



Irish Nationality

Alice Stopford Green

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Ireland lies the last outpost of Europe against the vast flood of the Atlantic Ocean; unlike all other islands it is circled round with mountains, whose precipitous cliffs rising sheer above the water stand as bulwarks thrown up against the immeasurable sea.

It is commonly supposed that the fortunes of the island and its civilisation must by nature hang on those of England. Neither history nor geography allows this theory. The life of the two countries was widely separated. Great Britain lay turned to the east; her harbours opened to the sunrising, and her first traffic was across the narrow waters of the Channel and the German Sea. But Ireland had another aspect; her natural harbours swelled with the waves of the Atlantic, her outlook was over the ocean, and long before history begins her sailors braved the perils of the Gaulish sea. The peoples of Britain, Celts and English, came to her from the opposite lowland coasts; the people of Ireland crossed a wider ocean-track, from northern France to the shores of the Bay of Biscay. The two islands had a different history; their trade-routes were not the same; they lived apart, and developed apart their civilisations.

Alice Stopford Green was an Irish historian and nationalist. In the 1890s she became interested in Irish history and the nationalist movement. She was vocal in her opposition to English colonial policy in South Africa during the Boer Wars and supported Congo Reform movement. In her books ("Irish Nationality" and others) she argued for the sophistication and richness of the native Irish civilisation.

Alice Stopford Green was active in efforts to make the prospect of Home Rule more palatable to Ulster Unionists and she was closely involved in providing arms to the Irish Volunteers and played a role in the run up to the Easter Rising. She supported the pro-Treaty side in the Irish Civil War and was among the first nominees to the newly formed Seanad Éireann in 1922, where she served as an independent member until her death in 1929.

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