PART. I.

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21
BURO STAIRE MILEATA 1913-21
No. W.S. 1,770

ROINN COSANTA.

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS.

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Witness

Commissioner Kevin R. O'Sheil, B.L.,
21, Ailesbury Drive,
Dublin.

Identity.

Judicial Commissioner, Dáil Éireann Land Courts, 1920-1922;

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STATEMENT BY COMMISSIONER KEVIN R. O'SHIEL,

Irish Land Commission, Upr. Merrion St., Dublin.

1. Background.

I belong to an old Irish family that originally lived in Co. Antrim. Though not one of the kingly families, it seems to have held a considerable area of land in the North Co. Antrim up to the end of the XV11 century. The name was then written "O'Shiel" or "O'Shiell". The first of the O'Shiels, Shiels or Shields family of Co. Tyrone of whom we have knowledge lived in the reign of James 11. He resided at a place called Cranfield in the vicinity of Shane's Castle in the Co. Antrim, where he is said to have possessed considerable landed property and appears to have been a relative of Captain Charles O'Shiell, one of the Restorees under Charles 11 in that county. In the wars between William and James he and his four sons espoused the cause of King James and fought in the Battle of the Boyne where the father and one son were killed. Daniel, the youngest, found their bodies the night after the battle and buried them. He then rejoined the Irish army and fought at Aughrim, Athlone and the Siege of Limerick. After the

surrender of Limerick, the three surviving brothers separated, never to meet again.

The two eldest went with thousands of the Irish soldiers to Spain who, as the "Wild Geese" expatriated themselves to their country's sore harm. A descendant of one of these exiles, I understand, rose to a high grade as an officer and became Captain-General of the then Spanish colony of Cuba.

The youngest boy, Daniel, who was only 16 years of age, was left behind purposely to claim the family lands, as, at the time, the issue in the conflict was still being fought out on the continent, and there was great hope in Ireland that King James would return soon at the head of a victorious army and restore his supporters to their rightful properties. Daniel, accordingly, returned to the neighbourhood of his old home in the North of Ireland. With much difficulty, and after undergoing many hardships, he made his way as far as the Co. Tyrone and took up his abode temporarily in the mountains of Tyrone, the only place of safety at that time for Catholic "rebels", where he associated with several of his ex-comrades in the Jacobite army, now "Raparees" and "on their keeping" waiting like

himself, hopefully, for better times. From time to time he paid stolen visits to his old homestead in Co. Antrim on the other side of Lough Neagh which had been confiscated and granted to a follower of King William 111. There is a romantic story connected with these visits. It appears that in one of these journeys he was fortunate in saving the lives of two young girls who were boating in Lough Neagh. The boat having capsised in a sudden storm, the ladies were thrown into the water. Young O'Shiel, seeing their danger, hastened to their rescue and, being a strong swimmer, succeeded in rescuing them from their perilous position.

These ladies turned out to be the daughters of an Englishman, a Williamite officer named Captain Morris, then in charge of a garrisoned fortress called Mountjoy Castle, situated near the lake. The captain and his daughters were, naturally, grateful to O'Shiel for his timely succour and, despite the fact that he was more or less "on his keeping" they treated him with great hospitality and a friendly intercourse sprang up between the young Jacobite and the Williamite governor's daughters which resulted in O'Shiel making one of them his wife. After the marriage he resided with his wife on part of the lands of Altmore given

to him seemingly under some arrangement at the time. The Shields have been on the Altmore lands ever since, some 260 years.

A sister of his wife married Hugh Stewart whose father, Captain Andrew Stewart, accompanied Lord Ochiltree from Scotland and settled, under the Plantations, at Gortigal, Co. Tyrone, in the year 1620. These Stewarts were then a very powerful landed family. They were the direct ancestors of Sir John Stewart, Bart., of Athenree, Co. Tyrone, who was M.P. for the county and, at the time of the Union, was the Attorney-General who actually drafted that disastrous measure. For these services he was, like others of that ilk, handsomely rewarded by substantial money grants, and by the bestowal of a baronetcy on him in 1803.

In the Plantation of Ulster Sir Toby Caulfield had assigned to him the Castlecaulfield Estate, on condition that he built a fortress on the Altmore Mountains to protect the planters and those allotted the confiscated estates of the Jacobites from disinherited Irish gentlemen, or "Rapparees", who had organised and entrenched themselves in those mountains.

British soldiers for years occupied the fortress erected by Sir Toby Caulfield, and were withdrawn in the year 1746 to take part in the Battle of Culloden Moor where the Pretender and his forces were finally worsted.

The Shiels were staunch Catholics through the Morris's, but their connection with the Stewarts did much to assuage for them the asperities of the period of the penal laws. When the British troops evacuated Altmore barracks, O'Shiel took a lease of it from the Stewarts who were then the landlords, which lease was renewed from time to time by their kinsmen, and when most of the Penal Laws had been repealed and Catholics permitted to take long-term leases, Charles Shields (the grandfather of General Shields) took a lease of the big townland of Altmore in perpetuity, which lease was, in time, converted into a fee farm grant, in pursuance of the Renewable Leasehold Conversion Act, 1849. Finally, by the action of the Landed Estates Court, the Shields obtained the interest of the grantor as well and thereby became full proprietors of Altmore.

During '98 period there was little disturbance in the Co. Tyrone, despite the fact that there were many revolutionary "United Men" there, mainly Presbyterians.

The Catholics were, as they are to-day, the most numerous community there, decisively outnumbering all the Protestant sects taken together, but, unlike to-day, they then possessed little of this world's goods. The infamous Penal Laws, then in full force, saw to it, as they were deliberately designed to do, that the Catholics did not gain in power or wealth and above all, on the land. It is, therefore, far from surprising that in a planted county like Tyrone, there was then no Catholic owner of land whatsoever and few, if any others, holding the comparatively privileged tenure of the Shiels. The wide moorland and mountainy district of Altmore was, as it is to-day, a Catholic stronghold. In that part of it where the Shiels lived there were few Protestant families. There was one Protestant family there called Hamilton. The Hamilton men were sworn "United men" and they pressed the Shiels to join them in the Society, but without avail. The Shiels did not trust them and, in fact, few, if any, Catholics in the district were United Irishmen.

On the eve of the Rising of '98 there were, according to Government information, no less than 14,000 United Men in Co. Tyrone said to be fairly well armed. Nevertheless, there was virtually no outbreak of any kind there; the

county remained tranquil throughout the rising.

Coming to a somewhat later period, I might mention in passing that my grand-uncle was General James Shields, the American soldier, statesman and lawyer, who was born in Altmore House in the year 1810. As a young man he emigrated to the U.S.A. where he had a legal, a military and a political career. In the latter capacity he had the distinction of representing as Senator in Washington, at different times, three different States, viz: Illinois, Minnesota, and Missouri. But his career, or careers, belong to American and not to Irish history. It was he who "Americanised" the Gaelic name O'Shiel, or Shiel, to Shields; in his time, O's and Mac's were not popular in the U.S.A.

The General's brother, Patrick - my grandfather - lived all his life at Altmore House where he carried on farming. He was also the proprietor of a bank which he had founded in 1850, and which was very prosperous whilst he was in control of its affairs. Unfortunately, his son, Michael, who succeeded him, had not his business capacity. He lent money out right, left and centre, to any neighbour who approached him on little or no security, for, if his head was not hard, his heart was certainly soft, with the

inevitable result that the crash came in the year 1899 to the tune of £122,000. The Court of Appeal found that the main cause of the disaster was the offer to the depositors of too high a rate of interest.

11. Omagh in the 80's and 90's.

My father was one of eight. He studied for the law in Dublin and was duly admitted solicitor in the year 1880. He was apprenticed to the late James Reardon, a Corkman, who eventually was appointed by a Liberal Government Crown Solicitor for the Co. Tyrone. The following year - 1881 - my father set up in practice at No. 3 John St., Omagh, the County Town of the Co. Tyrone. From the beginning my father enjoyed a good general law practice. A serious fly in the amber, though, was the crash of the Shields Bank. On my father fell the burden, and, to some extent, the unpleasantness, of winding up the bank's affairs. It took him about ten years doing this; and it was largely through his efforts, and his steadfast attention to sound business principles, that the Bank finally paid all its creditors about 14s.6d. in the pound. My father, when he started practice, took a keen interest in politics and was, from the beginning, a supporter of the Liberals and the Home Rule

Party, then firmly united under the strong hand of Parnell. In the General Election of the previous year, Gladstone had been swept into power by a veritable landslide completely swamping Beaconsfield and his Tories, and resulting in the Liberal Party obtaining an over-riding predominance in Parliament. The Irish Home Rulers were his allies against the hated Beaconsfield and they also had every reason for rejoicing, seeing that they had gained no less than 14 seats from Conservaties and Liberals, which gave them a total voting power of 61 in the House of Commons. The Co. Tyrone then comprised one great twin-membered constituency. Up to that time no Nationalist, or indeed, Liberal, ventured to go forward for Parliamentary honours in the county, the limited electorate, based on a high valuation qualification, made it quite futile for them to contend against the powerful Tory influences as those of such families as the Abercorns and the Ranfurleys; and, accordingly, elections there resolved themselves into contests between dissident Conservatives. However, in that general election, for the first time, a non-Conservative went up in the person of Mr. Edward Litton, Q.C., a Liberal, against the powerful Abercorn interest. In lieu of an avowed Home Ruler - for Liberals, at the time, were not

committed to Home Rule - he was backed by the Nationalists of the county. My father took an active part in the election and acted as a legal sub-agent under the direction of the candidate's agent, the aforesaid Mr. James Riordan, solicitor.

MacCartney, one of the Conservative candidates, was returned at the head of the poll with a total of 3,808 votes, followed by Litton with 3,500. At the bottom of the poll came Lord C. Hamilton, of the powerful Abercorn family, with 3,452. It was a near squeak, only 48 votes, for Litton; but, nevertheless, his victory came as a huge surprise to everyone, as no one thought a Liberal had a ghost of a chance on the then extremely limited register.

Later, my father got elected to the Omagh Town Commissioners (as they then were) as a Nationalist. He resigned that position on his being appointed solicitor to the Urban Council (on its formation), a post he held till his death in 1947.

Bit by bit the Nationalist organisation spread and grew throughout the county and, in this expansion my father played an active part, for the central area of the

county, ultimately being appointed election agent for the Nationalist Party in the constituency of Mid-Tyrone. And here it should be noted that the term "Nationalist" came in, for the first time in Ireland, during the Parnell era. As a denomination of a party or movement, it was unheard of in Ireland prior to that time.

The functions attaching to the office of Election Agent involved not only conducting parliamentary elections on behalf of the Nationalist candidate, a responsible business demanding a sound mastery of election law and its many snags, but also the duty of attending at the annual sessions before the Revising Barrister for the revision of the Voters' Lists. This was an onerous but highly important task, for, on its success depended, not so much the maintenance of a nationalist M.P. for the constituency, for Mid-Tyrone was a safe Nationalist seat, but the size of his majority over his protagonist should there be a contest. And, in a way, even more important, on its success certainly depended the control of the Town of Omagh, and seats on the County Council and Rural District Councils within that area.

A name entered on the Voters' List could not get through, and be placed on the Register, if there was an

objection lodged against it. That objection came on for hearing before the "Revising Barrister", as he was called, at the Revision Sessions, which were held each year for the purpose, as the name indicates, of revising the Voters' Lists for the parliamentary, as well as the local government franchise. Both big parties, Nationalists and Unionists, were represented by their agents and lawyers, and either opposed or supported any objection lodged. Those objections were fought out at those sessions very toughly indeed as, in that politically and religiously divided county, much depended on them; and both divisions of the public took an enormous interest in them and crowded the Courts whilst they were proceeding. In those cinemaless days, Courts of all descriptions provided a species of public entertainment.

I was born in the town of Omagh in the year Parnell died; so, of course, all my knowledge of Parnell and his times is based on hearsay and on the literature of the period. Up to the time of the Divorce Court debacle, Parnell was all powerful in Nationalist circles in the county; his word was law then, as it was law everywhere else in Ireland. After that great calamity his immense power and prestige over the Tyrone Nationalists collapsed

overnight, and he fell like the idol with feet of clay. That there was no division worthwhile in the county between Parnellites and anti-Parnellites, as there was in so many of the southern counties after the split, is hardly to be wondered at seeing that Tyrone is probably the most equally divided county in Ireland in religious outlook, 55% of the population being Catholic and presumably Nationalist, and 45% Protestant of one sect or another, and presumably Unionist. Living in the midst of a strong and well-organised non-Catholic community, the Tyrone Catholics were constantly on the qui vive and more consciously aware of their faith and of all reactions to it, than were their Southern fellow-countrymen, who lived in an overwhelmingly Catholic atmosphere. Almost the most heinous thing imaginable to the Northern Nationalist mind is to split the Catholic vote and let in the Orange Protestant - a form of treachery, in that mind, that amounted almost to perversion. This consciousness, this ever-awareness of their religion, even in the most trivial matter of everyday life, was still further emphasised by the strong tinge of Jansenism that permeated it, and to which hardly any other sin in the calendar of sins could be more horrific than that one of the flesh which brought

Parnell into the divorce court. Hence it was that there was practically no split in the solidly orthodox and ultra montain Nationalist forces of Tyrone, a fact that was evidenced in a strikingly conclusive way in the general election of 1892. An Electoral Reform Act passed in 1885, whilst substantially enlarging the franchise, altered and remodelled many of the electoral divisions. The Co. Tyrone, from being one large double-membered constituency, was divided into four single-membered constituencies, viz: North-, South-, East-, and Mid-Tyrone. Of these constituencies, East- and Mid-Tyrone returned Nationalist members, and North- and South-Tyrone usually Unionist members, although the former was often captured by a Liberal with Nationalist support. At that general election, three candidates stood for the constituency of Mid-Tyrone, viz: Matthew James Kenny, B.L., the late Circuit Court Judge for Cork, as the official Anti-Parnellite Nationalist candidate for whom my father acted as election agent, Dr. Edward C. Thompson, an Omagh doctor, as the official Unionist candidate, and the late Count Plunkett as a Parnellite. The result was that Kenny was returned at the head of the poll with 3,667 votes, Thompson came

next with 2,698, and Plunkett last with a trivial 123. Though the Parnell split that raged so violently in the southern counties during the last decade of the Nineteenth Century hardly touched the north, the bitter depressing effect of the disaster was, nonetheless, keenly felt there all the same. All over the country the reactions of the split were felt and ate into the vitals of organised nationalism, like a deadly fungus, killing hope and poisoning enthusiasm.

In my childhood, Nationalist politics in the town of Omagh were in the doldrums. Large numbers, disgusted at the way the Nationalist cause had been handled by their leaders, and bitterly disheartened by the general debacle, had given up hope of seeing that devoutly to be wished for event - a Parliament sitting in "th' auld House in College Green", and political Nationalism in the North was reduced to falling back on a more consciously Catholic basis, and opposing Unionists at the parliamentary and local elections, more as opponents of their religion than as opponents of their national objective. Yes, politics in Tyrone in those days were in the doldrums; and, not only Nationalist but Unionist politics, too. Lacking the

pressure on it of the triumphal advance that characterised Nationalism in the decade preceding the split to stimulate its opposition, Unionism, too, became static and Orangeism tended to deteriorate and to disintegrate.

In a letter to William O'Brien, M.P., about this time, the famous Archbishop of Cashel, Dr. Croke, wrote:

> I take very little or no interest in Irish affairs. The country has disgusted me. The warmth that, in years past, used to animate me and gladden my heart, has disappeared. I wish I could get back to New Zealand. There is nothing to cheer me in Church or State".

And those depressing views were the views of at least 90% of the Nationalists of that time.

However, in the last decade of the Nineteenth Century, a number of events occurred that were to contribute substantially to the radical change in the pattern of political life, not only in the North, but throughout the country. In the first place, William O'Brien founded in Westport, in January, 1898, a new Nationalist organisation which he called the "United Irish League", in honour of the United Irishmen of 1798 whose centenary year it was - dedicated to the promotion of "a union of power, friendship

and affection between Irishmen of every religious persuasion". William founded many organisations and every one of them were flowing over with the "milk of human kindness" as to their purposes. Despite the hostility of Redmondites and Healyites alike, and of his then nearest allies, the Dillonites, O'Brien's U.I.L. spread with lightning rapidity throughout the country and, in a short time, it established itself as the unchallenged national organisation of the country, for the people were heartsick and tired of the split and hungry for a national directive.

Presently, the force of public opinion, organised and working through the League, compelled the warring national leaders to come together. This reunion took place on 1st February, 1900, when John Redmond, the leader of the Parnellite faction, was elected Chairman of the reunited Irish Party, an office that he held till his death in 1918. Thus, the great split, after nine years of fratricidal strife, was healed, and the chasm created by the Parnell earthquake, bridged, at least superficially.

About the same time as the U.I.L. began to spread throughout the country, another organisation shot up and, in time, grew into a veritable power in the land, and a

secret power at that. This was the "Ancient Order of Hibernians" with a most disarming motto, viz: "Friendship, Unity and True Christian Charity"; its supporters claimed for it that it was founded by none other than the redoubtable Rory Oge O'More himself in the reign of Queen Elizabeth; that, at the close of the Eighteenth Century, it sprang up afresh in the form of combinations bearing such names as Ribbonmen, Molly Maguires, for the protection of Catholicity and the Irish tenantry, and that it evolved therefrom into its modern structure. Be that as it may, its modern form was clearly roughly modelled on its Orange rival and its great expansion in the first decade of the new venture was undoubtedly due to the strong personality and vigorous leadership of a young man, Mr. Joseph Devlin, the Nationalist M.P. for West Belfast. Not only was the Order political; it was also, like the Orange Institution, sectarian and secret. Not only had its members to be Home Rulers of the strictly orthodox brand of constitutional nationalism, sponsored by the U.I.L., but they had also to be Catholics.

These two organisations, the U.I.L. and the A.O.H., established themselves firmly and in strength in the province

of Ulster. Indeed, the secret A.O.H. became, in course of time, stronger, more numerous and certainly more influential in Ulster than in any of the other provinces outside Dublin city. This was due, of course, largely to the existence of the rival secret society, the "Loyal Orange Institution", and to the fact that its "National President", Mr. Joe Devlin, was himself an Ulsterman living in Belfast. Mr. Devlin, as well as being Head of the A.O.H. in Ireland and Great Britain, was also General Secretary of the U.I.L. and thus was able to supervise and co-ordinate the personnel and the activities of the two bodies. Mr. Devlin did not fail to take every advantage of his unique position so that very shortly this young, talented and comparatively unknown man rose to a prominence and power in the nation's affairs that challenged that of the established leaders, a circumstance that led, in due course, to much bickering and division among the said leaders.

111. Early XX Century Omagh.

In the Co. Tyrone, the A.O.H. spread and flourished exceedingly, becoming eventually a powerful force in the community of close on 5,000 pledged members, all the more powerful because of its secretive, pledge-bound character.

One of the first results of the uprise of this organisation was, very naturally, to galvanise into activity again the rival Orange institution which had been on the decline since the Parnell split. I must also refer here, in passing, to two other "fin de siecle" organisations that were destined to leave a profound mark on the country, but which, at that time, counted for little in the North of Ireland at any rate. These were the "Gaelic League", founded by Douglas Hyde in 1893, and "Sinn Féin" founded by Arthur Griffith, and which, as an organised movement, came into being in 1905.

From 1894 to 1905 a Conservative Government was firmly in the saddle, and the Unionists and Orangemen with their Liberal-Unionist allies, had little to fear as regards Home Rule. The Conservatives did not wholly confine themselves to coercive legislation in regard to Ireland. They passed some sound measures that won the country's approval, such as their series of Land Acts, and their Local Government Act of 1898 which abolished the feudal powers of the Grand Juries and established county and district councils, the first elections to which in 1899, resulting, save in Ulster, in a veritable nationalist

landslide. In the Co. Tyrone, though the Catholic Nationalists substantially outnumbered their Protestant Unionist opponents, they did not, at that time, succeed in capturing the County Council, but they went very close indeed to doing so - almost to one vote. However, they captured, and held firmly the Omagh Rural District Council until the gerrymandering of its electoral areas by the Belfast Government. The Township of Omagh then had a population of about 4,500, of whom about 2,600 were Catholics and Nationalists and about 1,900 Protestants and mainly Unionists, though there were a few Liberals and even Home Rulers among the Presbyterians. This substantial Nationalist majority did not mean that the township was always in the hands of the Nationalists. Indeed, in the first elections after the bestowal of full urban powers on the town, the Unionists got control. This was accounted for by reason of the limited franchise, with high property qualifications, which greatly helped the Unionists, seeing that they held a very much larger share of rateable property within the urban boundaries than the Nationalists. Later, when the Nationalists got control, an event that was the cause of much rejoicing in Catholic circles, the new "City Fathers"

set about devising a plan designed to secure the hegemony of their party for the future in the town's affairs that their numbers within the town boundary unquestionably entitled them to. And this plan they lost no time in putting into effect, ignoring the indignant outcry from the Unionist platform and press. The plan was the capture of the doubtful south Ward for the Nationalist Cause. The town, for urban electoral purposes, was divided into three wards. The division of towns into electoral wards was a function reserved to the Local Government Board which had its headquarters in Dublin, and was then under governmental control; and, at the time that that division took place in Omagh the Unionists were in power, and, of course, saw to it that the wards were so contrived as to favour the interests of their party. To make an effective division of that character, to "jerrymander" the town, in other words, is a simple enough matter in the north where the two opposing religions, certainly in the lower middle-class and labouring strata, live largely in separate areas. It is quite a common thing there; nay, quite the usual thing, to pass from a wholly Catholic collection of streets and lanes into a wholly Protestant one, even

in the smallest town in the Northern "mixed" district. So, the Local Government Board inspectors, assigned to this work with regard to the town of Omagh, divided it up into three wards, each ward returning seven urban councillors, making a total of 21 in all. By all the principles of fair play, two of these wards should have been predominantly Nationalist in complexion; but that was not what happened. The L.C.B. inspectors went as far and effectively as they could on behalf of their employers, the Unionist Government, and, as a result, one ward, the North, was wholly Unionist; another, the West, wholly nationalist; whilst the third, the South, was the doubtful ward, the ward that decided what party was to rule the town, sometimes returning four Unionists and three Nationalists, and sometimes just the reverse.

In order to secure the South Ward for their party, the Nationalists, having got control of the urban district, engaged very extensively in the erection of artisans' dwellings within the confines of that ward. This they were empowered to do by a recent widening of their financial powers, and by the provision of grants for such purposes by the Government. Presently, whole streets and terraces

of working-class houses sprang up with mushroom-like suddenness around the Fair Green and on Gallows Hill and Meetinghouse Hill, and, as soon as each house was completed, it was, at once, occupied by a Nationalist family brought thither from one or other of the other two wards.

By that method, by the aid of these new voters in the South Ward, the "Swallow Voters", as they were derisively called by the Unionists, the Nationalists secured a permanent control of the township for many years, which, of course, their substantial majority in the town entitled them to; indeed, down to quite recent times, when a new and more sweeping jerrymander of the wards by the Northern Government took place, which has assured Unionist control for the immediate future, at all events.

Thus it was in this divided community, and in that flat atmosphere of the "doldrums" in politics that I grew up, as a child and a boy, in Omagh.

Politics, national politics, for the reasons stated, were perceived by me in but a vague and cloudy way. But, from an extremely early age, I did realise that my little world was sharply divided into two great disparate sections of humanity, to one or other of which each one

was born into, and belonged as irrevocably as he belonged to his particular sex. These "Great Divides" were the Catholics and the Protestants, which latter I was, in due course, to learn were again sub-divided into Church of Irelanders, Presbyterians, Methodists, Baptists, Dippers, Gospel Hall people, and various other kinds of Dissenters. And, whilst Catholics never became Protestants, or Protestants Catholics, or so seldom in both cases as to be practically never, and, of course, rarely intermarried, the same rigorous frontier did not obtain between the various sub-divisions of Protestantism who changed their sects and intermarried fairly freely into other sects, generally in the church or chapel of the bride.

Save for the more uppish elements in the Church of Ireland community, the squireens, the large farmers and the professions - who maintained a certain definite social aloofness to all outside their own charmed circles, whatever their faith - there were little or no impediments against their social and human contacts amongst the various levels and branches of Protestantism. With regard to Catholics and Protestants, however, things

were different; and, though there were no impediments on wholly business contacts amongst them - were it otherwise, it would indeed have been bad for the numerous prosperous Protestant merchants who controlled the major and by far the most profitable share of the town's business - social contacts between them, whilst far from unknown, or even rare, were certainly not universal. A kind of involuntary or unconscious "apartheid" existed between these two great religious divisions, sanctioned by the custom of circumstances and accepted as inevitable, so that it seemed quite the law of nature for people who went to a Protestant Church to live a life more or less apart from their Catholic neighbours. And, whilst undoubtedly this "apartheid" originated from and had its roots in the Protestant Ascendancy, established after the Williamite Wars, a large section of the Catholic population adhered to it as firmly as the most bigotted Orangeman. The fact that the members of these two great conflicting religions held opposite political beliefs as well and different and conflicting traditions and loyalties, seemed to the average Northerner also quite in order, and according to the natural law. I understand that in recent years there has been some change in this respect in the North and that,

to some little extent, the frozen walls of the politico-religious apartheid have been thawed.

But, in my early days, the position was as I have described it. While that was the general position there, I myself had, as I grew up, plenty of Protestant playmates and friends. This was due to the fact that I belonged to a professional family, and professional families in the small Northern towns, never very extensive, were much more wont to mix freely with each other, despite their different religious and political outlooks.

Going to Church on Sundays was universally practised by all religious groups. Indeed there was a strong leven of Scottish Sabbatarianism in the social atmosphere. Every shop in the little town was shuttered and blinds piously drawn in the windows of the dwellinghouses. People of all strata dressed in their "Sunday bests". Horse traffic, save for going to services, was conspicuous by its absence in the streets. The truly godly - and the number of these was considerable - stayed indoors all day, even in sultry summer weather; and, if there was any music or singing at all it was hymns; anything else would be a desecration that was "liable to cause scandal" - an awful

possibility. Shooting and fishing were frowned upon, albeit there were not a few daring "infidels" who braved the communal, or rather half-communal discouragement and engaged in these sports on that day of days. Football, golf, cricket- or games of any kind on the Sabbath were unheard of, and country lads and lassies had nothing else open to them but to sit on the roadside ditches, the former with their pipes in their mouths (cigarettes were then unknown to the countryman) and spend the day engaging in the usual sort of banter when young people of the opposite sexes came together. At that time, especially in the Catholic areas, there was very little open "company keeping". Catholic Jansenism and Presbyterian Calvinism, in most things such uncompromising opponents, were close and fast allies where "company keeping" was concerned.

As I have said, church-going on Sunday was universally practised by all denominations. Sunday was accepted almost "de rigeur" as a church-going day. The Catholics, of course, topped the bill in this respect, but a much smaller percentage of Protestants stayed away from Church than is generally the case elsewhere. The Church with far and away the largest following was the Catholic

Church. At that time, and until the early years of this century when the present great Church of the Sacred Heart was completed, the Catholic Church, or "Chapel", as it was generally referred to, was situate in Brook St., the poorest and slummiest quarter of the town. It was really a "Chapel" and not in any way a "Church", an unpretentious dreary erection devoid of spire or tower. The fact that it was situated in the poorest and lowliest area was a memory of the Penal times when Catholicism was just tolerated, and its places of worship had to be inconspicuous and unostentatious. And certainly the old Catholic chapel in Omagh fully complied with those stipulations.

Its then P.P. was a very formidable and redoubtable man - the Very Rev. Patrick Monsignor MacNamee, P.P., V.F. He was of the old school, a rigid disciplinarian and moralist, devoted to the maintenance of the 6th and 9th Commandments. He was feared more than loved by his parishioners, but respected by all. His great work during his reign was the erection of the huge Church of the Sacred Heart. In this connection he had three simple ambitions. Firstly, he wanted the largest church in the county; secondly, he wanted it to have the tallest spire in the county; and thirdly, he wanted to say the first Mass in the new church.

All his wishes were granted to him save the last; he never lived to see it completed. So keen was he to secure his first two ambitions that he is said to have sent engineers round the county to get the dimensions and measurements of all the other churches. The result was that he erected a great pseudo-Gothic edifice with double spires and seating accommodation for 2,000, with dominates the Omagh scene, one of the spires shooting up 215 feet into the sky, and thus stunting its nearby Protestant rival, whose spire drops some 85 feet behind it.

To the Catholic Church went, every Sunday and Holyday, the largest section of the urban area, rich and poor, but mainly the latter. Here also went Catholic soldiers from the local military depot of the Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers, led, generally, by their Protestant officers who sat back during the Mass in a "not-belonging" but not disrespectful attitude, taking a detached interest in the mysterious ceremony. We youngsters used to hurry out after Mass to see the soldiers forming up - for two-thirds of the 'Tommies' were Catholics - and marching off with their band playing rousing, martial music down Castle St. and Abbey St. to their barracks beside the big county gaol in Gortmore.

The Church of Ireland people went in style on Sundays to St. Columba's, their parish church, the men in frock coats and top coats, and the women in the nearest things they had to the prevailing fashions - all bearing, large, conspicuous prayer-books. Those who lived near, or reasonably near the church strolled thither in a serious and leisurely way, armed with their great books of devotion. Though the Church of Ireland had then been close on 30 years disestablished, it was still enveloped in a kind of twilight and afterglow of its old prestige and power, so much so, that when Presbyterians, Methodists and other dissenters got on well in life, it was no unusual thing for them to transfer themselves and their families from the Presbyterian "Meetinghouse" to the Episcopal Church, thereby hoping to immerse themselves in some of the aura that still lingered after the Disestablishment and thus acquire the stamp of indelible respectability.

The other churches were less spectacular in their worship parades, though the Presbyterians, whether they went to "Omagh First" or "Omagh Second" - there were two churches in the town for those of that faith - always took care to arm themselves with what appeared to me to be outsize bibles. In general, the top hat and the frockcoat

was as conspicuous by its absence at the Non-conformist Church parades as it was at the Catholic.

The socialogical pattern of Omagh and its environments were rather unusual for a planted area. To begin with, there was no noble or other great landed potentate, either resident or belonging there. The nearest was the Duke of Abercorn who dwelt beyond Newtownstewart at Baronscourt, some 14 miles away to the north, and, in those days of horse transport, was little more than a name in the Omagh district.

The land upon which, and for a wide area around it, the town stood appears to have belonged to a number of non-resident landlords whose very names were unknown to most of the populace, and, at the time I am referring to, had been mostly bought out. The absence of such a recognised head gave local society a rather loose, but rather democratic pattern. But, if local society was without a recognised head, it was not without its "pretenders" to such a position. These "pretenders" were individuals between the "squireen" and "half-sir" category who occupied what amounted to large country residences of a villa type on the outskirts of the town, each equipped with an avenue

and a gate-lodge, and each having a certain amount of farm-land attached, in most cases sufficient to maintain its owner in easy, but by no means opulent, circumstances. They were really substantial, good-class farmers possessing, in addition to a little private means, anything from 60 to 150, or in some few cases, perhaps 200 acres which, unlike genuine agriculturalists, they never worked themselves but through stewards, land-managers and hired men. Manpower was very cheap in those days and each of those minor magnates could get the work of tillage and stock-raising done for them quite effectively and at very little cost with half a dozen men or so; and, I imagine, the produce from those farms of theirs furnished them with much the greater part of their livelihood. They did no farm, or indeed, other work themselves, but lived "gentlemen's lives". None of them were, in any sense, wealthy and I have more than a suspicion that some of them had probably a precarious enough income, though they kept a brave face to the world as became self-constituted "pukka sahibs"; went round in their carriages with their coachmen in livery and duly cockaded top hats, paying social calls on each other, and thus managed to pass the days of their lives in a kind of genteel idleness. They were not, in any sense, landlords, for none of them had

any tenants, or derived any income from rents. Most of them were connected by blood or marriage with the minor grades of the Protestant landlord class or Protestant clergy, and quite a few of them were agents for small estates scattered over the Co. Tyrone and neighbouring counties; and that could be said to have been the extent of their "landed interests". However, such as they were, they represented the nearest thing, particularly in their own eyes, to an "aristocratical landed" element in our midst, for, as I have said, there was no resident magnate with sufficient wealth, power, tradition or personality to head our local society. There was then no acknowledged head of our community, which, for those days, was rather democratically organised; nevertheless, those men of leisure were, to a limited extent and in a rather good-humoured and not too serious way, accepted at something less than their own valuation. Though, as I remember it, their influence was small and far indeed from the immense influence and prestige that the landed class wielded at that time in the south and west. Indeed, when there was any very great occasion in the town requiring a social Chairman of accepted eminence, the lacuna was generally filled by importing the Duke (or Duchess) of Abercorn who lived 14 miles

to the north at Baronscourt, or the eccentric Viscount Corry, who lived at Enniskillen, 25 miles to the west.

Numbers of those militia "tycoons" used to visit my father's house occasionally. He was a sportsman and fond of shooting and his visitors followed the same sport. As a youngster, sitting unobtrusively in the drawing-room, I was even then amazed at the small range of their conversation. It was mainly on field sports and country life, hunting and horses and about the various local characters, respectable or otherwise, who engaged in the said sports. Religion and politics were, of course, taboo; but references to the admirable qualities and the health of the Queen were permitted - she being deemed to be above politics - and would occur in the course of the evening over the punch and cigars. How often had I to sit and listen to that dull conversation and its dull stories, most of which, unlike cameos from the classics, certainly did not bear repetition.

Their sons were idle young men, certainly not excessively educated, without professions or jobs of any sort, or, for that matter, any particular aim in life; indeed, to earn their livelihood or to equip themselves professionally

to do so was, seemingly, an offence against the canons of their caste. They passed the days in such varied but limited occupations as shooting, fishing or hunting in season, love-making - not always of a harmless character - going to tennis parties and to whatever private dances were given amongst their group, or by the officers in the Depot. There was, however, one of the heroic qualities that could not be denied them; they certainly had courage and proved it by joining up at once on the outbreak of World War 1, and getting themselves practically wiped out before its first two years were completed.

Nearly all these people held commissions of the Peace; some of them were even Grand Jurors, and they all possessed military titles - "Colonel", "Major", "Captain", in the local militia battalion attached to the Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers, who had their regimental Depot at Omagh. Every spring they were called up to the said Depot, with the militia men from the area, for their annual 27 days' training, under regular army officers, detailed for that purpose. This annual period of training was their gala time when, as militia officers, they were very much in evidence during the day, strutting through the little town

in a most consequential manner, resplendent in brilliant scarlet tunics and extremely tight-fitting dark trousers, with great swords - sometimes too large for their owners - dangling at their sides, and with immense busbies on their heads. Some of them even sported mounts. Old Colonel B., for example. He was a tall, portentious-looking man, with the authentic Wellingtonian nose, a splendid moustache pomaded into pointed terminals, and magnificent grey, mutton-chop whiskers that flowed out from his cheeks. The Colonel, garbed in all his warlike glory, used to come into town on these occasions, from his residence a few miles out, mounted on an ancient dapple-grey that was guaranteed to throw nobody. On his way to the barracks in the Gortmore suburb, he would alight at the White Hart Hotel in the High St. to refresh himself after his trying ride and to stimulate himself in preparation for his strenuous military exercises. When he was ready to leave the hotel smoke-room, he would hail the head-waiter in a stentorian bass that resounded through the premises: "James, tell Henderson (the ostler) to bring out my cha-a-arger!"

Those military officers were, of course, all true-blue Unionists, but very few of them engaged in active politics,

and none of them that I knew was a member of the Orange Institution - a body that they despised as "declassé" and beneath them, and regarded, at best, as an unpleasant necessity.

The militiamen, apart from their officers, were mainly Catholics and Nationalist, but they were recruited mainly from the towns and villages of the county. Few of the farming or country stock joined them, for the redcoat had an unenviable reputation and was absolutely taboo to the farmer's daughter, or any girl who valued her reputation. And not alone the Catholics, but also the Presbyterians, had this dislike to the Redcoat, socially, at all events, perhaps a memory of '98

The week in May that the militia were paid off and disbanded was a wild one in the town. Respectable people cleared off the streets early in the evening and left them to a drunken mob of militia men, and the town's underworld of both sexes, who broke windows and kept up a raucous din of shouting, singing, brawling and quarreling for the better part of the night. Custom, seemingly, gave those disbanded warriors a licence to do much as they liked for that particular week.

A small but influential stratum in our society was the professional element. This small stratum comprised the solicitors, of whom there were 13, 4 of whom Catholics, and the doctors of whom there were three, one Catholic, a few engineers such as the Co. Surveyor, the Town Surveyor. We can also include in the group the bankers who, though miserably remunerated, enjoyed (as by way of compensation) considerable social prestige. And this, again, was graded according to what the Bank was - the Bank of Ireland and the Provincial Bank leading in status, and the others following. Also attached to this group were the police officers, the County and District Inspectors of the R.I.C. and the regular officers from the barracks - never more than half-a-dozen of these; for only about a battalion of the R.I.F. were stationed at a time in the town.

Composed as it was of men who were, as their callings demanded, of considerable education, and specialised at that, who depended largely on the exercising of their minds for their livelihood, this professional stratum represented the most of whatever there was in the place of learning and knowledge, and,

indeed, of a love and appreciation of the more aesthetic things in life. Hence, it was that the leaders, or inaugurators, of cultural activities - musical, natural history, archaelogical, and dramatic societies, &c. - were almost always supplied from its ranks. And, though composed of Catholics and Protestants - the latter substantially predominating - they intermixed socially amongst themselves to a far wider and freer extent than the other strata.

Nevertheless, at our various social and friendly gatherings, two subjects were, by tacit consent, generally taboo, viz: religion and politics, that is, of course, should the company be mixed or composed of Catholic and Protestant, which, on this level, it nearly always was; and it was indeed strange and curiously unnatural for the outsider - though quite natural to the Ulsterman - to observe at, say, a dinner party, where the company was "mixed" how such a vital and interesting topic to all present as a General Election, which might happen to be actually raging, could be so completely ignored in conversation during the entire evening.

A great occasion, especially amongst the solicitor element in the stratum, was the biennial visit to the County town of Omagh of the High Court Judges. In March for the Spring, and in July for the Summer Assize, two High Court Judges would visit the town, bringing with them a flock of K.C.s and junior barristers. Great state and ceremony attended these visits of the Assize Judges from the time they arrived at the station and were received by the High Sheriff of the county, arrayed in top hat and frock coat, with his white wand of office; the sub-sheriff, the military and police officers and escorted through the ranks of scarlet tuniced soldiers, and black tuniced police to their carriage and pair, and driven off to the private residence that was appointed for their lodgings during their stay in the town. Administering, as they were, the Queen's Justice, they could not be permitted to run the risk of contaminating their impartiality by sojourning in an hotel. Every morning their carriage was ceremoniously met at the big Courthouse crowning the High St. hill, by the tall-hatted and befrocked sheriff, and "Her Majesty's going Judges of Assize" emerging therefrom, arrayed in their wigs, ermine and robes, red for the criminal, and black for the

civil judge, were escorted by him into the building to their respective Courts. During the fortnight that the Assizes generally lasted, the town took on a soberly festive air, the streets were brightened by the military in their red scarlet tunics, and a cosmopolitan air given to them by barristers and solicitors in the de rigeur top hats and frock coats. There was a bar mess in the Grand Jury rooms of the Courthouse for the barristers who lunched and dined there; and, every evening, dinners were given for them in the various solicitors' houses.

I well remember how the pungent smell of cigar smoke, pleasing but rare to us youngsters, for my father was a non-smoker, permeated our house for days after those festivities.

It was the Victorian era; this group was, of course, quite idiotically snobbish, especially its womenfolk, disdaining to know, or to have any social intercourse with what it termed "tradespeople", though there were, at that time, at least half a dozen of the latter, big merchants in the town, who could have bought out half of the professionals without feeling it. And, as this is designed to be a veracious chronicle of

those days, I cannot pass over the narrow isolationism and exclusivism of this particular stratum. It certainly did think great cheese of itself and, correspondingly small cheese of the other elements that made up the community.

The hallmark of respectability and social acceptability was to be a member of the Tyrone County Tennis Club. This club, for no earthly reason that I could ever see, was exceedingly exclusive, and the atmosphere very Protestant. In fact, at that time we were the only Catholic members, albeit there were several Catholic families that would have done credit to it and were certainly as good as most in it and better than a lot. Perhaps they never applied to get in; we did, and succeeded, or, rather, my mother did, who was a particularly strongminded woman with an enlarged superiority complex, and could not, for the life of her, see why Catholics should not claim and hold their rights with the others in all the town's activities and institutions, and she herself was a prominent person in the Musical Society and other mixed bodies. True, I have never heard of any Catholic being black beaned for it,

but then, I never heard of any Catholics other than ourselves applying for admission. On the other hand, I have often known of Protestants being refused admission and "beaned" because the Protestant "kettles" in the Club considered the Protestant "pots" pas comme il faut.

Talking of tennis brings me to speak of other pastimes. There was then a flourishing hunting club, the Seskinore Harriers. This, unlike the Tennis Club, was very democratic, or rather Catholic in the best secular sense of that word, welcoming high and low, long and short - all, in fact, who had a horse and liked a run with the harriers. It even included a priest - an unheard of thing in the north, the C.C. of Fintona, Father Hackett, now, or until very recently, P.P. of Dunboyne, Co. Monaghan. There were no clergymen of any other church. My two sisters and my younger brother were members of this club. I was not, as I had no particular taste for horses. The Master of the Seskinore Harriers was Lewis Scott, the owner of the big "Excelsior" Corn Mills in the town. He was a wealthy man and could maintain the hounds. Popular with all classes, he was open-handed and generous and quite devoid of "side" or anything like a false sense of

importance. When he died, or resigned, after many years as M.H., he was succeeded by Col. John Knox McClintock, owner of a small estate at Seskinore, about 6 miles from Omagh, one of the old militia chiefs.

In 1910, a Golf Club was started on land rented for that purpose on the Dublin Road. Captain Auchinleck of Creevenagh, the landlord of the land, was made the first President, and my father was elected first captain. The Club had not been long in existence when a great controversy arose amongst its members that shook it to its foundation. The controversy was on the awful question - should there, or should there not be "Sunday Golf". Though there was no particular social exclusivism about the Club, the fact was that Catholics formed then not more than a fourth of its members. It must be remembered that golf, at that time, was very far from being so popular and universal as it is to-day. Of the Protestants, the Presbyterians predominated. The set up was - all Catholics pro Sunday golf, all Presbyterians against, with the Church of Ireland people divided, a minority of them siding with the Catholics. The only exception to this was that nearly

all the bankers - whatever their religion - save those in the Northern Banks - there were five Banks in the town - were in favour of Sunday golf. The controversy was, at length, fully thrashed out at a general meeting of all members in the Clubhouse, my father being in the chair as Captain, when Sunday Golf was eventually defeated by a three to one majority. At the end of the proceedings, and before the meeting broke up, a very god-fearing Presbyterian - MacAdam, the chemist - got up and besought my father to pledge all the members to secrecy, not even to breathe it outside that such an abomination as "Sunday Golf" was actually seriously discussed. My father replied that he was sure all members would use their discretion; and there the matter rested until, in quite recent years, the Club has succumbed to modern "paynimism" and resorted to that abomination of desolation "Sabbath Golf".

The game that was played by and appealed to the proletariat - Protestant and Catholic - was Association Football. The big match of the year was between a Co. Tyrone team and a Co. Fermanagh team. There were absolutely no G.A.A. games of any kind, and no rugby at

all. In the summertime the military played a little cricket, but it was not serious and never caught on. Indeed, when I contrast those days with the present time, one striking change is the great improvement in occupations and amusements for the people. In those early days of mine there were only tennis in the summer for the self-constituted "elite" who succeeded in getting elected to the County Tennis Club, and, in the winter, absolutely nothing for the vast majority of the community, high or low, outside a bit of shooting or hunting for those that way inclined. The consequence was that the men resorted to the pubs where drink was cheap and plentiful and which offered an outlet to mankind's gregarious nature. Drinking, open and secret, was almost universal among men, and heavy drinking at that. As for the women, young and old, they stayed at home as they could not go round unescorted, drank tea, knitted and sewed and gossiped.

Having given some account of the town's would-be "uppish" strata, I must lieve say a word or two about the other and larger elements that used the town and contributed so largely to its prosperity and the working of its organisms. For a large northern town, Omagh

is unique in having little or no industries. In the days of my youth, the Corn Mill of W. & C. Scott, Ltd. in the Lisnamallard area was the only thing that could be called an industry. At that time it employed about 50 hands, about the same number as it does to-day. Indeed, industrially, Omagh is not a lot better to-day, for, with a population a third larger than then, it possesses a Nestle's Milk Factory employing 400 men and women and a Shirt and Collar Factory employing 300 girls. In my days there was no industrial proletariat at all. There were artisans and labourers, saddlers, farriers and employees of the coach and cart builders as well as considerable numbers employed in the backney car business. Also the numerous shops, willy-nilly, had to maintain a number of drivers, stableboys and yardmen to service their delivery vans, a necessity in those days of horse transport, particularly seeing that the town catered for a wide agricultural area whence it derived its prosperity. And, as I have mentioned shops, I should point out that though the Catholics were nearly 3/5ths of the population, the merchants and shopkeepers were at least 2 to 1 Protestant. Catholics were more numerous in the smaller by-streets such as Bridge St., John St., Castle St.,

Abbey St., and, of course, they had almost a monopoly of the pubs. There was one Protestant publican, a good Orangeman, but the Orangemen, a notorious thirsty species, basely deserted him on their festival outings as he had the name of selling bad drink.

As I have said, the town depended on little or nothing in the way of industries or factories. Apart from Scott's Mills, there was a Creamery on the Kevlin Road, four printing presses, two of which were owned by the proprietors of the two rival weekly newspapers, the Unionist "Tyrone Constitution" and the Nationalist "Ulster Herald", and a small shirt factory in Irishtown employing 20 or 30 girls. Through all these varied commercial activities, but not through industries or factories, the town contrived to support a fair-sized proletariat. On the whole, and for those days, they were not badly housed or clothed, particularly those who were lucky enough to be installed in the new artisan houses in the South Ward. Nevertheless, there must have been a considerable amount of unemployment, for I never saw the Courthouse railings wanting their line of men, leaning against them, or the pubs with a similar group supporting their walls, as they smoked away the "ly-long day"; "loafers" the respectable people called them.

The town had its slums too and its share of wretched Victorian poverty. Brook St., where the original Catholic chapel was situated and which, at its farthest and most respectable end, contained the Parochial House and Presbytery and the large Loreto Convent and girls' school standing in their own grounds, of course, was a vile squalid lane reeking with foul smells and inhabited largely by slatterns and down and outs and good for naughts, all mainly in rags. Respectable people would not venture down that ill-lit street at night because of the drunken orgies of its disorderly inhabitants. Only the priests, and, to a lesser extent, the police, could venture there at night with safety. It was mainly, but not wholly, Catholic, I regret to say.

The other great class that used the town, the greatest and most important of all the elements that contributed to its existence and prosperity, was the farming class. There were, of course, a considerable number of "strong" farmers, farming 60, 70 and some few actually over 100 acres with good houses and outoffices, but the vast majority of farmers were smallholders, very many of whom these days would be deemed to be uneconomic. As I have said, there was little or no landlordism in the area, all, or most of the holdings in a wide surrounding district, having been

bought out under the Ashbourne Acts. In the market area of Omagh that I am now treating of, say a radius of 8 to 10 miles around the town (nothing wider could be covered within horse power days) I should say the average farm did not exceed 30 acres and many were much below that level. These small farmers, the life-blood of the town and district, were an energetic and extremely hard-working community, living entirely and very frugally on the produce of their little farms and supporting thereon large families, who gave their work for their sustenance, but received no regular wages in return therefor. The houses of these little peasant proprietors were generally poor thatched affairs with a kitchen and two other rooms, all with clay ground floors. There were also farm labourers for whom the Government, at this time, supplied grants to the Rural District Council for building rural labourers' cottages. In some parts of the area these labourers' cottages were quite numerous, and in many cases the new government built ones were better, more comfortable and more weather-proof than the ancient farmhouses of their employers.

On a market, or fair day, the town was taken possession of by these little farmers whither they travelled

on their springless carts, brightly painted in brick red and blue, at the rate of not more than 4 miles an hour. The best transactions in markets and fairs were always executed early in the morning, so these little men would often have to rise at 4 a.m. or earlier, swallow a modest breakfast of porridge and hot black tea, yoke their horse and make for the town - no very thrilling thing on a fiercely cold, or raw wet morning in the Northern winter. The small farmer was very poorly and shabbily attired as a rule in rough thick serge, or tweed coat, waistcoat and corduroy trousers with seldom a collor round his neck. For headgear, a bowler hat or hard half-topper; with younger men a cap. One thing, whether old or young, Catholic or Protestant, he hardly ever possessed an overcoat. I have often seen these people jogging along home, miles away maybe, in the dusk of a winter's evening wet to the skin in the heavy constant downpours of the Northern winter, sometimes so bad that they would be, cold and all as it was, steaming from body heat and damp as they sat in their plank across the cart and urged on their slow steeds. How they were not all killed out early in life with rheumatic fever just beats me. They must have had the constitutions of crocodiles. In actual fact, they did die off at a

comparatively early age. At 40, they were old men and looked it; and their women at that age often looked wornout hags. The dress of their women was complementary to their own; generally a shawl over the head and shoulders. Some of the older women sported black bonnets glittering with beads and black beady shoulder capes and, of course, an umbrella.

My father's house was a villa residence standing in about two acres a short mile from the town on the Creevanagh road. On fair and market days it was the delight of us youngsters to go down the avenue to the gate and watch the long, long unbroken procession of carts wending their way homewards. Practically all the farmers would be hopelessly drunk on the feed of raw whiskey they had taken without any food - for no one catered for them and they never thought of eating "abroad". The old horses could always be depended on to jog them over the long miles to their homes without any reins control, for most of them were incapable of manipulating reins, or anything else, indeed. We young wretches used to play at discovering their religious and their political views by the simple process of shouting at each cart, as it passed

our gate, "To hell with the King!" or "To hell with the Pope!". This always drew a response, either praising us, or anathematizing us. In this way we often set a wordy battle going between the occupants of following carts, to our enormous delight, young scallywags that we were!

Before passing away from the proletarian end of local society, I must refer to the two big religio-political and secret organisations that bound together the rank and file of the Protestant and Catholic manhood, kept them divided from each other and ever-mindful of their differences. These were: the "Loyal Orange Institution" and the "Ancient Order of Hibernians". The first was by far the older organisation, having been in existence almost continuously since 1795. It consisted (and consists) of a network of lodges, headed by "Worshipful Masters", through the towns and rural areas of the province. Every county had, and has, its "County Grand Lodge", with its Grand Master, which is the governing executive of the Order in the county, with a provincial Grand Lodge in Belfast, and a Grand Lodge of Ireland, then located in Parnell Square (then Rutland Square), Dublin. The supreme ruling cabinet of this unique body was the Imperial Grand Lodge located in Belfast. The

Orange Order was monied, and monied to an extent that no corresponding Catholic body was. Hence it was able to cover the rural, as well as the urban areas, throughout the province, with sound, well-built halls. These halls were particularly valuable to the Protestant community in isolated country districts, supplying them with invaluable contact centres for their political and religious meetings and social gatherings such as dances, soirees. The Orange Hall, in a northern country district, was the hub of Protestant life, not only keeping that section of the populace together and giving it an integrated unity, but co-ordinating it and keeping it, in all the essentials, apart and separate from the Catholic section. It maintained an "apartheid" condition of affairs, albeit by no means so drastic an apartheid as that which obtains to-day in South Africa, or in the southern part of the United States.

The Order's ranks were open to members of the different Protestant churches and, I should say, the great majority of the local Protestant manhood were members. For, apart from its political and religious significance, the Order was a very strong social draw. Applicants were inducted by a kind of colourful masonic ritual, and sworn

to preserve the secrets of the Order and to carry out its decrees. It was recruited (and still is) mainly from the small farmers and labourers in the rural districts and from artisans and workers in the towns and urban areas. The Protestant bourgeoisie and upper classes, as a rule, steered clear of it. Indeed, though they shared fully its Unionist views, they regarded it with a kind of slight disdain and distaste, and more as an uncomfortable necessity than anything else. Two branches of the Order, the "Royal Black Preceptory" and the "Purple Orangemen" composed of better-placed individuals, constituted its link with freemasonry. The rank and file of Orangry are not freemasons, nor are the majority of Presbyterians.

The 12th July, the anniversary of the Battle of the Boyne, and the 12th August, the anniversary of the shutting of the Gates of Derry, were (and are) the two big annual festivals of Orangeism, when the "Brethern" turned out in force and in full gala garb, and held great demonstrations in the Ulster towns.

Strangers are generally extremely surprised at their first sight of an Orange demonstration. The lodges parade, one after the other, down the streets, each headed

by its lodge hierarchy, and a huge square banner on which is inscribed, under some symbolical "loyal" painting, its name, its number and its particular slogan, such as, "No Pope", "The Open Word", "No Surrender", etc. It is certainly a riotously colourful display with the brilliant colours of the sashes of the members, and the flags and banners waving in the breeze, and bringing an unwonted brightness to the drab town. Also, it is an extraordinary noisy affair. Every lodge had its band - fife-and-drum, flute, concertina, bagpipes (always Scotch), brass - and as they follow very close on each other's heels, all playing different tunes, quite regardless of each other, and, as the drums (generally the most plentiful instrument) are often lashed with canes instead of drumsticks, the discord and noisy clamour can be imagined. The whole cannot but impress the stranger as a wild and rather barbaric carnival and quite incongruous in the allegedly dour and certainly puritan North.

The "Ancient Order of Hibernians" already referred to, was the Catholic and Nationalist counterpart to the "Loyal Orange Insitution", and was recruited from corresponding strata in the Catholic community and disliked and avoided by their more respectable co-religionists. The one kept

the other alive and flourishing. The big annual days of the Hibernians, or, to use the vernacular, the "Hibs", were 17th March, St. Patrick's Day, and 15th August, the Feast of the Assumption. On these days, the Hibernians foregathered at some centre where they paraded the streets with their bands and banners. But, as the inexorable laws of patriotism confined them to one colour - green - and forbade any display of "England's cruel red" their demonstrations cut much duller and far less colourful figures than did those of their rivals. It took Sinn Féin to add orange to the depressing traditional green, thus giving nationalist processions a tiny touch more of colour and brightness, yet far from the dazzling, if somewhat barbaric splendour of those of their Orange rivals. Like their Orange rivals, too, they adopted a good deal of symbolism and the fee-fa-fum used in secret societies. The Order had lodges in all the towns and villages and quite a number of so-called "halls" throughout the countrysides. This factor, as in the case of Orangeism, provided a definite contact unit in the district where the members of the Order and their friends could assemble for meetings and social "soirees", a factor that undoubtedly helped its recruitment. But there was this

difference; whereas in the Orange case the local hall, particularly if in a country district, was open to all Protestant functions, whether Orange or not, in the case of the A.O.H., the hall was almost exclusively confined to "Hib" functions.

The Hibernians, in the course of time, became very powerful in the Co. Tyrone, having in the peak period of their prosperity - 1909 to 1913 - close on 5,000 initiated members - a very high membership in a largely agricultural area for a secret religio-political body. There was, unquestionably, a lot of very sincere and decent people in the ranks of the Order, who thought it was an effective organisation for helping the National and Catholic cause and defending it against its enemies. On the other hand, it attracted a tremendous number of "chancers", eloquent Dempseys, and by no means a few charlatans and intriguers, not very reputable individuals whose targets were the realisation of their own ambitions, and who, when and where they could, used the Order to defeat their Catholic business rivals and to achieve wholly unworthy ends, often of a solely "mé féin" character.

Well, so much for this attempt of mine to sketch the socialogical background of my little home town in Central Ulster as it was in my early days. I must now get back again into the historical stream and record events and happenings there against the general historical background as they occurred in my time, and their reaction on the populace.

1V. The Boer War Period.

In the last years of the last century the Boer War dominated every other topic. Outside town and country politics, the Boer War provided the only other excitement that then stirred citizens in any degree. In that issue the populace was divided into pro-Boer and anti-Boer, the divisions, of course, corresponding to those on either side of the traditional gulf - Catholic and Nationalist, and Protestant and Unionist. Yet the avowed sympathy for the Boer cause of the former did not prevent hundreds of Catholics and Nationalist "townees" and agricultural labourers (hardly ever farmers, big or small) taking the Queen's"shilling" and enlisting - an example that their Protestant and loyal neighbours were careful to refrain from following, in such substantial numbers, at all events.

After some training in the local Depot of the Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers, the new soldiers, putteed and haversacked, with brand-new rifles across their shoulders and sun-helmets strung on their backs, would be marched to the railway station behind a military band playing stirring martial airs, often Irish ones, to entrain for their post of embarkation for South Africa. And, to the no small disgust of the "Loyalists" who lined the streets in goodly numbers to cheer them on, those new warriors frequently responded by loud cheers for "Krudger an' the Boers!".

The attitude of the Nationalists, or rather Catholics, particularly the upper stratum of them, was far indeed from being a bigoted or intensely-felt pro-Boerism. Indeed, with the older clergy this sympathy was very weak because they had heard and read (the war press took care of that) that, religiously, and, in their attitude towards Catholicity, and the Pope, the Boer "Doppers" and their "Predicaats", were nearly worse than the Orangemen. Whilst general Catholic, or rather Nationalist feeling was sympathetic to the Boers, it was very far indeed from being as strong as was, for example, the feeling in Ireland, in the first months of World War 1 for the Belgians; or, later,

the feeling of the Catalans for us on the death of Lord Mayor MacSwiney. Side by side with a vague pro-Boerism, generally ventilated in varying degrees of emphasis, according to the nature and object of the speakers on political platforms, you had Nationalist Councillors and local leaders joining in on Committees for comforts &c. for the Irish soldiers. And, when, eventually, the hat went round to collect money for the erection of a monument on the Courthouse Hill in the centre of the town for the fallen Tyronemen - mostly Nationalists and Catholics - in the "Great Boer War", as it was often referred to, it was contributed to by all parties and faiths.

At the actual unveiling of the monument by the Duchess of Abercorn, and other county highlights, most of the Catholic members of the U.C.D. had arranged to be there with the others, and, no doubt, would have attended, had it not been for a letter in reply to an invitation thereto, written by my father, declining, and giving his reasons for so doing. Whilst he had the greatest sympathy for the Irish soldiers who had fallen in the war, he wrote, and had marked that sympathy by contributing to the funds for the relief of their dependants, he could not be a party to a

ceremony that, in effect, commemorated the defeat and downfall of two gallant small nations of farmers that had fought so bravely for their freedom and their rights. This letter was, I understand, published in the local papers and, whether that was the reason or not, few Nationalists attended the unveiling ceremony. My father lost much favour with many of his Protestant friends for some time on account of his action. But he was anything but an extremist in politics. Indeed, he was little more than a very moderate and very conservative Nationalist, with a belief in the Empire and its opportunities for Irishmen when Home Rule came which, as he maintained, was only right and fair, seeing that the Empire was largely Irish built. In this regard, there were very many Nationalists like my father at that time.

But, all that notwithstanding, he had, from the beginning, been strongly opposed to the Boer War which he considered to be nothing else than the first move in Chamberlain's offensive imperialism. He thought it was an unjust war and said so.

In the year 1899, I was sent to school in England and remained there until 1909, only returning home twice a

year - a fortnight's vacation at Christmas and six weeks' vacation in summer. At Easter we got a bare week's vacation, but most of us spent it at school. I was at four different English schools, in Oxford, Bath, Surrey and Derbyshire, respectively. The first two were preparatory schools - convents. The Oxford one was particularly English, and though, of course, very Catholic, intensely anti-Boer. It was almost like avowing oneself an Atheist to express any sympathy for the Boers and their cause. I , indeed, hadn't the courage to do so, and kept dark, young as I was, about my father's fatal infatuation for them as though it were a skeleton in the family cupboard. And, anyhow, I was so young, in my 8th year, that I had little idea as to what the whole rumpus was about.

I remember all the good nuns bringing us on to the verandah of the school that overlooked the broad thoroughfare of St. Gile's, and giving us little Union Jacks to wave and cheer off to victory against the wicked and treacherous anti-Catholic and anti-English Boers, the patriotic citizen-soldiers of the "City Imperial Volunteers", the C.I.V.s, as they swung smartly and purposefully by below us in their wide slouch-hats and new khaki uniforms to entrain for the Veldt.

It was a gay and rousing sight, with cheering crowds and bright martial music from the bands, and I must confess that, in the words of the famous song "The Mountains of Mourne" - "I cheered, God forgive me, I cheered with the rest".

In what seemed to me a very short time afterwards, we were brought to Oxford Station to greet the return of what the Boers had left of those warriors, and, though it is now well past half a century since that day, I still remember that sad, depressing scene - the long line of stretcher cases being carried by the orderlies to the waiting horse ambulances, the dreadfully emaciated soldiers with their worn and soiled khaki tunics just hanging on their bones, the wounded, with dark, crusted bloodstains on their linen dressings, many obviously in pain, being helped along by doctors and nurses, and, above all, the heavy, sickly smell of stale human blood that permeated the atmosphere under the large station enclosure.

Another melancholy date at that school I also do not forget was the day Queen Victoria died, 22nd January, 1901. It was, as I recall it, a cold grey day, enveloped, as it were, in a queer unnatural stillness. In the convent, everybody - nuns, boys and girls, went about hushed and on

tip-toes. All the nuns, even the usually bright and cheerful ones, were sad and many were quietly weeping. The universal depression was deepened by the mournful tolling, all day long, of Oxford's countless bells, muffled for the occasion. It seemed to us children that something terrible had happened, that Goodness itself had passed out of the world!

V. English Schools.

Being mainly away at school, out of the country during the first decade of this century, I was, naturally, much out of touch with Tyrone, and, indeed, with Irish events. However, I was not long at those schools before I discovered myself to be an enthusiastic Irish Home Ruler. How that happened seems now to me to have been a bit of a miracle. In my short annual visits home - for that is about what they were - I heard comparatively little politics discussed, partly because of the mixed religious society which provided my parents' social background, and partly because my mother was not interested in Nationalist politics, albeit, very much so in religion. There were many women like my mother in those days. Judging from my own experience, it seems to me that the average Irish youngster

(there are exceptions) is a Nationalist from the cradle, and takes to Nationalism as a duckling takes to water, without having to be taught, and, indeed, often abysmally ignorant of the historical reasons why. People may regret this, but they cannot dispute the fact. Agreed, Nationalism is a human emotion largely, an irrational emotion, but its force is terrific: the only force that in our country equates to, and, when a clash comes, prevails over that of faith and the Church, as has been demonstrated to-day by its extreme devotees, which shows that no emotion is so capable of developing into pathological forms so difficult to contend with.

As I say, I grew into an enthusiastic Irish Home Ruler during my period of implantation on English soil, and, as I grew older, took a more critical and more detailed interest in Ireland, in the doings of the Irish Parliamentary Party. This was greatly helped by two books in my very small personal library, given to me by my father, which were at that time my most precious earthly possessions. One was A.M. Sullivan's "Story of Ireland", and the other an old copy of Martin Haverty's "History of Ireland". I read and re-read them until, at one time,

I nearly had them off by heart, and passed them round to my English as well as Irish schoolmates. God help any of them who criticised a statement in them! I cannot estimate what I owe to those two books. They were my bibles of Irish nationality and Irish background and stimulated my nationalism and kept it going when I lived, like Rath, "amidst the alien corn". And perhaps my biggest debt of all to them was that they enabled me to contradict in English histories, and Catholic ones at that, albeit the proportion assigned to Irish affairs in those histories was so slight. I still possess my Haverty, sound and fair, and a fine old history it is, even to-day. Its pages are black with thumb-marks and finger prints. Where I was concerned, that old book certainly did its job, God bless it!

Irish boys constituted a small minority of my schoolmates in those schools, but, whether born in Ireland, or of Irish descent in England, they were mostly as enthusiastic for the "Cause" as I was myself, and several of them far better up on the prevailing position at Westminster. Some few Irish there were, however, who were more uncompromisingly opposed to Home Rule than the

most rabid Orangeman. One of this type I remember well at The Mount in Derbyshire. A good fellow he was in most ways and highly intelligent, but purblind utterly where the land of his forefathers was concerned. He was the son of an Oxford doctor and he possessed the grand old Saxon name of O'Kelly. His "nom d'ecole' was "Birdie O'Kelly" because he had a sharp pointed nose and round eyes like a bird. He, of course, always spoke against Home Rule. A case of "Ipsis Anglés Angliores"(!).

All the English boys that I associated with at that period were, with but three exceptions (one of whom, tell it not in Gath, was a Labourite!) dyed-in-the-wool Conservatives and, of course, vehement Unionists. They particularly abhorred the pro-Liberal tendencies of us Irish fellows, for, to them, the Liberals were nearly what the Communists of to-day are to us: far, far worse, for example, than Nye Bevan. I don't know how many times in our constant arguments on Home Rule that we Irish were told by our English companions that no good Catholic could back Liberalism and be a good Catholic. There was, for instance, good old Father Colchester, S.J., our Spiritual Father at the Mount, the mildest and saintliest of men, who used to give out to us about Lloyd-George, whom he did

not hesitate to stigmatise as "that wicked, that evil man", his gentle brown eyes flashing with anger behind his spectacles. How happy would the good old man be to know that, to-day, I don't think his opinion of that notorious little trickster anything like as far out as I did then!

In general, the Irish mixed well with the English and were, I must say, most popular with them. My experience has convinced me that there is something in the Irishman that appeals to the Englishman; and, I think, vice versa is also true. It has been said that the difference between the Welsh and the Irish, with regard to the English, is that the Welsh like the English collectively but detest them individually, whereas the Irish hate them collectively but like them individually. I think there is much in this and that there would be much more in it, so far as the Irish are concerned, if the English could only sit a bit more tightly on their (often) unbearable sense of superiority, often so clumsily albeit, unconsciously disclosed.

Even on the vexed constitutional question the English attitude towards their Irish school-mates was one of tolerant and rather condescending amusement, summed up in:

"Oh, you know good old Paddy, he just loves being contrary, can't help it, you know; his nature; again the Government; can't live without a foight". Any English boy I met there had no doubt that he could "take off the brogue" to perfection, and I never met one that had been to Ireland, save a few that stayed with me on my brief holidays at home. I don't think one of them believed for a moment that the Irish could really be so imbecile at heart as to want to sever themselves from the best government (particularly when it was Tory) outside heaven!

"It's all just an Irish quick; Hibernian cussedness. If Home Rule ever looked like coming, they'd be the first to protest against it. You can't take anything the Paddies say seriously. What an amusing lot of leg-pullers they all are!". And I think we helped substantially in their forming this opinion of us by our notorious and incorrigibly hyperbolistic and exaggerated national habit of over-statement, even with regard to the most trivial things in life.

But, as I say, the Irish got on excellently with their English fellow-students. I myself had many good friends amongst them. Nevertheless the differences in

the temperament and character of the two nationalities was wide and clearly marked which, young as I was, did not, even then, escape me. Simplification, I know, is exceedingly dangerous, especially when dealing with peoples so subtly disparate as the English and Irish, but, were I forced to give in a sentence the fundamental difference between them, I might, very inadequately, put it this way: the Irish are much quicker-witted and brighter mentally, but much more superficial than the English, who are a much deeper people than we are. The idea that the Englishman is sentimental but not emotional is only partly right. Sentimental he certainly is, but he is also very emotional. His emotions, however, lie very deep in him, and he is, unlike us, and the Latin, ashamed of revealing them. I have, however, seen more than one instance of their upsurging and it was something to see.

A conclusion to be drawn from this quite inadequate axiom is that the Irish and the English are two peoples that are, or should be, complementary to each other; complementary, of course, on an absolutely ex aequo basis; that is my own personal opinion for what it is worth.

Save for a few in most (but not all) the schools I was in over there, and for a few masters, I could not honestly say there was any real hatred of the Irish, certainly of individual Irish, though there were quite a number that didn't care much for us either collectively or individually. Indeed, for that matter, none of them were fond of us collectively. They understood us very imperfectly, of course, and the historical background behind our national claims not at all. They knew absolutely nothing about Irish history and cared less (or Scots, for that matter, as my Galloway friend, Duff Fife, used to complain to me). To them we were wilful children, evidenced by our absurd striving for the forbidden fruit of Home Rule, which had to be firmly and gently kept away from us, in our own interests, of course, as a loaded revolver is kept away from a child. Amongst the generality of them the attitude towards us, their schoolmates, might be said to be a curious mixture of good-natured contempt and respect. The latter feeling was evoked by the phenomenon (to them) of the remarkable pre-eminence of the Irish in the class-rooms as well as on the playing fields despite their low numbers - a pre-eminence to which I personally contributed little in either

sphere. A few examples may illustrate better and more clearly the outlook and attitude of the young Catholic (as most of them were) adolescent Englishman of the central social stratum of my generation. The school in this case was the Mount, Derbyshire, run by the Jesuits of the English Province. Every year, round about St. Patrick's Day, there was a full-blooded debate on Home Rule in the Debating Society on a resolution such as: "This House believes that Ireland should have Home Rule". For this particular debate the Middleton Hall (as it was called) was always crowded, not only with boys, of whom there were about 360 in all (it was not a large college), but priests, masters lay and scholastic, and even lay-brothers. Some of our most enthusiastic supporters were amongst the lay-brothers.

The resolution was always lost by a 3 to 1 majority, despite the fact that scholastics and masters, having Irish affinities, would have spoken eloquently and movingly in its favour. Their English opposite numbers did likewise, of course, for the Anti-Home Rulers. There was no doubt that most of the eloquence (not all), and the better part of the argument was on the Irish side, but that

did not save the resolution. In arguing Home Rule with the English, the Irish had a great initial difficulty: they had first to convince the English that Ireland was a nation. This the English, even the most sympathetic of them who would give us hearty pats on the back for what we had done for the Catholic Church, would never accept. To them Ireland, or rather Nationalist Ireland, was a fantastic Yorkshire gone contrary, and wanting, with incredible childishness to self-govern herself.

I remember one of the English debaters most fancied was a fellow called Nelson. He was some connection of Lord Nelson, the famous Admiral's collateral descendant. The English had a high opinion of Nelson's forensic ability in "dishing" Home Rule. His arguments were few and baldly simple, but, to them, unanswerable. They would come up to me after the debate and say: "Look here, O'Shiel, what's the use of you Irish hollowing for Home Rule? You might as well holler for the moon. Old Nelson hit the nail on the head to-night when he said: 'Ireland won't get Home Rule because we won't give Ireland Home Rule'. That's the whole thing in a nutshell".

On the Irish side I used to speak with Frank Lanigan-O'Keefe, Tommy Corballis and Jack Neary, now a Jesuit

Father and, by far, the most eloquent and convincing of our speakers.

Another incident at the same school. They used to have concerts now and again produced by the boys of the College with some outside professional assistance. These concerts always wound up with "God save the King" at which the entire audience - priests, masters, boys, players - stood to attention. A handful of Irish boys, including myself, used to contrive to sit down whilst the few bars of the Anthem were being played. How we escaped, I don't know. I never suffered anything more violent for this act of "lesé-majesty" than a few hacks on the shin. The truth is, I think, that we were so insignificant in that mass of loyalists that nobody, least of all, wise authority, thought of giving us the satisfaction of taking notice of us. An admirable tribute to their toleration and sense; but the North Englishman is very tolerant by nature, a good deal more so than his southern compatriot.

On one occasion, towards the end of the concert, I got into a terrific argument on something or other that I have now forgotten, and that certainly wasn't Home Rule,

with my friend who was sitting beside me, C.F.W., a full-blooded young Englishman and, later, a Jesuit Father of the English Province of the Society. I think he died some years ago. The argument was so tense and we got so dug into it that, in the general confusion, W. forgot to stand up for the National Anthem. When we were going out, Mr. M., the Prefect on duty at the door, called W. over to him. Mr. M. was the scion of an old English family with traditional service in the Royal Navy. He was, of course, an Englishman to his finger-tips and staunch Conservative, and one of those who, sad to say, had no violent liking for us Irish and our captivating ways.

"Why didn't you stand up for the National Anthem, W.?"

"I forgot, Sir".

"You forgot, did you? Well, get a dozen ferulas to remind you not to forget to honour the National Anthem in future".

"Oh, hang it, sir, that's most unfair. What about O'Shiél. He's a wild Irishman (that was our invariable adjective in England) who harbours some imaginary and utterly fantastic grievances against us. But you and I, W., are <u>Englishmen</u>, and ought to know better".

W. and he were of the gods; celestial fabric: far indeed from the same clay as queer, Hibernian mortals!

When a General election, or a by-election, in the local constituency occurred, our Rector used to hie him forth in his gig down to Eckington, the town in the valley below us, to vote solid Conservative. And though there was no organised send-off for him - indeed, such was officially discountenanced, as the college was theoretically "non-political" - the boys found a way of gathering and cheering him off on the goodly mission. As the then Rector happened to be an Irishman, we Irish took a poor view of his action.

Before I pass from my schooldays in England, I feel I should record one last incident of a none too sporting character in which I was involved, if only to give balance to that background as a whole. The particular incident I am about to record took place in the Surrey school. It was a very English school indeed, with, curiously enough, a full-blooded Scot as its Headmaster and a very considerable percentage of Irish, both native and "emigrant" vintage. But, despite its Englishness, mirabile dicta! it recognised St. Patrick's Day in a very

special way by giving the Irish boys exclusively a special dinner and concert in the evening with entertainers brought down from London to soothe, or elate, their nostalgic patriotism with suitably chosen "numeros". You had to be Irish, or of mainly Irish descent, to get into that exclusive function. But, sad to relate, so weak is human nature, even English human nature, that there were not wanting quite a few of the latter to barter their Saxon souls for a mess of pottage, and Hibernian pottage at that. These "weaklings" would wake up one morning within the "prescribed period" to discover that, after all, they were as Irish as the Blarney Stone, as much so as the rest of us. O, those flesh pots of Egypt! But those "renegades" were very few (and very temporary) and, anyhow, never succeeded in convincing Authority that their blood had changed sufficiently at any rate to qualify for participation at the big Patrician evening.

The mass of the English boys there were 100% English and Tory who would no more think of 'verting to Milesianism than to Gallicism. That truly extraordinary privilege to the Irish in a school that was very consciously English, much more so than the Mount in

Derbyshire, amazed me even then and I could not make it out. I understand it was of rather recent origin and was largely due to the second-in-command of the school, a man who came between the Scots Head, Father MacMurdy, and the very English Prefect of Studies, Father Oswald Turner, an Irishman of a very dominant and powerful personality, Father Albert O'Neill.

This special favour shown to the Irish in a school that was primarily English and of which the English element was at least 4/5th was, naturally, the subject of some resentment, especially seeing that, as St. George was the patron saint of the school, all boys came in for the celebration on his day. But, only in the case of a very small section of English was this resentment taken seriously. And that section certainly did not hesitate to mark their resentment in no uncertain way. This they did by wearing, on St. Patrick's Day, bright red ties, with red roses or other red flowers, in their buttonholes, emblematical of "Old England".

One St. Patrick's morning, brilliantly bedecked with a dazzling green tie on which was affixed a large golden harp, with an enormous bunch of shamrock pinned on my lapel, I ran into Fawcett on my way into the playground

after breakfast. He was one of the English "resenters" and was said to be some connection of Mrs. Fawcett, the Suffragette. He was ablaze with "England's cruel red". Without a word of warning he caught hold of my green tie and proceeded to tug hard at it saying, as he did so: "Take that rag off you, O'Shiel!". I, of course, seized his tie and a great tug-of-war ensued during which we nearly throttled each other. Then he changed his tactics and plucked out my beautiful bunch of shamrock - a "weed" as he called it. Out instantly came his red flower, and the next minute we were hammering away at each other for all we were worth. We were both in the White House, the Junior House, both about the same height and strength and both the same age, fourteen. The boys, of course, even the seniors from the Red House, all crowded around us to see the "fun". Anyone that has been a schoolboy knows what a terrific draw a school fight is. It became a small "international incident", I being madly cheered by the Irish, and Fawcett by the English. My greatest stimulus in the fight was to behold, with the corner of the eye not wholly closed, the tall burly figure of O'Brien of the Red House, a great school athlete and, hence, a school hero, madly cheering me on. The unsolicited

audience we got was really a bad development, for it made the fight go on much longer than it should have, both of us feeling that we had the prestige of our respective countries to maintain. I don't know how long the fight lasted, but it was suddenly stopped by one of the Masters, curiously enough a Welshman - Cornwall-Jones.

I should say that whilst there was no "knockout" or anything like it - we were too evenly matched for that - I got by far the better of the encounter. This was afterwards generally admitted and I got a reputation as a pugilist, an entirely false one actually, but it gave me some peace from the attention of bullies of whom there were not a few in the place.

Having stopped the fight, Cornwall-Jones ordered me peremptorily into the Study Hall and, to the surprise of all, said nothing to Fawcett but to go and clean himself up. So, bleeding from many wounds and all tattered and torn, my lovely St. Patrick's Day decorations ruined beyond repair, I went into the Study Hall and sat myself down. Presently, all the boys came trooping in

after the morning "Free" and sat down to study. Cornwall-Jones, as Prefect on duty, mounted the rostrum and suddenly proceeded to harangue us all. I remember well to-day the gist of his remarks, but, of course, not his actual words, after more than forty years.

He began by saying that they had witnessed a disgraceful spectacle of barbarism. If O'Shiel and the wild Irish came over to them to get civilised, they'd jolly well have to behave themselves and not carry on like savages. They should remember that they are not in Ireland now; and more of that ilk. Presently, he got to a stage when, seemingly, his feeling got past words, for he shouted at me:

"O'Shiel, leave the hall!"

I asked feebly and miserably:

"Where shall I go, Sir?"

He retorted:

"Anywhere you like. Back to Ireland, if you like. We don't want you here".

So, feeling the most abject wretch in Christendom, sure that I must have done some terrible wrong, I made my way out of the large hall through the rows of desks to the

accompaniment of groans and boos from the boys and plentiful hacks on my shins. The exit I made for opened on to a wide corridor, on the opposite side of which there was a line of classrooms. I entered one of these and seated myself far at the back in the most inconspicuous corner I could find. The windows of the classroom looked out on the bowling-green, where the priests and masters were wont to pass some of their leisure time. That morning, to my vast relief, it was deserted. It was a beautiful bright Spring morning with the sun streaming down on the world, and bathing the faultless lawn of the bowling-green in warmth and light. The birds in the shrubberies around were in full song, and a bed of wallflowers below the open windows sent up a pleasant full fragrance that I can well remember. All the world, thought I, was gay and happy save only me, a wretched miscreant, an outcast from respectable society. At any rate, I was grateful to be away from my schoolmates who, anyhow, had repudiated me, away from everyone and alone. Suddenly, to my consternation, I heard footsteps on the gravel walk that passed close to the window; the next moment, the shadowed outline of a

priest, in cape and biretta, was thrown on the sunny path, and who came up to the window and stuck his head in but the redoubtable Father Albert O'Neill, his breviary in his hand. Hehad a very pink complexion, and a particularly pink back of the neck which earned him the nickname of "Salmon". Salmon, seeing me, exclaimed, "Hello, O'Sheil, what are you doing here? Why aren't you in the study hall with the House?". To these, and other questions, I had to blurt out that Mr. Cornwall-Jones had banished me from the study hall for fighting.

He bade me go wipe the blood off myself and go to his room as he "wanted to talk seriously to me". Very nervous and feeling sure I was in for a birching, at least, I made my way presently round to the great man's room in the exclusive Masters' quarters. He was there before me, sitting in a large armchair before a cheerful fire, filling his pipe. Bidding me take the other armchair, he said: "You were fighting Fawcett, weren't you? I saw it all from the Hill. What I want you to tell me is how did it begin?". When I told him, he smiled, gave me a clap on the back and said I did quite right to stand up for my country. "You wouldn't be a true

Irishman if you didn't do that, especially when you were attacked".

He gave me a glass of sherry and a cigarette- the first adult that ever offered me a drink or a smoke. Then he proceeded to wax eloquent about Ireland and the Irish - the great country it was and the fine folk all we Irish were and what a grand history we had, and how necessary it was for us to stand up to the English and make them have respect for us. He knew several warlike Irish ballads and he recited them to me with terrific verve, as well as talking to me on Irish history which, at that time, I knew little about. At the end of an hour with him, my Irish was so lit up in me that I felt I could, at that moment, take on the whole of England. As I was leaving him, he warned me, no matter what the consequences might be, to refuse to apologise to Fawcett should Cornwall-Jones ask me to do so. Actually, Jones did ask me to do so and in fear and trembling I declined. He had keen, penetrating eyes, and he gave me a glance from them that was answer enough for me. I was sure my posterior would have to be offered up on the altar of my country and I waited a few days in miserable anticipation. However, one day, after morning studies in

the White House, when the fellows had their morning "Free", Jones, in the company of Fawcett, came up to me and said curtly: "Come with me". He walked us, Fawcett on one side of him and I on the other, up the steep pathway to what was known as the Hill. At the brow he stopped abruptly and said: "When are you two fellows going to make up your stupid row?". Fawcett and I were only too glad to do so and spontaneously we hook hands. Fawcett was a thoroughly decent fellow and we became good friends after.

I have, perhaps, delayed too long on this rather trivial occurrence in the long, long ago of my schooldays and had thought of not recording it at all. Wrongly or rightly, I have now done so. It was certainly an incident that left a deep impression on me.

V1. Late Victorian Ireland.

During my biennial visits home at that time I managed to pick up a certain amount of what was going on in the social and political world. It is, I think, quite impossible for people of a younger generation than mine to-day to sense, to any degree, the atmosphere

of those far-off pre-World War 1 days. Its dominant element was an atmosphere of supreme tranquillity, as enduring as the sun. The whole world was at peace, and Britain, in particular, had been at peace and incredibly prosperous for the greater part of a century. Her little wars of conquest, even the Crimean War, the Indian Mutiny and the Boer War, were in a sense, certainly an economic sense, comparatively insignificant, and had practically no effect at all on her vast wealth. This long-established atmosphere of tranquillity had its reflexes on life everywhere. In small country towns like mine, its seemingly endlessness was most pronounced, giving plenty of leisure for the trivia of the small matters of life and which, because of the lack of greater and more significant issues, took on an importance and consequence that they were not entitled to. But mankind, particularly womankind, must have targets to gossip about whatever the age or period.

Victorian ladies, according to the custom of the period, were great stay-at-homes, their ordinary social life circulating round their afternoon tea-gatherings. Each lady had her special afternoon when she would be "At home" to her friends who would assemble in her

drawing-room to drink tea from china cups (and great vying there was about those cups!), eat thinly cut bread and butter, hot crumpets and seed cakes, and gossip about the events and doings of their day, of which by far the major part was taken up with the eternal "Servant Problem". These parties were mainly composed of women, but they were never without a sprinkling of men, generally of the occupationless and leisured type that I have described. My father never put in an appearance at these gossipings which he considered only appropriate for women; but my brother and myself, much against our wills, had to attend them, all starched up and on our best behaviour, when they met in my mother's house, and were expected to make ourselves useful by passing round teacups and cake plates, etc. In this way I picked up a considerable amount of chatter and gossip. The ladies participating in these innocuous and rather Cranfordian little parties were of different religions, usually there were considerably more Protestant and Unionist ladies than Catholic and Nationalist ones. But, whatever their religious and political complexions might be, they all struck me, as I look back now on those

far-off days, half a century ago, very loyal - almost fulsomely so - in their talk about the Queen who, despite her well-known aversion to Ireland and the "superstitious and dirty Irish" they all seemed to hold in such awe.

In the year 1900 the Queen took certain action that gave great pleasure to the type of people I have been referring to. Because of the "courage and bravery of her Irish soldiers" on the battle-fields of South Africa, she decided to reward Ireland by visiting it - her first visit to that country for 51 years - and spend her Spring holiday there, instead of in the South of France. And she prefaced her visit by an act that made those dear ladies nearly weep tears of gratitude at her wondrous benevolence. Let us hear about this touching act of royal grace from the pen of a good, loyal, contemporary historian, the late Richard Bagwell:

> "The most striking event, however, in Ireland", he wrote in the article on "Ireland" in the eleventh edition of the "Encyclopaedia Britannica" Vol. 14 - "in the earlier part of 1900 was Queen Victoria's visit. Touched by the gallantry of the Irish Regiments in South Africa, and moved, to some

extent, no doubt, by the presence of the Duke of Connaught in Dublin, as Commander-in-Chief, the Queen determined in April to make up for the loss of her usual Spring holiday abroad, by paying a visit to Ireland..... Directly the announcement of the Queen's intention was made the greatest public interest was taken in the project. Shortly before St. Patrick's Day the Queen issued an Order which intensified their interest, that Irish soldiers might, in future, wear a sprig of shamrock in their headgear on the national festival. For some years past the "Wearing of the Green" had been regarded by the army Authorities as improper, and friction had, consequently, occurred, but the Queen's orders put an end, in a graceful manner, to what had formerly been a grievance. The result was that St. Patrick's Day was celebrated in London, and throughout the Empire as it had never been before, and, when the Queen went over to Dublin at the beginning of April, she was received with the greatest enthusiasm".

To show how deeply that "graceful concession" touched Irish Nationalism, and official Irish Nationalism

at that, here is the then Irish Leader, John Redmond's contemporary reference to it in the House of Commons:

> "The Irish people will receive with gratification the announcement that, for the future, the shamrock shall be worn by all Irish Regiments on Ireland's National Festival. The Irish people will welcome this graceful recognition of the valour of their race, whatever the field upon which that valour has latest been exhibited - and our people will, moreover, treat with respect the visit which the Venerable Sovereign proposes to make to their shores, well knowing that on this occasion no attempt will be made to give the visit a party significance and that their chivalrous hospitality will be taken in no quarter to mean any abatement of their demand for their national rights which they will continue to press until they are conceded".

And, in these words, Redmond expressed the sentiments of the great mass of the Irish at that time.

I think her stay in the "sister isle" lasted three weeks, most of which she spent in the Viceregal Lodge in Dublin. Unlike the visits of her son, the Prince of Wales,

in 1885, there were very few untoward, or hostile incidents, and nothing in the nature of a demonstration; and what few there were, were wholly insignificant. That "horrid extremist girl, Maud Gonne" had, of course, to hang a black flag out of her window, but Constituted Authority soon had it removed.

Even the "Freeman's Journal" wrote as follows the day after the Queen's entry into Dublin:

> "Yesterday's reception is, indeed, a reply to those who declare the Irish people to be so deep rooted in resentment at the centuries of oppression to which the country has been subjected, that conciliation is impossible, even by a tardy concession of justice and liberty. Ireland is eager, even yet, to respond to any offer of friendship based on liberty and justice".

Such trivial displays of hostility were lost in the general demonstrations of loyalty, not alone from the professional loyalists but from the most unexpected quarters; for example, the "rebel" Corporation of Dublin by 30 votes to 22 passed a resolution offering her "a hearty welcome

on her arrival in the capital city of her Kingdom of Ireland, in the assurance that she came among the Irish people above and apart from all political questions". And the Queen was received at the city boundary by the Right Honourable the Lord Mayor and the Aldermen and Councillors of the Corporation, and the keys of the city presented to her.

Indeed, a wave of loyalty, or rather, "royalism" passed over the country, affecting in particular the dames of Catholic and even Nationalist Ireland, many of whom undertook the journey to Dublin to behold the tiny impersonation of England's 900 years' old Crown, and, better still, if they could get in for some of the receptions, banquets and balls that were, for the period of the royal visit, the rage in the capital. A goodly number of my mother's friends including, of course, herself, were amongst those that hied them thither for that purpose, where they spent a very congenial week, beholding the little "goddess" whenever and wherever they could, and getting in for a share of the festival events. Their description of their doings in Dublin, and particularly of the little royal woman, arrayed in bonnet and cloak, driving through

the streets of the city, thick with Union Jacks and red, white and blue bunting, and bowing to the cheering crowds, formed a prominent part of their gossip for many a day afterwards. I verily believe that each one of those good ladies was convinced that the Queen bestowed a particular and special bow on her. When they returned to Omagh it was observed that not a few of the older of those ladies copied the old Queen's attire, and her bow, or rather, little nod of the head.

This queer kind of toadyism in certain Catholic and Nationalist circles is, doubtless, not easy to comprehend in the universal republican climate of to-day, but it was very general at that time. Such outbursts of loyalism in such unexpected quarters in my early days makes me think what an easy task British officialdom could have had, by the smallest gesture on its part, or that of royalty, in bringing a great part of the country, certainly the influential Catholics, round to Crown loyalty under a very moderate scheme of Home Rule. But they were too purblind, too stipidly prejudiced, to seize and make use of the many fine opportunities fate had, from time to time, put into their hands. They certainly paid dearly for that blindness and prejudice in the long run.

On 22nd January, 1901, Victoria died after a reign of 64 years - the longest in English history. Two days later, her eldest son, the Prince of Wales, was proclaimed King "of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland and of the British Dominions beyond the Seas, Emperor of India and Defender of the Faith". He took the name and title of Edward V111. This king had grown up under the shadow and disfavour of his jealous old mother, which circumstance had had a definite effect on his outlook and way of life far from what she wished. He possessed a strong and engaging, indeed, a rather Falstaffian personality that enabled him to contact and mix with ease with all sorts and conditions of men. He had, to a wide extent, and to the vexation of his mother, broken out from the narrow strait-jacket of the Court circle and annexed friends in social strata that, theretofore, were considered wholly taboo for royalty. His personality, and his democratic and liberal tendencies appealed to the Irish and were much enhanced by a number of other circumstances relating to him that were certainly not overlooked in this country. One was the wellknown fact that, for years, he had been out of line with his royal mother, whose dislike

for Ireland, and all things Irish, was notorious and is said to have stemmed from the refusal of Nationalist Corporations and townships to erect a statue to her husband, "Albert the Good", as the loyal city of Belfast had done. She was jealous of her attractive son and of his popularity, and kept him, for the greater part of her life, out of the limelight and out of all affairs of prominence, in so far as she was able. For example, she decidedly rejected the proposal of Disraeli, her favourite Prime Minister in 1860, to establish a royal residence in Ireland corresponding to that of Balmoral in Scotland, and permit the Prince of Wales to reside there from time to time, thereby giving the monarchy a much-needed popularising in this country, a proposal which Gladstone put up to her, at a later date, with no better fate.

Again, Edward was universally believed to be a Home Ruler, which certainly did his popularity no harm with the Irish; and his manifest reluctance at the coronation to pronounce the words in the oath, execrating the Mass and the Eucharist, along with his personal call on Pope Leo X111 on his visit to Rome, endeared him to Catholics everywhere. But the reactions in the Protestant north was very different,

and Belfast's articulate dead walls were already warning "Papish Ned" that such goings-on had not the approval of that centre of enlightenment and that, in the vernacular, he had better "watch his step".

In his short reign of nine years he paid two visits to Ireland. On both occasions he received a great popular welcome despite the fact that Dublin Corporation refused him an Address of Welcome by the narrow majority of 40 votes to 37 on his 1903 visit. However, this was well compensated for by the attendance at the Royal Levee of the Archbishop of Dublin, Dr. Walsh, and by Maynooth College putting its best foot out to receive him, decorating itself lavishly in the royal colours and hoisting the Royal Standard over its roof. He was received at Maynooth on 24th July, 1903, by Archbishop Walsh of Dublin the Archbishop of Tuam, and 13 Irish Bishops; Dr. Mannix, then Vice-President of the College, read a loyal address to him on behalf of the Archbishops and Bishops of Ireland and of the College staff and students.

The news of the King's death on 5th May, 1910, was received with genuine sorrow in Ireland. The flags of the City Hall and the Mansion House were lowered to half-mast.

Sympathetic references were made in the Nationalist press; Archbishop Walsh telegraphed his sympathy, the Dublin Corporation passed a resolution of condolence, and a Votive Mass was sung in the Pro-Cathedral, the Archbishop presiding. The Cathedral was heavily draped for the occasion, the Corporation attended in their state robes and the celebrant invoked a blessing on the new King.

V1. The Liberal Avalanche.

The reunion of the Irish Party, and Edward V11's popularity softened the atmosphere of hard and embittered pessimism that had prevailed for so long in Nationalist Ireland. The General Election of 1900 had made no difference in the size of the parties. The Unionists were returned to power with Salisbury as Prime Minister, and George Wyndham replacing Gerald Balfour as Chief Secretary for Ireland. The next year, Redmond and some of his colleagues toured the U.S.A. on a fund-collecting expedition on behalf of their reunited body. About that time there was much talk of a final settlement of the Land Question, either on the basis of a just dual ownership, or on that of an out and out tenant proprietary. Impatience at the Government "laissez faire" attitude

towards this burning question led to much boycotting, cattle-driving and suchlike agrarian disturbances in the south and west, and a number of counties were proclaimed under the provisions of the Coercion Acts. The Orange North, too, was restless on this matter, if not as violently so as the south. The agitation for a complete buy-out by the State of the landlords' interests was led in Ulster by Mr. T.W. Russell, Unionist M.P. for South Tyrone. A by-election falling due in East Co. Down, Russell and his friends nominated a Unionist Tenant-Righter against the official Unionist candidate. This latter was none other than the redoubtable Col. Wallace, a V.I.P. in the Orange Order, and, in due course, its imperial Grand Master. The by-election took place on 6th February, 1902, and resulted in the return of the Russellite Tenant Right candidate, Wood, by 3,576 votes to Col. Wallace's 3428. Another by-election on 10th August of that year disclosed further fissures in the Ulster Unionist fabric when the Independent Orangeman, Tom Sloane, assisted by another Independent Orangeman, Lindsay Crawford (who was to become, eventually, first Irish Consul-General in New York) polled 3,795 votes against 2,969 votes polled by the official

Unionist candidate, Dunbar-Buller, in the intensely Orange stronghold of South Belfast. Those signal defeats of orthodox Unionism in its strongholds caused a great sensation at the time, and much perturbed the Unionist Party's leaders. However, they were not, alas, to continue; the growing power, expansion and aggressive anti-Orangism of the secret and avowedly sectarian A.O.H. made sure of that. In this year the former Liberal Prime Minister, Lord Rosebery, definitely repudiated Home Rule, declaring that it was not feasible unless and until a Government was returned, supported by a majority of English M.P.s in its favour, as England was the "predominant member of the partnership of the Three Kingdoms" and would first have to "be convinced of its justice"; a very strange averment indeed for any leader proclaiming himself a believer in democratic Liberal principles. This led to his small group of "Liberal Imperialists" being opposed by the Irish in those British constituencies where they were strong enough to do so. And Asquith, the future "Home Rule Premier", then a Rosberyite, and then as ever a Whig, was of the same view and telling his constituents some years earlier that "the reconciliation of Ireland ..... could

only be overcome by methods which carry with them, step by step, the sanction and sympathy of British opinion".

(This "Liberal Imperialist" group had been formed at the start of the Boer War to counteract the Anti-War and pro-Boer outlook of a large section of Radical Liberalism led by people such as Lloyd George. The "Liberal League" was, from the beginning, headed by Rosebery and contained in its ranks such eminent and respectable names as Asquith, Haldane, Sir Edward Gray. During the Boer War their activities were mainly attending dinners of the League and giving utterance to their strong support of the Conservative Government in their operations against the two South African republics. None of the Liberal Leaguers was, at any time, very enthusiastically behind Home Rule and Asquith, as I have said, whilst a member thereof, subscribed to Rosebery's doctrine of the predominance of the predominant partner, England, in the case of Home Rule. Asquith, on succeeding to Campbell Bannerman's Premiership - who had always been an opponent of the Liberal Imperialists - left the league).

That July, Lord Cadogan, who had become converted to Home Rule, resigned the Lord-Lieutenancy wherein he was

succeeded by the Earl of Dudley, and Salisbury made way in the Premiership for Arthur J. Balfour. That November, an unusual, a surprising, appointment for a Unionist Government to make was that of Sir Anthony MacDonnell a member of the Indian Council, an Irishman and an avowed Home Ruler, to the important post of Under-Secretary to the Lord Lieutenant. Lord Dunraven, an enlightened landlord, had, somewhat prior to this time, assembled a conference of prominent men, including William O'Brien, to consider ways and means of settling the Land Question. The Chief Secretary, the highly intelligent and sympathetic Wyndham, whilst not "of them" could be said, in a very careful and non-committal way, to be "with them". Dunraven shortly afterwards formed the "Irish Reform Association", in which Sir Anthony MacDonnell, who never disguised his Home Rule principles, took a very keen and, as things turned out, too imprudent an interest for a high Castle civil servant under a Unionist Government. This association was the organ of Dunraven's "Devolutionism" which proposed not only to transfer private bill legislation to Dublin on the Scottish model, to which no interest in Ireland could object, but also to hand over the internal expenditure in Ireland of a considerable percentage of moneys voted to that country by

Parliament to a Financial Council, consisting of half-nominated and half-elected members. "Devolution" found little support, and on its exposure and failure, was promptly repudiated by Wyndham and Balfour. A difficult parliamentary crisis, caused by the fears and suspicions of Irish Unionists of the avowedly Home Rule Under-Secretary, and his dangerous goings-on, was only temporarily modified by the resignation of Wyndham. But, before departing from the public scene, that high-minded, imaginative and far-seeing man was able to get his great Land Act passed into law in the year 1903.

For the next few years there was no change in the political world. The atmosphere, as a whole, in Ireland continued tranquil and humdrum as it had been since the Unionists attained to power in 1896. There was, clearly, no immediate possibility of Home Rule and, therefore, no strong Nationalist offensive towards that target. Nationalists, or rather, their leaders, accordingly, for the want of something better to do, if for no other reason, resorted to that traditional pastime, a bit of squabbling amongst themselves, excommunicating, from time to time, from the orthodox body, leaders like William O'Brien and Tim Healy. But not so in the north. There was no sign of any fracture

on the solid Nationalist structure. The actual political background being stagnant, and the outlook far from hopeful, northern Nationalists tended to concentrate more on the Catholic than on the Nationalist standpoint. Nationalism there, as elsewhere in Ireland, was in the doldrums, and Unionism, or rather Orangeism, little better, until it was frightened back into life by the growth and expansion of the sectarian Hibernian Order.

But all this tranquillity, this stagnation - call it what you will - was nearing its end. The gods were planning to intervene, and to intervene in a startling fashion that was to bring about a series of constitutional crises that, in turn, were to develop into an unprecedented revolutionary reaction from the most unexpected quarter.

By the year 1905 it was clear that the long reign of the Unionist Party was seriously threatened and not by its normal enemies without, but by its own dissident members within its household. It was one of its more recent acquisitions, no less a person than the Liberal-Unionist, Chamberlain, who brought things to a head by insisting on pushing his Tariff Reform and Imperial Preference policy against the views of a large body of Free Trade Conservatives.

Balfour, finding he could carry on no longer with this internecine war raging under his roof, resigned the Premiership in that December, and was succeeded by Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman, Bart. This was disappointing to the Liberals who wanted a general election. However, they had not long to wait. Campbell-Bannerman's makeshift government soon collapsed and, in January 1906, went to the country. The ensuing general election resulted in a terrific landslide transforming the former Unionist and Liberal Unionist all-over majority into a minority of 157 seats out of a total of 670 in the House of Commons, with the Liberals, with over 400 members, holding an absolute majority over all parties combined, Unionists, Liberal-Unionists, Nationalists and Labour. A Liberal victory was, of course, expected, but no one, least of all the Liberals themselves, anticipated the magnitude of the victory. Naturally, Liberals, Nationalists and Labourites (who came in for the first time as a distinct party with 40 seats) were jubilant. The reaction of the Tories was very different.

V111 - The Genesis of Tory Supra-Constitutionalism.

Mixed with the chagrin and humiliation of their stunning defeat was a fear, indeed a dread, at what they imagined it would lead to. Was this overwhelming triumph of their enemies the writing on the wall for them and their class? Was their historic party, composed as it was, in the main, of England's prime ruling stock, the class, whether Tory or Whig, that had held the government of the country in its hands for centuries, was that class now to get its "nunc dimittis", and lose its traditional hegemony for ever? That awful possibility, and its consequences to England and the Empire, bit into their souls, and had a great deal to say to the revolutionary agitations that developed within the ensuing decade.

The dreaded anticipations of the worsted aristocrats were intensified by their actual horror of the type of legislator that the electors had commissioned to fill their shoes. Instead of good-class people, with the authentic public school background, maintaining the government and traditions of their ancient kingdom, and whose "language" one spoke and understood, you had a crowd of upstarts from the minor middle classes, dissenting ministers' sons, chapel people and the like that, indeed, that wicked old spider,

Gladstone, had thrown open the doors of Parliament to by his Reform Act, 1885. Their leaders were men like Asquith, Birrell, Simon, Morley, McKenna, MacNamara, Masterson, John Burns, and that notorious anti-aristocrat and rabble-rousing demagogue, Lloyd-George. They were bad enough, God knows, but what was likely to follow was even worse, judging from the mass of the rank and file then in the House of Commons, for it could not be denied, alas, that Asquith and the majority of his Cabinet colleagues were highly educated men, stamped with the authentic seal of Oxford or Cambridge, albeit few, if any, of them could claim that essential appendage, an "old school tie", nothing nearer thereto than a Grammar School certificate. What country could be safe in the hands of such "chancers"? Was it not their right, nay, their bounden duty to their country, their Church and their empire to rescue them from such adventurers by constitutional means, if at all possible; if not, by any effective means?

To maintain the country's ruling elite, now so gravely threatened by the upsurge of the vast proletarian sea - that was, and must be, the real end-all and be-all of Tory policy in that crisis, though, of course, it need not and, indeed, should not be openly proclaimed. This new

combativeness of the Tory Party with its new awareness of their caste in the country, in short, this new "Jingoism" had its roots in the last decades of the last century, and was indeed nought else but a revival of the plan or "card" of their predecessors.

And I feel I must digress here a little to sketch briefly the "fons et origo" of that extraordinary political phenomenon, the Conservative extra-constitutionalism of 40 years ago, as it is the essential background to the understanding of this narrative. In the year 1885 the franchise had been greatly extended - over 2,000,000 new and mainly proletarian voters being added thereby to the Register - and when, after the General Election of that year the Irish Nationalists under Parnell held the balance of power, both English parties played for the Irish vote. The Tories made contact with Parnell with a view to reaching agreement on the Home Rule question. About the same time, Gladstone had also decided for Home Rule, but did not announce his decision as he, wisely, did not wish, if he could possibly help it, to make Home Rule a party issue. Gladstone's son, however, without informing his father, rashly disclosed his father's views. The Tories, thereupon

at once reversed their intended new policy, and, to defeat the new Liberals (their prime aim), and maintain their hegemony against the rising flood of the dreaded hoi polloi, broke off negotiations with Parnell, and made their fatal resolve to fight their Liberal antagonists on a clear-cut Anti-Home Rule issue. Having taken this decision, the Party settled to pursue it ruthlessly and, if necessary, by violence, or, at any rate, threats of violence. Henceforward, since the premature collapse of its plans for a working agreement with Parnell that might have enabled them to "dish" the Liberals, Conservatism, to attain that wished-for purpose, was to be synonymous with Unionism, and with Unionism in its strictest form, viz: the complete preservation of the "status quo". Should, for example, the unitary character of the United Kingdom be about to be changed even to the mild extent of a very limited local autonomy for England, albeit the entire British Isles would remain intact under the supreme sovereignty of the Crown and the Westminster Parliament, then this great traditionally Constitutional Party of England was prepared to (and in fact did) advocate resistance to that constitutional measure by violence and extra-parliamentary methods. At the particular period I have for the moment returned to, it was - Anything

to destroy Gladstone and his new-fangled democratic Liberalism, and dominate and keep in its place, before it was too late, their immense rabble backing. As one of them is reported to have remarked: "We must keep the House of Commons a gentleman's club".

The leader selected for the vanguard attack against Liberalism and Radicalism, or, if you prefer it, for opening the new Conservative policy of violence, was Lord Randolph Churchill, son of the Duke of Marlborough and father of Sir Winston Churchill, Secretary of State for India, and a man who, the day before, so to speak, was one of those Conservatives who had conducted the negotiations with Parnell. It is clear from his letters that it was a deliberate, carefully thought out policy, and that there was no limit to the extent they were prepared to go, or rather, to encourage others to go, to achieve their objective.

On 22nd December, 1885, Lord Randolph wrote to Lord Salisbury, then Prime Minister: "If the Government went out and Gladstone introduced a Home Rule Bill, I should not hesitate, if other circumstances were favourable, to agitate Ulster even to resistance beyond Constitutional limits".

There was no mealy-mouthedness about that; nor was it, in any sense, a hot-blooded, impulsive decision. Nor did the then Prime Minister repudiate that deliberate threat against constitutionalism coming, as it did, from one of his senior colleagues - H.M.'s Secretary of State for the Indian Empire.

On 16th February, 1886, Churchill followed this idea up by his famous letter to his friend, Judge Fitzgibbon in Dublin, declaring that if Gladstone "went for Home Rule the Orange card would be the one to play". And the potential rebel added somewhat guiltily and hesitantly, "Please God (sic!) it may turn out to be the ace of trumps and not the two". And, as regards its prime objective, the integrity of the United Kingdom and the Empire, the policy of the "Orange Card", thus originated, in its final playing by Bonar Law and Carson, certainly did not "turn out to be the ace of trumps". After this, Churchill, with the full endorsement and support of the English Conservative Party, as we know, set forth on a deliberately mob-stirring campaign to "agitate Ulster", as he had promised, and rouse the latent passions of the ignorant Orange masses in the town of Ulster and to excite and stimulate their anti-Catholic bigotry, not for any particular benefit for them, but for the over-riding purpose of maintaining Tory ascendancy in the United Kingdom.

The end justifieth the means. The rousing of evil passions, latest in the best of us, is one of the easiest of all things to accomplish - look how successfully Hitler worked on that, and how speedily he filled his prisons with sadistic guards and wardresses. He never wanted for devils incarnate, male or female, to do his loathsome work. With a minimum of instruction he could create them in endless supply in a few weeks. Hitler, pervent from Christianity that he was, had been a Christian, and he knew well, and his designs reveal, that we mortals are prone to evil, not to good. On that simple axiom he built his baneful empire.

Churchill took on his assignment with his eyes open, knowing but too well that he would succeed in his shameful and despicable mission; and, of course, succeed he did. He told the Orangemen that if Parliament decided on Home Rule "Ulster, at the proper moment, would resort to the supreme arbitrament of force". This statement is historical as being the first public exhortation to anti-constitutionalism, and to physical force, by a responsible top-level British statesman, and a Conservative one at that. And he left them a slogan, the clarity of which appealed to their

simple "dour" minds: "Ulster will fight, and Ulster will be right!".

Churchill had speedy proof of the success of his assignment on behalf of the Conservative Party. His steamer, taking him back to England, was hardly out of sight, and he himself had hardly had time to light his after-dinner cigar, than Belfast and other Ulster towns were in the grip of bitter and bloody pogroms, bringing in their wakes death, fire and rapine. On that occasion certainly the "Orange Card" proved triumphal.

Randolph succeeded in turning out Gladstone's Home Rule Government, inflicting on it a crushing rout at the polls, and in establishing the Tory Party firmly in power for some years, a perfect example of the end justifying the means.

That was how the new "Jingoism" began. It was also the seedbed, ready to sprout again when needed by Tory necessity - which, as we shall see, it duly did.

Chamberlain's war against the Boer Republic in 1899-1902 gave this new Conservatism a decided fillip, particularly the long series of humiliating British defeats

in the early years of the campaign. If those disasters hurt the pride of Britain, that was nothing to the bitterly painful wounds they inflicted on Tory pride, for, to the Tory way of thinking, they, the Tories, were the real and authentic England that, in the last analysis, had to be preserved at all costs.

The Tories, of course, and to a large extent, their affinities, the old Whigs, at that time so closely allied with them, were not, in any sense, and never were, fond of democratic institutions. Indeed, they thoroughly disliked and feared democracy, seeing in its ultimate triumph the downfall of their caste and its hegemony. Their plan for the future was the firm entrenchment on the country of a strong caste oligarchy, albeit a benevolent and patriotic one, such as Bismarck and the Prussian Junkers - whom they profoundly admired - were then, with great success, erecting on the German Reich. Our Tories sought a Parliament, as far as could possibly be, modelled on the Reichstag, where the representatives of the "hoi polloi" could assemble and blow off steam when they felt so inclined, as often as they liked, but where their votes were worthless and quite futile to affect in any way the activities of the Kaiser and his Cabinet of Junkers.

Something on those lines they sought for England and were sure that it would advance the Crown, the Kingdom and the Empire; and, at last, but by no means least, themselves and their caste.

IX. The Tories Declare War on Liberal Rule.

Well, as we know, the General Election of 1906 swept the Liberals into power with an immense, an unprecedented majority. Campbell-Bannerman became Prime Minister, of course, and formed the first Liberal Government for twelve years. Lord Aberdeen was appointed Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, with James Bryce as his Chief Secretary. Walter Long, the latter's Unionist predecessor, lost his seat in Bristol, but, being beloved by the Irish Unionists (who had made him Chairman of their Party) a seat was found for him in the then safe Unionist seat of South Co. Dublin. Two years later, in 1907, Bryce was sent to Washington as Ambassador, and his post of Chief Secretary for Ireland went to the lot of the friendly, but, as events proved, ill-fated Augustine Birrell.

In 1908, Campbell Bannerman resigned through ill-health, dying shortly afterwards, and was succeeded as Prime

Minister by Henry Herbert Asquith, the latter's post of Chancellor of the Exchequer being bestowed on that then radical stormypetrel, David Lloyd George, the little Welsh attorney, returned for Carnarvon Boroughs.

The new Chancellor manifested an intensely radical, anti-vested interests, near-socialist outlook, which he gave expression to in a defiant, demagogic way, that annoyed and surprised not only his enemies, but also many of his friends. However, seeing what his background was, that should not have surprised them. He sprang from Welsh peasant stock and was reared by his God-fearing Baptist uncle, Richard Lloyd, who carried on the business of a shoemaker in the small hamlet of Llangstumsday. A veritable son of the people, he grew up with a strong partisan sympathy for them, and all that appertained to them, such as Welsh nationalism and Welsh non-conformity; and with an equally strong partisan antipathy for their enemies (as he regarded them) such as landlords, parsons of the Established Church, mine owners and factory magnates. Those strong traits in his composition craved for expression; and, in those early days of his he gave vent to them whenever the opportunity presented itself. In his new post he soon found himself well provided with such opportunites

He took office when the last Asquith Budget - that of 1908-1909 - and the Old Age Pensions Bill were in their last stages. He had no serious difficulty in piloting those measures through Parliament, or in financing the latter by extending the new levy of super-tax (inspired first by Asquith in his 1907 Budget) on all incomes above the £5,000 a year level.

The increase in the super-tax levy, of course, profoundly disturbed the Tories, but they refrained from any of those violent methods of opposition that were soon to characterise their ideas of discharging the work of "His Majesty's Opposition". In the next Budget, however, that of 1909-1910, the Chancellor was in for it with a vengeance. He introduced it on 29th April, 1909, and its then supposedly revolutionary character created widespread dismay in Conservative circles in the City, and amongst propertied classes throughout the country. The main features of the Bill were large increases in the duties on spirits and tobacco, estate, legacy and succession duties and income tax; and an elaborate system of duties on that most sacred of all commodities in the Tory eyes in those days - land values. Land and landlordism, at that time, were not only the indispensable title to social eminence,

but were still the source of most of the biggest individual incomes. The Tories believed, or elected to believe, that those relatively moderate and certainly not unjustifiable provisions, were but the vanguard of the great legislative assault on their order, and vested interests, that they had been anticipating since the formation of Asquith's Government of "radical upstarts". So they decided to make it the first test of their newly endorsed supra-constitutional policy, aimed at the new Liberals that they at once feared and despised, towards the glorious objective of their ultimate and complete extinction, or, at all events, of their reduction to comparatively harmless proportions in the legislature of the country. And so, in pursuance of this new policy of theirs, the Tories lost no time in launching a violent war on the Budget, not alone in the House of Commons, but throughout the country.

Lloyd George, however, was a born fighter, and this decision of theirs was right up his garden path. He met threat by threat, and attack by attack. He answered their "Budget Protest League" by forming a "Budget League" with his great friend, Winston Churchill, then President of the Board of Trade, as its President. Under its auspices

he made his famous "Limehouse Speech" on 30th July, 1909, a speech that brought down on his head the concentrated fury of the whole Tory Party. They characterised it as rank socialism and, what was even worse, as a vulgar and abusive appeal to the mob, against the rights of property that was wholly unworthy of one of His Majesty's Ministers. King Edward V111 thought so too, and remonstrated with Asquith about the speech which he stigmatised as "Billingsgate oratory". Yet, reading it to-day, it does not seem such a very awful exhibition. Defending his land taxes - the main object of the Tory attack - he asked "Who was the landlord?", and answered by saying the landlord was a gentleman who did not earn his wealth, and "whose sole function, whose chief pride, was stately consumption of wealth produced by others". He went on to say that "land near London Docks, formerly rented at £2 to £3 per acre, had sold at £6,000 or £8,000 per acre ..... A bit of land in Scotland, wanted for a torpedo range and "affording an opportunity for patriotism" was rated at £11.2.0 a year, and sold to the nation for £27,225". He gave the case of Mr. Gorringe, the big furniture store proprietor, whose lease in Buckingham Palace Road had been renewed by the Duke of Westminster, the terms being an increase of the ground rent

to £4,000 a year, a fine ("a fine, mind you!") of £50,000, and the building of huge and costly premises according to plans submitted to the Duke. "Such a case", he declared, "is not business; it is blackmail". This speech, reprinted, was circulated widely, but its matter, especially the "Gorringe Case" was severely criticised. Sir Edward Carson declared in a letter to the "Times" that it marked "the beginning of the end of the rights of property".

About this time, or somewhat later, Lloyd George caused grave offence in his attack on primogeniture by referring to it, in searing terms, as "the privilege of the first in the litter".

Amidst all the abuse hurled at him from so many quarters he found a most unexpected defender in no less a personage than the Archbishop of Canterbury who, on 30th November, 1909, argued that the Finance Bill was not revolutionary. The supposed revolutionary tendency behind the Bill, found in the speeches of Lloyd George, he attributed to "the tendency of the Celtic temperament to respond to environment, a tendency promoted by the mysterious Celtic "huel" which makes the speaker say he knows not what, and excites the audience they know not why". A by no means

unfair or inaccurate explanation on the Archbishop's part; and one that could be applied equally fittingly to the orations of many Irish Celts of to-day, as well as yesterday.

On 4th November, 1909, and after a singularly stormy passage, the Budget passed through the Commons by 379 votes to 149, and went up to the Lords. There, it encountered greater and much more effective opposition. On 30th November, Lord Lansdowne moved "that this House is not justified in giving its consent to this Bill until it has been submitted to the judgement of the country". That resolution was duly carried, and the Budget rejected by 350 votes to 75. The Lords, by taking that action on the second reading, had cut themselves off from all controversy on details, and asserted the right to reject wholesale the entire Budget, and, on principle, any finance bill. There was no precedent for such an act for at least 250 years. It had been the universal assumption, never challenged till then, that the House of Commons, as the elected House, and it alone, had the sole right to control the finance of the Kingdom.

Another important point has to be noted by this action of the Lords. It was the first occasion on which

the new Tory tactic of insisting on an "appeal to the country" for certain measures of their opponents, thus delaying, where they could not quash, legislation distasteful to them, was put into operation. We shall see it employed again before this narrative is concluded.

On 2nd December, 1909, Asquith moved in the House of Commons "that the action of the House of Lords in refusing to pass into law the financial provisions made by this House for the services of the year is a breach of the Constitution and a usurpation of the rights of the Commons". This resolution was carried by 349 votes to 134, a majority of 215. The Government accepted the challenge of the Lords and appealed to the country. Parliament was dissolved on 3rd December, 1909, and on 10th of that month, Asquith opened his campaign in the Albert Hall. Before an audience of 10,000 men "boiling over with enthusiasm" as the 'Times' informs us, he declared that Ireland was still the main failure of British statesmanship, "The Irish problem", he said, "could only be solved by a policy which, while explicitly safeguarding the supremacy and indefectible authority of the Imperial Parliament, will set up in Ireland a system of full self-government in regard to

purely Irish affairs. For such a policy in the new Parliament the hands of the Liberal Government would be perfectly free". And, of course, he did not forget to add the limitations: "There is not and there cannot be any question of separation", he assured his audience. "There is not, and there cannot be, any question of competing supremacies, but, subject to those conditions that is the Liberal policy". Nothing could be more explicit than that announcement, that the Government would be committed to a measure of Home Rule for Ireland in the event of their victory at the polls.

Later, however, in East Fife, his own constituency, he declared he could make no promise regarding legislation on education in England, land in Scotland, and self-government in Ireland until the obstacle offered by the Lords' Veto was out of the way. But, of course, the clear inference of those words was that once that obstacle had been removed, the matter referred to, particularly having regard to his Albert Hall Commitment as to Ireland, would be duly dealt with.

The real issue in that election, as in the next following election, was whether the Lords' Veto was to

continue to thwart the wishes of the electorate when it returned a non-Tory Government. That was an issue that appealed to all - Irish Nationalists, the Welsh and Scotch radicals, the Labour Party, and to all but the most Whiggish Liberals. Anti-peerage, anti-aristocratic rule was the driving force behind the Radical speeches. At the Queen's Hall, London, Lloyd George said: "In rural England you would see a baronial castle and a little unsightly red-brick chapel - the only place in the village which would stand up to the castle". And there was, indeed, something in that. That particular General Election absorbed public attention to an extraordinary degree. The contest was carried on everywhere with unexampled vigour and variety, and an unparalleled number of speeches were made.

John Redmond, the Irish leader, spoke on behalf of Liberal candidates off several platforms throughout Great Britain. On 9th January, 1910, at Manchester, he earnestly appealed to the Irish in Great Britain to vote for the abolition of the House of Lords that, for so long, had been the enemy of their country. He declared that Ireland merely wanted such freedom as had been given to the Transvaal and denounced the English Catholics as "worse

enemies of Ireland than the Orangemen of Liverpool". He spoke, of course, in Ireland too. At Rathmines on 21st January, 1910, he said that "Ireland was not foolish enough to ask for Home Rule before the Lords' Veto was out of the way. They were not asking for separation, but for supremacy in purely Irish affairs.

The result of that crucial election was the return to power of Asquith's Liberal Government, but with a loss of 100 seats to the Tories. Clearly, the huge sums spent on anti-Liberal propaganda had had their effect in the country. The overall majority of the Liberals had vanished, and vanished for ever; thenceforward they would have to depend on the Irish to run their Government. Only once before were the Irish in that enviably strong position; that was in the days of Parnell's leadership after the 1885 General Election. But Parnell's dominance was nothing like as numerically strong as Redmond's, amounting, in the last possibility, merely to a bare decisive two votes; whereas Redmond commanded, or, rather could, in the case of Home Rule, command 82 Nationalists, thus holding the balance between the 275 Liberals and the 273 Unionists, even ignoring the 40 Labour votes, or treating them as hostile.

But, of course, the Labour M.P.s were more sympathetic to the Irish, at that particular period, than were many of the Liberals.

It was, indeed, a singularly powerful position for Redmond and the Irish Nationalists to find themselves in, and its immediate upshot was the re-emergence of that skeleton in the Liberal cupboard, Home Rule, as a living and virulent issue after thirteen years in the wilderness. That awkward issue, disliked at heart by most of the Liberals nearly as much as by the Conservatives, had been deliberately kept in the background by Asquith and his Cabinet, so long as the Liberals commanded an unchallenged Parliamentary majority. When, for example, their Irish allies showed signs of impatience, as they did in the year 1907, the resourceful Birrell produced an "Irish Council Bill, designed to give a very mild administrative, but not legislative, instalment of powers under an anaesthetic, as it were. It was intended as a kind of bone to silence the baying in the impatient Nationalist kennels. Actually, for the times and the circumstances, it was not at all a bad measure. "It prevented", wrote Sir James O'Connor, "any possibility of partition. It vested administration

for all Ireland in an All-Ireland body. It was the nucleus from which would inevitably have sprung an All-Ireland Parliament controlling administration, legislation and fiscal control".

The Council was to consist of 82 elected and 24 nominated members which would assure the dominance of its representative element. The Chief Secretary was to be a member but without voting power; and the Lord Lieutenant was to have power to reserve any resolution, to confirm or annul it, or to remit it for further consideration. An "Irish Fund", and an "Irish Treasury" were to be created to finance the scheme. As it was designed as a purely administrative, or executive body, and, in no sense, a legislative body, the Unionists, though disliking it, could hardly oppose it. Two very disparate types of Irishmen supported it; on the one hand, Patrick Pearse and Terence MacSwiney, and on the other, John Redmond. True, Redmond's approval was a qualified one, and its chief appeal to the two former was that it gave education into Irish hands. However, the bulk of the people were against it, deeming it to be but a red herring to deflect the country from the national objective of Home Rule. Arthur Griffith was against it from

the beginning and waged war on it with his powerful pen.

Redmond crossed over to Dublin to propose its acceptance at a specially called National Convention, but, when he got there, found the opposition so strong that he had, willy-nilly, to volte face and propose its rejection.

Again, in 1909, the Nationalist attention was held by Birrell's Land Act. I do not charge that that particular measure, like the Irish Council Bill, was primarily put forward to assuage Nationalist impatience as regards Home Rule. Because of the collapse of the finance machinery in the Wyndham Land Act of 1903, Birrell's measure was essential, and urgently essential at that. But, all the same, it was a very welcome distraction from the big Home Rule issue for the harassed Liberals, which they certainly did not neglect to utilise.

At all events, since the January 1910 election, landing, as it did, a predominant Nationalist Party in the House of Commons, there was no more scope, or use, for such subterfuges. A Home Rule Bill could no longer be side-tracked; it just had to be faced and swallowed like a draught of unpleasant medicine. And, in this way, did those Neo-Liberals who, unlike Gladstone, had nearly as little stomach for

Irish self-government as had their Unionist opponents, find themselves holding that obstreperous and by no means tranquil baby.

X. The Mid-Tyrone Election, 1910.

The new hegemony of the Irish Parliamentary Party, and the re-emergence of Home Rule on the scene as a strong probability had, of course, its reactions on the Ulster Unionists and the Orangemen. The Chairman of the Ulster Unionist Party, Walter Long, an Englishman, having been returned for a London constituency, resigned, and was succeeded by a Dublin King's Counsel, Edward Carson, M.P. for the University of Dublin. Addressing his new supporters in the House of Commons after his election as their leader, he promised that he "would dedicate himself to their service, whatever may happen". That day should be remembered, for it was one of the three most fateful, if not indeed fatal, days in modern history for England, the British Empire, and, of course, but not just in the same sense, for Ireland also. It was the 21st February, 1910. The other "Jours fatals" shall be drawn attention to in due course.

But, if Asquith was not Gladstone, Redmond was far from being Parnell. Even in those days of his peak prestige

and popularity in the country, he was no "uncrowned king", and could not, and did not, at any time in his political career, command the allegiance of all Ireland's Nationalist M.P.s as his great predecessor could always do up to the hour of his tragedy. A decent, high-minded, Irish gentleman of the first quality, Redmond lacked that element of iron, of ruthlessness, to the point, almost of unscrupulousness, that Parnell conspicuously possessed, and that was, at that period, at all events, a "sine qua non" for a successful Irish Leader confronted with English politicians, but half-heartedly interested in Ireland's demand.

Despite the big "family" reunion at the commencement of the century, and the re-integration of the warring Nationalist factions, that new integrity was of but brief duration. Redmond, notwithstanding his masterful position in the new parliament, failed to keep all the elected Nationalists together in one pledge-bound party under his wing. After the General Election it was seen that, of the 82 Irish Nationalist members returned to the Commons, no less than 11 were O'Brienites, repudiators of Redmond's primacy, and looking to the formidable

William O'Brien, M.P. for Cork City, as their "guide, philosopher and friend", or, rather, as their oracle. Those Nationalist "schismatics", or "factionists" as the orthodox Party supporters called them, were, with one exception, confined wholly to the City and County of Cork. The exception was the constituency of North Co. Louth which returned Tim Healy by a few votes, against the Irish Party official candidate, Dick Hazelton, who had received powerful support from the A.O.H. and U.I.L., both of which organisations were highly organised in that constituency.

Tim Healy, on his election, threw in his lot with O'Brien who, in that February, consolidated his conquests from the official Party by banding them together into a brand-new Party, the "All for Ireland League" and founding a new weekly paper on its behalf, viz: the "Cork Free Press". The aim of the new Party was declared to be a "combination of all the elements of the Irish population in a spirit of mutual tolerance and mutual goodwill" and "guaranteeing the rights of the Protestants, winning the friendship of the British people, and disarming the prejudices of the Irish Unionists against

Home Rule"; and, for its slogan, or text, it chose the "Three C's" - Conference, Conciliation and Consent". There certainly could not have been a more "milk of human kindness" target than all that; and, actually, O'Brien's new organisation attracted into its ranks a considerable number of southern Unionists including the Earl of Dunraven and Moreton Frewen, a Co. Cork Landlord, who actually was elected M.P. for one of that county's divisions in the AFIL interests, and whose daughter was to become Carson's second wife.

And it presently became evident that "Rebel Cork", and Louth were not the only places where discontent and resentment were boiling up against orthodox Nationalist officialdom which, like all officialdoms that have enjoyed a long period of unchallenged authority, had grown extremely autocratic and wholly indifferent to, if not intolerant of, the views and criticisms from the constituencies.

Outside the wholesale rebellion in Co. Cork and the rebellion in North Louth against the Party machine, the next most formidable rebellion occurred, of all places, in Ulster, and in the great Catholic stronghold of Central Ulster at that. This was wholly unexpected, for

Catholic Ulster had always been the official Party's loyalist region, clinging to it with exemplary steadfastness in spite of everything. Not even the devastating eruption of the Parnell debacle caused the slightest ripple on the loyalty of Northern Nationalism. And, of course, that steadfastness was quite natural and understandable in the circumstances. The strong Unionist threat in the region alone compelled it. As I have said, the most appalling political crime that could be imagined amongst Nationalists in Ulster was that of putting up an Independent Nationalist in a Catholic constituency, thereby splitting the Nationalist vote and letting in the Unionist.

This deep-down sentiment in Northern Catholics that I know so well explains the reason why, even to-day, constitutionalists there will not dream of putting up a candidate to oppose a physical force man, though they are far indeed from endorsing his policy. Better that the constituency be represented by an abstentionist gunman than by an Orange Unionist. A cat, a dog,- anything animate or inanimate rather than he! I am far from seeking to justify, much more to approve of this outlook;

it is the characteristic outlook of irredentist populations everywhere. It is, of course, pathological, but then the historical and political conditions whence it has sprung are also pathological. It is a phenomenon that automatically and inevitably grows from certain political conditions that cannot be explained and just has to be accepted. All we know is that when the conditions that gave it life disappear, it also disappears with them. That being the outlook and atmosphere of thought in Ulster Nationalism, makes the story of the Mid-Tyrone election in January, 1910, all the more remarkable.

Let me now reverse back a little in time and return to my "native heath" to tell the tale of that famous revolt against the Party machine in the very heart of Ulster. It was one of the few challenges to that then powerful and well-entrenched machine outside the Co. Cork, and it was the only challenge in the Province of Ulster.

Mid-Tyrone was, as I have pointed out, one of the four constituencies into which the Co. Tyrone had been divided. It occupied the centre of the county and, indeed, the heart of the Province, and included the County

Town of Omagh. Prior to the General Election of January, 1910, it was represented at Westminster by Mr. George Murnaghan, J.P. This gentleman was not a native of the county. He came originally from the Co. Armagh, whence, as a young man, he emigrated to the U.S.A. where, settling down in the City of St. Louis, he engaged in business and, in due course, made a comfortable fortune. Returning to Ireland, he looked around him for a suitable property to purchase and settle down in. Just about that time there came on the market a fine property, known as Lisonelly, about 1½ miles from the town of Omagh, pleasantly situated on the banks of the river Strule, comprising about 100 acres, with a finer residence. He bought this property and settled down with his wife and family to the farming of it. In those days, Murnaghan ranked as a fairly well off, if not exactly opulent, man. Now, at that time, there was no such thing as payment of Members of Parliament, and if a man was returned as M.P., particularly as an Irish Nationalist M.P., the financial burden of maintaining him in that position (he was usually a poor man) was thrown on the Irish Parliamentary Party and on the constituency. Hence it

was obviously a great advantage if some suitable person could be found who had the money to maintain himself at Westminster.

Shortly after Mr. Murnaghan had settled down in Omagh there was a vacancy for a Nationalist M.P. for Mid-Tyrone, and the local Nationalists offered the seat to him. He accepted and undertook to finance himself without any call whatever on them, or on the Party's funds.
I think the General Election of 1894 was the first occasion on which he was put up for election, when he was returned unopposed, as the Unionist hadn't a chance in that Catholic stronghold against a united Nationalist front.

From that time, until the first General Election of 1910 - a period of 16 years - Murnaghan sat for Mid-Tyrone in the House of Commons as an official Irish Nationalist Member and for 14 years, at any rate, under the leadership of John Redmond, M.P., and, during all that time, he maintained himself in London entirely at his own expense, not costing either the Party, or the local organisation, a penny. Murnaghan's voluntary services were not confined solely to his parliamentary

duties. He was a very active and assiduous public man, a Justice of the Peace, a member of the County Council, of the Committee of Management of the Tyrone and Fermanagh Asylum, Chairman of the Omagh Rural District Council, and a member of the Grand Jury of the County Tyrone. With Gallagher and MacMenamin, two flourishing drapers in the town of Strabane, he was the only Catholic member of that body. In brief, he was, in every sense of the word, an excellent man of affairs who gave of his time and experience freely to the work of the many boards and institutions to which he was attached. Gratitude, however, is a rare thing in life, and particularly in public life.

For some years prior to 1910 there had been a growing amount of underground criticism and murmurings against Murnaghan going on throughout the constituency on the charge that he was, in some vague way, neglecting his constituency. This charge, against so attentive and conscientious a public man as he, was, of course, fantastic; but when a man like him has to be removed an excuse as thin as that of Aesop's wolf with regard to the lamb fills the bill well enough.

That criticism had been largely propounded and fostered by the local leaders of the A.O.H., a number of whom considered themselves to be lost Demosthenes and sought the opportunity, by hook or by crook, of supplanting Murnaghan at Westminster.

At that time the A.O.H. was rapidly becoming an exceedingly strong and formidable institution in the North of Ireland, its growing strength and the tactless partisan outpourings of its orators whipping into life again the latent bigotry in its rival, the Orange Order.

The A.O.H. was much more dynamic and effective than the official U.I.L. by reason of its network of lodges and halls throughout the constituency and the pledged obedience of its members to its chiefs.

Perhaps Murnaghan's greatest sin was that he would not join the Order on principle. Now, it is true that, in the ranks of this secret, sectarian and political society, there were many sincere and honest men who joined it because they thought that, by so doing, they were promoting in a tangible and practical form what they had deeply at heart, viz: the National and Catholic causes.

But, on the other hand, there were also in its ranks only too large a proportion of political chancers and adventurers that these kind of societies always seem to attract, who were there for their own aggrandisement and for nothing else.

At all events, when the first 1910 General Election occurred the underground plottings against Murnaghan that had been so assiduously nursed for years, flamed out into open and determined action which soon manifested itself at the Nationalist Convention at Omagh to select a candidate, when Murnaghan's nomination was, for the first time, challenged. One John Valentine from Bristol was put up at the Convention against him and, the issue being put to the vote, Murnaghan was defeated by a substantial majority.

The Murnaghan element was exceedingly wrath at this result. They claimed, and with much reason, that the Convention had been rigged by the powerful secret organisation; that, accordingly, the Convention decision was ultra vires, and that, anyhow, it was far from representing the true wishes of the Nationalists of Mid-Tyron

The Murnaghan-ites withdrew from the Convention, held a meeting of their own where they endorsed the candidature of Murnaghan and decided that he should contest the election. My father, who had taken little or no part in politics for a considerable number of years theretofore, re-entered the political arena as Murnaghan's election agent, the late Frank O'Connor, solicitor, being Valentine's.

And here, I should say that my father played a large part in urging Murnaghan to go forward. The old man, after all his years of service, was naturally depressed at the Convention's action and was not at all anxious for a contest as he, like most Northern Nationalists, had a horror of splitting the Catholic vote. The Murnaghan-ite section of Mid-Tyrone Nationalism comprised the more conservative elements in the Catholic community, solicitors like Mr. Alex Donnelly of Omagh, well-to-do businessmen and farmers, a considerable proportion of county and rural Councillors, and at least nine-tenths of the Catholic clergy. The latter had no love at all for a secret society such as the A.O.H. Another curious feature of the line-up in this split was that Murnaghan's

support came almost entirely from the country districts. The towns, headed by Omagh, went largely against him.

In general, the Murnaghan-ites were indignant at the scurvy treatment of Murnaghan by the Party machine for no cause whatsoever. They were also resentful at that latest manifestation of dictatorship by the secret Order of Hibernians who, at that time, were unquestionably engaged in carrying out a policy of weeding out every non-Hibernian Member of Parliament in the Party. So, in justice to Murnaghan himself and as a protest against the growing arrogance of the Party bosses, they felt they were bound to accept the challenge and contest the election. Also, they had that pathetic conviction, shared, seemingly, by all elements in politics on the eve of an election - they were sure of victory, even were a Unionist candidate to go up which, at first, was by no means certain. The overwhelming support of the clergy would alone, they fancied, assure that. The big split in Mid-Tyrone Nationalism gave joy to the Unionists, and presented them with an opportunity that they were not slow to utilise. When it was certain that there was no possibility of healing the split, the local Orange and

Unionist societies met in the Orange Lodge, Omagh, and selected a Dublin junior barrister - one Gerald Brunskill - to fight the election in the Unionist interest. The election was bitterly fought, all the bitterness being confined to the two wings of Nationalism who held open-air meetings and demonstrations throughout the constituency and said plenty of unpleasant things about each other. The Unionists, on their side, did things in a very quiet, almost furtive way, confining their meetings to their lodges and halls, and making few comments on the warring Nationalists.

The result of the election was that Brunskill, the Unionist, was returned with something in the neighbourhood of 2,100 votes. Next came Valentine with about 1,800, and, at the bottom of the poll, Murnaghan with 1,200. This result satisfied only the Unionists. The Valentinians were wild at losing, and the Murnaghan-ites deeply disappointed in their man being at the bottom instead, as they fondly hoped, at the top of the poll.

Actually, when one considers what they had to face, the Murnaghan-ites put up a very good fight. On their side there were no organisations of any kind and no fund

beyond what came from their own pockets. On the Party side were two powerful organisations with plenty of funds to call on and, what was even better, with the local paper "The Ulster Herald" wholly behind them.

After the declaration of the result of the poll at the Courthouse in Omagh, I witnessed an interesting incident. Outside the Courthouse the defeated Valentinians had assembled and were being harangued by the candidate and Omagh politicians on the base treachery of the Murnaghan-ite "Factionists" for "selling the seat" to the Unionists. Suddenly, through this crowd dashed a gig drawn by a lively horse, scattering the people as it carved a way through them. The driver of the gig was the Rector of Erganagh, a rural Church Parish. Beside him sat his very pretty young daughter, then about 15 years of age, and as he drove she waved a large Union Jack defiantly over the heads of the crowd. It was one of the most uncalled-for pieces of provocation that I ever witnessed anywhere. I knew the Rector and his family personally and was exceedingly surprised, as he was, though a vehement Unionist, a man of much charm and address. The good-class Unionists condemned

this really stupid act, but I am afraid it found much favour with the lower elements of Orangeism.

And here, to give a fitting balance to any impression this anecdote may cause in a reader, I must relate another: About two miles on the road where our home was situated there was the Church and Rectory of Edenderry. The Rector of this Church of Ireland parish was the elder brother of the Rector of Erganagh. He, too, was a strong Unionist and an Orangeman to boot. On demonstration days, replete with sash, he used generally to lead into Omagh his Orange parishioners, walking at the head of the Edenderry L.O.L. band. Down the road would come the band, playing good Orange and Protestant airs, with plenty of 'drum' in them, until they came to the mearing of my father's residence. The music would at once cease, even if they were in the middle of a bar, until they passed the further mearing, when it would burst out into a loud and vigorous "Kick the Pope" or "The Protestant Boys". This was wholly the act of the Rector who, and whose family, were personal friends of ours. So much was this act of courtesy due to him, and to him only, that on those rare occasions when

he didn't lead in his band, the "Brethern" gave us a special extra dose of good Orange music to make up for the times when the Rector's firm restraint was laid on their unwilling shoulders.

This big local split in Nationalism took a long time to heal. Indeed, you might say it was not wholly healed until the Partition issue and Sinn Féin appeared on the horizon. The election left behind it a strong deposit of "Schismatical" Nationalists who, though they never again attempted to win back the Parliamentary seat, more than held their own on the County Council and Rural District Council. For example, all attempts to depose Murnaghan from his chairmanship of the Omagh Rural Council, and replace him by a Hibernian, were successfully defeated. And here I must give credit to a number of Unionists therein who saved the position by voting with the "Independent Nationalists", as they liked to be called. But those Independents had little influence on the Omagh Urban Council, the Nationalist part of which was composed entirely of Hibernians or their "fellow-travellers". And, anyhow, seeing that the town was held by the Nationalists by only one seat, it

would not have been at all a popular or politic thing for the Murnaghan-ites to have forced a contest.

Accordingly, at the second General Election that occurred that year in December, they withdrew from the field and left the contest to the official Nationalists and the Unionists. The latter, full of hope that they could count on the support of the embittered and defeated Murnaghan-ites, put up Brunskill again. He was, however, decisively beaten by the new official Party candidate, Dick McGhee, a Protestant Nationalist from England, though of Ulster stock. Nevertheless, officialdom was sorely disappointed at the substantial drop in the Nationalist majority. Undoubtedly there had been a considerable Murnaghan-ite vote for the new "compromise" candidate, otherwise he could not have won the election; and we can safely say that few, if any, of the Murnaghan-ites voted for Brunskill; that would have been regarded, as I have pointed out, as rank treachery to Nationalist and Catholic interests. In general, the bulk of the Murnaghan-ites disappointed both Unionists and Partyites by abstaining from voting for either candidate.

Looking back on those now faraway years, the intense feeling and bitterness that the election engendered and left behind it was, indeed, astonishing seeing that, in that mixed religious and political community, it was so essential for the Nationalists to keep united, and, furthermore, seeing that the split occurred on no question of principle, merely on a question of personality - the envy and dislike of Murnaghan by certain leaders of the populace in the town of Omagh, where the revolt against him had its origin, and whence it had been organised throughout the constituency. In bitterness and resentment it resembled, for its limited area, a kind of local Parnell split aftermath, affecting, directly and materially, human relationships within the Catholic community. The two antagonistic elements for years afterwards were barely on speaking terms with each other, and there were numerous instances where custom or trade was withdrawn from businessmen and firms of the offending "faith".

This atmosphere, in the Nationalist heart of Ulster, was all the more strange, having regard to the imminence of Home Rule. To most people in Ireland, Home

Rule was then regarded as virtually a fait accompli once the Lords' Veto had been smashed by the Parliament Bill. In the light of to-day, it was indeed, curious how the long backwash of a petty local political squabble overshadowed the supreme national issue of Home Rule in that area that was being fought out on the floor of the House of Commons.

XI. - Those Tranquil Pre-1914 Times.

Nearly 50 years have gone by since those days, in one sense not a great stretch of time; but what colossal, what incredible changes have occurred within that half century! There were, of course, the two devastating world wars and the phenomenal advance of science, due mainly to those wars, giving birth to motor development, radio, air transport &c., to say nothing of the atom bomb and the jet engine. But, just now, I want to stress the almost more remarkable changes in human outlook and atmosphere in their special application to conditions in my own small town and its rural hinterland. Apart from the split, and its particular complications, life in the years immediately preceding World War 1 was tranquil and humdrum to a degree that would be inconceivable to-day.

People's lives were simpler, restricted to a much narrower compass, far calmer and free from the restlessnes of to-day. The pound had a rational connection with twenty shillings in value, and the commodities and necessities of life were extremely cheap and plentiful. People appeared to be more contented, more satisfied with, or reconciled to, their lot than they are to-day. And, indeed, the whole world itself was extremely tranquil. Save for an odd racket in Africa, the Indian frontier or the Balkans, or an intermittent revolution in South America (actually only their form of general election) warfare, certainly anything approaching large-scale warfare, was unknown.

In the half-century preceding the fateful year 1914, there had been but two major wars - the Franco-Prussian and the Russo-Japanese. People were saying that the former was the last great war that Europe would ever witness. The latter war was far too remote to cause the doings of Admirals Togo and Rodzesvensky to have any effect on us and, anyhow, was fought between two countries by no means considered to be up to western Europe's level of civilisation - almost folk of a different flesh who could not be counted on our level.

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