

GODKIN, EDWIN LAWRENCE (1831-1902)

Edwin Lawrence Godkin was born in Moyne, county Wicklow, the eldest child of a Presbyterian clergyman. Godkin was educated in Yorkshire and at the Royal Belfast Academical Institution, and Queen's College Belfast, from which he graduated with a Bachelor of Arts in 1851. At Queen's, Godkin was the first president of the Undergraduates' Literary and Scientific Society. Moving to London, he planned to read for the bar but abandoned his plan in order to pursue a career in journalism. As the author of a book sympathetic to the revolutionary cause in Hungary (*The History of Hungary and the Magyars*), he visited in 1854 and was greeted as a hero and presented with a commemorative sword by the revolutionaries. Godkin joined Cassells Publishing house in 1852 before becoming a staff member and eventually sub-editor of the *Illustrated Family Paper*. He was also on the staff of the *Northern Whig* (Belfast) from 1855-56. As special correspondent for the *Daily News*, he specialised in Turkish events and the Crimea, where he joined Omar Pasha's army from October 1853 to September 1855. Returning to Belfast, he began a series of lectures on the Crimea. After moving to New York in November 1856, Godkin married in Connecticut and resumed his legal education whilst working as a leader writer for the *New York Times* (1862-65). He continued to work as special for the *Daily News*, covering events occurring in New York and visiting the southern states of America where he reported on slavery from 1856-60. Throughout his career, Godkin maintained strong political views. He was opposed to Britain's role in the South African War, denounced the Spanish-American war, argued against the American annexation of Hawaii and the Philippines. He was, like his father, a lifelong advocate of Irish Home Rule, and contributed to the liberal *Handbook of Home Rule* edited by his friend James Bryce, and published in 1877. Godkin himself edited the *Sanitary Commission Bulletin*, and was appointed to a commission to compose a 'Plan for the government of cities in the State of New York', which reported to the New York Legislature in 1877. He co-founded *The Nation* in New York with Charles Eliot Norton, and edited the paper from 1865-81, when it merged with the *Evening Post*. At this point, he became an associate editor from 1881-83, and resumed editorship from 1883-1900. At this time, Godkin became seriously ill and sailed for England in May 1900. He died at Greenway House, in Devonshire, on 21 May 1902 and was buried in Northamptonshire. His *Life and Letters* were published posthumously in 1907, and Harvard University established the 'Godkin Lectures at Harvard University' in his memory. **AD**

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