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Whereas much is known about the Scots in the British Indian Empire, the role of the Irish has been so far neglected. Crosbie's study is therefore a welcome addition to the literature on the contribution of various British ethnic groups to the maintenance of the empire. He initially highlights the recruitment of Catholic Irish soldiers for the troops of the East India Company (EIC), which established an outpost at Limerick on the Irish coast in 1758. As late as 1900 the Irish contributed about 50 percent of soldiers to the British Indian Army. Crosbie then studies the Irish networks in the field of middle class employment in the empire. Laurence Sullivan (1713–1786), who became chairman of the Court of Directors of the EIC in 1781 after a career in the Bombay Presidency, is a good example in this line. Due to Sullivan’s patronage many Irish men did well in the service of the EIC. They formed a „Sulivannetwork“ which was well known in its time.

Later on the Irish also contributed famous members to the medical service and the various scientific services of the EIC, the most famous being William O'Shaughnessy (1809–1889). He had already made a mark by working on the intravenous treatment of cholera before he went to India; then he introduced Cannabis indica (Indian hemp) into Western medicine as a cure for tetanus and similar diseases. Like many Irish physicians of his time he was interested in Irish folk medicine. Sir William Wilde, father of Oswald Wilde, was a leading Irish medical scholar who took note of O'Shaughnessy's work. O'Shaughnessy's experiments with the telegraph added to his fame. In 1853 he became the first Superintendent of Telegraphs in India and installed 3500 miles of telegraph wires. He was not the only prominent Irish scientist in the service of the EIC. Crosbie also mentions Thomas Oldham (1816–1878) who was Professor of Geology in Trinity College, Dublin, and left this position in 1850 to become the first Superintendent of the Geological Survey of India. He took a deep interest in the problems of the Indian peasantry and was also an ardent advocate of the spread of science education in India. Valentine Blacker (1778–1826) an Irish military officer of the EIC wrote about British military history of India, but also served as Surveyor General of India, doing pioneering work.
in the establishment of the Great Trigonometrical Survey of India.

The plight of the Irish peasantry led to legislation for the protection of tenant’s rights epitomized by the three F’s (Fair rent, Free sale, Fixity of Tenure). This Irish legislation then served as a precedent for tenancy legislation in India. Some Irish members of the Indian Civil Service were in the vanguard of the movement for tenant's rights in India. Crosbie pays particular attention to a maverick Irish man, Charles James O'Donnell (1849–1934), who served in Bihar and Bengal and studied Indian famines and the plight of the peasantry. He published pamphlets in which he severely criticized the Government of India. Early Indian nationalists were attracted by his views. As his brother was a Member of Parliament for an Irish nationalist party, O'Donnell's views also resonated in Britain. He advocated Home Rule for both Ireland and Britain. Later on he himself became a Member of Parliament for the Liberal Party when it formed the government in 1906. O'Donnell was a harbinger of the growing sympathy of Irish nationalists for Indian nationalism. This was continued in the next generation by the Irish socialist, Annie Besant, who joined the Theosophists and settled in India, founding an Indian Home Rule League. Her activities are only briefly mentioned by Crosbie as her work in India started in the 20th century which is not within the scope of his study.

This book can be recommended to readers who are interested in Irish history as well as in Indian history. It is also good contribution to the study of social networks. Both the advocates of a New Imperial History and those who favour more traditional historical studies will find Crosbie’s approach attractive.

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