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In Foundation 35 Edward James of the University of York's History Department considered the relationship between History and sf. Here he looks through proto-sf eyes at a historical problem which remains an ongoing, contemporary anguish.

Ed James has lately joined the editorial team of Foundation as Deputy Editor.

1886: Past Views of Ireland's Future

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The agreement in Autumn 1985 between Dublin and Westminster over the future of Northern Ireland seems to have done more to unite Protestant feeling in Northern Ireland than any other political move for a very long time. It does not take much of a prophet to anticipate that 1986 will be a politically stormy year in Northern Ireland. As such, perhaps, a thoroughly Irish way to celebrate the centenary of 1886, the first unsuccessful attempt to solve the Irish problem in a radical way. 1886 was a crucial year in the long and unhappy history of relations between Ireland and Britain, and one which might bring. And inspired, perhaps, by such fictional warnings as Sir George Chesney's *The Battle of Dorking* (1871), a number of writers decided to express their worries in the form of fictions set in the future. As Dr I.F. Clarke showed in his important study *Voices Prophesying War, 1763-1984* (1966), this form of reaction to political events was not uncommon in the late nineteenth century. No doubt the writers I shall discuss below would have been nonplussed to see themselves categorised with a genre that Brian Aldiss so convincingly argued began with *Frankenstein*. But the use of fiction to depict future worlds as a warning to the present (or, very occasionally, as a goal for which to aim) is an

inherent part of the whole movement of speculative fiction that we label sf. And I am encouraged that Darko Suvin, who has theorised much about what constitutes and does not constitute sf, is happy to include these examples within the fold: indeed he refers to them as “that curious and interesting subgenre, so far much too little if at all noticed, the ‘future civil war in Ireland,’ which flourished during the Home Rule debates” (Suvin 1983 p.5). (Most of what I have written below I wrote before I found a copy of Suvin’s book, but, like any researcher into the history of early sf, I have benefited greatly from it.) What the sf works I discuss here lack in literary or political imagination, I hope they may gain in curiosity value and perhaps even in contemporary political relevance. I offer some discussion of six of the thirteen sf novels about Home Rule listed in the bibliography, which I think are very illuminating about Irish Protestant attitudes now as well as one hundred years ago.

Firstly, a few words about the political background. Ireland had been invaded by the English in 1169, in the time of Henry II, and from then on some or all of Ireland was more or less loosely under English control. In the seventeenth century, symbolised in nationalist mythology by Oliver Cromwell’s invasion, came new and fatal developments: the settlement of Protestants in Northern Ireland and the repression of Catholicism. After the failure of the Irish Rebellion of 1798 (led by Protestants as well as Catholics), the parliament at Westminster decided to unite Ireland more closely than ever before to Britain: on January 1 1801 “the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland” came into being. It was a union which greatly benefited the landowning and industrial classes, the latter particularly in Belfast and other northern towns—above all, therefore, Protestants. But there was nationalist opposition to it, both constitutional and illegal. Catholics won political emancipation in the United Kingdom in 1829, and Catholic Irish MPs sat in Westminster for the first time; they spearheaded the various campaigns for political and economic reform for Ireland during the rest of the century. In 1886 there was for the first time a House of Commons which was (in current parlance) a “hung parliament,” in which the Catholic nationalist MPs, led by Parnell, held the balance. Even before that, however, in late 1885, the Liberal prime minister, William Ewart Gladstone, had decided that Home Rule was the only just solution to Ireland’s problems. His Home Rule Bill in 1886 offered very limited home rule; Westminster would still be in charge of defence, foreign affairs, customs and excise, the coinage, and so on. But opposition to it was intense and bitter, even from within Gladstone’s Liberal Party. And Northern Irish Protestants felt (as they do today) betrayed by the government of the country with which they wanted union. The Orange Order, the fiercely anti-Catholic organisation that had been outlawed earlier in the century, achieved a new lease of life, and began organising resistance to Gladstone’s proposals. Northern Unionists received plenty of support from the English Conservative opposition, whose determinedly pro-Unionist approach began then and hardly faltered until the 1980s. The Unionist cause led the Conservatives, now thought of as the party of “law and order,” into some strange declarations. In 1912 the Conservative leader Bonar Law (born in Canada, of Ulster Protestant stock) said, as Ulster Protestants were busy arming themselves to fight Home Rule, “I can imagine no lengths of resistance to which Ulster will go which I shall not be ready to support.” In 1886 Lord Randolph Churchill was a little more circumspect, but his catch-phrase “Ulster will fight; and Ulster will be right” must have encouraged many to plan for armed resistance, including the writers of our sf novels. (“Ulster” always means “Protestant Ulster” in the mouths of

Protestants and Conservatives, although in the 1886 parliament its nine counties were represented by 18 Catholic “Nationalists” and only 17 Protestant “Unionists”.) Churchill’s support was perhaps largely cynical; he wrote in February 1886 about “playing the Orange card . . . Please God it may turn out to be the ace of trumps and not the two.” But those for whom he spoke were far from cynical: they were fierce in their belief that they could not allow themselves to be ruled by Papists in Dublin. “Home Rule is Rome Rule.”

The Orange card was indeed the ace of trumps. The 1886 Home Rule Bill was a disastrous failure, and one that had profound consequences for Britain as well as Ireland. The Liberals were split; the Conservatives were forced into a new alliance with the Unionists; Ulster Protestants began to realise their strength; and Irish nationalists began to despair of peaceful parliamentary reform. Even so, a new election in 1892 gave Gladstone a chance to try again. The Home Rule Bill of 1893 was forced through the House of Commons, despite bitter opposition, but was thrown out by the House of Lords. Gladstone gave up. It was not until 1914 that a much stronger House of Commons, with a Liberal majority, passed a Home Rule Bill. It was due to come into effect in August 1914. Ulster Protestants were actively arming and training, and it emerged in 1914 that there was a real danger of British soldiers in Ireland refusing to obey Westminster’s orders to fight the “Ulster Volunteers.” There is little doubt that civil war would have broken out in Ireland in August 1914, had not Europe fortunately decided to stage the Great War. It was only after that war that the British government finally admitted the strength of Protestant feeling and conceded what neither Protestants nor Catholics had wanted: the partition of Ireland. The strength of Protestant feeling—underestimated by Irish nationalists and English liberals alike, in 1886, in 1914, and even in 1986—is dramatically revealed in these works of fiction.

1886 was not the first time that hopes and fears about the future of Ireland had been couched in fictional terms. But the only earlier example which I have read is very different in tone. *The Next Generation*, published in 1871, was written by John Francis Maguire: a Catholic from Cork, a lawyer and journalist, who founded the O’Connellite newspaper the *Cork Examiner*, was elected Mayor of Cork four times, and served as an MP at Westminster from 1857 until his death in 1872, the last eight years of that as Cork’s own representative. He travelled in the United States, and wrote a book on the Irish in America, which was much quoted by Gladstone. He was apparently well respected; both English parties offered him office, and after his death Queen Victoria was among the subscribers to a collection for the benefit of his wife and children.

Some of his radical political views emerge in *The Next Generation*, which looked forward twenty years to ‘1891’. (In what follows dates in inverted commas refer to fictional dates in an author’s future.) It is astonishing how many reforms had come to pass in those twenty years; an astonishing tribute to his optimism, perhaps. The Church of England had ceased to be the established church, and a cardinal and a papal nuncio sat in the House of Lords. A Charter of Women’s Independence had been passed; women had become MPs; a women’s university had been set up, and there were women’s clubs in London, the Minerva and the Mermaid. Maguire is certainly attempting to raise male smiles in portraying the ludicrous aspects of female emancipation, but there is surely a real reforming impulse there. Women in ‘1891’ had even become surgeons, and Maguire obviously realises the potential obscenity of that suggestion, for he devotes three pages to

defending the idea of teaching anatomy to women.

Volume 3 of this three-volume work is mostly concerned with Ireland, written from the point of view of a future enlightened Protestant. The narrator bemoans the evils which had befallen the country since the Act of Union with the United Kingdom in 1801: "When terrible crimes startled the public mind of England, too many in that country thought more of the crime than of the cause of the crime, and while attempting to deal with the symptoms, they altogether ignored the cause of the disease . . ."—something which Maguire regarded as "shocking bad doctoring!" During this time the Protestants "stood aloof from our Catholic brethren, but when we found how thoroughly consistent they were in their policy, which we now feel to have been honestly National, and when we began to appreciate the fact that no real cause of division any longer existed between ourselves and them, Heaven gave us grace enough to induce us to meet them fully half-way." The result of this agreement between Protestants and Catholics was Home Rule for Ireland. A viceroy was appointed—the Prince of Wales—who married an Irish girl, and presided over a prosperous country. "The prosperity is real. That you can see on the face of the country, in the dress of the people, in their houses, in their circumstances, ay, in their very manner." And Ireland and England themselves lived in peace together, which only happened, added Maguire the journalist, because the great output of anti-Irish literature had dried up: if this had not happened "not all the legislation, not all the wise and good measures that could be passed, could have reconciled this country to England . . . the evil done by the Newspaper Press was enormous." And Maguire argued that all that separated Irish from English was misinformation and lack of education: there was no racial difference between the English and the Irish. (This last was just as radical for Maguire's times as his women's lib views, for scientists had "proved" the physical differences between the various European races to most people's satisfaction. Around this time the great medieval historian E.A. Freeman went on a lecture tour of the States, and noted at one point that America's racial problems would all be solved when the last Irishman had been hanged for the murder of the last negro.)

The optimism of this Catholic politician and his belief in the possibility of the peaceful resolution of England's Irish question was shared by at least one subsequent novelist: the anonymous author of *The Battle of the Moy* (1883), in which a Home Rule Ireland declares itself a republic during a war between Britain and Germany, and wins prosperity for itself. (I do not know the message of the 1882 novel published in New York: *Ireland's War! Parnell Victorious*, although the title suggests that it was not dissimilar.) But the six novelists who reacted to Gladstone's proposals for Home Rule, whose works I describe below, were very different in tone: they are all fictionalised threats as much as warnings, from the pens of Unionists. Most are anonymous, and whether these Unionists are from Ireland, north or south, or from Britain I cannot tell, although the place of publication may sometimes be some clue.

The first I would mention is *The Great Irish Rebellion of 1886*, "retold by a Landlord" and "dedicated to all who hate treason, and who love God, their Queen and their country." Like all the others the main object of the hatred and distrust of the author is Gladstone himself: "a statesman whose insatiate love of the popularity and loud applause of the Great Unwashed mainly contributed to the disasters of the past year." Home Rule came about in '1886', but "The North! the glorious patriotic North! True Orange, loyal Ulster!" held out. "Had they forgotten their glorious old traditions? Had they forgotten

Aughrim? Did the mention of the memory of the Boyne strike on unenthusiastic ears? (etc etc)." (The answer, in '1886' as in 1886, is, of course, no.) The landlord narrator observes the disasters of '1886' from his home in "beautiful Donegal," the westernmost of the nine counties of Ulster; interestingly he comments that he had never joined any political body himself, "as I was so anxious to give no cause for dissatisfaction to any of my tenants or my neighbours"—all of the former at least were, presumably, Catholic. But his tolerance is rewarded by a Catholic plot to exterminate all landlords. The narrator's son joined the Orange Army. Protestants were slaughtered in the south, and even Belfast fell into rebel hands, the gas-works being blown up and many people slaughtered in a night-time uprising. The leader of the Nationalists was a "Yankee": even then the possibilities of transatlantic support for the nationalist cause were appreciated (unless this is a jibe at the nationalist leader Parnell, and his American mother). The Orange Army gathers, and we see them sitting in their camp at Carrickfergus: "the ruddy firelight played on those enthusiastic and loyal Ulstermen's honest faces as they and their friends the soldiers joined lustily in the inspiring Orange songs and in 'God Save the Queen', whilst some indulged in 'Rule Britannia'." They also indulged in a song about hanging the Pope, which is quoted in full. The inspiring songs had their effect; the Orangemen took Belfast by storm, and then Dublin. "The peasantry are utterly vanquished. There is to be, of course, no more 'Home Rule'."

The anonymous *Newry Bridge, or Ireland in 1887* (Edinburgh and London, 1886) is rather less emotional and more politically aware, but has the same message. It is, of course, Gladstone's fault. "One reason, indeed, which the Prime Minister put forward, was that Ireland had been so badly treated in the past, she ought now to be given her own way, and allowed to set the country on fire if she fancied it; which is just as if I were to say to the little one here, "Now, my darling, I have been a very careless father to you; so now pick up that poker out of the fire, if you like, and burn a hole in our best carpet" . . . And so the Bill was passed; but when the time came, it was the Irish members themselves who did not seem altogether happy at the idea of saying goodbye to the British Parliament. You see, there would be no one left to badger or shout at, for they didn't mean to fight among themselves at first, and after all, though they had got what they wanted, it would be a come down for all but the leaders."

The Irish party gradually realised the way in which the Home Rule Act restricted their ability to act; all military and financial matters were still controlled by Westminster. But Home Rule was the thin end of the wedge (as "Loyalists" in 1986 maintain about the Hillsborough agreement of 1985). Gladstone would let more and more slip into the hands of the Dublin politicians. "True he had used some grand words about maintaining the unity of the Empire and the supremacy of the Imperial Parliament, but such a master in the art of explaining his words away would find it easy to swallow trifles like these." At first the Irish parliament was "such a happy family . . . because the Ulster men weren't there at all." Belfast and Dublin studiously ignored each other. But then Dublin persuaded Westminster to withdraw British troops from Ireland, and it set up its own bench of judges, whose jurisdiction Ulstermen refused to recognise. Westminster gave Ireland control over Customs and Excise, after "regrettable incidents" in Cork involving the drowning of British customs officers. And so Ulstermen began arming themselves. They called their volunteer contingents "shooting clubs," to make them legal, and they went out practising with rifle and bayonet, uniformed, marching in step. Guns came in

from the United States, and hundreds of Englishmen came over to join the cause; the Ulster Defence Fund attracted thousands of pounds. The anonymous author recognised that the political situation was complex; it was not a question of Protestant versus Catholic or of North versus South. There were many Catholics in Belfast, many Protestants in the South, many Protestants who were nationalists, and many Catholics who were loyal to the Union. The police force in particular was very much divided between nationalists and loyalists. ("Loyalty", of course, then as now, did not mean loyalty to Westminster—Gladstone's government kept on telling Ulstermen to keep quiet under Irish government—it meant loyalty to the concept of Protestant supremacy.) Finally the Ulster loyalists assembled, and took Newry by force. Martial law was declared by the Dublin government, and all expressions of sympathy with the North were forbidden. The rival forces met at Newry (in our world just north of the border between the Republic and the Six Counties), and the Loyalists won the battle. Not on their own, however: thousands of English and Scottish volunteers had come over "to succour a people rightly struggling to be free, and who would not submit to the hated tyranny which had been aimed against their liberties at the imperious bidding of a reckless old man and his servile following. What had the other side to put against such forces? Do you suppose that the ring of place-hunting demagogues to whose mercies the English Minister wanted to hand over all power in Ireland were the sort of men to keep working together for long?" Of course not. Once the Loyalists had defeated the Nationalist troops in the battle of Newry they swept into the south and found little resistance. They showed, however, great clemency and thoughtfulness to the conquered Irish. The Prime Minister in England was driven from power, and the Home Rule Act repealed.

Neither of these Unionist comments on Home Rule seem particularly concerned with the religious differences, summed up in the slogan "Home Rule is Rome Rule." But Edward Lester, whose *The Siege of Bodike: a Prophecy of Ireland's Future* was published in Manchester and London in 1886, was clearly worried more by the Papist menace than the threat to the unity of the Empire. Lester (1831-1905) was himself a clergyman, educated in Cambridge and living entirely in England, latterly in Lancashire (Suvin 1983 p.187). When Home Rule is declared in his novel the new Lord Lieutenant from England is welcomed by the Lord Mayor of Dublin (a baker) and the Archbishop of Dublin, a Maynooth man (that is, trained in the Catholic seminary to the west of Dublin), "of the usual Irish priestly type . . . assurance masking ignorance, and pomposity taking the place of dignity." Initially Orangemen tried to make the best of it, joining in deliberations in the new parliament in Dublin. But there was a plot to drive them out and to establish a Republic, free of all constitutional ties with England. Public disorder grew. Troops fired on a mob in Sackville Street, Dublin (where, in our world, thirty years later, British troops besieged Irish nationalists in the Easter Rising); Cork and other towns were on the point of rebellion; and Ulstermen were arming and preparing to march on the South. The Irish began strengthening Bodike as a fortress, and almost all towns outside Ulster were preparing to declare for the Republic. "Nothing but blood in rivers would wash away the insane desire of the people for a Utopian liberty such as no republic ever had or has. The people had been happy enough before the absurd Home Rule craze; they had lower rentals than in England, far better schools, dispensing doctors in every village free to all the poor; they had less taxes, less duties, and yet for all that they must cry after a liberty unobtainable by mortal men."

The Ulstermen came south: "onward, ever closing their deadly grip, pressed the stern

sturdy Ulster men; and not without cruelty was their progress, for one article of their creed was "Shoot every Roman priest you meet; they are the real causes of this row," and so many an innocent victim was given short shrift. Of course the result of this was that the few remaining Protestant clergy in the South and West—and they were very few—were not only shot but mutilated and butchered, and in some cases their wives and children with them." Trinity College Dublin (then a staunchly Protestant university) was dynamited by the republicans, so the Orangemen of Dublin sacked Maynooth, and "treated with savage brutality the unfortunate students." In response republicans began dynamiting banks, churches and town halls in the North. The Ulster army came to Bodike, and slaughtered thousands of rebels; the rebellion was over. Any Fenians found thereafter were severely dealt with, above all Irish-Americans: "it was generally felt that this nest of vipers had done more to foment discord and work destruction than any other agency except perhaps the hierarchy of the Roman Church." Two bishops and scores of priests were among those punished. An Irish University was set up, the country flooded with cheap wholesome literature, the two royal palaces in Ireland were frequently visited by the monarch, trade prospered, and all said what a lovely country Ireland was and what courteous, friendly, delightful people the Irish were.

There were other novelistic reactions to the first Home Rule Bill. *In the Year One (A.D. 1888) of Home Rule "de jure"* presents a "scary picture of mob rule, violence and rampant atheism in self-governing Ireland" (Suvin 1983 p.29); *Opening and Proceedings of the Irish Parliament: Two Visions* by G.H. Moore (an otherwise unknown G.H. Moore) presents two possibilities, riots and rebellion in '1887' with English troops restoring order, and peaceful amity between England and Ireland in '1894'.

Fears understandably remained in Protestant circles after the defeat of the Home Rule Bill of 1886, and some are expressed in an anonymous book published in London in 1888: *The Great Irish "Wake": by One Who Was There*. This is an historical narrative rather than a novelistic account, dated Dublin 1950, and telling of the fate of the short-lived constitutional experiment of the '1890s'. Queen Victoria set her signature to the Home Rule Bill in January '1890', and the new administration was set up in Dublin. It consisted of three figures well-known in our own time-line: Tim Healy, MP for an Irish seat and leading Home Ruler, who became President in '1890', J.G. Biggar, founder of the Home Rule League, who became Foreign Minister, and a certain William Ewart Gladstone, who changed his constituency from Chester to Clonakilty and became Minister of the Interior. Independence under the terms of the Home Rule Act was, of course, the thin end of the wedge. Irish nationalism ran rampant. "Streets with a suspicion of a Saxon twang in their designation were ruthlessly converted into unmistakable Hibernian names . . . everyone held a species of roving commission to remove the semblance of a crown—no matter where found—from armorial bearings to a bottle of blacking; in short every childish act worthy of a French executioner after a revolution was not only emulated but surpassed." Complete independence was soon sought for, and the crown was offered to William, or Iwurt, who suddenly and conveniently announced that his real name was not Gladstone but Gallagher. "A man of weight in Orange circles" who tried to put the objections of Ulstermen to those in power in Dublin was thrown into Kilmainham Jail. Some 20,000 "stalwart men of Ulster were ranged under the Orange flag;" the South issued a proclamation calling for patriotic recruits, and there was "within a week a body of 30,000 men, consisting principally of Irish-American adventurers, lawbreakers from the larger

towns of the United Kingdom, and a small proportion of the more ignorant inhabitants." The Orangemen marched south, getting as far as Malahide (a few miles north of Dublin). There was rumour in Dublin of a great defeat, and rioting and arson followed. In a stirring speech by the Rotunda (the historic hospital at the head of Sackville Street (now O'Connell Street) in Dublin), Dubliners were urged to "stop this humbug which began with a farce and has ended in tragedy" and to "shoot the remaining agitators that are still among you, for England can't afford to lose such brave lads as you've shown yourselves." Gladstone/Gallagher left, disguised as a Scot, and Ireland returned to the Union.

Not all these attempts at futurology were quite so serious: two at least were set in the form of romantic novels. In 1888 Edmund David Lyon, an infantry captain, published *Ireland's Dream: a Romance of the Future*, featuring "melodramatic loves and fights amid horrible lawlessness of newly independent Ireland. Orangemen successfully resist Dublin. Irish-American gangsters loot and rape, finally Britain restores order" (Suvin's summary, p.35). And in 1893 the anonymous *1895, Under Home Rule* was published in Dublin as a response to the second Home Rule bill of that year. Dramatic effects are achieved by liberal (if that is not an unfortunate word) use of exclamation marks and clichés, much like Orange declamations today. "Never!" cries Charles Fitzmaurice, his young face aflame. "Give in to those murdering scoundrels!—not likely. No; England has thrown us over, but we'll fight to the end, and there are 10,000 Orangemen on their way from Canada. They'll sweep all the Healyites and the Dillonites and the rest of the cut-throat crew into the sea." (This is the first and only example where Orangemen admit they cannot win on their own.) The scenario is much the same as usual, and the reaction from Orangemen exactly the same. Fitzmaurice Castle holds out against the Dublin Parliament which had been established with Home Rule in '1893', and there is fighting in Ulster: "Erin's green isle is red with blood, but the loyalists are staunch and true. Deserted and betrayed, they hold their own still." Fitzmaurice Castle is taken, and so is one of its members, Charteris, the lover of Fitzmaurice's sister Kate, who has deserted rather than fight against the Fitzmaurice clan. Kate goes to Queen Victoria (according to the Home Rule Act still the ultimate legal authority), and begs for a pardon. "Be calm," says the Queen. "He shall not die." The pardon reaches him, just as he is about to be shot: one of the ultimate clichés of popular melodrama. In the meantime "the Orangemen have marched boldly on Dublin, and 10,000 men have landed at Queenstown" (now Cobh, near Cork). "Then, at the eleventh hour, England awakes from her sleep and rises from the long dream of madness . . . over the scene of strife and ruin hope hovers once more, and Erin turns her weeping face to the sister island to be comforted and forgiven."

Another response to the 1893 Home Rule Bill was by 'Phineas O'Flannagan', *Ireland a Nation!*, set in an independent Ireland in '1894', where, once more, the Catholic church rules an increasingly lawless country. Suvin describes it as "satire from chauvinist Ulster viewpoint" (Suvin 1983 p.53).

Our final tale, also published in Dublin in 1893 (and not read by Suvin), is rather less tearful and more bitter: it is written by a Protestant clergyman, the Rev. Alexander Donovan, and uncompromisingly entitled *The Irish Rebellion of 1898: a Chapter in Future History*. "For many years the English government had followed in that country (Ireland) the singular policy of weakening the loyal population and strengthening the disaffected." The Disestablishment of the Irish Church in 1869, fought through by Gladstone in the face of strong antidisestablishmentarianism (a word I learnt at the age of

six or so, and have never before had the excuse to use), benefited nobody, said Donovan, "not even the lunatics and idiots whom Mr Gladstone's fellow-feeling intended to relieve." In '1893' Gladstone transferred the government of Ireland from Westminster to Dublin; by '1898' Ireland had been reduced to "the lawless condition of Hayti or Mexico . . . The taxation was ruinous, and the ministers thought of nothing but enriching themselves at the public cost." (As someone who lived in the Republic of Ireland for eight years, I have some sympathy with that prophecy.) In '1897' all Protestant churches were confiscated, and the endowments of Trinity College Dublin were handed to the Catholic Church; a systematic persecution of Protestants began. In '1898', as England went to war with France, Ireland announced it would not fight for England, and as France won the war the Irish set up an independent republic.

The immediate consequences of that are by now familiar. The Ulster members met in Belfast and began to prepare for armed action, although first they solicited Westminster for permission. "The terrified and bewildered Parliament at Westminster granted the Ulster loyalists all they desired." As Catholic persecution of Protestants grew more ferocious, Lord Wolseley marched south at the head of an army made up of English troops and Ulster volunteers. On November 5th they met Irish troops at Dundalk (just north of "our" border), and defeated them. The war was over by '1899', by which time only Ulster MPs were left in the Imperial parliament, and all the Irish legislation of the previous five years was repealed. All that had happened was due to "the wicked folly of the Liberal Party in 1893 who, acting under the sinister influence of Mr Gladstone, handed over one of the United Kingdoms to the implacable enemies of England. It is charitable to suppose that the mental disease from which that statesman died raving mad in 1894 was incipient in his brain when he induced his followers to commit this act of reckless wickedness which brought England to the verge of ruin and replunged Ireland in the poverty, anarchy and misery from which the Union of 1800 had for a time rescued that unhappy land."

It is obvious that there is little literary value in these works. But they do have value for the historian, and for the historian of sf. For the historian they are a vivid demonstration of what Protestants feared from rule by a Catholic Dublin, and also a good guide to what Protestants were expecting to do about it. There is little political imagination here; the Unionist authors can think of no alternative to the continuation of the status quo, and display almost no sympathy with what we might regard as the legitimate grievances of the majority of the Irish people. All these works stem from a crucial period in the development of Protestant identity in Ulster, and are at the origins of what remains entrenched even today as the political mythology of a majority of the citizens of the Six Counties. In the twentieth century we have, to my knowledge, no comparable works of fiction to illustrate this mythology; one can well imagine that, if an Orangeman sat down today to express his political views in science-fictional terms, the results would not, *mutatis mutandis*, look markedly different from those we have been looking at. From the point of view of the development of science fiction too, these works are of interest. They show how, by the 1880s, it had become quite natural, in a way unthinkable even twenty years before, to express fears or aspirations about the future in fictional terms. Suvin's figures for sf books published in the UK show the picture dramatically: 9 in 1848-60; 8 in 1861-70; 39 in 1871-80; 110 in 1881-90; and 219 in 1891-1900. What happened in the 1880s and 1890s was, according to John Sutherland (in Suvin 1983 p.123), "the evolution of SF

from a satirical device to a genre." There may be an enormous literary and political gulf between these writers and Wells, whose works began to appear in the 1890s, but they lived in a similar intellectual world.

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