewhat timid reformers',⁵⁶ and Keir Hardie made a speech that was deeply resented by the latter. The leader of the British Labour party appeared to be recommending a type of self-government that was more concerned with giving Egyptian control of sewage plants and gasworks than in redeeming the nation. Kettle was inclined to regard this congress as 'opening a new epoch in the Egyptian Nationalist movement'.⁵⁷ He was impressed also by the sincere desire for peaceful relations with Britain that he discerned behind the proceedings and the speeches. To his mind, the Egyptian Nationalists were simply saying 'what every Englishman has heartily said with Simon de Montfort, and Hampden and Locke and John Stuart Mill.'⁵⁸

In foreign affairs Kettle associated himself with the radical traditions of the Liberal party and he found allies amongst anti-imperialist Liberal back benchers like Sir Arthur Ponsonby and Phillip Morrell. But Kettle's anti-imperialist commitment was based less upon abstract notions of freedom than upon his sense of identification as an Irish Nationalist with the other small nations of the world. A tenacious and unwavering adherence to the principle of Nationalism coupled with emotionally expressed outrage when that principle appeared to be violated marked all of his contributions to debates on Imperial affairs. The only moral justification for the British Empire in Kettle's eyes lay in its acting as emancipator or midwife of nationality. He was therefore unimpressed with the reforming activities of Sir Eldon Gorst, Cromer's successor in Egypt. Although Gorst's programme of piecemeal reform extended the power of Egyptian organs of local government and associated moderate Nationalists

⁵⁶Ibid.

⁵⁷Ibid.

⁵⁸Ibid., p.76.

with the central legislative council of the country in the new regime, there was no role for Farid's Nationalist party. The Khedive was allied firmly to the British, the movement of the Jeunesse Egyptienne was badly split between various highly argumentative constitutional factions and an assortment of equally heterodox secret societies pledged to patriotic violence. In February 1910, the assassination of the Khedive's Prime Minister, Boutros Pasha, a Copt by a Moslem zealot added a religious dimension to the violent divisions of Nationalist Egypt and the movement subsided into quarrelsome impotence. Kettle, speaking in the House of Commons, found a parallel to the assassination of the Egyptian Prime Minister in the Phoenix Park murders and likened attempts to blame Farid's movement to the efforts made to implicate Parnell in the Irish crime. Theodore Roosevelt who stopped off in Cairo en route to a big game hunting safari in the aftermath of the assassination and who delivered himself of the observation that the British in Egypt should 'govern or get out' was described by Kettle in scathing terms. Roosevelt was, declared Kettle, '...an unrivalled master of platitude, a sort of mixture of Tartuffe and Tartarin of Tarascon who will soon be forgotten'.⁵⁹ Kettle accused Sir Edward Grey of being 'guilty of an entire and complete betrayal of all Liberal traditions'.⁶⁰ But for all his fervour, Kettle had allied himself to a hopeless cause. Significantly, this was his last speech in the House of Commons.

his

Kettle's instincts in foreign affairs were generous and he followed/instincts. We can see in his approach to international questions some of the strengths and weaknesses of Irish parliamentary Nationalism. He belonged to a tradition that identified strongly with the underdog; given Ireland's history, it would

⁵⁹ Parliamentary debates, Fifth series, Vol. 17, 15 June 1910, p.1360.

⁶⁰ Ibid., p.1371.

have been an unimaginative and insensitive Irish Nationalist who did not make this identification. Kettle tended to see Nationalism as the supreme political principle of the world. This overemphasis on Nationalism led to an implicit denial of the importance of most of the issues that European statesmen were dealing with in the early years of the twentieth century. The necessity of safeguarding European peace, of holding the balance between rival imperial powers, of maintaining a civilised world order weighed heavily against the generous but impulsive humanitarianism that was Kettle's guiding principle. Kettle knew perfectly well that the British preoccupation with Egypt rested on their strategic concerns. In an addendum to his essay on 'Young Egypt' he turned to this problem. 'The Canal is the difficulty. But if the Canal be definitely neutralised on terms fair to Egypt and England alike, what pretext will then remain for the maintenance of the occupation?'⁶¹ But, of course, the British did not dare risk such an agreement with the Egyptians. For the calculations of diplomacy, Kettle had little time. His imagination was acutely sensitive to human suffering and to human cruelty and it was ^{as} a matter of conscience that he spoke out on behalf of victims of tyrannous government.

When in 1908 King Edward announced his intention of visiting the Russian Czar, Kettle was prominent amongst those members of parliament who opposed the trip. To Kettle, the visit was 'not a fraternisation with the people of Russia, but a fraternisation with the hangman of liberty in Russia'.⁶² Hilaire Belloc, at that time a Radical M.P. of unorthodox Liberal persuasion, had made the rather dubious statement that 'the overwhelming mass of Russian national opinion would be shocked if by any actions of ours we were to slight their executive...'⁶³ This provoked Kettle into a well researched denunciation

⁶¹T.M. Kettle, 'Young Egypt', p.76.

⁶²Parliamentary debates, Fourth series, Vol. 190, 4 June 1908, p.228.

⁶³Ibid., p.226.

of Czarist iniquities.

He would not go back to the storm which swept over Russia in 1905 and 1906 from the Baltic province to Georgievsk and the Caucasus, but he would remind the House that in the first three months of this year there were 267 executions, being an average of eighty-nine per month or three per day. Did the hon. Member for Salford deny the existence of the torture chamber? There were well-authenticated reports of ruined towns and devastated villages. Were the stories untrue in regard to women dishonoured, schoolboys shot down, and men by administrative orders to the number of 7,000 or 8,000 arrested and imprisoned without trial of any kind within the last three years?⁶⁴

This was well said but Kettle did not address himself to the more cogent point that Belloc had made, when he had remarked that 'in our present circumstances - he would not use the words "amity" or "furtherance of peace" - anything that helped us towards national security it was the duty of every man who owed allegiance to this country to support.'⁶⁵ The Czar's domestic policies, Russian Czardom being what it was, were morally indefensible. But if an alliance with the Czar maintained the precarious peace of Europe, the British could scarcely risk offending him by condemning his internal policies. It could be argued that it was no less a moral duty to follow any measures that helped preserve the stability of Europe. Perhaps such an argument could not have been sustained or might have been inapplicable. What is striking is that this type of argument did not enter Kettle's calculations and by its absence, his statements on foreign policy appeared consistently unbalanced. Kettle's overemphasis on nationalism as a supreme good in the world led to an equal overemphasis on the wickedness of imperialism. This simple schema was insufficient as a paradigm for great power relations.

⁶⁴Ibid., p.227.

⁶⁵Ibid., p.226.

Kettle was exceptionally well informed about foreign affairs. The use of thoroughly researched detail in his speeches is reminiscent of the techniques of investigative journalism, and indeed on his tour of the United States he had been greatly impressed by the activities of the muckraking school of newspaper reporting. But there was more emotion than balanced judgement in the conclusions he drew from his investigations. The reserves of irony, the quality that Kettle had recommended as a shield against the disappointments of the political life and which sustained his endeavours as a Nationalist M.P., were insufficient to provide him with a detached view of international politics. The ironic approach to one's opponents depends, after all, upon a certain amount of intimacy. Kettle knew Britain and British politics all too well. His knowledge of Europe, for all his travels, was pre-eminently cultural and his attitude was coloured by a streak of romantic enthusiasm that precluded irony. In so far as any Irish Nationalist took an interest in European affairs, an element of distortion in perspective was inescapable. Kettle himself quoted with approval the remark said to have been made by some bygone Lady Clanricarde to an English politician 'You have always been like a high wall standing between us and the sun.'⁶⁶ Britain had for too long mediated between Ireland and the harsh realities of international politics for any Irish Nationalist to have anything other than an essentially innocent view of the world. Nationalism in Europe was not necessarily Irish National^eism writ large.

Irish Nationalism had an intense but narrow focus. Its great issues, Catholic emancipation, land reform, repeal of the Union, had each a European dimension but the formulation and solution of these problems tied Ireland firmly to an Anglo-Saxon rather than to a European tradition. Home Rule owed little to European political models and everything to the English

⁶⁶T.M. Kettle, The open secret of Ireland, (Dublin 1912), p.1.

tradition of administrative devolution. There was then built into Irish parliamentary Nationalism, almost by definition, a fierce parochialism, an overriding sense of the importance of the local, the specific and the domestic. The jackboot kicking down the family door, the father lashed in front of his wife and children, these were the images Kettle sought out when he spoke against political tyrannies. He had the Irish Nationalist ability to see the world as a series of localities with all the advantages and drawbacks inherent in such a consistent yet incomplete vision. After all, when the European order finally broke down in 1914, Kettle was to be found on the side he had hitherto denounced, on the side of the Czar and Sir Edward Grey. Kettle's view of Europe was unconsciously ethnocentric, distinctively Irish. A dogmatic belief in Nationalism as the historic expression of a moral imperative was coupled with a principled hatred of injustice felt with an intense and personalised emotionalism towards the aggressor. Pragmatic and ironic in his political work for Ireland, in foreign affairs Kettle was inclined to become a Crusader.

⁶⁶T.M. Kettle, The open secret of Ireland, (Dublin 1912), p.1.

2. Kettle and the United Irish League

Despite his wife's claim that Kettle's career at Westminster was 'the happiest period of his public life'¹, his own assessment of his experience tells a different story. In the course of a correspondence with Alice Stopford Green in 1909 he wrote, 'I have never been happy for a moment in politics and of course have been getting poorer every month I have been in them.'² With reference to his appointment to the chair of National Economics in the newly created National University of Ireland, he assured Mrs Green that 'you will hear no more of me in party politics or sectional squabbles.'³ Willie Dawson, one of Kettle's closest Dublin friends, remembered him describing various Westminster notables whom he had met and made the proviso that 'perhaps his caustic criticism of some of them had better remain unpublished.'⁴ Oliver St John Gogarty wrote of Kettle the parliamentarian that 'his extreme youth and want of knowledge of parliamentary procedures kept him diffident and held him back. Besides there was the suspicion, dim as yet to his discerning brain, that parliament was not all composed of the honestest aspects of its members.'⁵ Arthur Clery, another close friend, thought that Kettle was out of place in the parliamentary party because 'he was the only young man of abstract ideas (or at least with a capacity for expressing such ideas) to make his way into the Irish party since the Parnell split.'⁶ Clery also thought Kettle's personality mitigated against him making a successful career in politics for, '...a man in his twenties

¹ Mary Kettle, 'Memoir' in T.M. Kettle, The day's burden (Dublin 1968), p.30.

² Kettle to A.S. Green, 28 December 1909, National Library of Ireland MS15081.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Willie Dawson, 'Kettle memorabilia', Kettle papers.

⁵ Oliver St John Gogarty, 'Thomas Kettle' (typescript for a radio talk), Kettle papers.

⁶ Arthur Clery, Dublin essays (Dublin 1919), p.10

only attains success of this kind at the price of much jealousy and ill feeling, and Kettle was by no means the man to allay feelings of that sort. For he was neglectful of the smaller courtesies of life and he was not at all an easy man to work with.⁷ By itself this statement of Clery's is not an adequate explanation of Kettle's relative failure in the political arena, but it does serve to draw attention to what was widely felt by his contemporaries - that Kettle was temperamentally unfitted to the rough and tumble of political life, and that the Irish parliamentary party was somehow a degenerate and torpid body that could offer only disillusion and frustration to the high-spirited idealism of the younger generation of Nationalists.

In fact Kettle was a loyal, hardworking and useful, if much maligned member of the Irish party whose loyalty never faltered. The political situation between 1906 and 1910 did, however, see the Irish parliamentary party put to strange and sometimes desperate shifts to maintain their position. Clear eyed as he was about the limits of parliamentary endeavour, it was not a sudden disillusionment with politics that led Kettle to retire but a surfeit of a particular type of politicking that led him to feel, probably correctly, that his was not the type of personality - he was far too highly strung for one thing - that could find satisfaction in the day to day life of politics. In Kettle's mind this was no reflection upon the Irish parliamentary party which ever afterwards retained his loyalty and affection. That erratic but sometimes curiously perceptive observer of human psychology, G.K. Chesterton, penetrated Kettle's character much more effectively than did Mary Kettle when he claimed that 'Kettle was a patriot whose impulse was practical and whose policy was impolitic' and summed up his political career by remarking that 'if any part of his fine work was in

⁷Ibid.

vain, it was certainly not the reckless, romantic part; it was precisely the plodding, parliamentary part.'⁸

Considering Kettle's political career in the light of Chesterton's statement it can be seen that the political situation at Westminster was such that he could get only the worst of both worlds, the practical and the ideal. Let us consider first the practical. The major beneficiary of the apparently overwhelming Liberal victory in 1906 was the embryo Labour party. The sixty to seventy Labour members in the House of Commons were a disturbing new presence. Veteran parliamentary hands felt that the Parnellite style of disruptive politics was most likely to be resorted to by the Independent Labour members who allied themselves with neither of the major parties and who stubbornly insisted on judging issues from their own incoercible viewpoint. It was widely recognised that Labour represented a formidable new force in British politics and one that had to be appeased. Consequently, Liberal legislation aimed at improving the condition of the working classes passed the House of Lords unscathed. But this relative bipartisanship of the House of Lords and the Unionist party was not likely to be extended towards Liberal measures aimed at devolving legislative power to Ireland. Home Rule, along with educational reform and legislation to regulate public house licenses had become a specifically Liberal cause. The effect of this situation upon Kettle was twofold.

On the one hand he found confirmation in his belief in the power of determined government to transform and modernise society as the Liberal government began to produce a body of legislation that was in effect laying the foundations of the welfare state. On the other hand, he achieved little personal fulfillment in the parliament of 1906-10 because as an Irish Nationalist he was condemned to be a mere onlooker at Westminster.

⁸G.K. Chesterton, Irish impressions, (London 1919), p. 169.

Certainly the experience of sitting in a great reforming parliament made a deep and lasting impression on his mind. Of all the legislation introduced by the Liberal government, the most striking and immediate in its impact upon Ireland was the Old Age Pensions Act of 1908 of which Kettle, with his friend and soon to be brother-in-law Richard Sheehy, provided a detailed exegesis. It is clear from his introduction to this pamphlet that at Westminster Kettle was receiving an education in practical economics and pragmatic radicalism. This process had profound effects upon a mind whose intellectual foundations had been laid by the Jesuits of University College.

The idea that the State should make provision for the veterans of the grand Army of Labour is one of comparatively recent growth. Under the civil feudalism and spiritual democracy of the Catholic Middle Ages this task was undertaken in great part by the monasteries, the secular clergy and certain large-hearted princes. In those days Property was a kindly and human thing, which recognising itself as a social fact, accepted its social duties. Then came the period of individualism; the unity of life was shattered; society became a planless tumult of appetites; and Property, with iron egotism, 'did what it liked with its own.' The revolt of Rich against Poor in the 16th century has slowly transformed itself into the revolt of Poor against Rich in the 20th. Men begin to understand once more that they must organise and systematise society as a whole - must put, at all events, as much thought and common purpose behind its functions as are embodied in a workshop, or a farm, or even in a pack of hunting dogs. And since sickness, and that incurable sickness, Old Age, are the blackest shadows along the paths of those who work with their hands, the first step back to justice must be to make such provision for the stricken as will transmute what is now a calamity into a discipline. People call it a triumph for Socialism. But you may also call it if you like, a triumph for Medievalism, or for Radical Democracy, or simply for common intelligence and humanity.⁹

The idealisation by Kettle of 'the Catholic Middle Ages' in the preceding passage is highly suggestive. This coupled with his distaste for Enlightenment

⁹ Thomas Kettle and Richard Sheehy, Old Age Pensions Act, 1908, (Dublin 1908), p. 1.

individualism and his ready justification, upon profoundly conservative postulates, of broad measures of social reform was completely alien in spirit to the English tradition of liberal Utilitarianism. Kettle, whilst welcoming progressive legislation, compulsively translated it into a humanitarian, Catholic framework. In the political parlance of contemporary Europe Kettle would be classified as a Christian Democrat. His cast of mind, however peculiar in the context of Westminster politics, was a significant indicator of the type of political culture that might be expected in a self-governing Ireland in which, inevitably, Catholic influences would predominate. But between 1906 and 1910 Home Rule for Ireland remained as far away as ever and Kettle's presence at Westminster became, as far as he was concerned an affirmation of the Nationalist ideal. Unfortunately it was as barren a time in Irish political life for idealists as it was for pragmatists.

In 1907 the leaders of the Irish party blundered badly by allowing the Irish Council Bill, Campbell Bannerman's promised measure of devolution, to be brought to a National^{ist} convention of the United Irish League in Dublin. It was a fatal mistake to associate the emotive demands of Irish Nationalism with this mundane system of committees and overlapping bureaucracies. In the mind of the Irish Nationalist public the scheme seemed to strengthen the Dublin Castle administration and the parliamentary party appeared to be rehabilitating what should be swept away. The situation was made worse by the widespread impression that Redmond and Dillon favoured acceptance of the measure. In fact Redmond urged the Convention to reject the measure out of hand but it was generally believed that the Irish leader had somehow been brought to heel by the Convention.

In the spring of 1907, therefore, all the old questions about the relationship of the parliamentary party both to Nationalist Ireland and the Liberal party were reopened. The stage was set for a dreary replay of the old issues

that had long divided William O'Brien and Tim Healy from the majority of the parliamentarians. What were the implications of the Convention's decision to reject the Council Bill for the party policy of tight control over the constituencies; should the party now look to other strategies for winning their ends than the Liberal alliance; did the decision of the Convention and the manner in which it was reached cast a new light on the strict interpretation of the party pledge whereby members of parliament swore loyalty to the party rather than to their constituencies? The parliamentary party between 1907 and 1910 underwent a prolonged crisis of morale. In this crisis Kettle played a prominent and contentious role, which exhausted him physically and mentally and which led to deteriorating relationships with his family and friends in Dublin. By 1910 the party machine was again working smoothly under the triumvirate of Redmond, Dillon and Devlin. The policy of the Liberal alliance was seen to be paying dividends, a Home Rule Bill was imminent and the ideological dispute about Irish Nationalism suspended temporarily. But prominent amongst the casualties of three years tempestuous political moratorium was Kettle.

Kettle was a tireless campaigner in Ireland for the parliamentary party against its most prominent enemies - William O'Brien and the increasingly effective coalition of radical Nationalists grouped under the umbrella of Arthur Griffith's Sinn Fein movement. His speeches in Ireland, like those he made at Westminster, were based upon a constant reiteration of Ireland's minimum demand - Gladstonian Home Rule. Nevertheless Kettle very well knew that this parliament would not bring in a Home Rule Bill. Indeed the rejection of the Irish Council Bill had left the Irish party without any hope of even partial implementation of the policy. Small wonder then that the worth of the Liberal alliance, indeed the worth of the parliamentary

party itself increasingly came into question. In spite of this, Kettle remained a loyal parliamentarian who allowed himself no doubts about the basic correctness of the strategy originally laid down by Parnell.

Kettle clearly saw that only the Liberal party would bring in a measure of Home Rule and for that reason William O'Brien's flirtation with the Unionists was a distraction from the main purpose. Equally futile in Kettle's opinion was the Sinn Fein option. The parliamentary road to independence on the other hand took on in his mind a kind of idealistic significance. This significance it gained in part from the long line of Irish parliamentarians who had spoken so eloquently on Ireland's behalf, from the time of the Union to the present, and in part from the undoubted success of Irish parliamentarians in winning some measure of redress for Ireland's grievances. Kettle also felt that parliamentarianism was the most appropriate expression of the Irish aspiration to independence and this he thought was due to something that was somehow innate in the Irish character. When, in 1907, Kettle was translating Contemporary Ireland by the French sociologist L. Paul Dubois, he wrote the following passage in his introduction.

For this, in the last analysis, is what Mr. Paul-Dubois takes to be the deep malady of Ireland. She has not gained the whole world, but she has come perilously near losing her own soul. A certain laxity of will, a certain mystical skepticism in face of the material world, an eloquence which in depicting Utopias exhausts the energy that might better be spent in creating them, a continual tendency to fall back on the alibi of the inner life make Ireland the Hamlet, or still more the Rudin of the nations...although Ireland's last cards are on the table, she is capable, if she plays them well, not only of preserving our ancient people but of creating a new civilisation.¹⁰

¹⁰L. Paul-Dubois, A Frenchman's Ireland, (Dublin 1908), p. IX.

Kettle then was on his guard against the 'Utopian' nostrums of Sinn Fein and William O'Brien and he was in favour of a tightly disciplined Irish party. Thus he believed in a strict interpretation of the party pledge, in tight control by the party over local constituencies, in the ultimate effectiveness of the Liberal alliance and that Home Rule and not remedial social legislation was the answer to the Irish question. All of these positions placed Kettle firmly in the Dillonite wing of the Irish party, propagating a vigorous, disciplined Nationalism to offset the 'laxity' of the Irish mind.

It was therefore extremely embarrassing for Kettle when, in the summer of 1907, his father suddenly attempted to launch a new political movement to supersede the parliamentary party. A.J. Kettle, who was suspicious of any but the most rudimentary of political strategies and who had counselled Parnell to pull the Irish party out of Westminster years before, had always tended to place parliamentary politics in a position subservient to mass agitation in Ireland. Given a large enough issue around which the Irish people could unite, he was quite prepared to countenance a version of the Sinn Fein policy. He thought he had found just such an issue in the report of the Childers Committee on the Financial Relations between Great Britain and Ireland, which had, in 1896 produced the startling and fiercely disputed conclusion that Ireland had, since the Act of Union been overtaxed to the extent of £ 2,750,000 per annum. Both Unionists and Nationalists had come together to demand redress from the British government and A.J. Kettle saw in the exploitation of this issue a means of winning Unionists over to the cause of Irish Nationalism. He proposed forming a new national organisation to be called the Irish Financial and Industrial League.

In the organisation of his new movement, A.J. Kettle first bowed in the direction of William O'Brien by calling for a National Convention to assemble in Dublin. Present at this Convention would be representatives of the parliamentary party, the United Irish League, the Gaelic League, the Irish Reform Association, the Sinn Fein Council and the Industrial League. To the question of who should chair this heterogenous assembly, he proposed that 'as I worked with members of nearly all the above-named bodies perhaps I might venture to call the Conference myself, with I hope more success than Captain Shaw Taylor on the land question.'¹¹ If the idea of a convention was designed to placate O'Brien, in his proposals for the role of the parliamentary party, A.J. Kettle went a long way to accomodate Sinn Fein.

The Parliamentary position and every other vantage ground should be maintained and utilised to the utmost, but not as in the past. There is an able section of the party domiciled in England and under the guidance of Mr. T.P. O'Connor they could act as an Irish garrison in London. The commander in chief, Mr. Redmond could move the whole party about according to the circumstances. The literary men in the party could find work reading and writing up everything bearing on the financial and commercial questions under the supervision of Mr. Sexton and other experts. But the great body of the party would require to stay in Ireland and make house to house canvas of the whole people, the same as at a contested election and by way of information they should keep a record of what excuse any man, lay or clerical could advance for not joining the League.¹²

The sheer dottiness of this idea need not be emphasised. The humiliation of the Irish parliamentary party, reduced to door-knocking opinion pollsters, would have been complete enough to have satisfied the most ardent Sinn Feiner. Tom Kettle would have been less than human if these foolish proposals had not caused him deep pain. Mary Kettle reminds us that her husband enjoyed

¹¹Irish Independent, 8 June 1907.

¹²Ibid.

a particularly close relationship with his father.

He was intensely proud of his father and always loved in later years, when the old man was confined indoors to drive out to his country home to thresh out current politics with him. Though apparently they seldom came to agreement, still it was obvious that each radiated pride in the other.¹³

Before the enemies of the parliamentary party could make use of Andrew Kettle's intervention, a personal tragedy temporarily removed the old man from the political scene. On 25 August at the Dominican Convent in Blackrock, his daughter, Sister Mary Ambrose, suddenly died. Andrew Kettle was plunged into deep mourning and never fully recovered his interest in politics. In September 1908 he resigned as honorary treasurer of the parliamentary party and thereafter played little part in Irish public life.

Kettle was also faced with political trouble in East Tyrone where his old friend, Bulmer Hobson, was busily organising for Sinn Fein. The Ulster-based, I.R.B.-inspired Dungannon Clubs began an upsurge of activity early in January 1907 which culminated in a meeting in Dundalk where they finally merged with Cumann na Gaedh^el to form the Sinn Fein League. The Tyrone Courier reported in April that:

The new movement is growing rapidly in East Tyrone, branches having been formed in Dungannon and throughout the constituency and its supporters have become numerically so strong that they have actually threatened to bring a third candidate into the field against Mr. T.M. Kettle M.P. at the next parliamentary division. He in return has, since his arrival from America denounced the new policy in all his speeches.¹⁴

What Hobson and his colleague, Sean M'Dermott, thought they could gain in East Tyrone, apart from losing the seat for the United Irish League by the

¹³Mary Kettle, 'Memoir', pp. 27-8.

¹⁴Tyrone Courier, 18 April 1907.

introduction of a third candidate, is not clear. It was perhaps unfortunate for Kettle that Dungannon, with its emotive associations with the eighteenth-century Volunteer movement, was in his constituency. Hobson, having settled on the title of Dungannon Clubs for his new movement, was compelled, if for no other reason than on grounds of nomenclature, to organise in East Tyrone.

The presence of Sinn Fein organisers in his constituency led Kettle into a number of turbulent scenes which were recorded with relish by a Unionist press ever vigilant to detect dissension in the ranks of its political foes. The Tyrone Courier reported on the first of a series of clashes in April.

A convention under the auspices of the United Irish League was held in Coalisland on Sunday at which Mr. Kettle M.P. and others delivered addresses. At the same time the Sinn Feinists held an open-air public meeting at Annaghmore Cross, about one mile from Coalisland at which Mr. M'Dermott the Belfast organiser, and a large following from Coalisland and Dungannon were present...but the proceedings had hardly commenced when about one hundred local supporters of the United Irish League, armed with sticks and pitchforks arrived on the scene and announced their intention of breaking up the meeting. Although somewhat in the minority the Sinn Fein men were nothing daunted and showed a bold front. Revolvers were drawn and a desperate conflict seemed imminent when the police force on duty managed to get between the parties and after considerable parlaying induced Mr. M'Dermott and his followers to return to Coalisland. There they held a successful meeting in view of Mr. Kettle's supporters.¹⁵

The Tyrone constabulary in March noted that 'John McDermot [sic] a Sinn Fein organiser attempted to hold a meeting at Ardboe on 10th March but was refused a hearing by a hostile crowd of A.O.H. men who threw stones at him. He was forced to drive rapidly away.'¹⁶

In October the R.I.C. reported that M'Dermott had finally succeeded in establishing a Sinn Fein branch at Ardboe. There were also branches in

¹⁵Tyrone Courier, 18 April 1907.

¹⁶R.I.C. Inspector General's monthly report, February 1907.

neighbouring Cookstown and in Dungannon. In the whole of County Tyrone there were eight Sinn Fein branches by December 1907 and this represented the maximum inroads that the organisation made in the county. By 1908 the Tyrone police were able to report to Dublin Castle that 'the Sinn Fein party is not making any progress in this county.'¹⁷ Sinn Fein's limited success is explained by the continuing growth of the Ancient Order of Hibernians which by December 1907 numbered in County Tyrone 78 divisions. This growth continued so that by the time of Kettle's re-election in 1910 the police calculated that 'the A.O.H. is ousting the U.I.L. and is now the leading Nationalist organisation in the county.'¹⁸

There is no record of Kettle ever having expressed disquiet at the aggressive tactics for which the Ancient Order of Hibernians were notorious. Sinn Fein interlopers in U.I.L. constituencies were frequently beaten up by this praetorian guard of Nationalist Ulster and the Hibernians also had a long and dismal record of involvement in sectarian rioting. Kettle was disposed to regard the A.O.H. as yet another peculiarity of Ulster. He appreciated crowds and tumult and enjoyed colour and vigour in political life. The A.O.H., it could be argued, embodied a noble ideal in so far as the organisation was on the side of Irish Nationalism however distasteful some of its fringe activities. Kettle was not inclined to be introspective about the peculiarities of Ulster politics; rather he was prepared to enjoy them with the wry amusement of the sophisticated Dublin outsider. Mary Kettle provides a hint as to his attitude.

In the North, religion is the predominant colour; it is the Catholic Green against the Protestant Orange. I

¹⁷ Ibid., February 1908.

¹⁸ Ibid., March 1910.

say guardedly, predominant; of course there is the great issue - Home Rule v. Unionism. But the conspicuous place religion took struck a Dubliner as something quite extraordinary. I remember one amusing incident of the election, which my husband often cited as typical. Our motor-car broke down, and while repairs were in progress a small boy was an interested spectator. When all was in order again and we were about to start, the boy looked wistfully at us - at least as wistfully as a northern boy can: they are not demonstrative except on the twelfth of July. My husband, interpreting the look, invited him for a drive. He accepted, and as my husband set him down after his spin the boy lifted his cap and said: "Thank you, Mr. Kettle, I am much obliged. To hell with the Pope!" and walked sedately away. It was surely a spirited and quaint declaration of independence and incorruptibility.¹⁹

Although the political implications of Ulster 'quaintness' were not fully apparent between 1906 and 1910 the undercurrent of unpleasantness and violence was beginning to pull more strongly throughout the North of Ireland. Kettle's was a warm and complex personality and he was far from happy in the role of figurehead of one sectarian faction. Increasingly he began to distance himself mentally from a constituency which to a Dublin intellectual was always something of a foreign land.

Violence in Irish political life was not, as far as Kettle was concerned, confined to Ulster. His association with the Ancient Order of Hibernians and his vigorous defence of the idea that Home Rule could be won only at Westminster by the action of a tightly disciplined parliamentary party won him the undying enmity of William O'Brien. In the mind of O'Brien, the parliamentary party tended to divide Irishman from Irishman and with manic energy he devoted himself to bringing about by extra-parliamentary means a union of Irishmen of all classes and creeds based upon a vaguely defined notion of common economic interest. In the name of conciliation, O'Brien was prepared to go to extremes of divisiveness. In 1907 he was in the

¹⁹Mary Kettle, 'Memoir', pp. 27-28.

position, or positions, of attacking the parliamentary party; of simultaneously trying to get back into it on his own terms; of continuing to press the policy of conciliation with Unionists; and of making up to Sinn Fein.

This all had little to do with the political realities of Irish life. If landlords ceased to be Unionists, if Sinn Feiners accepted representation at Westminster, if parliamentarians submitted to extra-parliamentary control of policy, then all would be well and O'Brien's vision a reality. Indeed if this were to be the case, there would be little need of politics at all in Ireland as political problems would no longer exist and the circle would have been squared. Kettle was understandably skeptical about this nirvana and his enjoyment in the political life was to be considerably soured by the tirades of abuse showered upon him by O'Brien.

Kettle's position on the Standing Committee of the National Directory of the United Irish League coupled with his membership of the Board of Erin was proof positive to O'Brien that he was a guiding intelligence of the Molly Maguire conspiracy whose invisible hand everywhere frustrated the grand policy of conciliation. Kettle shared this dual role with such notables as they Lord Mayor of Dublin and Willie Redmond, but that the presence of distinguished, moderate members of the Nationalist community might act as a restraining influence on the Ancient Order of Hibernians never even crossed O'Brien's mind. Despite the scurrilous insults that O'Brien's paper the Irish People hurled at him, Kettle's basic generosity of spirit was unimpaired. When, in January 1908, O'Brien performed a characteristically bewildering volte face and rejoined the parliamentary party, Kettle welcomed O'Brien's return to the fold.

He [Kettle] did not believe in sentimentalism in politics. He did not believe that any good had ever been done by members of parliament passing votes of confidence in one another. He had taken a large part in the controversy for the past two years and they would allow him to say that the controversy was now not only a closed book but a burned book. In politics it had been well said, "There is no past," and they should turn their faces to the future and not to the past. So far as he was concerned, he had fought only on National principle and in the carrying out of the political programme of the party.²⁰

This reconciliation did not survive the Act of 1908 that amended, in O'Brien's opinion fatally, the Land Act of 1903. The latter piece of legislation had been the cornerstone of O'Brien's entire policy of conciliation, and though its financial clauses had irretrievably broken down, he could not accept the new Act. The proposed increase in annuities to be imposed upon tenant purchasers, coupled with the decrease in bonuses to landlords, rendered the Act of 1908 anathema to O'Brien. In a spirit of extreme bitterness he renewed his feud with the party and with Kettle. It was O'Brien's followers who were to be responsible for the single most unpleasant experience in Kettle's career.

On the afternoon of 6 September 1908, in the course of a series of speaking engagements, Kettle, accompanied by Stephen Gwynn and Michael Joyce, the Limerick MP, travelled up from Limerick to Newcastle West. They would address a meeting to discuss the forthcoming purchase of their holdings by the tenants of that town from Lord Devon. Newcastle West had been the target of a lively propaganda campaign by William O'Brien whose supporters had put it round that the town tenants' transaction would impede the advance of purchase money for the rural tenants of the district. A crowd had assembled in anticipation of the MPs' arrival when, about two in the

²⁰Irish Times, 19 January 1908.

afternoon, several jaunting cars clattered into the town square and disgorged a number of burly countrymen armed with hurley sticks and shillelaghs. The platform, a series of planks laid loosely over barrels that had been erected for the expected speakers, was seized by the interlopers who commenced an impromptu meeting of their own. A number of speeches were delivered which were, in the words of the Freeman's Journal, 'for the most part eulogistic about Mr. William O'Brien'.²¹

When Kettle, Joyce and Gwynn arrived in the square, the speechmaking abruptly stopped and the O'Brienite faction set about denying, literally, a platform to the MPs by ripping up the planks. While the floor of the platform was being demolished, Kettle advanced resolutely and began to speak. He was instantly struck in the face with a stick, thrown to the ground and then kicked. Stephen Gwynn who had followed closely behind Kettle maintained a precarious position on one of the remaining crossbeams of the platform and, flinging his arms around an upright which had escaped the attention of the wreckers, attempted to address the crowd. Michael Joyce was heard to call for the Abbey fishermen, a group of thirty of these stalwarts having come up from Limerick, possibly in the role of bodyguard for the MPs. The fishermen 'rushed into the debris and ejected the wreckers in quick time'.²² In the melee, Joyce was attacked from behind and badly beaten around the head. He was helped from the scene of combat to the Munster Hotel where his wounds were dressed.

The turmoil abated and Kettle was able to make a speech to the crowd. It became immediately apparent that his response to physical danger was

²¹Freeman's Journal, 7 September 1908.

²²Ibid.

one of anger, not fear. Indeed Kettle was in a towering rage which he vented upon the town^s people in an oratorical performance which, whilst scarcely diplomatic, doubtless served the valuable function of relieving his feelings.

...he began to wonder whether there were any men in Newcastle West after the manner in which they had allowed half a dozen blackguards to tear the platform to pieces. They would not have stood that thing in Nationalist Ulster (hear,hear). He spent the week before last in bed ill and he came here that day against medical advice and if ten men had followed him on the platform they could have captured it in five minutes but he was flung off the platform and his friend Mr. Joyce was in the hands of a doctor in the Hotel Munster (A voice - "It was through a mistake"). His friend Mr. Gwynn, the grandson of Mr. William Smith O'Brien was also struck and flung off the platform. He would tell them why he had come here that day. Because he read a paragraph in a paper saying that he was afraid to face the music. Well he had faced the music (hear,hear). Where was William O'Brien? Where were the white flaggers of Cork? Where were the gentlemen who had got for the landlords of Ireland seven years purchase more for their land than was paid formerly? The most important question they had to consider there that day was the question of Home Rule. When he came there that day he was fully convinced that Ireland was amply fit for Home Rule but after what he had seen he was asking himself, whether Ireland was worth the sacrifice and labour that had been made for it. He would go home wondering whether, if the element of blackguardism could terrorise and beat down the elements of reason, they could claim that thought had so far developed and National unity so far advanced that they were capable of²³ conducting their affairs in a reasonable and orderly way.

Kettle then delivered himself of what we can consider, in spite of the emotionalism of the occasion, as his final and considered judgement of O'Brien and O'Brienism.

There were two policies of land purchase before the country. The first was the policy of the Cork Advisory Committee. They

²³Freeman's Journal, 7 September 1908.

were the landlords' friends, the white-flaggers, the hand-uppers, the gentlemen who wanted them - who had fought for twenty-five years in that movement - to strike their flag to the Clanricardes and the Dunravens and the rest of that unholy brood. The policy of these gentlemen was helter skelter purchase at landlords' prices and with losses on stock paid out of the pocket of the Irish ratepayers. The policy adopted by the Irish party - a policy unanimously adopted by the Directory of the United Irish League was purchase at a fair price with the loss on flotation paid by the treasury. Mr. O'Brien said that the Irish ratepayers had to pay for the disappearance of landlordism. They said that the British Government put the Irish landlords in the country and that the British Government should pay the cost of their disappearance.²⁴

On the question of conciliation, Kettle gave his own robust version. Undoubtedly he was not feeling in a conciliatory mood after his recent unpleasant experience. Nevertheless the fierce Ulster Nationalist combativeness that informed his approach to this question was a factor constant in all his utterances about landlords and Unionism. Clearly he felt that conciliation in the O'Brienite version was an idea as soft and balmy and indeterminate as the sleepy Munster air.

As for conciliation, let them not be misled into thinking that the Irish Party were opposed to welcoming under their banner any friendly men who sincerely came over. If Irish landlords were coming over, let them come over the whole way (hear, hear). They had flung down from that platform a man who had affinities with County Limerick, the grandson of William Smith O'Brien. His friend, Mr. Gwynn broke away from the landlord clique and he came the whole way and wrote "Home Rule, Irish Nationalist, Pledge-Bound Member of the Irish Party" in legible letters after his name. For men like Stephen Gwynn, Nationalist Ireland had a hearty welcome, but they had no welcome for men who wanted only to scuttle the ship and sink her in sight of port. He was not in favour of conciliation that consisted in blackening the character of Irish Nationalists. He had only this to say in conclusion. He said at the beginning

²⁴Freeman's Journal, 7 September 1908.

of the meeting he would go home wondering whether Irish Home Rule was after all worth fighting for and wasting ones life away for. He was done with Munster. In Ulster he had never had a Nationalist meeting disgraced by scenes like these he had seen this day.²⁵

The picture of Kettle bleeding, battered but unbowed, denouncing the enemies of the parliamentary party, excoriating his countrymen for their apathy, provides an appropriate image to sum up one aspect of his political endeavours.

The role Kettle played in carrying out the policies of the parliamentary party was a vigorous one and he was conspicuous by his loyalty to the party leaders. Newspaper accounts of his meetings attest to the fact that he was always capable of producing arresting and original platform oratory. Nevertheless, this was an age of outstanding political orators and an analysis of Kettle's speeches is not sufficient to explain the remarkable hostility he seemed to arouse amongst his opponents. This can be explained partly by his youth and, we must conclude also, by his manner. Intellectuals are rarely popular in politics and youthful intellectuals in particular, stimulate the rancour of older politicians. When Kettle spoke of William O'Brien, he frequently appeared to be condescending to that choleric veteran, indeed he would make fun of him.

The anti-populist stance that Kettle's analysis of the political situation led him to take up was also deeply wounding to political veterans whose most cherished memories were of the Land League and subsequent agrarian struggles. Kettle, in common with Dillon and Redmond, realised that the hopes of Irish Nationalism were now focused exclusively upon Westminster. To romanticise about the Land League, to emphasize the

²⁵Ibid.

common feeling of Irish identity forged in mass struggle, were merely rhetorical strategies for platform oratory. No political advances could be gained by trying to create movements that had their focus in a purely Irish context. It is doubtful if any such enterprise, whether conceived by Sinn Fein or by William O'Brien or Andrew J. Kettle could even have met with much success in Ireland. Irish Nationalists who shunned Westminster or sought to bend the parliamentary party to their ends in the name of ideas emphasizing a common heritage of Irishness were at best guilty of sentimentalism, at worst of playing into the hands of Unionism.

On issues of strategy and tactics, Kettle would never allow his heart to rule his head. This as much as anything explains the strong emotions of resentment that he inspired in his political foes. His opponents could have tolerated having their ideas challenged. Kettle went much farther than this. He appeared to be ridiculing their dreams, and his eminently rational approach to Nationalism aroused a slumbering, irrational hatred. Yet Kettle himself was the most idealistic of men. By giving his entire loyalty to the party he was making a commitment that increasingly involved the exchange of his own most generous aspirations in return for the tedious compromises that were the most Irish parliamentarianism seemed able to wring from the slow grinding and faltering mills of Westminster government. Was Kettle's political life to be a career or merely an interlude in a career?

¹ T. M. Kettle, 'On crossing the Irish sea' in *The Irish Nation* (Dublin 1937), p. 21.

² T. M. Kettle, 'On saving ourselves' in *ibid.*, p. 102.

³ *ibid.*, p. 101.

3. Kettle's resignation from parliament

It was a combination of circumstances, all productive of deep feelings of personal unhappiness, tantamount in the end to a sustained and eroding depression that led Kettle to leave parliament. Two essays that he wrote during his period as an MP are filled with images that reflect his unhappiness at the constant travel to and from London. In 'On crossing the Irish Sea', written in 1909, he wrote of one of his trips from Kingstown to Westminster:

The grey, cold, sliding treachery of the sea comes out through the surface brightness. One wonders if the sea that gives empires may not take them suddenly back. At all events I am going to be sea-sick. It will be another argument for Home Rule. "The Channel," said Grattan, using the English name for the Irish Sea, "forbids union, as the ocean forbids separation." One should be glad to be sea-sick in assertion of so slashing an epigram.¹

In 'On saying goodbye', written in 1910, the mood is one of a sustained pessimism alleviated only by references to the consolations of religion.

The smell of the sea, so raw and stringent in a landsman's nostrils, brings thoughts with it and a strange spume of memories. To me it brings a perception of what people mean when they toss in the air that dusty adjective, "cynical". A cynic is a man who, finding himself, for all striving, incurably sad from the lips in, sets himself to be incorrigibly gay from the lips out. It is a triumph of will over temperament, a way of courage, and, by times, even a way of nobleness.²

In the course of this essay, Kettle produced his own most slashing epigram.

'Life is a cheap table d'hôte in a rather dirty restaurant, with Time changing the plates before you have had enough of anything.'³

¹T.M. Kettle, 'On crossing the Irish sea' in The day's burden (Dublin 1937), p. 21.

²T.M. Kettle, 'On saying goodbye' in ibid., p. 101.

³Ibid., p. 103.

The most obvious reason for Kettle's melancholy had to do with his private life. He was a young man in love. The prolonged absences from Ireland caused by his parliamentary duties were therefore difficult for him to bear. Mary Sheehy, the third daughter in the family of David Sheehy MP, was an attractive young woman. Stanislaus Joyce, who with his elder brother had been a regular guest at Mrs Sheehy's Sunday night soirees for the livelier students of University College at the family home at No. 2 Belvedere Place, Dublin, confided to his diary his impression of Mary.

Mary Sheehy has a very pleasant speaking voice and an engaging laugh. She seems to be happy and lazy and is often amused. Under her quietness I think she has a merry disposition. She is very handsome and wears an immense plait of soft black hair.⁴

It is difficult to state with precision when Kettle's love affair with Mary Sheehy began but certainly as early as 1906, when Kettle was in the United States, the flow of love letters between them had been a source of irritation to that most irritable of men, John O'Callaghan, secretary of the United Irish League of America. By 1908, the relationship between Kettle and Mary Sheehy was sufficiently advanced for each to be thinking of marriage. To this project, however, Kettle's absences in England, the crowded schedule of his activities in his constituency and his extremely limited financial means posed well nigh insuperable obstacles. To Mary, Kettle confided his innermost doubts and fears and, although none of his letters to her from this period survive, her regular epistles to him during their absences confirm the impression of his deep unhappiness.

⁴George H. Healy (ed.), The complete diary of Stanislaus Joyce (London 1962), p. 13.

Throughout the month of November 1908, Mary Sheehy was in constant communication with Kettle who was obviously in a state of mental anguish. On 4 November she wrote, 'I see by today's letter that you are allowing the black mood to keep you from company. You must not do that. Keep looking forward, always forward and that will help.'⁵ In the same letter, she mentioned the Irish Universities Act and asked, 'What do you think of the Royal's demise? Will it matter much to us?'⁶ This could have referred only to the possibility of a teaching post for Kettle at the new College to be set up in Dublin and suggests that whatever her later comments on the subject in her 'Memoir', Mary Sheehy would have been only too glad to see him leave parliament if such a step would have facilitated their marriage. She expressed her feelings about the vagaries of the parliamentary timetable in a letter of 9 November.

On Saturday I heard that the Land Bill came on the 23rd. That means you are staying over for the month does it? ...Oh, I know you will say you have not arranged it so. Still it is hard, especially as you need not have gone till the 23rd. The months slip by and the work we planned to do together is not done. Separation too works evil - I know it does with both of us - I am getting so tired of it all!! I cant, strive as I will, understand you and you dont help me to understand.⁷

On 12 November she wrote imploringly, 'You wont let those melancholy moods master you?...You still write in a broken way - have you not one last word of comfort for me? Why do you dwell on the black possibilities of life.'⁸

⁵Mary Sheehy to Kettle, 4 November 1908, Kettle papers.

⁶Ibid.

⁷Mary Sheehy to Kettle, 9 November 1908, Kettle papers.

⁸Mary Sheehy to Kettle, 12 November 1908, Kettle papers.

Kettle was finding that his position as a Member of Parliament was interfering increasingly with his friendships in Dublin. He was a member of a tight knit circle of friends, all politically inclined, all high-minded and all of radical persuasion in their approach to the National issue. Frank Sheehy Skeffington was married to Mary's sister, Hannah, and Cruise O'Brien was to marry another Sheehy daughter, Kathleen. They had all been collaborators on the Nationist and were still the guiding lights of the Young Ireland Branch, although Kettle's involvement in the latter organisation was increasingly tangential. The Young Ireland Branch was essentially a ginger group within the United Irish League and its influence on the parliamentary party was negligible. Kettle's loyalties were to the party and his appreciation of strategies and tactics were those of an inside player of the game of parliamentary politics. In any conflict between the Young Ireland Branch and the party leaders, Kettle would be found on the side of Redmond and Dillon. Indeed one of the dispiriting aspects of Kettle's parliamentary career was that so much of his energy was expended on squabbles with his fellow Nationalists - with William O'Brien, with the United Irish League of America, and now with his friends in the Young Ireland Branch.

The Young Ireland Branch was becoming dissatisfied at the lack of progress towards Home Rule. Sheehy Skeffington, the outgoing President of the Branch, was making increasingly radical pronouncements about the parliamentary party's apparent political subservience to the Liberal government. The response of the party leadership to this outspoken criticism was an attempt to gag the Young Ireland Branch. The agents of the party in this endeavour were Denis Johnson, National Secretary of the United Irish League and the Young Ireland Branch paterfamilias, David Sheehy MP. On 13 November, Mary Sheehy sent Kettle a letter appealing to him to come to the aid of the Branch.

It appears we were to have a meeting of the Branch tonight as I told you. Frank was to lecture on 'the prospects of Home Rule'. Well, today Johnson forbade us to hold the meeting - at least he refused the rooms - as he said we would be likely to criticise the Party and that was not to be allowed. The Secretary had then to give a promise that the press would not be admitted, and that no word against the Party should be spoken. Father was sent as notetaker! He says he had a private letter to do so and that he and Johnson were authorised to act in this manner. We have met and have resolved on our future tactics. We are appealing to the Standing Committee as a first step - at least we are asking them if they back Johnson and forbid freedom of speech. If they endorse, we go to the National Directory and if we are suspended - unlikely I think - we continue to exist outside the League.

There is no need for me to say more - you can take a sane view and see how foolishly the League is acting. I don't believe D.J. will be supported by the League, but I think it would be well for you to take some step in the matter. Perhaps you could speak to Redmond and write to some members of the Standing Committee...At any rate I rely on you to be with us help us as far as you can.⁹

For the next few weeks, the fate of the Young Ireland Branch hung in the balance. On 16 November, Mary Sheehy wrote to tell Kettle that drastic action had been taken against the Branch.

We are all anxious to know what step you will take in regard to the Branch, but I feel sure you will take a strong attitude. I have heard since I last wrote that we are to be silenced. If that is so, your position won't be easy. What do you think will be the issue? Frank told me he wrote to you - we had a small committee meeting here last night. Indeed I am quite worried by the whole miserable affair. But, sweetheart, you will be on the fighting side won't you? Be my captain, as we as our captain?¹⁰

On 17 November she wrote again, 'You know by now the position of the Branch. It is to be suppressed - because it has dared to think and express its

⁹ Mary Sheehy to Kettle, 13 November 1908, Kettle papers.

¹⁰ Mary Sheehy to Kettle, 16 November 1908, Kettle papers.

thoughts fearlessly and openly. What side are you on?¹¹ When, in December, Sheehy Skeffington's term of office as President of the Branch came to an end, Mary Sheehy wrote to Kettle that she had been invited to be his successor.

We meet at Lincoln Chambers tomorrow - I meet the Y.I.B. Cruise O'Brien is using all his influence to get me to consent to be President. But I wont, much as I regret it - from the woman point of view. I am however likely to have my head turned...¹²

Kettle's political life was becoming uncomfortably entangled with his private, emotional life. As a member of the Standing Committee of the United Irish League National Directory, he presumably used his influence to help settle this row. The Young Ireland Branch remained within the United Irish League and under its new President, Cruise O'Brien, pursued a policy of even more outspoken criticism of the course being followed by the parliamentary party.

The Branch's constant reiteration of its major recommendations - that Irish parliamentarians cease all dealings with the Liberals until the English party introduced a Home Rule Bill - won it few friends amongst Westminster Nationalists. The fact that the Young Ireland Branch was made up in large part of University College graduates separated it from rank and file members of the United Irish League who thought its members overeducated and under-experienced in the ways of the world. Naivety was certainly apparent in the Young Ireland Branch's recommendations to the party. The Liberal alliance was the fulcrum of the party's strategy; without an understanding with the

¹¹Mary Sheehy to Kettle, 16 November 1908.

¹²Mary Sheehy to Kettle, 10 December 1908.

Liberals, Home Rule would never come. To shun all legislative measures other than Home Rule was to condemn Ireland to undiluted Dublin Castle government. Moreover, it was clearly unrealistic to expect Ireland's representatives to abstain from participation in the framing of legislation dealing with specifically Irish areas of interest such as land purchase or denominational education.

At the National Convention of the United Irish League in February 1909, a decisive rebuff was dealt the Young Ireland Branch when its motions advocating the policy of 'no minor measures' and support of women's suffrage were summarily rejected. Kettle seems to have totally dissociated himself from the policies of the Branch although he was a supporter of women's suffrage. In the aftermath of this Convention, which saw not only the humiliation of the Young Irelanders but also the final rejection of William O'Brien and the policy of conciliation, Cruise O'Brien commented on the return of the business of politics to the professional politicians. If Redmond and Dillon's control of the party had faltered in 1907 with the debacle of the Irish Council Bill, they were now back firmly in control of policy. For Cruise O'Brien, the dimensions of Nationalism were shrunk to the outcome of events awaited in the political arena of Westminster.

With the tragic but nature-appointed unwisdom of the older generation, the controllers of the Irish National...movement are restless at the advent of men younger and less experienced than they are. They say they are afraid of their inexperience but...it is not that they fear; they are afraid for their own power. The enthusiasm of youth wants to place the crown upon its brows, and the stern dying father misses it from the cushion at his bedside. It is perhaps as well for the younger Irish Nationalism, with all its enthusiasm and zeal to take up the work, with all its impatience and unrest at the apathy and slow awkwardness of the Nationalism that is dying, to be kept waiting for some little time, to be moulded and disciplined into steadiness by opposition. In five years the younger

generation will come into its own. Meanwhile there is very little active work possible to those who are waiting.¹³

To what extent Kettle subscribed to this gloomy prognostication we cannot say. Certainly he had his own reasons for political disillusion. His impatience with the business of Westminster, his growing interest in economics rather than in politics, and his desire to find a position that would support him in the venture of marriage, were all factors contributing to his disenchantment. There was also the matter of the black and incapacitating depressions that settled over him in London and which were the cause of such anxiety to Mary Sheehy. The sense of futility that was an inescapable adjunct to the Irish party's position of principled opposition at Westminster was felt particularly acutely by Kettle whose aspirations for his country were far reaching. Yet it can scarcely be denied that Kettle had made a considerable contribution to the melancholy impasse described by Cruise O'Brien.

Kettle had served the cause of the Irish parliamentary party well, perhaps too well. In the interests of the party, he had subjected himself to the prolonged unpleasantness of his American tour; he had been beaten up by the party's opponents; he had endured strained relationships with his father, his fiancée and his closest friends; he had subjected himself to the protracted boredom of parliament - and to what end? None of his parliamentary ambitions had been realised. His contribution to imperial debates had come to nothing. His interest in the women's suffrage question was frustrated by elements both in his own party and in the government. As a Nationalist, he could accomplish little. The major Irish measures that had been passed were

¹³Cruise O'Brien, 'The transition time in politics' in the Leader, 3 April 1909.

either - like the University Act - all-party legislation, or - like the Old Age Pension Act - the product of the Liberal government. In such a setting, Kettle's idealistic Nationalism was largely redundant. If he could carry on his work for Ireland in another sphere, there could be little doubt that he would take the chance.

Kettle's decision to leave parliament was arrived at gradually as, throughout 1909, his plans slowly matured. On 23 October 1909, the appointments to the faculty of the newly-established University College, Dublin, were announced and it was revealed that Kettle had secured the post of Professor of National Economics. It can be assumed that he had had some inkling of his good fortune, as on 8 September in Dublin's Pro-Cathedral, he was married to Mary Sheehy. Amongst Irish Nationalists, Kettle's wedding was undoubtedly the social event of the year. Kettle's brother, Laurence, was best man and the bride's uncle, the Rev. Eugene Sheehy, the distinguished veteran of the Land League, presided over the ceremony. At the reception at No.2 Belvedere Place, the guests included Redmond, Dillon and Devlin mingling, uneasily no doubt, with the members of the Young Ireland Branch. The newlyweds were to honeymoon in Austria. Conspicuous by his absence from the wedding was Kettle's old University College friend, James Joyce.

Their friendship had been renewed during an extended visit to Ireland by Joyce who had arrived at Kingstown Harbour on 29 July 1909 both to resume the love-hate relationship with his native land so necessary to his processes of literary creation and to attempt to repair the ever-dilapidated fortunes of his family in Trieste. The writer brought with him his offspring literal, his son Giorgio, and his offspring literary, the manuscript of Dubliners which he hoped to place with the Dublin publishers, Maunsel and Co. Kettle stood high in Joyce's estimation as he had, in the Freeman's Journal of

i June 1907 given a favourable review to Joyce's volume of poems, Chamber Music. It is interesting to note that Kettle, who would never adhere to the doctrine of art for art's sake, had some implied reservations about Chamber Music, remarking on the lack of national feeling in Joyce's work and the purely literary nature of the author's inspiration.

The inspiration of the book is almost entirely literary. There is no trace of the folklore, folk dialect, or even the national feeling that have coloured the work of practically every writer in contemporary Ireland. Neither is there any sense of that modern point of view which consumes all life in the language of problems. It is clear, delicate, distinguished playing, of the same kindred with harps, with wood birds, with Paul Verlaine.¹⁴

The two men met at the Joyce family home at Fontenoy Street in Dublin on 10 August and Joyce reported to his brother, Stanislaus, that Kettle 'has been extremely friendly and wishes me to apply for the lectureship in Italian at the New University'.¹⁵ This project came to nought, in spite of the undoubted influence that Kettle, as an MP, could have brought to bear on Joyce's behalf as there was to be no Chair in Italian at University College, merely a commercial lectureship in the language at £100 per annum. Kettle was interested enough in Joyce's literary career to ask to see his current work and Stanislaus Joyce was asked to send from Trieste by registered post the manuscript of A portrait of the artist as a young man. On consideration, Joyce did not show this to Kettle for 'he is to be married next week and I dont think it would be a nice thing to give to him to read.'¹⁶ Joyce was not however asked to visit the Sheehy family at Belvedere Place. Possibly

¹⁴Freeman's Journal, 1 June 1909.

¹⁵James Joyce to Stanislaus Joyce, 10 August 1909, Richard Ellman (ed.), Letters of James Joyce, Vol. II, (London 1956), p. 234.

¹⁶James Joyce to Stanislaus Joyce, 2 September 1909, Ibid.

he was not welcome because of the bohemian nature of his domestic menage, his elopment with Nora Barnacle in 1904 being still a cause célèbre in the Dublin middle class folk memory.

Nevertheless, Joyce was present at the reception held in honour of Kettle's marriage at the Gresham Hotel on 5 September and as he wrote to Nora 'was introduced to about twenty people and to all of them the same story was told: that I was going to be the great writer of the future in my country'.¹⁷ Of Kettle, Joyce wrote '...tonight I had a conversation of four hours with him. He is the best friend I have in Ireland, I think, and he has done me great services here.'¹⁸ This represented the high water mark of Joyce's relationship with Kettle and he was looking forward to playing host to Kettle and his wife on his friend's honeymoon.

He and his wife are coming to Trieste to spend a day or two there during their honeymoon and I am sure that you, my darling, will help me to give them a good welcome. Put the house in order and be sure the piano is not lifted and see that your dresses are right. Get the carpenter to deliver that table and stools. He is a very good-hearted fellow and I am sure you will like his wife. Unfortunately I have no money to make them a present. But I will send on a copy of Chamber Music from London...We will try to entertain them the best way we can and I am sure that my warm-hearted girl will be glad to give pleasure to two people who are at the entrance of their life together.¹⁹

This plan foundered on Joyce's chronic impecuniousness. He rushed back to Trieste on 9 September on an urgent summons from Stanislaus who was being harried by creditors. Either the urgency of his last-minute travel arrangements or the hostility of the Sheehys prevented his attendance at Kettle's

¹⁷ James Joyce to Nora Barnacle, 5 September 1909, *Ibid.*, p. 248.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 247.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 284.

wedding. The Kettles did not visit Trieste in the course of their Austrian honeymoon and anyway Joyce was completely absorbed in his attempt to raise money with his Italian partners for a cinema venture in Dublin. It was significant that Joyce had had second thoughts about showing Kettle the manuscript of A portrait of the artist as a young man. It is equally evident that Kettle had not seen the manuscript of Dubliners. Kettle had a well-developed sense of the proprieties in literature, even to the point of being prudish and the scabrous aspects of Joyce's work, when he discovered them, appalled him. Genuine affection on Joyce's part, coupled with an eye for the main chance, accounted for this cordial but short-lived interlude. In matters literary Kettle and Joyce were at opposite poles and this difference was a reflection of their temperament and tastes. The oceanic depths of Joyce's involvement with language and his sardonic irresponsibility towards his social obligations were a world apart from Kettle's sparkling literary symbolism and the stern and demanding standards that he set himself in his public and private life.

Kettle's marriage and his acceptance of the post at University College meant that in the future his career would have its focus in Dublin and that his teaching and research duties would have priority over his political involvements. He was not the man to take on a job and treat it as a sinecure. Nevertheless, it was inconceivable to the gossips of Dublin that the resignation of his seat in parliament should not have been the result of some political cataclysm. There was much ill-informed speculation on the subject. An echo of this rumour mongering is relayed in the standard biography of Oliver St John Gogarty wherein it is asserted that Kettle had been dismissed from the Irish parliamentary party for 'a speech in favour of the Suffragette

Movement'.²⁰ The most imaginative and malicious of these accounts was that circulated by Arthur Clery in his Dublin Essays published in 1919.

He [Kettle] had accepted a professorship in the new National University, for the establishment of which he had worked hard. As the subject (National Economics) was off the beaten track, he had few students and the duties were not heavy. There seemed however, to be a certain inconsistency between holding a whole-time professorship and being a Member of Parliament; so, after a short interval, he sent in his resignation to the Irish Party. It is now generally understood that he had counted upon the Party taking a line in this matter which would enable him to withdraw his resignation and remain in parliament. But if he had any such hope, he was destined to a severe disappointment. He was allowed to go...From this forth Kettle's career was simply a career of despair. One or two hopeless attempts to get back into politics only served to darken the gloom. A man familiar, as he was, with the realities of politics could never devote himself to the nonsense of political economy. "Economics," he used to say, "is not a science, but a series of controversies with a fixed terminology." You cannot expect strength of character from a man broken with despair. Some of his former political associates must have felt strangely when at last Kettle became martyr of their principles.²¹

Clery's picture of Kettle's relations with the parliamentary party and his account of Kettle's attitude towards the study of economics is not merely wrong in detail but entirely misconceived. Enthusiasm for his new post and impatience to be done with the political life are the dominant sentiments in the letter Kettle wrote to Alice Stopford Green in December 1909. Prominent amongst Kettle's new duties at the university was 'to advertise our new faculty of Commerce through the country so as to attract students'.²² The governing body of the University felt that it would be helpful in this work of publicity if Kettle were to stay in parliament. 'It is mainly to assist

²⁰ Ulick O'Connor, The times I've seen (New York 1963), p. 151.

²¹ Arthur Clery, 'Thomas Kettle' in Dublin Essays (Dublin 1919), p. 11.

²² Kettle to A.S. Green, 28 December 1909, National Library of Ireland MS 15081.

me in this most important part of our initial work that the Governing Body have allowed and even asked me to remain in Parliament. It gives me a platform.²³ Had the decision been left in Kettle's hands, he would have left parliament at the earliest opportunity. This he made perfectly clear to his constituents.

I went to E. Tyrone three weeks ago to ask for my release, explained that I couldn't attend Parliament regularly, that my first duty must always be to the University. They told me roundly, that if I left it could only be because I cared more about my own comfort than about the national cause. If I left, they said, a half-healed local division would be opened again and the seat would be lost to the enemies of Ireland. What could I do? If you knew rural Ulster and its long memories and secular passion of resistance to England you would feel cheap and mean indeed if being circumstanced as I was you were to say no. For the rest of it, it is well understood that I am leaving after this Parliament which is bound to be a short one, or within two years if it is a long one. Meanwhile it is quite possible that I may not even be selected as Nationalist candidate - I have a lot of irritable and noisy priests. And if I am selected it is more than possible that I may lose at the poll.²⁴

Kettle was clearly relishing the prospect of coming to grips with the subject matter of his new profession. The academic life, as Kettle saw it, was not a comfortable cushion against the harsh realities of earning a living, but a summons to an encounter with the most pressing problems of the contemporary world.

My subject is either of practical use, or it is of no use at all. If it is the function of erudition to stand apart from contemporary life, it is the function of economics to stand close to contemporary life. Can anything help more to that than for a man to be, as I now am, a man of strife and contention? ...Economists are only the hod carriers of society and no doubt are less noble in their view than the artists who sculpt the frezes and paint the frescoes and produce the dramas, or even than the dignified

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid.

persons who "inaugurate" the building with fine speeches. Still they are necessary and are quite content to go about their muddy labours with decent depression if given a chance.²⁵

William O'Brien and his followers were, of course, quick to insist that Kettle had obtained the position as a result of influence peddling.

Such an appointment is a scandal. It is in reality a waste of public money, as Mr. Kettle possessed no special qualifications for the post, and attendance in Parliament will make it impossible for him to devote himself exclusively to his duties. We question whether it is not a breach of the pledge. What is certain is that Mr. Kettle would in all probability have never been spoken of for such a position if he had not been a member of the Irish party, and that he has shown how readily your extreme Nationalist, when the opportunity presents itself will think first, not of promoting the welfare of his country but of buttering his own bread.²⁶

If Kettle's formal qualifications for the job were slender, he had translated Contemporary Ireland by L. Paul-Dubois and was one of the acknowledged economic experts in the parliamentary party. He was also one of the best read men in Ireland and was well acquainted with continental scholarship in both economics and sociology. Economics as a science was in its infancy and his appointment was in the faculty of commerce. Pure economics would be left to men better qualified than Kettle. Kettle's lectures would be more in the area of economic history, a subject he was at least as well qualified as any of his contemporaries to teach. Were the O'Brienites suggesting that members of parliament should take a self-denying ordinance where jobs with the new university were concerned? The intentions of O'Brien and his followers in raising the matter of Kettle's chair were purely scurrilous, an example of the malice that had contributed to his disenchantment with politics.

²⁵Ibid.

²⁶Cork Accent, 8 January 1910.

The campaign fought by Kettle in East Tyrone in the January general election was a valedictory triumph. At the Dungannon meeting that opened his campaign, he reminded his constituents of the restricted political role that he envisaged for himself as a result of his university appointment.

As he had told them, he had, up to a certain time, some doubt as to the possibility of combining his new duties with his duties as their member. Had they given him his release from their service and found another candidate to unite the Nationalist vote in that constituency he would have gone back to Dublin with a light heart, "glad", in the words of the Greek poet, "for what was." If he failed in either there were those who had the right to call him to account, and the right of calling people to account was one that was not allowed to fall into disuse in Ireland.²⁷

He assured his audience that he was not turning his back on Nationalism by taking up the academic life but merely continuing his political work on a broader front.

My connection with the University will involve the withdrawal from what I may call the combative area of domestic politics on the Nationalist side. But as regards the fight for self-government it involves not merely withdrawal, but a more earnest advance, for every economic question I investigate, every page of an economic book I read burns in my mind as intense conviction of the great human truth that only a self-governing people can be a prosperous people. That is the basis of all economics; it is the deep well-spring of all economic development.²⁸

Kettle's opponent in the election, Armour Saunderson, was a dedicated tariff reformer and a man with an impeccable Unionist family tree. His forefathers had been high sheriffs of Tyrone in the seventeenth century, a fact that Saunderson made much play of but one scarcely to endear him to the Catholic voters of the constituency. Even worse in Nationalist eyes, he was the son of the late Colonel E.J. Saunderson, one of the originators

²⁷ Tyrone Courier, 6 January 1910.

²⁸ Ibid.

of the Irish Unionist movement who was also an enthusiastic chieftain of the Orange Order. Saunderson's overemphasis of these credentials led Kettle to observe that, 'Mr. Saunderson...has protested so often that he is the son of Colonel Saunderson, that I, for my part, am inclined to believe him.'²⁹

Saunderson's candidature gave to the election a sectarian colouring of even more livid hue that was normally the case in East Tyrone. On the evening of 23 January whilst travelling in a brougham towards Cookstown with members of his campaign organisation, Kettle experienced a new hazard of the political life, when he was shot at. Luckily the ambushing party missed, and with a farewell volley, this time of stones, escaped into the darkness shouting anti-Catholic slogans. Unionist hopes were high in this election, as it was widely rumoured that the Sinn Fein element in the constituency would boycott the polls. In his speech accepting the nomination, Kettle referred to the fact that 'he had made some concessions in order to unite the Nationalist vote.'³⁰ In fact, he had brought his influence in the AOH to bear to suspend hostilities between the rival Nationalist groupings. The historian of Sinn Fein notes that in this election, 'T.M. Kettle, in return for Sinn Fein support, whose strength he may have exaggerated, had to promise to prevent Hibernians boycotting Sinn Feiners and breaking up their meetings.'³¹

Kettle was assisted in this campaign by his wife who disclosed the startling information to the electors of Coalisland that 'I am proud to say that not only was my father a Fenian but my mother was one too.'³² Since

²⁹ Mary Kettle, 'Memoir', p. 28.

³⁰ Tyrone Courier, 6 January 1910.

³¹ Richard P. Davis, Arthur Griffith and non-violent Sinn Fein (Dublin 1974) p. 52.

³² Irish News, 24 January 1910.

the last election, the register had been considerably strengthened in the Nationalist interest and there can be little doubt that Kettle's constituency organisation was more effective than Saunderson's. The Unionist press complained that 'East Tyrone is another of those places where the Unionists go to sleep while Parliament is sitting and only waken up in time to get a list of the votes left on the roll by the Revising Barristers.'³³ In spite of Kettle's limited commitment to the constituency in the coming parliament, and despite the potentially disruptive presence of Sinn Fein, he substantially improved his poll. This reversed the trend of previous elections which had seen the Unionists steadily advancing on the Nationalists. The result of the elections was a personal triumph and an endorsement of his performance as the constituency representative.

Neither was the weather particularly favourable for a high turnout at the polls. The electors of East Tyrone cast their votes in the midst of a heavy and continuous snowstorm. After the final count, Shane Leslie, who having lost a contest in Derry was now aiding Kettle's campaign, told a shivering crowd of Nationalists outside the Dungannon town hall that 'It seemed to him that they had made an arctic exploration into the heart of Tyrone and having found the pole discovered Kettle on top of it.'³⁴ It had been estimated that on the electoral register Kettle had a potential majority of thirty. In fact, he increased his majority from eighteen to 122, Saunderson polling 3,096 votes to Kettle's 3,208.

In the general election of December 1910, Kettle stood down and the seat was won for the Nationalists by Willie Redmond. But in spite of having left Westminster, Kettle's contribution to the public life of his times was very far from over.

³³Tyrone Courier, 10 February 1910.

³⁴Ibid., 3 February 1910.

1. **THEIR AS SUBJECTS**

... were 'questions that were lacking at your door and mine, and that have to be answered'.¹ It was perhaps inevitable that Devlin, as professor of natural sciences, should have regarded even of his energies as political rather than strictly academic matters.

CHAPTER SIX

An activist academic

... of the physical and economic forces of their country. The idealism of the 1930s led from the apparent triumph of the Third Dáil Bill to the brink of civil war and which thus hurled Ireland's fortunes into the European catastrophe of 1941. Devlin, with his fine historical consciousness and well-developed sense of public theatre, could have naturally been expected to stand aloof. His involvement in public affairs was not dictated by the very limitations of his academic post. In a lecture on a historical subject in 1932 he posed the question, 'What the Irish National Movement meant in a contradiction in terms?'² The answer he gave to his own question indicated that he intended taking for his province not only economic theory but also the history, sociology and politics of general questions.

A good many critics, indeed with their verbal dexterity as characteristic of Irish orators, have said to me 'You have a Chair of National Geography in your college. Have you also by any chance a Chair of National Entomology or National Biology?' The gibe does not do harm. So long as you keep to the sphere of the highly abstract sciences any linking particularity is certainly incongruous, but as you pass from the

¹ J. H. Devlin, 'The philosophy of politics' in *The Irish Nation* (Dublin 1962) p. 10.

² J. H. Devlin, 'The movement of the National Movement' in *ibid.* p. 101.

1. Kettle as economist

Politics, Kettle had once suggested, were 'questions that came knocking at your door and mine, and that have to be answered'.¹ It was perhaps inevitable that Kettle, as professor of national economics, should have expended most of his energies on political rather than strictly economic matters. Between September 1911, when he took up his post, and November 1914, when he took leave of absence from it to join the army, Irish Nationalists were forced to grapple with questions of the utmost significance for the political and economic future of their country. The timetable of the events that led from the apparent triumph of the third Home Rule bill to the brink of civil war and which then hurled Ireland's fortunes into the European catastrophe of 1914 unfolded with a dramatic and inexorable quality. Kettle, with his fine historical consciousness and well-developed sense of public theatre, could have scarcely been expected to stand aloof. His involvement in public affairs seemed to be demanded by the very definition of his academic post. In a lecture to a Maynooth audience in 1912 he posed the question, 'Does the title National Economics amount to a contradiction in terms?'² The answer he gave to his own question indicated that he intended taking for his province not only economic theory but also the history, sociology and politics of economic questions.

A good many critics, endowed with that verbal deftness so characteristic of Irish critics, have said to me: "You have a Chair of National Economics in your college. Have you also by any chance a Chair of National Trigonometry or National Biology?" The gibe does not go home. So long as you keep to the sphere of the highly abstract sciences any limiting particularity is certainly incongruous. But as you pass from the

¹T.M. Kettle, 'The philosophy of politics' in The day's burden (Dublin 1968) p. 58.

²T.M. Kettle, 'The economics of Nationalism' in Ibid., p. 104.

greyness of theory to the golden-green foliage of the tree of life, to the rich and endless differentiation of concrete fact, the incongruity diminishes. A National Mathematics is absurd; a National Biology is not quite so absurd, seeing that every country has its own peculiar flora and fauna. When you come to National Economics the incongruity has wholly disappeared.³

The economist, in Kettle's opinion, could not escape politics. 'Politics imposes itself on him. He can evade the political aspect of his material only by evading reality.'⁴ As a result of this attitude of Kettle's, it is not easy to assess his stature as an economist. His academic investigations into Irish economics were coloured by partisanship and special pleading induced by his political beliefs. Kettle was not alone amongst his contemporaries on the faculty of University College in producing work marred by prejudice, carelessness and a reluctance to ask searching questions of his source material. Similar criticism has been levelled at the work of Eoin MacNeill and Thomas MacDonagh. The political ferment of the time turned professors into political activists and for academic researchers into matters Irish the seamless robe of nationalism served to obscure elements in the Irish past inimical to current political concerns. Economic history in Ireland in 1911 was in its infancy; an infant born of political controversy. Kettle, an assiduous researcher into the archival material available had but little scholarly detachment from his material, and he took his stand as an economist on the time-worn prejudices of the Irish Nationalist tradition.

As an economist, Kettle has been praised by an eminent contemporary economic historian for 'being distinctly more alert to continental developments than the general run of Irish authorities'.⁵ To the extent that Kettle

³T.M. Kettle, 'The economics of nationalism' in The day's burden (Dublin 1968), p. 104.

⁴Ibid., p. 103.

⁵Joseph Lee, The modernisation of Irish society, 1848-1918 (Dublin 1973), p. 34.

concerned himself less with formulating general economic laws than with seeking, piecemeal, for examples of continental economic practice to bolster Irish development, there is some truth in this assessment. It is, however, a somewhat negative virtue. Kettle's interest in economic theory was perfunctory. If freedom from economic theory, or lack of acquaintance with it, allowed him to demonstrate on occasion an engaging pragmatism, the absence of theory led him into many erratic and wrong-headed judgements.

The assumptions underlying Kettle's economic thought are most clearly set out in his essay, Home rule finance, published in 1911, and in The open secret of Ireland, published in 1912. Each of these publications is as much concerned with politics as with economics, and in this they are characteristic of Kettle's writings on economic matters. Home rule finance was intended as his contribution to the discussions over the financial clauses of the third home rule bill. The open secret of Ireland contained, for the benefit of English readers, a colourful and highly partisan version of Ireland's history and a first-hand description of Irish government based on his experiences as an MP. Both works are frankly polemical. Kettle shared the common assumption of nationalist thinkers on the subject that all of Ireland's economic woes could be attributed to the Act of Union. This measure, thought Kettle, had the effect on the Irish economy of 'one of those spiritual outrages which, in their reaction are like lead poured into the veins'.⁶ In a classic statement of the nationalist case, Kettle put forward the claim that:

The Union came precisely in the period in which capital was beginning to dominate the organisation of industry. The Union denuded Ireland of the capital which would have enabled her to transform the technique of her

⁶T.M. Kettle, The open secret of Ireland (Dublin 1912), p. 71.

manufacturers and so maintain the ground won under Grattan's Parliament. The channels through which this export of capital proceeded were absenteeism and overtaxation.⁷

The supposed commercial injustices inflicted upon Ireland by England had figured prominently in political controversies between Ireland and England since at least the time of Swift. Kettle took his stand firmly within a polemical tradition that correlated Irish economic depression with English misgovernment. This tradition sought to explain Ireland's economic ills in political rather than in economic terms, a point of view made still more attractive to nationalists by the fact that many unionist writers on economics also subscribed to it. In the eighteenth century, Hely Hutchinson's The commercial restraints of Ireland effectively made out the case against English-inspired economic policies in Ireland. In the nineteenth century, J.A. Froude's The English in Ireland and Lecky's monumental History of Ireland in the eighteenth century carried on Hutchinson's praise of the economic policies of the Anglo-Irish parliament and his condemnation of the commercial clauses of the act of union. The same point of view, again expressed by a Unionist, was taken up in Alice Murray's History of the commercial and financial relations between England and Ireland from the Restoration which was published in 1903 and which Kettle quoted approvingly in The open secret of Ireland.

Economists today would reject this way of thinking about Ireland's economic history. It is generally thought unlikely that an Irish parliament could have arrested the decline of the Irish economy in the nineteenth century. By denying any real autonomy to economic factors per se, the economists of

⁷Ibid., p. 72.

Kettle's generation in Ireland missed the underlying factors that kept the Irish economy in a chronically backwards condition. The consensus of contemporary economic and historical thinking on the subject is provided by Professor Cullen.

The real determinants of Irish economic retardation, although political resentment obscured the issue, lay outside the legislative and, almost equally although perhaps less obviously, outside the fiscal sphere. Externally these determinants were the technological and organisational advances of the Industrial Revolution and the radical improvement in transport wrought by the railways; internally the growth of the population.⁸

Kettle, of course, believed that Ireland could have had an industrial revolution of her own had Irish capital not been drained out of the country as a result of the Act of Union and that Ireland, on the eve of the great potato famine, was suffering 'not from over-population, but from under-development'.⁹ Once again his argument is rebutted by modern scholarship. Professor Lee points out that the removal of aristocratic patronage from the manufacturers of Dublin had a minimal effect on the Irish economy. The market in luxuries that had been created by this clientele offered little potential for lifting the Irish economy to industrial take-off point. 'There is no recorded case of an industrial revolution based on the fashion industry, and the migration of these aristocratic families had a very limited effect on the development of the home market.'¹⁰

⁸L.M. Cullen, 'Irish economic history; fact and myth' in Cullen (ed.), The formation of the Irish economy (Cork 1976), p. 114.

⁹T.M. Kettle, The open secret of Ireland (Dublin 1912), p. 87.

¹⁰Joseph Lee, 'Capital in the Irish economy' in Cullen (ed.), The formation of the Irish economy (Cork 1976), p. 58.

Kettle's claim that the Irish economy was weakened by the outflow of rents to absentee landlords is equally untenable as the bulk of money from Irish rents, regardless of the landlord's country of domicile, went either to repay mortgages held by Dublin or London insurance companies or was spent on various forms of conspicuous consumption. 'In neither case did they stimulate investment in Ireland.'¹¹ Whether or not Ireland was overtaxed as Kettle claimed, lower taxation would have had only a marginal effect on the economy of the country. 'Lower taxation would not have led directly to higher capital formation, because the poor would have spent rather than invested the extra money available to them, perhaps on more whiskey, more tea, or more tobacco, but perhaps also on other consumer goods, some of which might have been supplied within the Irish economy.'¹² Contrary to Kettle's belief, Ireland, throughout the nineteenth century, retained the capacity to generate a modest abundance of capital. Professor Lee points out that in 1860 '£40,000,000 of Irish money was invested in British government stock and another £20,000,000 was on deposit in the Irish joint stock savings bank.'¹³ The problems of confronting the Irish economy in the nineteenth century was 'Less a shortage of capital than...a wasteful use of capital by savers, investors, businessmen...Ireland's human capital failed to make the best use of the country's resources.'¹⁴

Only in this last remark of Professor Lee can there be found some agreement between the findings of contemporary economic historians and Kettle's guiding insight into Ireland's problems. Ireland, deprived of control over its own

¹¹Ibid., p. 58.

¹²Ibid., p. 60.

¹³Ibid., p. 53.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 62.

destinies, and overshadowed by its more dynamic neighbour had little impetus to develop its full economic potential. In Kettle's words: 'no instance can be cited of a modern people of European civilisation that ever prospered while held politically in subjection.'¹⁵

Kettle's recommendations to the Irish party in Home rule finance followed from his understanding of Irish economic history and were based around his idea of 'a doctrine of restitution'.¹⁶ The book was subtitled, 'an experiment in justice'. It was occasioned by the possible effect on the pending Home Rule bill of the discovery that, since the introduction of old age pensions, Ireland was now a net recipient of exchequer funds. In other words, Irish taxation now raised less money than was spent by the British government in Ireland. Kettle made an ingenious distinction between essential and non-essential government spending in Ireland, suggesting that it was the fault of the British government if they could not balance their books because of their expenditure on policing and garrisoning Ireland.

If I have obtained possession of your property in some dishonest way, and have thereby irritated you into "disloyalty" to me, and if, with the income of your property, I hire a policeman to baton you, a soldier to suppress you, a judge to admonish you, and a jailer to lock you up, when I am brought to book, I can hardly put in a trustee account exhibiting all these charges as part of your expenditure on the ground that they were spent on you. The principle of that analogy governs the case. Let Great Britain pay the piper in respect of the tunes which she has been calling in Ireland, in the teeth of a continuous Irish protest, since the Union, and the Home Rule Parliament will start with a comfortable balance.¹⁷

Kettle suggested that the Irish party should fight for the following economic objectives. The police force should be broken up into a domestic

¹⁵T.M. Kettle, The open secret of Ireland (Dublin 1912), p. 71.

¹⁶T.M. Kettle, Home rule finance (Dublin 1911), p. 69.

¹⁷Ibid.

body controlled and paid for by the Dublin parliament and an imperial force answerable to London. Thus Kettle reasoned, the bulk of expenditure on Irish policing would be borne by the imperial treasury. He felt that the imperial government should shoulder the annual charge on the land purchase bonuses, and that Irish land purchase should be in its entirety an imperial expenditure. Under his 'doctrine of restitution', Kettle felt it would be only just if a portion of the cost of the old age pension scheme in Ireland be borne by the Westminster parliament. Pensions, Kettle insisted, were a major expenditure in Ireland because of the prevalence of Irish poverty and for that poverty he held the policies of successive British governments responsible. He also felt that to build any sound economy for Ireland under Home Rule, the Dublin parliament must be given control of custom and excise duties. His final advice to the Irish party was to drive as hard a bargain as possible against the wily mandarins of the British treasury.

The Home Rule scheme may be paltry, or it may be courageous. We know that it will not be as generous as that enjoyed by the Colonies, nor, on the other hand, unworkably mean. Let us, whether beaten on points of detail or not, at least insist on the general principle that, for every power of which the Irish Assembly is deprived, it shall be relieved from a corresponding financial liability. We may, as the weaker party, be cheated; let us not be duped.¹⁸

Kettle then, as an academic, saw himself more as a Nationalist than as an economist, and given the tradition of Irish thinking on economic matters and the political developments during his tenure of his university chair, this was probably inevitable. If Kettle produced little work that was memorable in the field of economics, it must be remembered that he was tilling virgin soil. His wife remembered that at that period, 'the subject was almost a unique one, and had practically no text-books.'¹⁹ He certainly realised the

¹⁸T.M. Kettle, Home rule finance (Dublin 1911), p. 78.

¹⁹Mary Kettle, 'Memoir', p. 31.

need in Ireland for trained economists. Kettle was, moreover, an inspiring teacher. Denis Gwynn who was one of Kettle's students in the first class Kettle ever taught - they were a select group, only four strong - recalled the informal nature of his teaching.

He used to take us out to a seat in St. Stephen's Green and we would sit two on each side of him. They were delightful evenings and he opened up so many new vistas to us. Of our little group - Tom Kettle and four students - three died in the first World War. I am the only survivor.²⁰

Amongst Kettle's pupils was George O'Brien whose three-volume Economic history of Ireland appeared between 1918 and 1921. The prompt appearance of such a work suggests that Kettle succeeded in enthusing his students to no little effect.

²⁰ Irish Independent, 7 December 1968.

2. Kettle as teacher

Kettle's effectiveness as a teacher was enhanced by the breadth of his reading in the European literature dealing with his subject. He was struck by the difference between the English school of political economy represented by Adam Smith, Ricardo and John Stuart Mill, and the work of German thinkers who had been influenced by the historicist nationalism of Hegel and his followers. Kettle picked his way between these competing schools of thought with a delicacy of perception that did much to redeem the technical deficiencies of his economic thinking. He found the classic English economists at fault for having evolved, as a result of England's political stability and industrial supremacy, a system at once 'too abstract in method, and too dogmatic in tone'.¹ Kettle found the antidote to the excessive rigours of the English theory predicated on the free play of market forces alone, in the German approach that took the historical evolution of the nation as the underpinning of economics. Nevertheless, Kettle intended his criticism not 'as a condemnation of scientific principles'² but as 'a methodological admonition'.³ He was well aware of the dangers inherent in unbridled nationalism.

...a nation degrades and cancels nationalism by choosing to identify it with isolation or aggressiveness, The first blunder is at war with the conscience of all ages: a character as Goethe says, can fashion itself only in the stream of the world. The second is certainly at war with the conscience of this age. To receive hospitably, and assimilate deeply; to toil, to think, and to communicate without penury or reserve - these remain the marks of a strong nation as of a strong man.⁴

¹T.M. Kettle, 'The economics of nationalism' in The day's burden (Dublin 1968), p. 109.

²Ibid., p. 110.

³Ibid., p. 100.

⁴Ibid., pp. 107-108.

Kettle realised that Irish economic interests were, by definition, bound to be rather different from those of England and he was concerned that Ireland should have access to economic theories that would enable her to justify her stand against her more powerful neighbour.

When you come to mix in the actual life of our contemporary Ireland you will find everybody on the one side concerned about national self-realisation, political and economic. You will find every body on the other parroting forth the perennial nonsense that the Irish question is not political but purely economic. You will turn to some standard text-book for enlightenment - in the nature of things it will be an English text-book - and you will be confused and discouraged to find principles which you greatly value, either cheapened or ignored. I have tried to suggest to you that there is an historical explanation for all this. Continental experience comes much closer to ours than does English experience, and continental thought, is, as a result a much truer source of guidance.⁵

Kettle was pursuing a via media between English utilitarianism and its derivatives, and the German tendency to rhapsodise about the spiritual task of the nation. The Hegelianising inclinations he had shown, when as a student he had written the Philosophy of Politics, were tempered by an increasing interest in the nation as a principle of human rather than spiritual organisation and by an altogether mellowed patriotism.

"Cosmopolitanism," says Turgenev in Rudin, "is all twaddle...Even the ideal face must have an individual expression." This humanity, to the worship of which you are to butcher nationalism, is too vast, too vague, too bloodless an abstraction. Our arms are not long enough to fold it in an embrace. Ireland I feel equal to, and Dublin, and that windy Atlantic cliff, straining out against the ocean and the sunset, and that farmer to whom I spoke at Tralee fair, and that publican in Tyrone, and the labourers, spoiled by unemployment, who come to me at my house nearly every day, and for whom I can get no work. But as for

⁵Ibid., p. 112.

the world as a whole, even its geography is too large for my head, to say nothing of its problems, and its emotions are too large for my heart. What is humanity? You and I and the man around the corner, or over the sea, are humanity. And if it is the nature of us all to come to amplest self-expression by living our lives here and now, for a community which is small enough to know and to love, then by "transcending" national categories you do not enrich, you impoverish, humanity.⁶

Kettle's remarks above cast an ironic light on the criticism made of him in a piece on The day's burden by a clerical reviewer in 1911. When he suggested that Ireland become European, Kettle simply meant that Ireland be aware of her place amongst the nations of Europe. He was not advocating a denationalised cosmopolitanism although such was the reading a certain strain of xenophobic interpretation was liable to place on his words.

To become European first and Irish afterwards means that the freshness and vigour of mind shall be spent in the cultivation of foreign literature. The mind thus becomes sated with unnerving viands for which an artificial taste has been acquired and nothing remains but a jaded spirit as an offering at the feet of forsaken Eire. While admiring Professor Kettle as a scholarly Irishman who has done signal service to his country we would prefer to see him imitating cultured Irish-Irelanders in their work in the Language Revival, by bringing his brick, great or small, to the restoration of Tara's Walls instead of mooning around the pyramids of Egypt, or becoming lost in the maze of French and German literature.⁷

Kettle's enhanced appreciation of the domestic scale of the fully realised social life was attributable to a number of factors. Firstly there was the enjoyment of home and marriage. He had set up house at No. 23 Northumberland Rd., Dublin, and in January 1913, his daughter Betty was born. His academic concerns of necessity made him aware of the practical nature of economics and this to an extent tempered his idealism. There was also a discernible

⁶Ibid., p. 107.

⁷T.A. Fitzgerald, O.F.M., 'Is it not enough to be Anglicised without becoming European?' in The Catholic book bulletin, February 1911.

deepening in his Catholicism. In 1911 he translated Luther Kneller's Christianity and the leaders of modern science. Kneller's book was an undistinguished collection of biographical sketches of eminent Catholic scientists. Its aim was to show that Catholicism, so far from being a reactionary faith, had nurtured some of the most advanced scientific minds of the century. Although it was a dreary piece of hagiography, Kettle evidently felt that Kneller's work would help the Catholics of Ireland realise that religious faith was in no way inimical to the modern world of science. Kneller's selection of scientists were from a variety of European countries and Kettle's choice of this work to translate suggests strongly that his imagination was profoundly moved by the idea of the shared Catholic and spiritual inheritance of Europe. Kettle was also inclined to extol the virtues of moderation by his growing awareness of a manic strand that was beginning to dominate the European literature of which he was such a voracious reader. In 1911 he contributed to an introduction to J.M. Hone's translation of Daniel Halevy's The life of Friedrich Nietzsche.

Whilst admitting that Nietzsche was a brilliant stylist with 'a safe and even supreme position in the history of literature'⁸ Kettle denounced him as a philosopher.

...he gnaws and nibbles about the sanctuaries of life; when he tells us that the true Fall of Man was the Redemption, that the two most noxious corruptions known to history are Christianity and alcohol; when he presses his anti-Feminism to a point that goes beyond even the gross German tradition of which Luther's Table Talk is a monument, the best that one can do for him is to remember that he sometimes took too much chloral.⁹

Kettle's introduction to Halevy's biography of Nietzsche shows that he had already arrived three years before the first world war at a position

⁸T.M. Kettle, 'Introduction' in Daniel Halevy, The life of Friedrich Nietzsche, trans. J.M. Hone (London 1911), p. 8.

⁹Ibid.

of intellectual and emotional abhorrence of nationalism as a pseudo-religion.

Zarathustra had marched with the Germans over prostrate France, he had said in his Gargantuan egoism, "If there were Gods, how could I bear not to be a God? Consequently there are no Gods." If The Goths and the Vandals had read Hegelian metaphysics, observes Fouillee, they would have answered this question as Nietzsche had answered it. The living unit which accumulates a superabundance of force in order to impose its power on others...an andern Macht-auslassen. The Will to Power is the sole source of human activity. The strong must live as warriors and conquerors, adopting as their three cardinal virtues, pride, pleasure, and the love of domination. Pity is the deepest of corruptions; it but doubles pain, adding to the pain of him who suffers the pain of him who pities. If you have helped anyone, you must wash the hands that helped him, for they are unclean. The Crusaders brought home but one treasure, the formula, namely of the Assassins, "Nothing is true, everything is permitted." Science is mere illusionism; but the warrior, knowing how to be hard - for that is the new law - will impose his own arbitrary values on all things and will make life so good that he will desire it to be indefinitely repeated. The earth thus disciplined, will bring forth the Superman, who, having danced out his day will disappear to be recreated by the Eternal Return. Thus spake Zarathustra.

The greatest difficulty that one experiences before such a doctrine as this, is the difficulty of taking it seriously.¹⁰

In 1911 it was easy to dismiss Nietzsche's gospel of force as the outpourings of a diseased mind. That Nietzsche could, in any way, be considered a diagnostician of the underlying ills of European civilisation Kettle would have vigorously denied. He was, however, already receptive to the idea that Nietzschean thought itself was part of a disease, a bacillus incubated within German philosophy that could infect the humane liberalism towards which other European nations were advancing. For Kettle, in 1911, the intellectual outlook for Europe seemed to consist of the further development of a non-aggressive and benign nationalism. Within the European

¹⁰T.M. Kettle, 'Introduction' in Daniel Halevy, The life of Friedrich Nietzsche, trans., J.M. Hone (London 1911), pp. 12-13.

nations he foresaw a continuing process of accommodation between Enlightenment rationalism, purged of its revolutionary excesses, and a European Christianity relieved of its more obsolete archaisms by the invigorating effect of advanced theological thinking. The grandiloquent blasphemies of Nietzsche repelled Kettle, who valued his religion for its emphasis on the charitable and its insistence on the transcendent possibilities to be found in the ordinariness of everyday life. The civilization so despised by Nietzsche, Kettle saw as the embodiment of the struggle of all the ages to implement the most treasured and sacred values of mankind.

If Kettle had a strain of romanticism in him at all it was well modified by his religious beliefs. Kettle, it might be said, had all the anti-romanticism and, therefore anti-Nietzscheanism, of the Catholic intellectual. The Catholic view of the world is after all as quintessentially mysterious, dramatic and emotionally involving as anything romanticism can offer. Kettle's temperament was in some respects sympathetic to romanticism. He never held his beliefs with anything less than passion; he was prone to the flamboyant utterance and the dramatic gesture. He even had a streak of well calculated personal eccentricity. But his sense of humour, his sense of proportion and his highly developed sense of responsibility sprang alike from a certain decent Christian humility. To his religion Kettle owed his appreciative respect for the mysterious richness and equally mysterious desolations of human existence. From his religion came his fierce suspicion of intellectual or emotional excess. Whatever the defects of their teacher in the formal area of economic theory, the little group of students sitting with him in Stephen's Green could not have wished for a better balanced or more committed guide to introduce them to the broader potentialities of life than Kettle.

3. Kettle's private life and unhappy state of mind

A study of Kettle's life that failed to make some attempt to come to terms with his emotional state of mind between 1911 and 1914 would fail utterly to account for the peculiarly intense and passionate nature of his response to the great political crises of the period. The charm and melancholy of Kettle's personality that left such a marked impression upon his contemporaries cannot, of course, be recaptured or even adequately explained by the historian. Just how much weight should be placed upon purely personal factors in explaining the choices and actions of individuals in public, or indeed in private life is a grey area and likely to remain so. In a not unpleasing paradox the absence of any reliable consensus amongst philosophers, psychologists or social scientists on this matter force the historian/biographer back upon his or her individual judgement. That complicated historical events call forth complicated individual human responses should be a truism. That it is not is due to the tendency of the various schools of explanation to level down individual character to an example of this or that theory. Mercifully then, any opportunities for excesses of psychobiographical theory in Kettle's case are prevented by the extreme sketchiness of the details of his private life. But there is ample evidence to suggest that he was profoundly unhappy. His struggle with this deep-rooted personal unhappiness was not without its effect on his political judgements and led him increasingly to adopt the language and style of the crusading moralist in his public campaign.

On the face of it, this should have been a supremely happy period in Kettle's life. There was the enjoyment of home and marriage. His salary of £500 per annum enabled him to set up home at No. 23 Northumberland Road,

Dublin, a solidly built Victorian house midway between the leafy pleasantness of the Grand Canal and the fashionable suburbs of Ballsbridge. It was here, in January 1913, that his daughter Betty was born. There is no reason to assume that Kettle was dissatisfied with his academic post, despite a tradition of Dublin gossip that claimed he had been angling for the chair of English literature.

Padraic Colum, Oliver St John Gogarty and Maurice Joy all managed to suggest that Kettle had somehow been elbowed out of the running for this post. The prevalence of such gossip suggests that Kettle's acquaintances were seeking somehow to explain his sudden bouts of melancholy. Maurice Joy's comments on this subject in the aftermath of Kettle's death appeared in an article written for an Irish American magazine and relatively uninhibited therefore from the pious conventions of the Irish obituary notices. Joy certainly managed to suggest that there was something amiss with Kettle's state of mind.

[National Economics] was not the chair to which he was best suited. Powerful influences decreed that the chair of English literature, which he would have filled so brilliantly, should be given to another man, a sound scholar but far less gifted than Kettle. Had Kettle obtained that chair, he might have found in its work that outlet in action which minds like his often demand through an instinct of self preservation. But fate ruled otherwise, and he found death in what may prove to be the one insincere act of his life.¹

The suggestion that Kettle, as Professor of National Economics, did not have sufficient outlet for his energies is quite unfounded. If anything, despite his lack of physical robustness, he overworked, even to the point of

¹Maurice Joy, 'Some memories of Kettle' in Ireland (New York) 30 September 1916.

nervous exhaustion. Moreover, Joy's article is not innocent of political intention. The claim that Kettle was insincere about the position he took on the First World War is impossible to sustain in the light of Kettle's own utterances on the subject. It was, however, in the interests of Sinn Fein sympathisers of whom Joy was one to call into question Kettle's motivation. Nevertheless the hint in Joy's article that Kettle was somehow self destructive is of no little significance.

Kettle did not miss his life at Westminster. On the contrary he loved living in Dublin and his job gave him scope to study in detail the city that meant so much to him. Willie Dawson remembered that one of Kettle's projected enterprises was a book on Dublin.

When not meditating the writing of such a work himself he used to urge his friends to undertake it. His idea was to follow the method of Mr E.V. Lucas in his A wanderer in Paris or A wanderer in London. He frequently drew his companions' attention to his walks abroad to bits of Dublin, usually unnoticed that would make excellent pictures for this book. For Dublin city he had a great love and pride and for its poor a tremendous pity.²

Dawson also remembered that one of the few opinions Kettle shared with George Moore was that 'he immensely desired that the system of the Continental Cafe should be introduced into Dublin.'³ Kettle enjoyed the life of the city because he was innately the most sociable of men. Oliver St John Gogarty recollected in this context an uncharacteristic lapse from Kettle's normally exalted standards of chivalry towards the opposite sex.

The tongues of the acid old ladies who love to nose out anything their gossip may turn into scandal or reproach came to discuss Tom Kettle's late visits

²Willie Dawson, 'Kettle memorabilia', Kettle papers.

³Ibid.

to the United Arts' Club which had come to be associated more with arthritis than with art. The male members could not leave his company and so, left to themselves, the ladies found some mischief still for idle tongues to make. Some of their talk must have reached him for he is reported to have defined the United Arts' Club as 'Infinite bitches in a little room.'⁴

Kettle's conviviality and the hint of scandal attached to his social life is germane in coming to an explanation of the periods of acute despair to which he was prone. That these could achieve a level of shattering intensity is revealed in a letter preserved by his wife. It is the only such letter that she preserved and was obviously of deep personal significance to her. It is quoted not merely because of the light it sheds upon Kettle's character, but for its revelation of the powerful, interior, ethical impulses that were to shape Kettle's view of the last great campaign in his public life.

Kettle wrote from London whence he had apparently fled to escape his Dublin acquaintances. The letter is undated but from the reference to his daughter must have been written in 1913.

I do think that the miracle has been granted. Dublin, as a focus of temptation has disappeared for me. When I come back - I wonder sometimes if I am to see you ever again - it will be to a return prepared in advance. The new life I mean to lead will be the life you suggest it was always my desire.

With the exception of the one occasion of which you knew by intuition, or some strange transference of thought, I have not been mad. It is very hard for me to write anything at all. Somehow I got on to the fringe of shady Irish-London this time, and in every case of a fall from hope, decency and good repute I saw myself mirrored.

Take this as true - the old way is over. Whatever I bring back to you and Ireland it will not be the

⁴Oliver St John Gogarty, 'Thomas M. Kettle', script for a radio talk, Kettle papers.

old sin...

Will you try to believe that this time my will is growing strong? After all, there is no other salvation. And volition is maybe the most intimate expression of God.⁵

What then was the matter with Kettle? He wrote of Dublin as 'a focus of temptation' and he was too self-conscious a literary stylist to use a word like 'temptation' lightly. In the context of the letter, it seems unlikely that he was using the phrase 'fall from grace' in any trivial sense. Clearly there was something wrong with Kettle's life in Dublin.

An explanation is to be found in a consideration of Kettle's rather special place in the social life of the city. As a wit and conversationalist, Kettle was held in high esteem by the literary and political demi-monde of Dublin. This type of popularity brought attendant perils. Wit and conversation are sociable arts and Kettle was ever the most convivial of men. Indeed he was a public man twice over. Quite apart from his status as a university professor, Kettle was celebrated for his journalism, for his extemporary verses in the newspapers on current events, for his lectures on a variety of literary matters and not least for the democratic impartiality with which he shared his company and conversation with his fellow Dubliners. If Dublin wits are the unacknowledged legislators of Dublin opinion, then Kettle was one such, and like his successors, Behan, Nolan or Kavanagh, prone to the ravages of the conviviality that is the reward and condition for the attainment of such celebrity.

Was Kettle then an alcoholic? He was certainly a heavy drinker but at only one public meeting was he ever incapacitated by drink - the meeting of

⁵Kettle papers.

the Trinity College Gaelic Society on the occasion of the Thomas Davis centenary in November 1914. That was an understandably emotional occasion due to the difficult circumstances in which the meeting was held and because of the political tensions generated amongst the predominantly Nationalist audience over the issue of Irish recruiting into the British army. In spite of his condition, Kettle gave a good account of himself. The matter of Kettle's drinking habits would be of little consequence were it not that his drinking is the most probable explanation of the deep and lacerating remorse demonstrated in the letter to Mary Kettle.

Kettle was a man who strived to live by the highest ethical standards and who hated to be the cause of pain and suffering in others. He had a perhaps exaggerated capacity for remorse. His reaction to what, in a Dublin context, must be accounted but a slight fall from social grace is revealing. Kettle's depression and melancholy were frequently remarked upon and he had the true depressive's capacity for self-laceration. In a weaker or less gifted man this could be dismissed as self-indulgence but Kettle's impulse to Christian stoicism enabled him to derive a higher consolation from his feelings of guilt and inadequacy. By dwelling on the capacity for the destructive and the wicked which he imagined he found within his own heart, he arrived at an awareness of the tendency towards wrongdoing and evil that lurks in mankind. His sense of the fallen nature of humanity, as revealed in his own fall from grace, made him also deeply aware of the redemptive possibilities offered by religion, and opened the way to a distinctively existentialist Christianity that was increasingly to characterise his judgements on public affairs.

There was a point beyond which Kettle ceased to see great issues in purely pragmatic, political terms and saw them as issues in the much greater conflict between good and evil in the world.

He did not until 1914 reach that point. The tenor of his thought during the period of his academic career was one of enthusiasm for his work as teacher and economist, and a measured irony in his refusal to be unbalanced by the more excessive claims that philosophers might be tempted to make for either nationalism or cosmopolitanism as zeitgeist. Kettle's ideal was, to quote again from the relevant passage of The economics of nationalism, 'to come to amplest self expression by living our lives here and now, for a community which is small enough to know and love'.⁶ What we might term the mellow Catholic humanitarianism of Kettle and his tone of amused but uncynical detachment from the more extravagant expectations that idealists bring to politics is well caught in his essay, 'The unimportance of politics'. This essay appeared in the British Review in 1914 and gently chided Hilaire Belloc and G.K. Chesterton for the intemperance of their reaction on discovering that the probity of Mr Lloyd George was something less than impeccable.

Coventry Patmore says somewhere that belief in man's perfectability on earth is the last proof of insanity. That is sound Catholic doctrine, full of good sense and intelligent humility. Nobody knows better than the authors of the League for Clean Government that there never existed, and never will exist, in this world an absolutely clean government. There runs through the whole of the material a certain obvious flaw which inhibits any such ideal sculptor - that flaw which is known to the highest science as Original Sin. The

⁶T.M. Kettle, 'The economics of nationalism' in The day's burden (Dublin 1968), p. 107.

devil is not dead and he does not neglect his business. Wherever you look, whether in the State or in the human organization of the Church, you are bound to find a leaven of corruption. To suggest in our time, and not before it, this leaven has become more noticeable and more dangerous is a flat denial of facts of which neither Mr. Belloc nor the Messrs. Chesterton would be guilty. One must reluctantly charge them with the gravest of all political offences; they have disturbed the soul of youth with impossible dreams.⁷

It was a two-sided coin this Christian sense that Kettle had of the fundamental inadequacy of the world and its institutions. On one side we find Kettle, the pleasantly pragmatic humanitarian realising with Voltaire that perhaps the best any of us can hope for is to be allowed to cultivate our various gardens in peace whilst enjoying amicable relations with the neighbours. Indeed in a last letter to his wife he said, 'We are going to live in the country, and I am going to grow early potatoes. I am also going to work very hard and make very few speeches.'⁸ The other side of the coin reveals Kettle the distraught and anguished moralist, dismally conscious of failing himself and his friends and family and oppressed with the sense of his own sinfulness. This latter Kettle possessed like a terrible intuition an imaginative empathy with the victims of suffering.

Kettle's character was of course many faceted, but to concentrate on this polarity induced by his fundamentally religious temperament is to see its essence. To pursue the metaphor - personality is never static and Kettle's

⁷T.M. Kettle, 'The unimportance of politics' in The day's Burden (Dublin 1937), p. 213.

⁸Mary Kettle, 'Memoir', p. 24.

was like a coin spinning, showing first a glimpse of one side, then a glimpse of the other. This gives us Kettle the sociable, the convivial, the centre of attention who nevertheless gave a hint of ineradicable melancholy, the Kettle of the passionate enthusiasms and the debunking epigram, the continental traveller who would rather have stayed at home, the connoisseur of political oratory who knew it ultimately counted for nothing.

Kettle's great sense of style, both in literature and in social life; the flourish with which he cultivated his few personal eccentricities, the ease with which he dominated the company of his contemporaries, were all alike part of a delicate balancing act. His response to the remorseless march of events in Ireland and Europe between 1912 and 1914 revealed increasingly the intensity of the spiritual convictions that underlay the glittering performance of the public personality.

4. Kettle and the Dublin Lock-out of 1913

When he left parliament, Kettle could begin to enjoy a freedom of expression on public issues that was unaffected by the constrictions of party politics. His post at University College carried with it the moral obligation to speak out on the problems of Irish society viewed from the broadest perspective. This did not mean that his loyalty to the Irish parliamentary party became any less strong. Rather it meant that he was free to become involved in areas where the parliamentarians, for sound political reasons did not wish to venture. While Kettle's own political opinions did not radically shift, his expression of them became more individualistic and focused less on the role of the parliamentary party than on the business of establishing a coherent system of economic priorities for the nation. It was a short but invigorating step from party politician to commentator on the national economic malaise, and the ease with which Kettle fitted into his new role contributed to the widespread impression that he was somehow a maverick figure owing allegiance to no party. Fairly casual acquaintances like Padraic Colum were even prepared, in retrospect, to accord him honorary revolutionary status as if Kettle somehow belonged with the enragés of the Irish Republican Brotherhood or with the fringe of ideologues who made up Sinn Fein. Kettle's own aim was simply to be of use to his country in endeavouring to clarify questions as far as he was able for the common citizen and to that end he would eschew the overtly political. As he observed in an article in the Irish Review:

It is doubtful whether there were ever before so many honest bewildered men. We feel, most of us, as much astray and amazed as a peasant suddenly plunged into the clamour of dynamos, or into that of the Stock Exchange. The twentieth century, which cuts such a fine figure in encyclopedias, is most familiarly known to the majority of its children as a new sort of headache.¹

The somewhat rueful tone of the above remarks is accounted for by the fact that Kettle was speaking, in retrospect, of his unsuccessful attempts to find a solution to the labour disturbances that, between August and December 1913, paralysed the economic life of Dublin. He wrote with feeling of the unbearable moral burden that the twentieth century imposed upon the ordinary citizen. Certainly Kettle's conscience was aroused by the appalling social conditions under which the members of Jim Larkin's Irish Transport and General Workers' Union eked out their existences. To his conciliatory task, Kettle brought a passionate moral commitment every bit as intense as that displayed by the leaders of the contending factions. He sought on the one hand to arouse the conscience of Dublin's more fortunate citizens to the plight of the slum-dwellers in their midst and on the other to end the dispute in such a way as to ensure its like would not occur again. It was on Kettle's part a wholly remarkable performance and one that left him exhausted and filled with foreboding for the future.

When on August 26, 1913 the drivers and conductors of the Dublin Tramway Company abandoned their vehicles in the streets without any warning and went

¹T.M. Kettle, 'Labour and civilization' in The day's burden (Dublin 1937), p. 109.

on strike, it set the febrile, theatrical tone which was to prevail throughout the dispute. The ultimatum issued by the Dublin Employers' Federation on September 3 threatening with dismissal all workers who belonged to the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union turned the strike from a transport dispute into a general industrial lock-out and a war of economic attrition. The ensuing industrial melodrama was distinguished by militaristic rhetoric, great set pieces of street violence, and the starvation by degrees of a substantial section of the Dublin working classes. By September 25,000 men were out of work and about 100,000 men, women and children facing a winter of deprivation. In rioting in the Dublin city centre on August 30 and 31, two men were killed, 400 of the crowd injured and over fifty policemen treated for wounds. The atmosphere of class warfare was compounded by the spectacle of columns of troops delivering coal supplies to government buildings. The countryside of County Dublin was also in the grip of a violent confrontation between agricultural labourers and their employers.

In early October, the Court of Enquiry set up by the government to arbitrate in the dispute failed in its task, due to the obdurate stand taken by the Employers' Federation who refused to recognise Larkin's union. Understandably, those Dublin citizens not directly involved in the conflict became increasingly concerned. The basic ties of civility upon which any society rests seemed increasingly threatened by the irrationality, stubbornness and militarism with which the struggle was being waged. As principal instigator and chairman of the Dublin Industrial Peace Committee, Kettle was in the van of those well meaning citizens who sought to formulate some compromise acceptable to both sides.

Kettle first addressed himself to the problem in a series of three articles for the Freeman's Journal in the last week of September when it appeared that there was still some hope of the Court of Enquiry settling the dispute. Nevertheless he reminded the strikers and employers that 'Dublin has a third party claim of enormous dimensions and it is time to assert it against the combatants.'² It was for Kettle a 'duty of conscience and patriotism'³ to speak out on the issue on behalf of those ordinary citizens who 'controlling neither millions nor mobs...are threatened with long and sore vengeance by those who do control them'.⁴ What Kettle found particularly abhorrent in the Dublin situation was the violence displayed by both sides.

What is unique in the Dublin situation is the passion with which each of the clashing parties has dedicated itself to the gospel of violence, a gospel stated by each of them in a form at once rude, crude and nasty.⁵

'The gospel of violence' was a phrase that was to run like a leitmotif throughout Kettle's public addresses not only on labour troubles in Dublin but on the larger troubles by which European civilization itself was shortly to be overwhelmed. But he could not dissociate himself from a share of the responsibility for the conditions that had bred the violence. In his imaginative empathy with the slumdweller of Dublin, Kettle lacerated himself and the middle classes of his city in tones of anguished personal responsibility and in language as powerful and unforgiving as that of Larkin himself.

²T.M. Kettle, 'Prices and wages' in Freeman's Journal, 23 September 1913.

³Ibid.

⁴Ibid.

⁵Ibid.

In average wage level, in previous lack of organisation, and consequently of skill and productivity, labouring Dublin is the blackest scandal of that Empire with which we are associated. And its housing? As a citizen of Dublin, I rend my garments and cry for forgiveness at the word. The mansion-slums of Dublin go as close as any material fact can to a denial of the ways of God...The houses in which so many of them [the workers] now live are not so much houses as camps pitched in the cemetery of the eighteenth century. If you seek for a parallel to the houses in which so many of our fellow-citizens are endeavouring to enact the ten Commandments on fifteen shillings a week you must go to some city in the Balkans. Chimney-stacks shattered by the wreck of war, powder-stained walls, picturesque and melancholy debris, rags, sordor, hunger, drink, disease, lunacy - that is the common picture... We ought, all of us, to be ashamed to talk again of the twenty-one thousand single room tenements of Dublin. Since I was a boy I have heard them talked about, and in the region of action from January election to January election, all was a rhetorical zero. A great citizen of the stature of say, Sir John Gray was called for, and a great act of citizenship. We gave, and got, instead, words as empty as a striker's stomach.⁶

The uncomfortable conclusion offered by Kettle to his readers was that 'what bred Larkinism was our own inept indifference.'⁷ What then was the outlook if intervention was not adopted? A note of Swiftian irony informed his answer to the hypothetical question.

We are to "starve the men into submission." A ragged regiment of dismissed tramway employees is to drift about Dublin - at the cost of our charity - this winter in order to advertise the futility of striking, the cost of opposing a lock-out. It wont do, it really will not do. Society as organised in Dublin starves some of its people so desperately in peace that war is for them clipped of its horrors.⁸

⁶T.M. Kettle, 'Dublin workers', Freeman's Journal, 24 September 1913.

⁷Ibid.

⁸T.M. Kettle, 'The war in Dublin - Appeal for a truce' in Freeman's Journal, 30 September 1913.

Kettle was, however, no socialist and still less of a revolutionary. That the violence born of poverty and desperation was itself a form of corruption, he had no doubt. Larkin's tactics, he claimed, were ultimately self defeating.

Force is no remedy. He [Larkin] tells us that he got his weakness for anarchy in the slums, which he not inaptly describes as Hell. It is very probable. When men are carefully starved from the cradle, and harassed with all sorts of indignities, they are apt to err a little from that perfect equilibrium of judgement and gentlemanly behaviour with which we comfortable people are notoriously all endowed. Not having been trained to use their minds in argument, they are a little more often than we to argue with fists. The narratives of castaway sailors make us aware that hunger, at a certain stage, produces light-headedness delirium and strange delusions.⁹

In particular, Kettle could see that Larkin's use of the sympathetic strike was bound to encourage the employers to combine against him.

The case for the employers has been in its way almost as far removed from the normal and the desirable. The simplest account of what happened is that they found themselves suddenly confronted with the experience of not knowing where you are, accompanied by the fear that you will not be there long. All security for business was gone. Your men might at any moment strike by telephone, if I may phrase it, not because they themselves had any immediate personal grievance, but because an appeal was made to their class loyalty. Collective agreements were mere waste paper. The smallest and most necessary exercise of discipline was seized upon by the walking delegates as a pretext for calling out. An intolerable tyranny seemed on the point of being established. The city rocked uneasily from strike to strike. The small shopkeepers who, at the best of times, mainly because of their excessive numbers have almost as hard a struggle as the unskilled workers, took panic. The small manufacturers did likewise, nor were most of the larger firms immune...¹⁰

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

For William Martin Murphy, the Employers' leader, Kettle expressed, as diplomatically as possible, a certain respect but it was tempered by an innate dislike of Murphy's determination to crush the workers' movement.

Nobody has a stronger or more sincere admiration for the President of the Employers' Federation than I have. If his great business qualities were a little less rare in Ireland we should have a more prosperous Ireland. But a great business-man is not necessarily, even from a strategical point of view, a wise leader of small business-men. There was certainly no wisdom, nor was there even truth in the suggestion that men ought not to strike because whatever restitution the striker may have to endure, the employer is sure of his three meals a day. And there is none in his refusal of all truces, armistices or accomodations of any kind whatever at a moment when all sensible men are growing sicker and sicker of these Waterloos, and more and more urgent in their desire for peace.¹¹

Kettle's opinions were shared by many concerned Dubliners who were by September 1913 wearied by the seemingly endless round of strike and confrontation and sickened by the rhetorical excesses of the leaders of both sides. But Kettle's concern ran somewhat deeper. He was neither a socialist nor an advocate of uninhibited capitalism. What truly appalled him in the labour troubles was the destruction of Dublin as a community. The full horror of the 'gospel of violence' was that its application destroyed civilized and humane values on the altar of ideology. We come back again to Kettle's Catholic humanitarianism, to his love of the specific, human community of Dublin which, with all its social inequalities and falling away from the ideal afforded at least the possibility of a broad and generous freedom in which individuals could find their own fulfillment amidst the variagated potentialities of life. In issuing his call for industrial peace, he declared,

¹¹Ibid.

I love Dublin. I admire those, both the leaders of capital and the leaders of labour who have made her great, and who, after this truce, and after the peace that will follow it, will make her greater. Will they not, ignoring British trade delegates, so-called Syndicalists, brilliant, extreme journalists and all the world beside, set Dublin above vanity?¹²

On the failure early in October of the Board of Trade Court of Enquiry to win any concessions from the employers, Kettle took the initiative in forming the Dublin Industrial Peace Committee. The inaugural meeting of this short-lived body took place in the Mansion House on October 4. The Committee afforded a forum to a number of Dublin notables, some of whom were afterwards to distinguish themselves in the cause of advanced Nationalism but who clearly shared Kettle's non-ideological approach to social problems. Arthur Griffith who was vehemently opposed to Larkin was absent, but prominent in the audience were Thomas M'Donagh, Joseph Plunkett, A.E. Clery, Padraic Colum, Osborn Bergin, Dudley Edwards, Mary Hayden and Eugene Sheehy. Kettle made a witty and rousing speech which even won cheers from the sprinkling of Larkenites in the audience.

The Chairman asked, was it not a paradox to say that the very first time that capital found a great leader in Dublin and that labour found a great leader in Dublin, capital and labour found it impossible to come to terms? It made one desire that they were back to the second class people on both sides (hear,hear). If this really great labour leader, and this really great employer in Dublin cared one farthing for the general prosperity of Dublin, then they said to them that it was time to call off the dogs of war (cheers). We want, said the chairman, to create in Dublin a public

¹²T.M. Kettle, 'Dublin workers', Freeman's Journal, 24 September 1913.

opinion in which Dublin has been lacking. We want to call into activity the social conscience that will not read of the collapse of a Church St. tenement as if it were remote and irrelevant, but that will regard it as a matter for which every citizen of Dublin is in part responsible and that will regard it as an evil that must be cured...we want, when this crisis is past, to put forward from this committee schemes of reform for the worst evils of Dublin, and to urge them upon the governors of the city of Dublin (hear, hear).¹³

These high hopes of Kettle's were, alas, summarily dashed against the intransigence of William Martin Murphy and the Dublin Employers' Federation. Although the Committee was authorised by James Connolly and the Dublin United Trades Council to negotiate with the employers, the Federation persisted in its refusal to accept the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union as a party to any discussions. Kettle was left to contemplate what he referred to in an article in the Irish Review as 'the agony of Dublin'.

He was particularly disturbed by the planned evacuation by Larkin's strike committee of the children of families suffering as a result of their parents' participation in the dispute. The scheme to send the children to sympathetic families in England had aroused the ire of Archbishop Walsh of Dublin. In urging the employers to come to a settlement, the Archbishop had used language that suggested that the souls of the children would be placed in immortal jeopardy by this 'deportation' to the homes of Godless English socialists. The actions of overzealous priests and laypersons who virtually kidnapped parties of the evacuees at Westland Row railway station and who prevented the departure of the cross channel ferries until all such children had been removed from them added a fresh dimension of bitterness to the dispute. Mary Kettle recalled her husband arguing, humorously no doubt,

¹³Freeman's Journal, 8 October 1913.

that 'the priests were acting as members of a spiritual trade union.'¹⁴

Kettle's more serious thoughts on the matter sprang from his own deeply felt Catholicism and were revealed in an article he wrote for the Irish Review.

...to anyone who knows the inner lives of the Dublin workers, the willingness of even one Catholic mother to send her child to England, with all the attendant perils to religion, domestic feeling, and national feeling is a tremendous fact. It speaks desperation. To me at any rate it suggests that if this struggle cannot be composed, and composed very soon, we may find ourselves plunged into a tempest of violence compared with which everything that we have experienced will come to seem like a suave breeze in June. It is not safe to press human nature too far. The man beaten into a corner may, of course, grovel, But he may also act upon the other impulse of despair: he may kill. One need not be an alarmist to tremble at the possible unleashing of madness that may follow upon a continuance of the present state of war.¹⁵

We can assume that the horror at the evacuation of the children which was shown by the Dublin press and by middle class opinion in general was shared by Kettle. At no stage in his career did he ever show any liking for socialism, a creed that he thought, in the unlikely event of its ever being implemented, would lead not merely to the demise of capitalism but to the end of civilization. The Dublin working classes, he was sure, would prove impervious to this disastrous ideology. In November he wrote in the Dublin Review: 'The worker will not make an end of civilization simply because he is himself a civilized man. He feels - for it is feeling rather than logic - that there is in our system of private ownership, despite everything, a sort of bedrock of fitness and necessity.'¹⁶ Neither, however, was he sympathetic to direct intervention by the Church in economic matters. It was for its mystical teachings that Kettle esteemed the Church. In economic and social

¹⁴Mary Kettle, 'Memoir', p. 49.

¹⁵T.M. Kettle, 'The agony of Dublin', Irish Review, November 1913.

¹⁶T.M. Kettle, 'Labour and civilization' in The day's burden (Dublin 1937) p.115.

matters the Church, for its own good, had better restrict itself to an advisory role. Writing in the Dublin Review in 1915, in the aftermath of the lock out, he gave it as his opinion that:

...any attempt to formulate, in the name of the Church, a rigorous and exclusive social programme, and to insist that it is sound Catholic policy must, of its nature, be futile and even dangerous. It is indeed part of the mission of the Church to safeguard those ethical truths which lie at the basis of all society; but when it comes to a discussion of the technical processes of society, economic and political, every man must affect his own synthesis of principle and technique, and he must be free to follow the light of his own conscience and his own experience.¹⁷

Early in the new year of 1914, the great strike or lock out dwindled to its anticlimactic end as the workers began to trickle back to their jobs. The Transport and General Workers' Union, severely weakened but at least still in existence could, and did, claim a kind victory but it was a hollow claim. The employers' stand had stemmed the tide of Larkinism and had successfully discredited the use of the sympathetic strike as a future tactic by labour but only at considerable cost to their own business interests. As Kettle put it, 'the dispute has not come to a conclusion, it has merely stopped'¹⁸ and, as he further observed, 'if there is peace in Dublin it is the peace of industrial anaemia, not that of a healthy civilization.'¹⁹

Kettle's attempt at mediation in the dispute had been singularly unrewarding and personally frustrating. He had acted throughout according to the dictates of his conscience, which prompted him to take the workers' side and in accordance with his economic training which led him to sympathise to a

¹⁷ T.M. Kettle, 'Labour - war or peace?' in *ibid.*, p. 174.

¹⁸ T.M. Kettle, 'Labour and civilization', p. 115.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

considerable extent with the employers. Whatever Kettle's imaginative generosity in seeing both sides so clearly, he was not by temperament a diplomat for he was lacking altogether in that bland gravamen that is the successful arbitrator's prerequisite. The militancy and irrationalism of the events in Dublin left him profoundly saddened. In this disintegration of the bonds of civil society he saw an ominous harbinger of future strife. He was not destined again to play the unaccustomed role of mediator. Instead it was the combative side of his personality that increasingly was to be engaged as he was drawn into the activities of the Volunteer movement.

5. Kettle and the Irish Volunteers 1913-14

Kettle had always adopted a pugnacious attitude towards Ulster Unionism. In part, this was due to his experiences as a Nationalist MP in an Ulster marginal constituency. Given the almost tribal nature of the electoral battles that he had fought in East Tyrone, it was inevitable that he should have come to share many of the prejudices of his constituents, prejudices which were, it must have seemed, simply his own preferences as a Nationalist writ large. Witty and sophisticated Dubliner that he was, the dour and unprepossessing countenance of Ulster Protestant Unionism afforded Kettle an irresistible opportunity for displays of badinage and verbal aggression. But if in mocking Ulster Unionism Kettle professed not to take it seriously, treating it as a 'hallucination' or a 'brainstorm', running below the surface of these jests was an undercurrent of anxiety and dislike. Kettle was an idealist. His dream of a free Ireland was generous and tolerant. The dream was tarnished and demeaned by the obduracy of Ulster Unionism. Yet Kettle was always inclined to make his political fights in the open. The conspiratorial style of politics that marked Unionist resistance to the Home Rule Bill of 1912 filled him with revulsion. The signing of the Ulster Solemn League and Covenant in September 1912 and the formation of the Ulster Volunteer Force in 1913 he saw as another, more serious, eruption of that 'gospel of violence' which was beginning to disfigure Irish public life.

The probable reason for his being invited to join the Provisional Committee of the Irish Volunteers was the widely held notion, in Dublin, that Kettle's Nationalism was stronger than that of the parliamentarians who had been so recently his colleagues. This reputation rested more on his uninhibited style of public speaking and upon ill-informed speculation about his

resignation from parliament than upon any actual deep rooted disagreement with Redmond, Dillon or Devlin. At the public meeting in the Rotunda in Dublin in 1912, at which Redmond introduced the Third Home Rule Bill for the consideration of the Irish people, a reporter present noted the expectation and excitement in the audience when Kettle rose to speak.

The reception given him was not hostile but suspicious. On which side will he be? was the question at once openly expressed and repeated on each face. Here was one of the intangibles in Irish politics, uninvited, come possibly to make mischief. The gathering heard his opening sentences in doubt and uneasiness. One felt the possibility that almost anything might happen, but certainly that the meeting would resent any attempt to make mischief.

Of what the speaker said in finely phrased sentences, delivered with perhaps an art a little too obvious, memory retains no single passage. But the speech was not hostile.¹

Kettle's reputation as an advanced Nationalist was enhanced by the poetic duel in which he became engaged against Rudyard Kipling in 1912. Kipling, the bard of imperialism, had saluted the massive anti-Home Rule demonstration at Belfast's Balmoral showground with a poem in the Morning Press simply entitled 'Ulster'. Containing as it did the unhappy lines, 'You know the doom that waits / On those who serve not Rome!',² it was not one of Kipling's more attractive compositions. Kettle's poem in answer, also entitled 'Ulster', appeared in the Dublin Evening Telegraph that same day. The best verse in the poem is well known and has been praised for its metaphysical conceit.

¹'Thomas Kettle' in the Westminster Gazette, 16 October 1917.

²Irish News, 12 January 1925, 'Kipling and Ireland'.

So now when Lenten Years
 Burgeon at last, to bless
 This land of Faith and Tears
 With fruitful nobleness,
 The poet, for a coin
 Hands to the gabbling rout
 A bucketful of Boyne
 To put the sunrise out.³

The verse that follows is less graceful and more troubling, and illustrates Kettle's difficulties in formulating an adequate response to the situation presented by Ulster's stubborn stand against Home Rule.

"Ulster" is ours, not yours,
 Is ours to have and hold,
 Our hills and lakes and moors
 Have shaped her in our mould
 Derry to Limerick Walls
 Fused us in battle flame;
 Limerick to Derry calls
 One strong-shared Irish name.⁴

If by 'ours' in the first line Kettle meant belonging to Ireland, then there was an immediate ambiguity, for the great body of Ulster Protestants who were resisting Home Rule were by Nationalist definition Irishmen. If by 'yours' Kettle meant the British, then Ulster Unionists were happy to concede that the essence of their position did indeed lie in their Britishness. In either case, however, the all-embracing Nationalist concept of Irish identity would have been conceded and surely Kettle did not intend to do that. If Kettle's 'ours' referred to the Home Rulers and his 'yours' to the Ulster Unionists, then he seemed to be threatening a civil war. As we shall see, he did not exactly intend this either. The ellipsis marks around "Ulster" are also ambiguous. Surely Kettle did not intend to question the existence of one of Ireland's historic provinces. Perhaps the ellipsis was intended to suggest not Ulster the province but "Ulsterism" as a frame of mind. possibly

³T.M. Kettle, Poems and parodies, (Dublin 1916), p. 70.

⁴Ibid.

as a hallucination or as a brainstorm. But this makes nonsense of the poem. Let us say that by "Ulster" Kettle meant to infer 'what the Orangemen are pleased to think of as Ulster'. Clearly the real ambivalence of the poem lies in the unresolved tension between 'ours' and 'yours' in the terminology of Irish Nationalism. If the Ulster resistance to Home Rule brought Kettle up short against the deficiencies of the somewhat one-sided version of history to which Irish Nationalism subscribed, his confusion was insignificant compared to that of some of his colleagues in the Volunteers.

The decision to launch a Volunteer force to counter Lord Carson's Ulster army was taken at Wynn's Hotel in Dublin on 11 November 1913 by an ad hoc committee of twelve prominent Nationalists, none of whom had close ties with the parliamentary party and at least two of whom were members of the I.R.B. Eoin MacNeill, Kettle's colleague at University College, was the chairman. It was decided that Kettle should be amongst those asked to join the Provisional Committee of the Volunteer Force. He sent word that he was unwell and therefore unable to co-operate. At a second meeting at Wynn's Hotel on 14 November, his brother Laurence became joint secretary with MacNeill of the proposed force. By the time the first great public meeting to launch the Volunteers was held, Kettle had changed his mind about the importance of the new movement, and his name duly appeared on the list of Committee members.

In the light of both his subsequent conduct on the Committee, and the allegations made about him by his colleagues, it would appear to be more than likely that Kettle had spent some time conferring with Redmond and Dillon about the potentialities of the Volunteer movement. The historian of the Volunteers, in a not unprejudiced remark, states that Kettle 'joined the Committee when it became evident to Redmond and his associates that the

Volunteer Movement was proving irresistible to the able-bodied nationalists of the country.'⁵

The point to remember here is that there was no general rush to join the Volunteers until general recruitment commenced with the inaugural meeting in the Rotunda on 25 November. By that time Kettle had joined the Committee. Kettle's initial excuse for not attending - ill health - may or may not be believed although he had certainly exhausted himself with his endeavours in the labour dispute. It seems altogether more likely that he hesitated over the initial invitation until it was clear exactly where his duty lay. Certainly the members of the Committee must have emphasised that it lay in joining them. At some time, and all the members of the Volunteer executive realised this, an accommodation would have to be reached with Redmond and the parliamentarians, but preferably an accommodation that would leave the Volunteers with as much autonomy as possible. In these negotiations, Kettle could be expected to play an invaluable role for, amongst the Committee members, his contacts within the parliamentary party were second to none.

If such was the intention of MacNeill and his colleagues, they had miscalculated badly for Kettle, who was never at his best in situations calling for diplomacy, and who hated conspiracies of all kinds, was well aware of the I.R.B. presence on the Committee. In Kettle's view, the Volunteers should be placed under Redmond's control as soon as possible. This was to be the root of much misunderstanding and ill will between Kettle and his colleagues.

Kettle was not present at the meeting at the Rotunda on 25 November 1913 that saw the commencement of serious recruiting into the Volunteers. This

⁵F.X. Martin, 'MacNeill and the Irish Volunteers' in F.X. Martin and F.J. Byrne (eds), The scholar revolutionary (Shannon 1973), p. 149.

meeting was a rowdy affair with a demonstration from the floor against Laurence Kettle who was a member of the platform party. The demonstrators were members of the Transport and General Workers' Union who were registering a protest against the tactics adopted by Andrew J. Kettle who had inaugurated a scheme of drafting unemployed labourers from other parts of Ireland to beat the strike of agricultural labourers in North County Dublin. In this scheme, Laurence Kettle had been intimately involved. The demonstration, in accordance with Larkin's tendency to turn industrial disputes into highly personalised confrontations, took the form of shouting anti-Kettle slogans. It is however worth noting that the name of Tom Kettle was not subjected to this abuse. For the chairman of the Industrial Peace Committee, Larkin retained a respect tinged with admiration.

Apart from this brief outburst, the meeting was an unqualified success and between 3,000 and 4,000 recruits joined immediately. In the months that followed, the total was to swell to over 180,000.

Less fortunately, the Volunteers were saddled with a governing committee of thirty members, representing all strands of Nationalist opinion. Conspiracies, misunderstandings and a lack of any coherent policy for the organisation were the result. The first priority of the Committee was to regularize their relationship with the parliamentary party and the United Irish League, and to that end, MacNeill immediately began to sound out Redmond. It soon became clear that defining the precise status of the Volunteers vis à vis the parliamentary party was going to be no easy matter. In part this was due to the activities of the I.R.B. members of the Committee who wished to retain as much autonomy as possible for the Volunteers so that they could continue, unimpeded in their own clandestine activities. In greater part, reason for contention arose because of the confusion in the minds of the non-I.R.B.

members as to the purpose and function of the movement. There was also the inescapable fact that the Volunteer leadership, by and large, rather enjoyed drilling and marching and playing with guns. It was against this sense of unreality that Kettle set his face.

It was all very well for MacNeill to claim that the Irish Volunteers should be a reincarnation of the Volunteer movement of the eighteenth century. That movement had not been organised in the conditions of near civil war which confronted the Volunteers of 1913. MacNeill, Casement and Pearse, despite his I.R.B. connections, all displayed a great deal of confused thinking on the issue of Unionist Ulster's preparations for war. They made the assumption, surely a fatally wrong one, that somehow the Irish Volunteers and the Ulster Volunteers were brothers under the skin, that Carson's movement was in fact as separatist as their own. Thus Pearse could say, 'I am glad that the Orangemen have armed, for it is a goodly think to see arms in Irish hands.'⁶ In Cork, MacNeill provoked a near riot by calling on a meeting to give three cheers for the Ulster Volunteers. This, in the words of an eye-witness 'was mistaken for an anti-Home Rule cry; the platform was attacked and stormed and cleared.'⁷ Sir Roger Casement had got an even stranger notion into his head which he proposed to Colonel Maurice Moore, the Inspector General of the Volunteers.

...it was a proposal to celebrate the ninth centenary of the Battle of Clontarf by a big parade of Volunteers to which the Ulster Volunteers should be invited to send a contingent. His idea was that Clontarf had been fought before the divisions which separate Irishmen had begun, and that such a true and national event might be celebrated by all. Coalition was not to be insisted upon or even pressed, but if all met on that field, the seed of Irish sentiment might be sown in Orange hearts.⁸

⁶Patrick Pearse, 'The coming revolution' in An Claidheamh Soluis, 8 November 1913 quoted in F.X. Martin (ed.), The Irish Volunteers (Dublin 1963), p. 61.

⁷Colonel Maurice Moore, 'History of the Irish Volunteers', Irish Independent, 5 January 1938.

⁸Ibid.. 4 January 1938.

Moore admitted that this plan 'took my fancy'⁹ although, predictably, nothing came of it.

Kettle's position with regards to the Ulster Volunteers was harsher. Writing in the Daily News in July 1914, he explained the character of the Orangeman to his English readers.

Let me acquaint Englishmen with one well-established trait of Orange psychology. Yield to an Orangeman, waver, be manifestly inferior in numbers of weapons and he is dangerous in the extreme...take him singly and no lamb could bleat milder music.¹⁰

Kettle felt the Unionists of Ulster should be seized by the scruff of the neck and shoved into an Ireland administered by a Home Rule government. When this position is compared to the attitudinizing of MacNeill or Casement, it can be seen that Kettle was at least addressing the realities of the situation in so far as he realised that protestations of brotherly love by Nationalists would get them nowhere with Unionists. He did not think that a general civil war would result if Carson's hand was forced, but he did fear for the safety of the Catholic populations of Belfast and Londonderry, a fear that was to grow as the Home Rule crisis deepened. Thus Kettle was tireless in his campaign against the Arms Veto that forbade the importation of weapons to the Volunteers. As he also wrote in the Daily News: 'I will now say deliberately that if 1) the Government shows any weakness in Parliament and 2) if the Arms Veto keeps our people in Ulster defenceless, a massacre of Catholic Nationalists in that province is as certain as the flowing of the Boyne.'¹¹

There were two imperatives uppermost in Kettle's mind as long as he was involved with the Volunteers: to ensure that the Volunteers were armed, and

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Daily News, 29 July 1914.

¹¹ Ibid.

also to ensure that this armed force should be firmly under the control of John Redmond. In the negotiations between MacNeill and Redmond over the future of the Volunteers, Kettle played an influential but shadowy part. In early June, MacNeill and Casement accompanied by Kettle went to London to consult with Redmond. Kettle's inclusion on this mission can be explained in part by the fact that he, along with Colonel Maurice Moore, had been authorised by MacNeill to draft a permanent constitution for the Volunteers. According to Moore though, Kettle was playing a double role. MacNeill complained to Moore that Kettle was conspiring against the Committee. In Moore's words:

T.M. Kettle at this time was acting for the Party as an unavowed agent. He wanted to be in London to paint the extremist side of the Committee...when parting from Professor Kettle on returning to Dublin he [MacNeill] was surprised by the observation that "the Committee might expect an ultimatum from the Irish Party in a few days." That seemed to him, in view of Kettle's relations to the Party to betoken that hostile conversations had been carried on of which he was not aware.¹²

MacNeill himself was of course being less than frank with Redmond. Throughout the negotiations the Howth gun-running plans were being carried out, an exploit of which even the Provisional Committee of the Volunteers had been kept in ignorance.

In the absence of any effective chain of command, it was clear that intrigue and adventurism would flourish amongst the various factions in the Volunteers. As the crisis over who should actually control the Volunteers, Redmond or the fissiparous Committee, moved to its climax, Kettle put his position in forthright terms to the assembled Volunteer forces of North

¹²Ibid., 28 January 1938.

County Dublin at a rally at Portarlington. He warned his audience that 'the sword of the Volunteers was being turned into a knife to stab the leader of the Irish party in the back.'¹³ The tone of his speech makes it clear that Kettle was motivated to make it by the same sense of citizenship and responsibility that had guided his actions during the industrial troubles. It was another blow against 'the gospel of violence'.

...remember that a military movement is one of the most serious in which any man can engage. Ever since the Arms Proclamation was issued laying a veto on Irish citizenship I have protested against it and asked for its repeal. But I never thought of this movement as one for scattering arms haphazard, at random, through a population untrained as to the use of them. I thought of it as a movement that would train men to the use of weapons; that would hold its military equipment in responsible custody, and if that is to be realized the Provisional Committee must add to its body men well known throughout the country, men of experience, of judgement and men who can be depended upon not to do anything extravagant.¹⁴

The speech of Kettle's was resented by his fellow Committee members. Colonel Moore ascribed Kettle's attitude to personal difficulties. 'Kettle was involved in many troubles and had lost the soul of his independence.'¹⁵ Yet Kettle's brother, Laurence, had spoken on the same platform and was in broad agreement with him, and it was not suggested that his judgement was impaired by 'personal troubles'. There must have been in Kettle's character something that made his enemies dismiss his opinions on the grounds that he was peculiar or deranged in some subtle fashion. Perhaps he was too intense, or too outspoken, or possibly the very reasonableness of the argument that he

¹³Freeman's Journal, 15 June 1914.

¹⁴Ibid.

¹⁵Colonel Maurice Moore, 'History of the Irish Volunteers', Irish Independent, 25 January 1938.

put up in favour of Redmond's proposals left his opponents no alternative save to attack him personally.

When the Committee met on 16 June to consider Redmond's ultimatum, it was in an atmosphere of hostility towards Kettle. MacNeill, according to Moore, announced that 'he could not ask any member to speak who had attacked his colleagues and made false statements about them...Then came a surprising scene, the members rose simultaneously to their feet and cheered, because there was a feeling of universal approval of the Chairman's decision.'¹⁶

Deeply upset, Kettle faced his accusers. 'Professor Kettle was evidently very much affected and asked to be permitted to make a personal explanation, which was received in dead silence. He admitted that his accusations were unfounded and ought not to have been made.'¹⁷ It is difficult to know how much reliance can be placed on Moore's memories. Kettle was certainly not alone on the Committee in believing that Redmond's ultimatum should be accepted and neither was he the only member who was fearful of the influence of the extremists. This ritual humiliation of Kettle having been sufficient to salvage the honour of the offended Committee members, the meeting went on by a vote of twenty-one to nine to accept Redmond's ultimatum. Kettle went out of his way to heal the wounds caused by this dispute by sending a letter to the Freeman's Journal apologising for any misrepresentation of the Committee in his Portarlinton speech.

...I completely misconstrued the feeling of the Committee. They deemed the matter to be of the utmost urgency and their proposals were not intended to be a curt rejection of Mr. Redmond's. I desire publicly to express my regret for any hasty condemnation...I hope that any heat of

¹⁶Ibid., 27 January 1938.

¹⁷Ibid.

controversy that may have arisen will now be dissipated and that all Ireland will settle down to the practical work that is before us.¹⁸

The Volunteers had surmounted a grave crisis and Kettle could afford to be conciliatory. He had not, however, 'misconstrued' the feelings of the Committee about placing the Volunteers under Redmond's control. The Committee members were deeply divided and the pressure Kettle had brought to bear on them had been resented. Kettle's position was both consistent and insistent. He was aware of the dangers posed by the loosely controlled, constitutionally anomalous Volunteer Force and he also had a clear vision of the role the Volunteers should be playing in the life of the nation. In a speech made after the outbreak of war, he described his idea of an Irish Volunteer Force. This speech was made, of course, after the Volunteers had split into two factions but Kettle's attitude on this matter remained consistent.

I have spoken of my association with the Volunteer movement. So many claims to the copyright of the idea are under hearing that I am glad to disown any claim in that direction. The whole Irish people made the Volunteers and to the whole Irish people they belong. After I had drafted in great part their manifesto of foundation and had been appointed to the original Committee I found two sections. One wanted rows; the other wanted rifles. I have acted consistently with the rifle men. Mr Redmond, as ever was loyal to his word, to his task and to the enlarging hopes of Ireland. He is now in his right place at the head of the People's Army of Ireland...the one duty of all Irishmen is to rally behind what is practically the first Home Rule Cabinet, and the first Home Rule Premier and to make real and efficient the first Home Rule Army.¹⁹

The acceptance by the Committee of Redmond's nominees regularised in Kettle's eyes the status of the 'Home Rule Army'. He now flung himself into the business of providing the army with weapons.

¹⁸ Freeman's Journal, 17 June 1914.

¹⁹ Ibid., 3 November 1914.

On 5 August 1914, the government proclamation banning the import of arms into Ireland was revoked. Between August and December 1914, when the embargo was reimposed, guns could be legally imported into Ireland. By August, of course, Europe was at war and as far as the Irish Volunteers were concerned, the political situation in Ireland had been utterly transformed. But however tense the situation in Europe in late July 1914, the war was still in the future and John Redmond, confronted with increasing demands from the Volunteers for weapons, and increasingly perturbed by the situation in Ulster, had made plans to break the arms embargo. As Patrick Pearse wrote to an I.R.B. contact in the United States, 'He does want to arm the Volunteers, or a portion of them; but he wants to arm them, not against England but against the Orangemen.'²⁰ Redmond was unaware of the plans laid by MacNeill and Casement at the end of April for the arms landing at Howth. By the time this consignment was landed on 26 July, Redmond's own plans were well under way. In mid-July, he had sent Kettle, accompanied by John O'Connor MP for North Kildare, to Belgium. Their mission was to buy guns and to organise their delivery to Ireland.

Kettle was in Belgium when the Howth rifles were landed. Had he been in Dublin he would doubtless have denounced the killings in Bachelors' Walk on the evening following the arms landing when British troops fired into a hostile crowd. As it is, his views are not on record, and for the best of reasons. The German invasion of Belgium which took place a week after the events in Bachelors' Walk eclipsed in his mind the horror of the Dublin killings. The latter appeared to Kettle a mere street brawl, the former an assault on civilization itself. The outbreak of war on 4 August did have

²⁰ Patrick Pearse to Joe McGarrity, 17 July 1914 in Martin (ed.), The Howth gun-running, p. 52.

a beneficial effect on Kettle's arms smuggling mission. The resultant lifting of the embargo against importing guns to Ireland meant that he and O'Connor could openly solicit assistance from their government contacts in Brussels and London. On 10 August, Kettle was back in London to finalise arrangements for the delivery of the guns. From the National Liberal Club he wrote to Redmond on 13 August outlining his plans and this letter gives an idea of the extent of government collaboration that Redmond and Kettle were now expecting to receive.

...I didnt want to bother you on Monday but it seemed a pity to let our rifles lie at Ostend and Antwerp where I am sure they are not wanted. I therefore went with O'Shea to the Foreign Office...T.P. O'Connor lent his aid at the Belgian legation.

Of course nothing may come except a polite No! On the other hand the Belgian authorities may agree. If so, I suppose you would desire me to make arrangements for the transport of the arms to Ireland. To do so I shall need of course, all the documents of title relating to the goods. Presuming that McGhee had them I telegraphed him as well as Joe Devlin, but without avail. I shall also need money to charter a boat. I have applied to have them carried at the expense of the government knowing that they have plenty of transport vessels coming back empty. This may be refused! If it is, however, I suppose we ought to pay ourselves, and secure the transference of the things to Ireland without delay. Should that be necessary the Foreign Office has promised to assist through its consuls in getting a suitable boat...

In the matter I have acted under your authorization. It was a bitter disappointment to me that we should be hamstrung by the war, and release of the rifles would, I think, in all points be very useful. In case the affair should go through I should suggest Waterford as a suitable port. I am waiting in London solely for the conclusion of this business.²¹

Kettle returned to Ostend from whence he kept Redmond informed of his progress. He had chartered a ship, 'L'Avenir', and was busily engaged in

²¹Kettle to Redmond, 13 August 1914, Redmond papers, National Library of Ireland MS 15,199.

trying to persuade its understandably reluctant crew to brave the perils of the high seas in wartime.

L'Avenir will get away noontide tomorrow. Earlier impossible. Expects arrive Monday. Guns are being taken out of cases, packed in straw. The present deck cargo of cases is so unwieldy that some have been lost - 3 or 4. Loading arrangements must be made to suit this change in form of cargo.

Have engaged ship now by day which will include crew and petrol - 8 per day. Have had practically to guarantee absence of gunboats.²²

L'Avenir, along with two other steamers especially chartered by Kettle, sailed to Dublin where the cargo was landed in the last week of August. Kettle's movements are hard to pin down during this confused period. On 5 August, he took up his duties as war correspondent for the Daily News, on 13 August he was in London, by 31 August he was back in Belgium. But from Redmond's note of 25 August congratulating him on the success of his mission, it seems that Kettle was in Dublin to supervise the unloading of the rifles. 'I congratulate you,' wrote Redmond 'on the success of your efforts to obtain the rifles. Please store them all at the South Wall in my name with instructions to deliver them only to my written order.'²³ If Kettle was in Dublin when the rifles were landed, then he probably made the sailing from Ostend aboard 'L'Avenir' - a suitably dramatic conclusion to his Volunteer experience.

The Freeman's Journal of 3 September recorded what became of the rifles. According to the Freeman's Journal, they numbered 'many thousands' and had been distributed to Volunteers in every county in Ulster.

A few days ago, following the arrival in Dublin of the cargo of rifles, bayonets and ammunition, Mr Joseph Devlin M.P. convened a meeting of representative men from each Ulster County, where a scheme for the despatch and apportionment of the arms etc. to the various centres was decided on...²⁴

²²Kettle to Redmond, undated, Ibid.

²³Redmond to Kettle, 25 August 1914, Kettle papers.

²⁴Freeman's Journal, 3 September 1914.

Particularly heavy allotments of arms had been made to Antrim, Down, Armagh, Londonderry, Tyrone and Belfast. In the lack of exact figures of how many rifles were landed, the Freeman's Journal estimate that there were 'many thousands',²⁵ must be taken on trust. Nevertheless, the arrival of three shiploads of weapons in Dublin must stand as the single largest consignment delivered to either of the Volunteer forces. There was an ironic twist to the story. The diaries of Charles Hobhouse, Asquith's Postmaster General, record what happened in August 1914 when the Belgian government approached their British allies for weapons.

Belgium came to us for rifles, preferably Mausers, so we gave her those captured from the National Irish Volunteers and recommended her to try for those of the Ulster Volunteers. Carson and his friends however refused unless the Govt. would undertake should Home Rule be passed to replace those given to Belgium by rifles from Govt. stores, truly a drole proposition producible only in Ireland. Eventually Redmond gave the Belgians all his Volunteers' rifles.²⁶

If Hobhouse was correct in his claim about Redmond handing over the Volunteer rifles, then Kettle's shipment of weapons must, eventually, ^{have} been sent back to Belgium. If that was the case then the finest irony of all is that Kettle himself would have endorsed enthusiastically this support for Belgium.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Edward David (ed.), Inside Asquith's Cabinet; from the diaries of Charles Hobhouse (London 1973), p. 183.

1. Kettle's attitude to the outbreak of the First World War

For most of August and September 1914, Kettle was in Belgium as war correspondent of the *Daily News*, a paper to which he had long been a contributor. His presence, as the spot, as Germany invaded Belgium, led to some vivid and highly personal reporting. Kettle's war reporting was later incorporated into his published volume, *The Story of War*, along with other articles and essays setting out his attitude to the war and the position he had taken as the hostilities.

CHAPTER SEVEN

The last crusade

When the Germans invaded Belgium he wrote to Kettle that his every intuitive fear had come true - the coming to bloody fruition of the Nietzschean doctrine of the Superman which he had deplored in 1911; the latest and most ruthless application of the 'pursuit of violence' which he had seen in the red-eyed gaze with which British strikers and employers had clashed; the destruction of democracy and fellowship which were for him the essence of nationalism. 'Mr. Jekyll' he wrote in *The Story of War* 'has been wholly submerged in Mr. Hyde.'¹ This transformation had come over Germany and over Germany alone. 'The Great War' declared Kettle 'was in its origin a Great Crime.'² It is right this great crime and to bring the traitor, Germany, to justice before for his of our a moral duty and a crusade, a crusade that was to consume the few remaining years of his life.

In Brussels on 4 August when war was declared, Kettle was in the tumultuous crowd that gathered before the Gare du Nord to hear the news of the German invasion and afterwards he was amongst the patriotic Belgians who 'stood on the cafe tables reading "La Brabantine"'.³ Next day as he watched the city preparing for war, he wrote:

¹ J. K. Kettle, 'The Invasion of Belgium' in *The Story of War* (London 1917), p. 38.

² *Ibid.*, p. 57.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 101.

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When the Germans invaded Belgium it seemed to Kettle that his every intuitive fear had come true - the coming to bloody fruition of the Nietzschean doctrine of the Superman which he had deplored in 1911; the latest and most ruthless application of the 'gospel of violence' which he had seen in the red-eyed rage with which Dublin strikers and employers had clashed; the destruction of community and fellowship which were for him the essence of nationalism. 'Dr. Jekyll' he wrote in The ways of war 'has been wholly submerged in Mr. Hyde.'¹ This transformation had come over Germany and over Germany alone. 'The Great War' declared Kettle 'was in its origin a Great Crime.'² To right this great crime and to bring the criminal, Germany, to justice became for him at once a moral duty and a crusade, a crusade that was to consume the few remaining years of his life.

In Brussels on 4 August when war was declared, Kettle was in the tumultuous crowd that gathered before the Gare du Nord to hear the news of the German invasion and afterwards he was amongst the patriotic Belgians who 'stood on the cafe tables roaring "La Brabançonne" '³ Next day as he watched the city preparing for war, he wrote:

¹T.M. Kettle, 'Why Ireland fought' in The ways of war (London 1917), p. 58.

²Ibid., p. 67.

³Ibid., p. 101.

It is impossible not to be with Belgium in the struggle. It is impossible any longer to be passive. Germany has thrown down a well-considered challenge to all the deepest forms of our civilization. War is hell, but it is only a hell of suffering, not a hell of dishonour. And through it, over its flaming coals, Justice must walk, were it on bare feet.⁴

In the evening came the news that the Germans had occupied Liege and that the fate of Belgium was in the balance.

Kettle did not require evidence of German atrocities to convince him that Belgium was in the right and Germany in the wrong in this war. His dislike of violence and his imaginative empathy with its victims was sufficient for him to grasp the horror of warfare without literal evidence of ruins and corpses. Nevertheless, although he was shocked by the German invasion, when he wrote to Redmond on his return to London about the rifles, he could still sound a note of irritation at the disruption of their planned gun-running. The shelling and destruction of Louvain on 26 August hardened his feelings. The University of Louvain had housed, since the seventeenth century, an Irish seminary and in the general destruction this was razed to the ground along with its priceless collection of Celtic manuscripts. Nationalist Ireland was shocked and overnight Cardinal Mercier of Louvain became a hero to Irish Catholics, and as a refugee in London a much feted guest of the Irish parliamentary party. On 27 August, the Cathedral city of Malines was shelled, and on 6 September, Termonde was reduced to rubble, by the German armies. These latter two Belgian frontier towns Kettle visited in September.

Termonde, Kettle discovered, was 'a tumbled avalanche of brick, stone, twisted iron and shattered glass'.⁵ What made Termonde infamous in Kettle's eyes was that the destruction had not been caused by artillery fire.

⁴'A world adrift' in *Ibid.*, p. 104.

⁵'Termonde' in *Ibid.*, p. 113.

According to Kettle, the German commander, General Sommerfield, had demanded a levy of 2 million francs from the town and when this had not been forthcoming, he had ordered his troops in with flamethrowers and they had razed the houses of the citizenry. Public buildings had been spared, Kettle thought, because the Germans were sensitive to the bad publicity the destruction of Louvain had brought them. In Antwerp that night, while the guns rumbled overhead, he wrote by candlelight:

Do not think that the evil, written here in the debris of Belgium, will be cancelled and blotted out by subscriptions and indemnities. It calls also for that holy vengeance without which all public law is a nullity. Sommerfield has got to be hanged. When are the allies going to issue a proclamation placing definitely outside the privilege of military law, Sommerfield and his kind?⁶

Next day he was standing in the ruins of Malines Cathedral thinking to himself 'This is how Nietzsche has, from his grave, spat, as he wishes to spit, upon Nazareth.'⁷ The unfortified town had come under heavy artillery barrage and the inhabitants had fled. After having been thoroughly fought over, it was now held, precariously, by the Belgians. Kettle found fresh evidence of German atrocities, and on the general subject of atrocities, he had this to say:

One notices in some of the English papers protests against the too ready acceptance of unanalysed and unconfirmed "atrocities." So liable is panic to mix myth with fact that I have pleaded more than once for the constitution of an International Commission to examine all the evidence. But in the meantime we find it difficult to divest ourselves of the faculty of inference. If you come, during time of war, upon a civilian, hanging by the neck, with his hands tied behind his back, and a fire burning under him, the theory of suicide or accident does not seem to embrace the full scope of the fact. A similar process of

⁶'Termonde' in Ibid., p. 118.

⁷'Malines' in Ibid., p. 123.

reasoning forces you to the conclusion that the Germans would not have hit Malines Cathedral so often if they had not aimed at it.⁸

For Kettle, the war itself was one prolonged atrocity and by definition the German military commanders were war criminals. In Malines he listened to Cardinal Mercier addressing a procession of refugees and afterwards talked with him about the destruction of Louvain. Later, in September, he met and spoke with both the Belgian Prime Minister and King Albert.

Kettle was now quite clear in his own mind that Germany must be fought and defeated. His grounds for believing that to be on the side of the Allies in this war was to be on the side of civilization were worked out thoroughly in a series of articles for T.P. O'Connor's T.P.'s War Journal in 1915. Kettle's case against Germany was not made out from any narrow viewpoint that equated Belgium with Ireland; neither was it made in the belief that Ireland's participation in the war would bring a larger measure of Home Rule. Certainly these ideas played a part in his thinking but they were subsidiary. The basis of his case against Germany rested on his own first hand experience of the Prussian influence on German society, on his reading of German literature, especially its history and philosophy, and on the shocking evidence of the type of modern warfare practiced by the German armies.

Kettle claimed that German society, German philosophy and German militarism were alike influenced by an unholy doctrine he called 'the gospel of the devil'. In Kettle's words, the main characteristics of this doctrine were 'violence, intellect and a certain malign splendour of domination'.⁹ 'We are', he elaborated, 'in presence of an Evangel of Conquest fully worked out and completely conscious of itself.'¹⁰

⁸'Malines' in *Ibid.*, p. 123.

⁹T.M. Kettle, 'The gospel of the devil' in The ways of war (London 1917), p.206.

¹⁰*Ibid.*

The three figures who he held most responsible for the infernal debauch to which German society had been given over were Bismarck, Nietzsche and the historian, Treitschke. Bismarck he described as 'the modern Wotan to whom Germany has built her altars'.¹¹ Bismarck was the bullying, immoral statesman who tore up treaties like little bits of paper, the founder of the Prussianised German empire. Kettle quoted Bismarck's chilling remark to the German armies, 'You must leave the people through whom you march only their eyes to weep with.'¹² These words, Kettle claimed to have read for the first time in Brussels in 1914 as news of the destruction of Louvain was just beginning to arrive.

If Bismarck was the Wotan of Germany, then Nietzsche was its Moloch. The Nietzschean philosophy that he had always deplored but had hitherto dealt with in a mocking manner he now treated with deadly earnestness.

Of the "deep damnation" which lies at the heart of the Nietzschean philosophy no doubt is admissable. It is idle to say that he contradicted himself at twenty turns, and that especially he hated the professors and raked them with the shrapnel of his irony. It is the way of supermen to hate other supermen. It is the badge of the tribe...Nietzsche was angry with the professors only because they preferred obscure and he preferred lucid brutality. Not since Lucifer was so much light shed to dark ends.¹³

Nietzsche was the demented philosopher, the 'Supermaniac' whose doctrine of the will to power had conquered the imagination of the Prussian nobility, 'an aristocracy more scientifically cruel than the world has ever known'.¹⁴ Nietzsche's teachings were for Kettle, quite simply, 'a long-drawn-out Metaphysics of Bullying'.¹⁵ Reading it, he declared 'Krupp feels himself a veritable knight of the Holy Ghost.'¹⁶

¹¹Ibid., p. 206.

¹²Ibid., p. 212.

¹³Ibid., p. 215.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 217.

Treitschke, the third member of Kettle's unholy triumvirate, he presented as a figure of ridicule, the product of a singularly ludicrous system of education, or rather miseducation.

In a German university you do not find any uniform, general life on which everybody can draw. The caste-system - on which all Prussia is founded - manifests itself very soon. Either you clip off your friends' ears in duels, keep dogs, abjure learning, and absorb beer for two or three years or you set out to be a Herr Doktor. By steadily accumulating notes, and grimly avoiding fresh air, you arrive at the moment when you can order a visiting card with this wizard title on it. Then wearing a nimbus of adulation, you pass on to be a Privat Dozent and ultimately a Herr Professor. Everybody's hat is off to you; you meet with no real criticism or free thrust of thought.¹⁷

Treitschke, in Kettle's opinion, was sick in mind as well as in body, 'an invalid set up as a Prophet of Bullydom'¹⁸, a feeble creature who preached a loathsome creed of the domination of the Chosen Race. Were Treitschke alive, wrote Kettle, when the German armies crashed through Belgium 'he would have rejoiced blatantly at the tearing up of the "scrap of paper" which stood for nothing except the conscience of Europe and the integrity of Belgium.'¹⁹

Allowing for the flamboyant advocacy with which he presented his case, and making allowances also for the element of propaganda in Kettle's writing, it was a remarkable insight that yoked together Bismarck, Nietzsche and Treitschke as three horsemen of the German Apocalypse. There is general agreement amongst historians that Bismarck was ruthless and unscrupulous; Nietzsche's philosophy is thoroughly uncharitable and irrational and makes a virtue of it; the reputation of Treitschke is not likely to be rehabilitated by serious scholarship. Perhaps Kettle might have strengthened his case still further by adding Wagner to his villanous triumvirate. He had, at the very least, anticipated many of the conclusions of modern historiography about the ideological back-

¹⁷Ibid., p. 225.

¹⁸Ibid., p. 226.

¹⁹Ibid., p. 227.

ground of Wilhelmitic Germany.

What is abundantly clear from The ways of war is that Kettle's commitment to the allied cause did not stem from any narrow concept of Irish nationalism. As his commitment to that cause strengthened and developed, Kettle's speeches and writings showed that he was arguing from a Catholic, humanitarian viewpoint against what he took to be a debased materialism that had its roots in German race romanticism and its final flowering in aggressive militarism. The German invasion of Belgium and German's wider aggression in Europe was for Kettle an assault against the sanctity of fundamental human values. But although he had convinced himself that he was fighting against barbarism and for civilization, he had still to convince his fellow countrymen that the cause of civilization, so defined, was their cause also.

The Allied powers did not come into the war, and will not come before history's judgment. The part of both Great Britain and France was deeply stained with domination, that is to say, Prussianism. Much of it was still apparent in their politics. But they had begun to cleanse themselves. The working out of the democratic formula would, in due course, complete their process. Prussia, on the contrary, has adopted her vice as the highest virtue. Her philosophy did not correct her appetites; it sanctified them. Therefore, speaking of ideas, the triumph of Prussia was not the triumph of force; the triumph of the Allies was not the triumph of law. In such a conflict to counsel Ireland to stand neutral is judgement, as if you were to counsel a Christian to stand neutral in judgement between St. Paul and St. Peter.

The war also had the effect of placing Nationalist Ireland's long-standing quarrel with Imperial Britain in a different perspective. It was not in order to end this breach that Kettle thought Ireland should support the British

¹ 'Why Ireland fought' in The ways of war, p. 10.

² *Ibid.*, p. 10.

2. Kettle and the recruiting campaign in Ireland

For Kettle the war had changed everything and changed it utterly. He apprehended the war with all the shock of a man who undergone a religious conversion. The force of this revelation had, like a conversion experience, the effect of cancelling the past. In The ways of war, he wrote that every familiar landmark had been 'submerged in an Atlantic of blood'.¹ The European world before the war seemed now to him, for all of its imperfections, a world in which civilized and democratic institutions had been slowly but surely redressing the worst injustices and inequities which afflicted humankind. Now, Kettle believed, the politics of the pre-war period should be seen as mere squabbles and the contending political parties should unite to repel the aggressor, Germany. Even Ireland, despite her deep rooted and deeply felt grievances against Great Britain was under a moral imperative to join with her former enemy against the new and infinitely more threatening foe.

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The war also had the effect of placing Nationalist Ireland's long standing quarrel with Unionist Ulster in a different perspective. It was not in order to heal this breach that Kettle thought Irishmen should enlist in the British

¹'Why Ireland fought' in The ways of war, p. 60.

²Ibid., p. 70.

army. Rather, his idea seems to have been that in the course of fighting the war, the political strife of the past would increasingly come to be seen as irrelevant. The war, thought Kettle, had shattered forever the integrity of that ancient quarrel between Irishmen. A new and terrible light was breaking over the world, altering the contours of the familiar. The author of The ways of war stood, as it were, contemplating this bloodstained dawn and realising that, whatever horrors it revealed, it was nevertheless dawn, the symbol of hope and rebirth. He wrote, suffused with a not altogether realistic optimism:

Used with the wisdom which is sown in tears and blood, this tragedy of Europe may be, and must be, the prologue to the two reconciliations of which all statesmen have dreamed, the reconciliation of Protestant Ulster with Ireland, and the reconciliation of Ireland with Great Britain.³

When Kettle returned to Ireland in October 1914, it was to find his countrymen flocking to join the colours. Needless to say, he had every intention of joining them at the earliest possible opportunity. The Volunteers had split into two factions, the vast majority, 170,000, rallying to Redmond's call to fight for Ireland in the European war. The National Volunteers as they were now called were potentially a pool of manpower for the British armies, but to persuade them to enlist, delicate handling would be required.

Redmond wanted an Irish Division with its own uniform, preferably the Volunteer uniform. Recruiting, he felt, should emphasise Irish rather than British patriotism. The British government had only good will towards this approach but Asquith's enthusiasm for an Irish Division could not move the stubborn military supremo, Kitchener. In the end, the Ulster Volunteers went in as a division on their own and a third division, the 16th, was formed out of the existing Irish regiments. It was in this division that Nationalist

³Ibid., p. 71.

Ireland enlisted, but although manned and largely officered by Irishmen, the actual insignia, colours and emblems of an Irish army were denied. On this subject, W.G. Fallon claimed that Kettle had actually secured an interview with Kitchener.

At the beginning of the war Kettle had suggested that the British military, their recruiting officers and their Union Jacks should all be shipped to Holyhead and instead that the best French military band and waving the Tricolour should be sent through Ireland and that Irishmen could join the French army if they chose to do so. Kitchener was quite unable to grasp the idea and as a result Kettle threatened to enlist a corps of Irishmen in the ranks of the French or Belgian armies.⁴

In spite of the insensitivity of the army establishment, between August 1914 and April 1916, over 100,000 Irishmen had enlisted, bringing the total number of Irish soldiers in the British army to 150,000.

Kettle flung himself into the recruiting movement and, on his wife's reckoning made 'over two hundred speeches throughout Ireland'.⁵ He spoke on platforms with old political comrades such as Redmond, Joe Devlin and Stephen Gwynn, and with erstwhile political foes such as the Unionist peer, Lord Fingall. Kettle's vision of the coming struggle was an intensely personal one and expressed in an intensely personal way. He placed himself under a terrible personal strain in making these speaking engagements, exaltation and exhaustion alike taking their toll of his physical stamina. One man with a vision could not change the mundane realities of Irish political life, especially when the visionary toiled under the handicap of fragile health. Evidence of the strain under which Kettle was labouring can be seen in certain incidents where his judgement was, to say the least, erratic, and where he

⁴W.G. Fallon, 'Notes for a lecture on Kettle', National Library of Ireland MS 22,598.

⁵Mary Kettle, 'Memoir', p. 34.

seems to have been acting very much in a freelance capacity.

It is most unlikely that John Redmond sanctioned Kettle's action in offering himself to the electors of East Galway in November 1914. The death of the sitting member had made imminent a by-election in the constituency. Kettle put himself in nomination as a candidate on the extraordinary condition that he should be given a 'short lease' on the seat for eleven months. At the end of his eleventh-month temporary tenure, he would join the army. The main points of his programme, if indeed it can be called a programme, were that:

- 1) The cause of the allies in the great war is the cause of justice and honour.
- 2) The victory of Prussian imperialism means the death to the hopes of all small nations, not least to those of Ireland.
- 3) The future fate and expansion of the Home Rule Act are inseparably bound up with the European settlement that will follow the war.⁶

In his address to the electorate, Kettle made what was virtually a recruiting speech and concluded by explaining why he had offered himself for the seat.

Other things being equal, a local man has claims superior to any other. But is it a time for localism or parochialism? Ireland is once again an inseparable part of Europe. The future of the Home Rule Act is bound up with the European settlement. The future of Land Purchase and that of Irish Public Finance are bound up with the economic harvest of war and the aftermath of peace. It seems to me a time when all local issues are under a political moratorium and when any Irishman who believes that he can serve Ireland has the right to throw his hat into the ring.⁷

Understandably, the electorate of East Galway were skeptical of a political candidate who pronounced a moratorium on politics and who was interested in holding the seat for only eleven months. Why Kettle should have imagined

⁶ Freeman's Journal, 3 November 1914.

⁷ Ibid.

that it would have helped his cause if he could speak as an MP is something of a mystery, especially as it seems never to have been his intention to take up a seat at Westminster. Whatever his intentions, he did not receive the nomination.

Further evidence of the strain under which he was labouring came at the famous meeting of the Dublin University Gaelic Society to commemorate the birth of Thomas Davis. This meeting was not allowed to take place within Trinity College because Vice-Provost Mahaffy took exception to one of the guest speakers - Patrick Pearse. Pearse had incurred Mahaffy's displeasure by speaking and writing against the recruiting campaign. The meeting took place eventually, in defiance of Mahaffy, in the Ancient Concert Rooms on 20 November 1914. The principal speakers were Pearse, W.B. Yeats and Kettle. Neither Pearse nor Yeats made, in their speeches any overt reference to the contemporary political situation. Kettle, who had just enlisted as a private in the Leinster Regiment to undergo special training prior to receiving his commission, was in khaki. This was taken by members of the audience as being very much in the way of a political statement.

The content of Pearse's speech and of Kettle's, if indeed he made one, are lost to posterity. Kettle arrived late, and in the words of Demond Ryan, 'gloriously drunk'.⁸ The audience greeted him with a storm of cheering and hissing. Mounting the platform to move a vote of thanks to Yeats, Kettle told the audience, amidst renewed clamour that 'It was because I anticipated the hissing that I came.'⁹ In Ryan's account, Kettle then hammered the table with his fist and with a glare at Pearse announced that he would defend the right, even of his enemies, to free speech. The Freeman's Journal reported him as saying:

⁸ Desmond Ryan, Remembering Sion (London 1937), p. 164.

⁹ Freeman's Journal, 21 November 1914.

He was not...going to develop an attack upon Professor Mahaffy but when it was gravely suggested that either speakers or newspapers should be suppressed in Dublin for expressing opinions which he thought wrong, but which the history of Ireland well warranted, he should be there fighting the cause of his personal enemies.¹⁰

At this juncture, his enemies in the audience repaid his concern for their freedom by accusing him of being a traitor to Ireland for wearing a British uniform.

Mr. Kettle retorted that he learned from his Norse ancestors how to fight a battle hard and clean and remarked to his interrupter "When my father was wearing the King's uniform as a convict I wonder where was yours."¹¹

It was an unedifying scene and particularly disturbed Pearse who felt Kettle had made 'a bad job of it with the crowd',¹² and who thought that 'if Stephen Gwynn had been there instead of Kettle he would have put up a case for himself.'¹³

In January 1915, Kettle was commissioned in the Leinster Regiment. His recruiting work continued apace in spite of the fact that his health was so bad that it was becoming a source of anxiety to his friends. Nevertheless, Kettle was prepared to make almost any sacrifice for the cause. He told a heckler at a meeting at Kells,

...his army pay was deducted from the salary he enjoyed as a University professor...he abandoned every penny that he used to earn at literature... when he decided upon the grave step of joining the Colours the first thing he had to do was to give up his house,...disperse his library...pack his furniture...and send his wife and daughter to England.¹⁴

The exile of Mary and Betty Kettle was, happily, only temporary for they were in residence in Upper Leeson Street, Dublin, by Easter 1916.

This work of addressing meetings finally came to an end in May 1915 when

¹⁰Ibid.

¹¹Ibid.

¹²Desmond Ryan, Remembering Sion (London 1937), p. 165.

¹³Ibid.

Kettle's regiment began serious training in preparation for their new duties abroad. Kettle had been given a staff appointment in Belfast but when the 16th Division sailed for France in December, he was not with them. Instead he remained in Ireland with the reserve. He was transferred to Newbridge in County Kildare where he was a staff officer with the 9th Dublin Fusiliers. In the time spared from his military duties he composed, with Stephen Gwynn, a volume of martial light verse, Battle songs for the Irish Brigades, and he was also busy with articles putting forward the allied case to the Irish public. For Kettle it was turning out to be very much a literary war. Probably it was never intended that he should see military action. T.P. O'Connor's biographer records that in May 1915, O'Connor was making attempts, at the instigation of Kettle's friends, to have him honourably discharged.

He [Kettle] proved to be unfit for army life, though he made useful recruiting speeches, and was advised by his commanding officer to tender his resignation for medical reasons. This advice was coupled with a promise to obtain for Kettle a letter of thanks from the army council.¹⁵

We may doubt if Kettle would ever have consented to such an arrangement. According to Mary Kettle, 'he was chafing to be at the front.'¹⁶ In any case, before O'Connor's lobbying at the War Office had produced any results, the situation was transformed by the Easter Rising.

¹⁵Hamilton Fyffe, T.P. O'Connor (London 1934), p. 252.

¹⁶Mary Kettle, 'Memoir', p. 34.

3. Kettle and the Easter Rising

To W.G. Fallon, Kettle remarked of the Easter Rising, 'The circumstances of this rebellion are so peculiar one does not know which side one ought to join.'¹ His bemusement was shared by the general public to whom the events of Easter Week came as a complete surprise. Kettle, himself, did not participate in the military operations although men from his depot were rushed to Dublin to quell the rebellion. His brother-in-law, Lieutenant Eugene Sheehy, was in charge of a company of Dublin Fusiliers operating in the vicinity of the GPO whilst his brother, Laurence, had an even closer glimpse of the action as a prisoner of the Irish Citizen Army. Laurence Kettle's car had been commandeered at St Stephen's Green on Easter Monday morning by the rebel forces led by Countess Markievicz. When he protested vigorously about the expropriation of the vehicle, he was led off, with a pistol at his back, into the College of Surgeons where he was confined for the duration of hostilities. Kettle's other brother-in-law and close personal friend, Frank Sheehy Skeffington, was to be one of the most notable fatalities of the Rising. The effect of this tragedy upon Kettle was incalculable and did much to shape his response to the political situation in Ireland in the wake of the rising.

Shee Skeffington had been attempting to organise a Citizens' Defence Force to stop the looting of the Dublin city centre by the Dublin slum dwellers which was the most notable immediate effect of the declaration in arms of the Irish Republic. On the evening of 25 April, on his way home, he was arrested by a patrol of the Royal Irish Rifles and taken to Portobello Barracks. Later that night, he was taken out as a hostage on a patrol led

¹W.G. Fallon, 'Notes for a lecture on Kettle', National Library of Ireland, MS 22,598.

by Captain Bowen-Colthurst who was convinced that Sheehy Skeffington was a dangerous Sinn Feiner. Bowen-Colthurst, who had been badly shell-shocked at the battle of Mons appears to have reacted to the military crisis of the Rising by lapsing into homicidal mania. In the course of his enforced military expedition with Bowen-Colthurst, Sheehy Skeffington witnessed his captor's cold-blooded murder of a youth of seventeen in the Rathmines Road. To ensure that Sheehy Skeffington could not give evidence against him, Bowen-Colthurst had him executed the next morning, along with two other luckless journalists who had fallen into his hands.

On 27 April, Kettle's wife Mary, accompanied by her sister, Mrs Culhane, went to Portobello Barracks to enquire about Sheehy Skeffington. They were promptly placed under temporary arrest by Bowen-Colthurst who denied all knowledge of Sheehy Skeffington, and threatened and verbally abused the two women. That night, Bowen-Colthurst led a patrol on a raid of the Sheehy Skeffington home. The soldiers smashed windows, fired rifles in the air and ransacked the house. Not until 11 May, and then only after considerable prevarication by the military authorities, was Bowen-Colthurst arrested. A court martial in June which found him guilty and sentenced him to be detained indefinitely in Broadmoor was followed in August by a government commission of enquiry which investigated the entire incident in detail. By that time there was a marked tendency in the Nationalist press to treat the Sheehy Skeffington case as a paradigm of military brutality during the suppression of the Rising, and to demand further enquiries into alleged atrocities.

Mary Kettle afterwards told the poet, Katherine Tynan, that Kettle had gone to Mrs Sheehy Skeffington and offered, if she wished it, to resign from the army. 'But my sister would not accept such a sacrifice.'² The death of his

²Katherine Tynan, The years of the shadow (London 1919), p. 81.

brother-in-law continued to prey on Kettle's mind even amidst the carnage of the Somme. In one of his last letters home, he wrote to Robert Lynd, 'The Skeffington case oppresses me with horror.'³ Nevertheless, whatever his feelings of personal loss, Kettle retained the ability to discriminate between atrocities committed in the heat of battle, or as a result of an individual's insanity, and terror as a deliberate policy. It was in the use of violence and terror in the latter sense that he thought the German armies should be singled out as being especially frightful. The tragedy of Sheehy Skeffington's murder remained a deeply felt, personal loss but it did not in any way change his view that, in the final analysis, British and Irish soldiers must fight on the same side to deliver Europe from the Prussian.

Neither did the execution of the leaders of the Easter Rising shift him from this fundamental belief. He had no sympathy with the rebellion. Mary Kettle recalled his bitterness that the rebels 'had spoiled it all - spoiled his dream of a free united Ireland in a free Europe'.⁴ But he also felt that 'the only thing madder than the insurrection was the manner of its suppression.'⁵ He knew at once that the execution of the leaders was a political mistake and he resented the imposition of martial law on Ireland. If anything, the executions made him even more eager to put his own beliefs to the ultimate test. In his wife's words 'He brought pressure to bear that he might be sent immediately to the front.'⁶

There remained but two political chores for Kettle to undertake in Ireland. One was to give evidence for the defence at the court martial of his University

³Robert Lynd, 'The work of T.M. Kettle' in New Statesman, 30 September 1916.

⁴Mary Kettle, 'Memoir', p. 36.

⁵Ibid.

⁶Ibid.

College colleague and adversary on the committee of the original Irish Volunteers, Eoin MacNeill. MacNeill who was palpably innocent of any involvement in the Rising and who had made strenuous efforts to prevent it, received on 29 May a life sentence apparently for his work in the anti-recruiting campaign. Then, on 3 July 1916, Kettle attended a meeting of the National Directory of the United Irish League which accepted the government's proposal of immediate introduction of Home Rule, allowing for the temporary exclusion of Ulster. Kettle was apparently under no illusions as to how far the word of Lloyd George, the minister responsible for these negotiations, could be trusted. Addressing the meeting he observed,

Mr Chairman, if a very needy and somewhat dishonest individual owed you £32, and when you proceeded to sue him, you found that he had squared the judge and packed the jury, but that at the last moment he offered you £26 on account, what do you think you ought to do? Mr Chairman, I am but a poor lawyer, but I do strongly advise you to accept the money without prejudice.⁷

These were the last words Kettle spoke on a political platform. Whatever the vicissitudes of spirit brought upon him by the Easter Rising and its aftermath, his humour and his sense of the pragmatic were apparently inextinguishable. On 14 July, he set sail for France.

⁷J.J. Horgan, 'Lieutenant T.M. Kettle', Weekly Cork Examiner, 30 September 1916.

4. The last crusade

Kettle was no less ready than Pearse and the other executed leaders of the Easter Rising to demonstrate his readiness to die for his beliefs. To fall in action would be at once a sacramental act and a bearing of testimony. In the Hibernian Journal of November 1915, Kettle had written a long article on 'The worker priests of France', a survey of recent French literature detailing acts of heroism by army chaplains and members of religious orders who had been caught up in the fighting. Many of these priests were members of religious orders that had been banned in France in 1905 and who consequently were denied exemption from military service. In fact, this anticlerical measure had, Kettle thought, 'recoiled singularly on those who saw in it a lever for the disintegration of the Church'.¹ For, as he went on, 'the soldier-priests have been the little leaven that has leavened the whole mass.'² Kettle cited approvingly the numerous examples of priests giving mass in the trenches and then advancing with the soldiers into action, crucifixes held high. He quoted the dying words of one such priest with a relish that recalls, in a rather different context, the blood sacrifice doctrine of Pearse. 'I do not fear death...I have seen it and seen it too close at this moment: there is nothing horrid about it, for it leads to happiness.'³ Kettle found, in the material he was reviewing, 'a rich, even an inexhaustible repository of Catholic heroism'⁴ and concluded his article with the stirring reminder to his Irish, Catholic readers 'When they burned Louvain, the barbarians lit a fire which is not easily put out.'⁵

¹T.M. Kettle, 'The soldier-priests of France' in the Hibernian Journal, November 1915.

²Ibid.

³Ibid.

⁴Ibid.

⁵Ibid.

It was then a Crusade in which he was engaged, and like any good Crusader, his commitment was total. As the troop ship slipped out of Kingstown harbour in the July evening and Kettle looked his last on Ireland, he recorded the moment with a poem that seemed almost to welcome death. In a prologue to the poem 'On leaving Ireland', he wrote:

I never felt my own essay 'On saying goodbye' so profoundly aux trefonds du coeur. The sun was a clear globe of blood which we caught hanging over Ben Edar with a trail of pure blood vibrating to us across the waves. It dropped into darkness before we left the deck. Some lines came to me, suggested by a friend who thought the mood cynical.⁶

The poem is perhaps the fullest rendering of the state of imaginative exaltation in which Kettle went to war.

As the sun died in blood, and hill and sea
Grew to an altar, red with mystery,
One came who knew me (it may be over-
-much)
Seeking the cynical and the staining touch,
But I, against the great sun's burial
Thought only of bayonet-flash and bugle-
-call,
And saw him as God's eye upon the deep,
Closed in the dream in which no women weep,⁷
And I knew that even I shall fall on sleep.

Of course he could not sustain this mood - who could? The poem was Kettle in extremis, a faithful reflection of one side of his personality, the agonising, moralistic, side - pessimistic almost to the point of mysticism. When he reached France, his spirits lifted. The life of camp he found enjoyable, if physically wearying. His sociability had ample outlet and he was a popular officer. The active life seems to have removed his tendency to depression; physical discomfort and military discipline working against the excessive psychological introversion which led him to such feats of interior

⁶T.M. Kettle, Poems and parodies (Dublin 1916).

⁷Ibid.

self-flagellation. And he was determined to record with his pen the life of the trenches, which, as the latter part of The ways of war shows, he did vividly and effectively. He was not, then, unhappy in his new, uncomfortable, occasionally violent world. He had, perhaps, found once again a basic human community of the type he had described in another, more peaceful, context.

You and I and the man around the corner, or over the sea are humanity...it is the nature of us all to come to an amplest self expression by living out our lives, here and now, for a community which is small enough to know and love.⁸

A letter Kettle wrote to one of his old political friends from East Tyrone, W.V. McLaughlin, sounds a calm, even optimistic note. The references to the Easter Rising and to the aborted negotiations with Lloyd George over the implementation of Home Rule in July 1916 show that Kettle was slowly losing touch with the world of politics. Increasingly it must have seemed to him that the world outside of the war zone was unreal, insignificant even, and that a new world with new political alliances was being forged amongst the men of the Allied armies in the mud of Flanders.

What a kind thought of you to write, and what an awfully kind letter, and what super-excellent cigars! I am now smoking one with great ease in a reserve dug-out which is a model of luxury, we actually have a real straw mattress instead of empty Ammunition boxes on which we last rested. We moved out of the line yesterday, alas! to return too soon, on the whole however, we had very few losses, and an easy time except for the heat, grime, insects, and rats, that is to say...

About things in Ireland...you may be entirely happy in the consciousness that you and I did exactly the right thing, The Sinn Fein nightmare upset me a little, but then if you tickle the ear of a short tempered elephant with a popgun and he and he walks on you, that is a natural concatenation of events. We took the side of justice, we did the

⁸T.M. Kettle, 'The economics of nationalism' in The day's burden (Dublin 1968), p. 109.

right thing, we helped to bring North and South together, you made your sacrifices, and I mine and our work remains. If I return I count on doing some little work in exactly the direction you have in mind. The superb work of the Ulster Division and the changed attitude of Sir Edward [Carson] fills me with cheerfulness. Does it not seem exactly as if the right thing happened at last, as if English statesmanship has thrown down its cards, and left the two great Irish parties to come to a settlement...

I myself am quite extraordinarily happy. If it should come my way to die I shall sleep in the France I always loved, and shall know that I have done something towards bringing to birth the Ireland one has dreamed of.⁹

Kettle did not glamourise or glorify war. He described it in The ways of war as 'an Assize of blood',¹⁰ in which millions of men would be marched to be 'torn with shells and bullets, gutted with bayonets, tortured with vermin, to dig themselves into holes and grovel there in mud and fragments of the flesh of their comrades, to rot with disease, to go mad, and in the most perciful cases to die'.¹¹ Even without the carnage of a full scale offensive, life in the trenches was very hard for one of Kettle's frail physique. After a short spell, his health broke down and he was returned to base camp. 'That he ever reached France.' wrote Denis Gwynn, 'in view of his physical unfitness, had been a marvel to his friends.'¹² T.P. O'Connor's well intentioned efforts on Kettle's behalf now seems to have had some effect for he was offered the job of base censor. Kettle would not, however, be parted from his men and he re-joined them at the Front for their stage of the Somme offensive. On

⁹Kettle to McLaughlin, 7 August 1914, Kettle papers.

¹⁰'Why Ireland fought' in The ways of war, p. 58.

¹¹Ibid.

¹²Denis Gwynn, Life of John Redmond (London 1932), p. 525.

4 September he wrote home:

This note is really a conditional 'goodbye' to you all. We have been on the march for days, sleeping on the bare ground, eating what we could, and so on, and are moving up tonight into the Battle of the Somme. The bombardment, the destruction and bloodshed are beyond all imagination. Nor did I ever think that the valour of simple men could be quite as beautiful as that of my Dublin Fusiliers. I have had two chances of leaving them - one on sick leave and one to take a Staff job. I have chosen to stay with my comrades.¹³

He came unscathed through the first part of the 16th Division's offensive at the village of Guillemont. To his brother he wrote from the battlefield, 'I am calm and happy but desperately anxious to live.'¹⁴ Then, remembering that, after all, the Kettles were the 'black strangers' of Baldoyle, he reverted to the imagery of the Norse Gods of war that had fascinated him in childhood. 'Somewhere the Choosers of the Slain are touching, as in our Norse story they used to touch, with invisible wands, those who are to die.'¹⁵

At midnight on 8 September, Kettle's battalion advanced to positions before the village of Ginchy. The stench from the dead that littered their way was so overpowering that Kettle and his men wore wet rags doused in footpowder over their faces. At dawn on the 9th, they attacked Ginchy. As Kettle led his company out of their trench, he was momentarily in a bent position. A bullet passed through the gap at the top of the steel waistcoat that he was wearing, hitting him in the heart. The officer in whose arms he died was by an ironic coincidence, Second Lieutenant James Emmet Dalton who, as General Emmet Dalton of the army of

¹³ Dublin Daily Express, 23 September 1916.

¹⁴ Mary Kettle, 'Memoir', p. 38.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

the Irish Free State was to perform a similar service for Michael Collins at Beal na Blath. The Dublin Fusiliers swept on to drive the Germans out of Ginchy. Later in the day, Kettle was buried on the battlefield by, according to Dalton, a detachment of the Welsh Guards. This procedure was strictly against army regulations but was a tribute, perhaps, to a remarkable and well-liked officer. In the night, heavy shelling churned the ground over and no trace of Kettle's burial place was ever found. His name today is listed on the gigantic memorial commemorating the thousands of allied soldiers whose remains mingled anonymously and irrevocably with the mud of the battlefield.

There was a final political testament which he had sent to his wife on 3 September. He had meant, he wrote in this document, to write a book about Ireland and England which he would have called The two fools; a tragedy of errors. All the folly of England, he claimed, and all the folly of Ireland had been required to produce the political situation prevailing in his homeland.

I have mixed much with Englishmen and with Protestant Ulstermen and I know that there is no real or abiding reason for the gulfs, saltier than the sea, that now dismember the natural alliance of both of them with us Irish Nationalists. It needed only a Fiat Lux of a kind very easily compassed to replace the unnatural by the natural.

In the name, and by the seal, of the blood given in the last two years, I ask for Colonial Home Rule for Ireland, a thing essential in itself and essential as a prologue to the reconstruction of the Empire. Ulster will agree.

And I ask for immediate withdrawal of martial law in Ireland and an amnesty for all Sinn Fein prisoners. If this war has taught us anything it is that great things can be done only in a great way.¹⁶

¹⁶Drogheda Independent, 4 November 1916.

Although there was a withdrawal of martial law with an amnesty shortly thereafter for the prisoners of Easter Week, and although Ireland did, in a way, achieve colonial home rule, it is hard not to conclude that Kettle was, at the end, out of touch with the new political situation in Ireland. He had too much imagination himself to be able to conceive of the unimaginative dourness with which Ulster Unionism would cling to its ancestral shibboleths. Certainly he did not anticipate the speedy demise of the parliamentary party and the rise of a harsher form of nationalism - republicanism backed up by the gun. Such an Ireland would have been a source of torment to him. So perhaps by his death he was spared much. Certainly he was spared the disillusion and disgust that the survivors of the Battle of the Somme felt towards their generals. Perhaps even Kettle's idealism would not have survived the protracted muddy slaughter of that most ineptly waged of wars. But consider his last poem, to his daughter Betty, and too well known to quote in full here, with its lines

Know that we fools, now with the
foolish dead,
Died not for flag, nor King, nor
Emperor,
But for a dream, born in a
herdsman's shed,
And for the secret Scripture of
the poor.

When in 1921 a committee was formed to erect a memorial in Stephen's Green, it was proposed that these lines be inscribed on it. The Board of works refused on the grounds that 'the quotation would cause contention and possibly hostility to the memorial.'¹⁷ This refusal persisted for 36 years. Evidently the political tone in the new Ireland was being set

¹⁷Irish News, 6 July 1921.

in the spirit of those hecklers at the Thomas Davis memorial meeting who had called Kettle a traitor for wearing khaki and whose rights of free speech he had sought to defend. Whatever may be said about the subtleties of the political climate of the new Irish state, it was a mean response to a life generously lived for Ireland. And a response that indicated how little Ireland could afford to lose either his passionate common sense, his splendid gift of debunking good humour and, most crucially of all, his independence of mind.

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