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THE GENERAL APPROACH
SOCIAL, INTELLECTUAL, POLITICAL

My FIRST TASK is to offer my profound thanks to the authorities at Ormond College for my election to the Scott Fellowship, an honour that I esteem the more since I am to be the first Scott Fellow. Without doubt more eminent men will follow when I have left, but no one will ever be able to dispute with me the honour of instituting the first fellowship, and I appreciate it very much.

It is that fellowship which has enabled me to give this course; and I wish, as the circumstances seem suitable, to start in Australia and work from there to Britain. It is suitable, but it is dangerous since it entails my talking about something of which my knowledge is limited, before an audience many of whom will know a great deal about it, while all I have to offer as a reason for this choice is that most shadowy and deceptive of phantoms, an hypothesis based on an impression. It is, however, a very strong impression. I realize now that it has been building up in my mind for years, though it only became clear to me when I arrived in Melbourne and saw your nineteenth-century architecture, particularly the architecture of your churches and chapels. I then recognized a feeling which came upon me two years ago on my first trip to Pakistan and India. On the first morning of my arrival I went for a walk and there, peeping at me from behind the trees, was a building of unmistakable English Gothic architecture, utterly unsuited to that climate, utterly unsuited to the surrounding architecture. And that recollection carries me back to my first visits to Boston and Philadelphia, when I taught for two terms in the University of Pennsylvania. Again, when I went for my first walk I saw the same architecture, architecture of which the style and inspiration was unmistakably British, though mixed in those cities with more that was of German or Italian origin.

I have gained from these memories the impression of a com-

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mon civilization. It is an English-speaking culture, I may not call it British, since it must include the Irish; a culture with the same modes of thought, the same often, alas, rather deficient aesthetic standards; a culture which had been extended all over the world in the early and middle nineteenth century.

I need not say that this impression is not based only upon fancied resemblances in buildings. It is reinforced by other things, it is reinforced by the fact that many of the denominations which used the churches whose architecture impressed me were the same denominations as I could have found in Britain. Some of them were denominations which in the form they had assumed, were, I believe, peculiar to English-speaking countries, such as the Methodists, the Church of England, the Unitarians and the Baptists. Others were denominations whose origins lay more completely outside British history, such as the Presbyterians or the Roman Catholics, but even so this Presbyterianism had been strongly moulded by Scottish or Welsh influences; and the Catholicism I saw was often Irish Catholicism which is, I venture to say it with the deepest respect, not quite the same as that of the Catholicism of any other nation. All these people derived from the British Isles, many of them had kept up their connections with the British Isles, and they seem to have exported thence their prejudices and their principles. For instance quite recently I had the honour to take part in a large conference of Presbyterian ministers, and I was surprised to find that the Great Disruption, which I should have thought was a movement which arose from conditions peculiar to Scotland and the position of the landowners in Scotland, had been exported to these shores, and had had profound effects here, while the controversies in your history about state aid to Churches seem to have been exported, lock, stock and barrel, from the controversies of the England of the same period.

The same close connection appears in quite different things. While I was working in Philadelphia, I wrote an essay on popular romanticism, which subsequently appeared among the essays called *Studies in Social History* which we presented to George Trevelyan on his eightieth birthday. For this work I required access to a good many books in which people had been much interested in the 1830s and 1840s, and in which for good reason

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not many people have been interested since. They had all been published in Britain, and referred to British conditions, but it was possible for me to do the entire essay from books which I read in the University Library at Pennsylvania. They had been in Philadelphia in one library or another ever since their publication. I have no doubt the same books would be found in the public libraries in Melbourne. When I visited Chicago I met a member of the University of Chicago who was interested in the early theatre of Chicago and he told me that plays which I had been considering, which had been successes in Drury Lane, had appealed also to the same kind of audience in Chicago; I would like to make a similar comparison with the Melbourne theatre. I could go on indefinitely, I could go to the legacy of the common law, not only in positive law, but to ways of thought and terms of political language which you will find in every political controversy. I could go to the complexities of economic relationships and the resemblances in the patterns of commercial practice. But perhaps I have said enough to suggest that historical conception which some historian, younger and better skilled than myself, will, I hope, some day work out.

It is the conception of a great diaspora of the English-speaking people. They leave a common cradle. They go in widely different directions—to Australia, to New Zealand, in certain capacities to India, to South Africa, to Canada, to the United States, to the Argentine and even to Patagonia, where there is a colony of Welsh farmers. They are confronted by different conditions, they experience widely different fates, but they have so much in common, brought with them from their common origin, that you cannot understand any section of them completely unless you take account of the whole. It was a great movement of men and women comparable to the folk-wandering of the Germans who broke into the Roman Empire in the fifth century; it is also possibly comparable to the great folk-movement of the Arabs which bore the tide of Mohammedan conquest right across the world in the early Middle Ages. As in all cases of the folk-wandering, the forces behind it were various. There was, just as in the case of the Mohammedan conquest, a missionary instinct, in this case the missionary instinct either of Christians as Christians, or the missionary instinct of the people who felt that they

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had a civilization which was better than all the other civilizations of the world. There were also the temptations of power, in this case the possibilities offered by sea power, which made conquest and colonization relatively easy. But there was one force behind this movement which I should guess lay behind many of the great movements of people: the drive of hunger. In most cases something had caused a population somewhere to increase so fast that it could no longer be easily supported in its home grounds. Thus to the temptations to wander might be added the compulsion of necessity. A situation might develop in which men had to leave their homes or die, or be content to live a life not much different from death.

Some such compulsion was behind this wandering. From some point in the eighteenth century, the population of Britain had been increasing. In 1801 the population of England and Wales had probably reached nine million persons. The process went on. In 1851 the population of England and Wales was nearly eighteen million,—it had doubled or nearly doubled. In 1901 the population of England and Wales had gone up to about thirty-six million, it had nearly doubled again. There is a comparable increase in Scotland and in Ireland. It is calculated that in 1845 the population of Ireland numbered no less than 8,250,000 persons and that in 1851 if there had been no potato famine it would have been nine million persons. That is more than the whole population of Australia a hundred years later. These figures for England and Wales, Scotland, and Ireland probably meant that there were more people in the countries than they could reasonably support, for in 1801 even in England most of the people lived in the country. This meant that conditions in the country districts were bad and were deteriorating. They were very bad in parts of England at the beginning of the century where to the results of over-population were added the effects of enclosures and bad harvests. But they were much worse in Ireland. Ireland is naturally a poor country. It has little or no natural mineral wealth, much of the land is bog and so covered with peat that it is very difficult to use, and much is barren rock. Of course it had been misgoverned, and there is, no doubt, much to be said against Irish landlords, though much that has been said has been said in ignorance. But whatever landlords

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there had been, whatever the government might have done, nothing could have enabled Ireland to support between eight and nine million people in anything but the direst, most hopeless and most dangerous poverty. The only thing which kept them alive at all was the potato, and in the late summer of 1845, and in the winter of 1846 and in 1847 the potatoes were dug from the pits, stricken with disease, black, rotten and useless. Therefore many of the Irish were faced with the dilemma–go or die. It is calculated that above a million went and nearly a million died.

This is the pressure of population at its starkest. In more moderate form that pressure was being exerted all through the British Isles. It was not always the threat of actual starvation. It was more often felt by people who saw no hope of improvement in their condition. There was a whisper in the ear of people in all ranks of society, since the increase of population had affected all ranks of society, 'unless you wish never to improve your lot, unless you are content going to sink into a lower level, you must go, you must go, you must go'. Many listened to it, the intelligent labourer, the younger sons of small farmers, the graduates of Glasgow, Edinburgh and Trinity College, Dublin, who saw little chance of fruitfully employing their talents as medical men, lawyers or divines in the crowded land of their birth.

They had a good chance of improving their condition abroad largely because behind this movement there was another force equal in power to the population explosion. It is what is called the Industrial Revolution, that is, the application of mechanical invention and the methods of mass production to British industry. The revolution was going forward with increasing speed in Great Britain, from about 1780 on into the nineteenth century. This, in due course, supplied the transport which made emigration possible. It also kept the trade routes in action along which the emigrant ships might travel, but what was much more important than either of those things, it was this revolution which supplied the chances of employment in the countries of reception. It provided capital for their development, it provided a hungry demand for raw materials, for cotton from the southern States of the United States, for wool from Australia, for timber

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from Canada, and for gold from wherever it could be found, and in due course, for food wherever it could be produced most cheaply, all of which had to be paid for by the goods which the new machines were creating in increasing abundance. It was this that enabled the countries of reception to pass rapidly from the state of subsistence economy to more elaborate communities with a much richer mode of life, and it secured that this new world which was coming into existence was largely a world of cities, and not only a world of frontiersmen.

I have called what resulted from this movement a 'culture', that is a situation which develops when a number of peoples and nations exist at the same time maintaining the same spiritual and intellectual backgrounds, using the same forms of thought and, in this case, speaking the same language. It was by no means a political unity. I suppose that as many people settled outside the British Empire, as within it, nor was it by any means a union of hearts. Referring to Australia, Sir Keith Hancock writes, 'Men do not emigrate in despair, but in hope'. That may be so, but at the moment of their departure from their mother country they do not always go in peace. When a man leaves his native haunts he may have been inspired by hope, but he may also have been impelled to go by hunger, or distress, or frustration or injustice, and these experiences may make him not look back on those who controlled his own home with the warmest consideration and regard. There was indeed a great variety of attitudes. In the famous pre-Raphaelite picture, 'The Last of England', there is a young couple sitting together on the deck of an emigrant ship and looking backward with what seems to be puzzled misery at the gradual disappearance of that land which they had called home, but which had no place for them. Standing behind them there is a figure that I take to be an Irishman, who laughs at the disappearing country and shakes his fist. Where the English went the Irish went with them, and with both races went the bitter feud between the Irish on the one hand and the English and the Scots on the other.

This did not really mean the break-up of the culture by the intrusion of an alien element. Hate may divide it, but it does not separate. The Irish owe much more to their English-speaking environment than they would care to accept. It was a friend from

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the National University of Ireland who first taught me how many of the ideas of Irish nationalism derived from the English common law. But the presence of the Irish encouraged a tendency in the new societies which was to be important: a tendency towards, if not hostility to the old society, at least hostility to those who traditionally governed it. Of course it was not true of all the people in the new societies in the new reception areas: there were many who came to the new societies who had enjoyed satisfactory positions in the old order: there were more who valued the old order of things when they could attain a reasonable place in the society which embodied it. There were officials, there were clergy of the Church of England, there were half pay officers who settled abroad and with these there were many who might be called the gentry of aspiration, men and women who had not started as gentlefolk, but who very much wished to assume the role. For neither the English nor the Scots lost all their social foibles when crossing salt water, and where they went snobbery went also. Nevertheless, the way in which the society in the new reception areas was recruited, and the way it made its money, made it likely that many of those who formed it should view the governing classes of the old country, their habits, their values, their pretensions, with hostility and some contempt.

And this brings me to a point which may have been troubling some of my audience. They may have been troubled by the question, why in a course of lectures ostensibly on British history, have I indulged myself in so long a preface which might seem mainly to be about communities outside Britain. Of course I might have done this because I wanted to make the point that to understand the history of Australia you must also understand something of the history of Britain, as also of the history of Canada and the United States, and in matters of government, India and Ireland; for that I believe to be a true point. But I have had a simpler reason for what I have done. Great Britain, or parts of it, was also a reception area in the folk-wanderings I have described, and the communities which developed in Great Britain assumed all the characteristics of new communities.

To make this point clear, it is only necessary to consider the movements of the Irish. It is often assumed that under the im-

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pact of the potato famine, most of the emigrating Irish went to the United States of America. I do not believe this to be true. After all, it was much easier and cheaper for very poor people in very desperate circumstances to go to Liverpool or Glasgow or Cardiff, rather than to go to New York or Boston. It is said that in the famine years of 1845-7, no less than 400,000 Irishmen came to Britain, but that figure is doubtful. What is more certain is that in the census of 1851 there were living in Britain 733,866 persons who had been born in Ireland, 519,959 of whom lived in England, and that neglects the numbers who escaped being counted, which, the Irish being what they are, were I think fairly considerable. Of course, some of those may have been making England a mere port of call until they could scrape enough money together to go overseas. But it is worth considering that 1851, the census year, is three to four years after the famine, and that not a few who had come to England during the famine would have died, or gone overseas already. More significant is the fact that by 1861 the number of those in England who had been born in Ireland had increased to 601,634, and to that number must by now be added a very considerable number of Irish children born after arrival. So it seems clear that a very large number of the Irish had come to make their homes in England and Scotland, a conclusion which some knowledge of the modern social structure of many British cities would suggest.

But the Irish were not the only men and women to come to British cities in these years. In the first half of the nineteenth century British cities were growing rapidly. Indeed, considering the nature of their growth and the nature of what was produced, they were growing horribly. Between 1821 and 1831 the addition to the numbers of people in Great Britain living in towns of over 20,000 inhabitants was no less than 1,100,000 persons. Between 1831 and 1841 it was 1,270,000 persons. Between 1841 and 1851 the addition was 1,800,000 persons. These people did not all come from Ireland. They came from the highlands of Scotland, they came from the valleys and mountains of Wales, they came from the English and the Scottish countryside. It was often a countryside quite near the city, but in these matters distance may not matter. If a man or woman has to leave the sanc-

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tions of home—if such sanctions have existed—and the customary life that he and his ancestors have lived; if he has to leave these for a new life, new companions and a new way of making his living, then even if the new life is being lived in a town only thirty miles off, even if it is being lived near a mine in the next valley, he would be likely to be as much uprooted as if he had crossed the seas; and for illiterate or partially illiterate people, in periods when communication was still relatively difficult, the possibility of coming back or communicating backwards might not be very great.

There was therefore a new, uprooted population in the great cities of England and Scotland, as there was a new uprooted population in the great cities of America and in the great cities of Australia. In Britain also there was the development of new forms of wealth, outside the time-hallowed system of agricultural wealth. Of course, Britain had never been entirely agricultural. There had always been places like London and Bristol in which men with non-agricultural wealth had been powerful. But such places had been few, and such men were a relatively small portion of the community. Nor were they ever the people who really controlled its government. Moreover, new fortunes had not remained outside the old system for very long. During the course of English history it has always proved to be possible, more possible than in other countries, to absorb any great fortune into the establishment. Even in sixteenth-century England it was said to be easy to make gentlemen. In the early nineteenth century it was very easy for a rich man to make himself a gentleman. All you had to do was to buy an estate, send your son to the right school and there you were, or there at any rate he was. In this way the Baring family, the Peel family, the Gladstone family, were all absorbed into the governing classes of the country. But what was happening in the second quarter of the nineteenth century was too massive to be absorbed in this way. Great or moderate wealth developed in the hands of people who could not be absorbed or did not want to be adsorbed; and cutting across that society there was a division that was becoming difficult even for a wealthy man to cross, the division between Church and Dissent. Therefore in that England a society developed which was divorced from the life which had gone on

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before. It developed in great cities. Sometimes these were to all intents and purposes new. Sometimes they formed round the nucleus of an old town, but even then what was in effect a new community came into existence. Very often the boundaries of the newly-populated area were different, and the social structure that developed was different from what had existed before. Very often also the government had been in the hands of a group which excluded the new men who were coming to be important. In many cases the new towns had forms of government which were utterly unsuited to the new communities which were growing up; for instance, until the 1830s, Manchester was governed by a manorial court. In some cases, the nucleus of these new towns had been so minute and so unimportant that what came into being was in effect a new community; sometimes, as in Middlesbrough, practically nothing had previously existed on their sites. They were in fact all new communities and their cities; their natural leaders were outside the old conception of an ordered society, presided over by the nobility and gentry. And so the idea which I want to put before you first of all, is that Birmingham, Manchester, Liverpool, Leeds, Glasgow and the rest were indeed the first and for long perhaps the most outstanding creations of this great folk-wandering, and they were in many ways as intellectually remote from the old as if they were in Australia or America.

But there was a serious difference between their situation and that of their contemporaries overseas. They were intellectually remote, they were removed in sympathy from the older world which existed in Britain, but they were not physically remote. The old world of the old Britain was all around them in massive force. Only a few miles out of a manufacturing town you might well come to the estate, or even the seat, of a great territorial magnate. Perhaps the town was partly built on ground owned by such a territorial magnate, as for instance the Earl of Derby who owned quite lot of ground of cities in Lancashire. The old aristocratic society still ruled the Britain in which these new great cities flourished. It could tax their wealth in order to maintain what must seem to them the absurdities of the court, the outrageous corruptions of Parliament and the idle lives of the well-connected. It could frustrate their commerce by imposing a