PART III

ORIGINAL

ROINN COSANTA.

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

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but H.M.'s. Opposition were ranged together in defiance of a proposed law; since the Bill was not yet on the Statute Book it was neither rebellion nor treason (it was certainly seditious and at least treason-felony. K.R. O'S.), but it contained the menace of both".

Later on in the July of that year, at the great meeting held at Blenheim, the Duke of Marlborough's place, organised by the Conservatives to scarify the Government and overawe public opinion, Bonar Law re-emphasised his views in language which Asquith described truly as "the complete grammar of anarchy". "If Ulster were deprived of her birthright", he declared, and if that were done "as part of a corrupt parliamentary bargain (i.e., by a parliamentary majority - K.R.O'S.), then they"would be justified in resisting by all means in their power, including force". And he went on to assure them that, in that event, he "could imagine no length of resistance to which Ulster would go in which he would not be ready to support them". This, of course, was exactly what Carson wanted; the official Tory bird had flown right into his cage; and he was so pleased with his new pupil in anarchy that he rose and declared, rather flamboyantly, that were he "to choose his own topic he would spend all the time allotted to him in thanking Mr. Bonar Law

for the great speech of encouragement he had just delivered".

From the day that the British Conservative Party allowed itself to be swallowed by Carson, that kind of language became, in wilder and more extravagant degree, the stock-in-trade, ad nauseam, of those self-appointed defenders of the constitution and of constitutional methods. It was, of course, no wild impulse, but the cold and deliberate design of its authors in furtherance of the new Orange-Tory programme. The history of the various elements, or strands, in the unconstitutional movement, against the Third Home Rule Bill becomes, from this onwards, involved and somewhat confusing, and can, I think, be more satisfactorily and briefly dealt with under a number of headings, rather than in strict chronological order. I propose, therefore, briefly to consider that history under such headings.

THE CARSON-BONAR LAW ALLIANCE.

A word or two about this unique entente is necessary at this stage. As I have already pointed out, two crucial and highly significant dates in the Anti-Home Rule campaign of 1910-14 are 27th February 1910, and 13th November 1911. On the former, Walter Long vacated the leadership of the Irish [redacted] Unionist Party in favour of Carson; and, on the

the latter, Balfour, who had resigned from the leadership of the British Conservative Party, was replaced by the almost unknown Bonar Law.

Career politicians, even of the loftiest vintage, are not given to effacing themselves at their prime from the high positions in their parties that they have won, without the most compelling reasons. And there can be no doubt that such reasons were very much in existence at the time. Since the big Liberal avalanche of 1906 the idée fixe in the mind of official Conservatism was, as I have already pointed out, how to circumvent the new Government and effectively negative its acts with a view to its speedy subversion. Behind all the stress, the noise and the fulminations of that famous Home Rule campaign that was the main purpose, the definite target, resolved on by the Conservative Party and pursued with great tenacity and purpose throughout those critical years. The intelligent Churchill saw this clearly and puts it very well in his confidential letter to Redmond in August 1912. "I do not believe", he writes, "there is any feeling against Home Rule in the Tory Party apart from the Ulster question, but they hate the Government, are bitterly desirous of turning it out, and see in the resistance of Ulster an extra-parliamentary

force which they will not hesitate to use to the full". There it was in black and white. The Government had to be overthrown at all costs, and as soon as possible, by parliamentary and legal methods, if possible; but, if not, by "extra-parliamentary" and illegal ones.

This line of policy, deliberately resolved on by official Conservatism, was pursued with unparalleled acrimony. "The reasons for such bitterness", writes Professor Robert Blake in his recent book, 'The Unknown Prime Minister', "are complicated, and it would require a lengthy analysis of English history over the previous 25 years to explain them in full. But, broadly speaking, the immediate cause of this extraordinary animosity was the General Election of 1906 which thrust the hereditary ruling class of England out of power for the first time since the Glorious Revolution of 1688".

After the return of the Liberals in the two General Elections in the year 1910, it was clear that there was little hope of achieving the desired target by legal means, and, after a great deal of secret cogitation and planning, the leaders of English Conservatism made the fatal decision to become Carson's tools in his policy of violence and force, a decision from the effects of which its quondam high moral prestige has

has never/wholly recovered. Now, both Long and Balfour were scions of the British landed gentry - aristocratic, conservative, and, by nature and hereditary, constitutional and respectable to the backbone. Whirling words and blatant incitement to anti-constitutional and violent methods, leading to civil strife, were alien to their blood and background. There can be no doubt that those two eminemt, experienced and, by no means, over-altruistic politicians were, by the time they r esigned from their responsible and embarrassing if not perilous posts, (seeing the shape things were taking) fully aware of the Orange and Tory alliance and their resolve to embark on the new policy. Being who and what they were, they naturally felt that, to put it at its mildest, it would be <u>infra dig</u>, very much <u>pas comme il faut</u>, and "ungentlemanly" for them to stoop to the level of the leadership of a policy of crude, vulgar and lawless fomentation, and that it would be well for them to make way for less rarefied and more plebian types to conduct the new policy roughly, toughly and, indeed, dirtily, as only such an irregular policy was possible of being effectively conducted.

But the fact that these two high-born gentlemen had abandoned their elevated positions did not at all mean that they were, in any degree, opposed to the new policy. Far from

it. They both knew all about it and were whole-heartedly with the rebels, giving them succour and support, and making their contribution to the flood of propaganda oratory in their fashion. Long, in particular, well behind the scenes, was most persistent in egging on Carson and his Orangemen to more and more violent and illegal action. There is something rather despicable about the machinations of this individual. We find him, in the year of his resignation during the six months political truce that followed on the death of King Edward when numerous peace kites were flying in the political sky, inviting Redmond to meet him and "discuss with him the possibility of settling a Home Rule scheme, to be adopted by consent, as part of the settlement of the constitutional crisis". The constitutional crisis at that time was, of course, the Lords' Veto and the Parliament Act. We do not know what was the result of that meeting, but we find him, four months later, signing with Carson and others a manifesto designed to kill any possible settlement on the issues at stake, which it effectively did. Whilst he does not appear to have been unduly prominent as a speaker, or inciter, he was present on many platforms, and attended reviews of Carson's rebel Volunteers in Ulster. Later, he became

President of the Union Defence League, an English organisation to encourage English signatures to an English form of the covenant. But his chief activities were conducted in secrecy and were, after the mode of Lady Macbeth, encouraging Carson on all occasions, and, especially when there were signs of pease in the air to be "bloody, bold and resolute".

To give one example of many: In November 1913, when things looked like coming to a crisis, he wrote to Carson as follows: "We must surely now make up our minds as to our course, not so much in the country but in the House; I hope it will be no quarter, war to the knife against a Parliament, not of statesmen but of cold-blooded murderers". His relinquishing of his perilous position had certainly given him magnificent freedom of expression even if under cover of the post! And, growing more and more daring as time went on, and more and more of the Kingdom's aristocratic and plutocratic elements joined the contingent rebellion, Long could go to Belfast in the opening of 1914 and, on behalf of the Conservative Party, eulogise Carson to his face for "forming an army which, he believed, would prove in its personnel, in its training, and in its equipment, to be in no way inferior to the best army that could be put into the field".

And this is the man who advised his successor in office, as Chief Secretary for Ireland, Augustine Birrell, (as stated in his "Memoirs" published in 1923) on no account to repeal the Act prohibiting the importation of arms into Ireland. On this point he writes in his book: "When a short time afterwards the Act was dropped - a great deal of trouble connected with the indiscriminate possession and use of arms, which led later to such terrible consequences, a rose". Comment is surely superfluous here!

The letters of this Tory landlord to his bourgeois hero are couched in curiously respectful, indeed rather sychophantic language. About that time, Asquith was busy "exploring" all possible avenues and byways for a settlement, and was having meetings with Carson and Bonar Law to that end. Long, ever the diehard, sub rosa of course, we find writing Carson in these terms:

"My dear Ned:

Many thanks for your letter and for your kind promise to see my son. I will tell him what you are good enough to say (sic!) .... I am against a conference and am very glad Asquith killed that idea .... I think we ought to have our programme cut and dried and if he

declares, as he must, in the House, that force will be used, then I think we must make Government impossible. I believe, in this way, we could force a dissolution".

And there was the whole point, the kernel of the conspiracy - to terrify the Government and the country into seeking refuge in a general election.

Long resembled a type by no means wholly unknown during our own troubles who, having failed to turn up, or pull their weight, became extremely implacable and "diehard" to settlement, or peace of any kind or at any price, save on the most impossible terms when the crisis that they failed was over. The type is a familiar one; all countries, seemingly, have specimens of it. The projection of a guilty conscience, doubtless.

But, whilst Long was glad to shed his leadership of Irish Unionism, he was intensely keen on acquiring the leadership of the English Tory Party as the first stage towards the Tory Premiership which, he was convinced, was round the corner. His attitude to his competitor, Austen Chamberlain, in those stakes was not only one of rivalry, but of personal resentment that such a one as the latter should dare oppose a landed squire like himself. There was, I fear, a slice of the cad

in this high-born gentleman's composition as the following story (recorded by Professor Blake) shows: On the very afternoon of Balfour's resignation, Long and Chamberlain accidentally met outside the House of Commons. Chamberlain had just arrived with Henry Chaplain, the senior Conservative ex-Minister, in a taxi. Chamberlain told Long that Chaplain had picked him up at the Tariff Conference when the latter interrupted: "On, you don't think it is necessary to explain why you are in a taxi with a man, do you? You haven't come to that, have you?" It took Chamberlain all he could do, naturally enough, not to knock him down.

I pass over Balfour who was comparatively prudent and guarded in his utterances, and who, by his moderating action during the Parliament Bill debates in the Lords, and his leaning, occasionally, towards some kind of compromise settlement, gave rise to the "Balfour Must Go" campaign that preceded his resignation and rendered him deeply suspect to people like Carson and Law. In studying the history of those times, Balfour always strikes me as not having his heart in the turbulent campaign, and certainly not in the unscrupulous corner-boy language with which his colleagues, even those possessing the Old School Tie, put forward their new policy.

He was decidedly not at home in the atmosphere of the new departure, though, despite his cherished reputation for good manners, he was obliged to forget them occasionally and make his contribution to the prevailing rudeness, albeit, in his case, such lapses have been designated "stylisized rudeness".

Bonar Law was, as we have seen, a very different kettle of fish from his two aristocratic colleagues; so different, indeed, that he could have had little, or nothing, in common with them.. And we know that there was little love lost between him and Balfour; nor could there be, seeing what widely disparate sources and backgrounds they sprung from. Balfour, the aristocrat, the landed gentleman; Bonar Law, a middle class man of business, essentially the man-in-the-street, a bourgeois to his finger-tips, unimpressive and lacking in personality. How did this quiet, very ordinary "meekly ambitious" little man, this "gilded tradesman", as the bourgeois-turned-flunkey, Asquith called him, become the violent leader, the turbulent agitator who turned the great traditional constitutional party of law and order into a party of violence and insurgence? Left to himself, says Professor A.P. Ryan, "he was not the man to set any heather on fire. He needed stimulus - and he got it from Carson". Carson's

powerful personality, and the apparent strength and inflexibility of his uncomplex and negative mind, intensified by his rich histrionic gifts that he was fully conscious of and made full use of, completely bowled over little Mr. Law, and provided him, at one and the same time, with a hero and an exemplar that he yearned to follow and to imitate. And so, by the aura which Carson exuded, Law became so mesmerised by him, as it were, that he was transformed into a man of violence, "a fighting leader", into something that the discharged Balfour did not possess, or could not, or would not acquire. And this metamorphosis in their new chief was exactly what the planners and designers of the new Tory policy were looking for. Nor had they long to wait before this Conservative leader was assuring the Belfast Orangemen that "whatever steps they might feel compelled to take, whether they were constitutional, or whether they were unconstitutional, they had the whole of the Unionist Party, under his leadership, behind them."

Thus was the alliance sealed between Carson and Law, between Orange fanaticism and sober British Toryism, whereby the former engulfed the latter. And Bonar Law was an exceedingly apt student. On his entry on to the scene, the campaign

of violence and incitement was hotted up immensely and became more and more irresponsible and more and more outrageous.

I have already given some samples of the oratorical "form" of Balfour's successor, and need not waste time on too many excerpts here. Most of his outrageously infamatory speeches are extant, but, though much has been printed about him, and his career, no one has yet edited a book of those famous orations perhaps wisely so. But, if the English Tories, or, at least, the architects of the new policy, were happy at their choice, Carson was happier still, and for good reason. For here was a leader that, unlike Balfour, he was sure of and who had pledged the whole enormous weight of the great Conservative Party and all that it then connoted, four-square behind him and his Orangemen in any illegal action they might undertake. His doubts about the attitude of English Conservatism with regard to his policy now at rest, satisfied that he had the Party and its leaders safely in his pocket, Carson, taking his cue from those events, threw the last shreds of discretion to the winds and went on with his illegal preparations more defiantly and more recklessly than ever. Theretofore, Carson, in all his fulminations, was particularly careful to repudiate any suggestion that he was subverting, or endeavouring to subvert

the allegiance of the British army. For example, we find him, as late as December 1913, saying at Manchester: "They tell us sometimes that we are trying to tamper with the army. It is a foul lie ..... I have said before, and say now, that it would be a bad day for the country if the army, under any circumstances, were to refuse to obey the lawful orders of those who are put in command over them. Of course they must. But it is for that very reason that statesmen and politicians ought to look ahead. It is for that very reason that statesmen and politicians ought to know to what their acts lead".

Bonar Law, however, once in the chair of leadership, had no qualms at all about undermining the army. In Dublin ("of all places", as Asquith comments in his memoirs) on 28th November 1913, he let himself go in the following extraordinary manner: "King James had behind him the letter of the law just as completely as Mr. Asquith has now .... In order to carry out his despotic intention, the King had the largest army that had ever been seen in England. What happened? There was no civil war. There was a revolution and the King disappeared. Why? Because his own army refused to fight for him". And Carson, taking his cue from his eager pupil, and despite his former declarations to the contrary,

began to talk about the Government "entrenching themselves behind His Majesty's troops"; and, on another occasion, warned that the Prime Minister would have to advise the King, on the enactment of Home Rule: "You are to sign the Bill with the certainty that some of your Majesty's most loyal subjects in the North of Ireland will have to be coerced by your Majesty's troops". And, so as to excite and boil over the opinion of the populace, he told an audience in the Criterion Restaurant in June 1912, that he intended "when he went over there (Ulster) to break every law that was possible".

In July 1913, Carson stated that he would call together the whole Ulster Council and "I hope we shall sit in our own Parliament from day to day, adopting all necessary means of Committee .... It may be, I believe probably it will be, an illegal procedure. Well, if it is, we give a challenge to the Government to interfere with us if they dare". And again, in the same year and about the same time, he admonished them in Belfast to go ahead with their preparations and be ready for "the day", adding that "I know that will involve statutory illegality, but it will also involve moral righteousness".

Bonar Law's whole-hog backing of Carson and his rebels was, as I have stated, an immense encouragement to his cause

and his policy of illegality, particularly coming at the time it did when responsible Conservatives were beginning to grow uneasy at the development of Carson's campaign. Without that backing, it is practically certain that the whole Orange rebellion would have withered and flopped. Carson knew now for certain / that the most powerful and wealthiest section of the kingdom, including a great majority of those who controlled the armed forces were solidly behind him, and he looked forward, by bolder, more daring and more outrageous threats to bring about very soon a parliamentary dissolution that he was convinced would smash the Asquith Government and ruin Liberalism for at least a generation.

In June 1913, Carson felt able to tell the House of Commons that if armed resistance by his rebels against a Home Rule Act should ever be necessary "we have now the open declaration of our leaders, of the leader of the Opposition, and of the ex-leader of the Opposition (he always went out of his way to bring in Balfour who was known to be concerned about his illegalities) that we have behind us in that armed resistance, under present and existing circumstances, the whole force of the whole Conservative and Unionist Party". "We have given a pledge", said the Conservative leader, Mr.

Law, at Bristol in January 1914, "that if Ulster resists we will support her in her resistance. We intend, with the help of the Almighty, to keep that pledge, and the keeping of it involves something more than making speeches". And he declared it to be "intolerable" to use British troops to shoot down loyalists "who demanded no privilege which is not enjoyed by you and me and no privilege which any of us could ever surrender".

Perhaps Law's most mischievous and most harmful declaration was that that he made in the House of Commons in March 1914, all the worse for having been made virtually on the eve of the Curragh Mutiny. He warned the Premier against employing the army: "If it is a question only of disorder", he affirmed, "the army, I am sure, will obey you; but if it is really a question of civil war, soldiers are citizens like the rest of us". This injunction, as we shall see, was not lost on mutinous officers; indeed, it was used by them effectively in their cause.

The campaign conducted by Carson and Law continued almost without a break for three years. Every week during that period, from platform and from the powerful and ubiquitous Unionist press, aye, and from the pulpit too, it was dinned into the

minds of the populace that it was right and proper and in no way wrong to resist vi et armis a statute of the Imperial Parliament, if that Statute granted Home Rule to Ireland. The campaign and, more so, the actions that accompanied it, the drilling and arming of Volunteers and the establishment of a Provisional Government were, of course, wholly illegal and treasonable. The late Lord Chief Justice of Ireland, Sir James O'Connor, writes of this in his History of Ireland:

> "That it was treasonable is, of course, beyond question. All of those highly placed men who were engaged in the Ulster campaign were guilty of the grave offence known as treason felony, punishable with penal servitude for life. The offence is defined in the Treason Felony Act, 1848, as follows: 'To compass, imagine, invent, devise or intend ..... to levy war against His Majesty within any part of the United Kingdom in order by force or constraint to compel him to change his measures or counsels, or in order to put any force or constraint upon, or in order to intimidate or overawe both Houses or either House of Parliament' ".

Apart from that Statute, there were others equally applicable to the situation, such as the Unlawful Drilling Act,

1819, and the Crimes Act, 1847. But Carson, himself an experienced lawyer, did not require Sir James O'Connor's opinion on the point. He knew every bit as well as he did, and said so on several occasions in the clearest and most emphatic words. For example, at Coleraine in September 1912, "I do not care tuppence whether it is treason or not". At Glasgow in October 1912: "The Attorney-General says that the doctrine and the course I am taking lead to anarchy. Does he not think I know that?". At Newry in September 1913; "The Volunteers are illegal. Don't be afraid of illegalities". And, about the same time, when he could point to the Protestant Archbishop of Armagh, sitting beside him in his diocesan capital, as his "brother rebel". But Carson's words were not only clear and emphatic, they were also defiant and contemptuous.

In October 1912, two prominent Liberals had declared that he ought to be prosecuted for "heinous crimes and misdemeanours' Carson replied: "They know where I am. I am always ready! The only reason they give why I am not prosecuted is that if I am, there might be riots, the most extraordinary reason for not carrying out the law that ever I heard". We can thoroughly agree with his opinion there.

This outrageous campaign was, of course, condemned

strongly by Liberal statesmen throughout the country, but as it was, even at a very early date, clear to the acute Carson that they did not intend to interfere with him in any way other than talk, their words to him were as water off a duck's back. Two of these condemnations were unusually sound and I feel I must give excerpts from them. In a letter to Sir George Ritchie, the chairman of his electoral committee in Dundee, which was duly published, Churchill denounced the doctrines of Bonar Law as fatal to constitutional evolution and as likely to put wild ideas into other heads. "All this talk of violence", he wrote, "of bayonets and bullets, of rebellion and civil war, has come from one side alone. The Orangemen have always been notorious for the intemperance of their language and for the religious bigotry which explains, though it does not excuse it. But now we have the Conservative Leader exploiting and endorsing all their worst excesses and committing his party to the proposition that acts which are in themselves cruel, wicked and contrary to law, become good and praiseworthy if they arise from the political motive. Yet it is only 12 years since the Conservative Government which he supported was punishing with vigour Dutchmen who had sided with their blood relations in the field. And in less than

12 months - If Home Rule were frustrated - he would be sending Irish Nationalists to penal servitude and the gallows, and holding three provinces in Ireland in the grip of a Coercion Act, in the name of that same law and order which he himself is now so reckless to trample down".

Churchill did not and could not then realise the extraordinarily prophetic character of his words and how soon his forebodings in the ultimate part of his statement were to come to pass. Nor, neither could Asquith, in the following admirable comment on Carsonism and Bonar Lawism. "The new dogma", he declared at Ladybank, October 1912, "countersigned as it is now by all the leading men of the Tory Party, will be invoked and rightly invoked, cited and rightly cited, called in aid and rightly called in aid, whenever the spirit of lawlessness, fed and fortified by a sense whether of real or imaginary justice takes body and shape, and claims to stop the ordered machinery of a self-governing society".

Readers who do not know those queer days may well ask was there no voice raised out of the massive body of the great Law-and-Order Party protesting against its wholesale commitment to Carson's campaign of insurgency and outlawry. The answer, they will be astonished to learn, is in the negative; or

virtually so. True, a Mr. Nicholas Cockshutt, a Lancashire Unionist candidate, protested against his leader's fomentations, but he was at once repudiated by the local Unionist Executive for so doing.

When we behold the spectacle of the great English Conservative Party, the traditional, albeit self-appointed guardian of the Constitution and of the Constitution's agents and organisations, the maintainer par excellence of the rule of law; when we see that great Party backing Carson's anti-constitutionalism, and backing it to the extent of force, without hardly a voice being raised in its ranks against it, we find it easier to understand how the whole, certainly the vast majority of the German people backed Hitler, in the earlier years of Nazism, at all events. The Tory Party's action in the period 1911-14, and Germany's acquiescence, with greater but still not very significant resistance in the Hitler period, are unique examples of the herd mentality. Unquestionably, as we now know, there were many Tories and many Germans who, whilst they supported their respective campaigns, doubted their morality or their lawfulness. But, although very uneasy as to the way their leaders were leading them, they held their peace and said, certainly did, nothing.

Both are splendid examples of the herd mind and its complete subordination to the pack cry, and it is curious to see it so clearly exemplified in the great Tory Party.

Ramsay Macdonald, John Ward, J.H. Thomas, Labour M.P.s., pointed out, several times in the House of Commons, the boomerang effects of the new revolutionary policy and other elements in the Kingdom. Ramsay Macdonald, the leader of the Labour Party, said that the syndicalists who had failed with the Labour Party had succeeded with the Tories. John Ward, in the debate on the Curragh Mutiny, put the issue clearly and squarely up to the House when he declared that: "we have here and now unquestionably to decide whether we are going to maintain ..... civil authority and law within these realms, or whether, for the future, this House, when elected by the people, must go to a Committee of Officers and ask that Military Junta ..... whether it is a subject with which they, as officers of the army, think that we, as representing the People, are not entitled to interfere". And he referred to a Syndicalist Manifesto, published that day to the men of the British army, urging them to remember that officers had exercised an option as to obeying orders, and asking them to resolve that they would never fire a shot against their own

class. J.H. Thomas told them that the N.U.R., comprising 400,000 members, were likely soon to go on strike, and that, in that event, if the Opposition doctrine was to be applied, his duty, as their secretary, would be to tell them to organise their forces and spend the Union's £500,000 of capital in providing arms and ammunition.

Ben Tillet and his followers in London were prosecuted, and Jim Larkin in Ireland jailed at that very time for activities incomparably less serious in comparison, but Carson and Law were free to roam the country at will, fomenting and inciting the populace against Parliament, reviewing their illegal army and subverting the Royal army. Tory Ascendancy, even when involved in grave breaches of the law, was sacrosanct.

And that the army was subverted and seriously tampered with there can be no doubt. The great, continuous and unchecked politico-social pressure of the Conservatives and their high social allies soon began to have its baneful effect on that organisation. There was first, uneasiness in its commissioned ranks, then unrest, and, finally, a grave mutinous outbreak by the officers in the Curragh, Newbridge and Kildare garrisons, and serious murmurings and threats from their colleagues in arms elsewhere.

How far-reaching and deep was the poison and its effects were duly revealed in the Curragh Mutiny that broke out in March 1914.

For months prior to that event, Carson and Law had been going about boasting of the letters they had received from serving officers threatening to resign and join the Ulster Volunteers. But when the affair actually broke out, people everywhere were completely astonished. Could it be possible that the famous British army, the world's most perfect example of discipline and absolute obedience and loyalty to its lawful superiors, had been so deeply corrupted that it was disintegrating and dissolving into fragments like the armies of Hayti or San Domingo, or of the republics of Central America? It seemed utterly incredible to the world; but there was the Curragh Mutiny before the eyes of the world as tangible and compelling proof of the progress of the rot within it. I well remember the unspeakable surprise everyone got when, on a day in that March of 1914, we opened our morning paper and read of the strange doings of the Generals - Gough, Paget, French, Ewart and Wilson.

That extraordinary individual (Sir Henry Wilson) requires something more than a passing reference for, in his person,

his career and his treatment, he is a magnification of the privileged position of a "Loyalist" in the national polity, particularly when that "Loyalist" is also a high-ranking army officer. He played a peculiar and very shady part in those events, so unique that one cannot overlook studying him and his deeds. There were, doubtless, many more of his ilk; but he was the only very prominent one that eventually emerged from under his stone.

Wilson came of an Irish family that had been planted in the Co. Antrim after the Jacobite Wars of the 17th Century, on lands confiscated from some of the defeated legitimists. Though he ran up all the army grades of rank to the very top of the ladder, with remarkable speed, rising, for example, from the rank of captain to major-general in 12 years, his professional success certainly cannot be ascribed to his professional prowess or qualifications. The latter simply did not exist. His distinctions, indeed, were all the other way. He failed twice to get into Woolwich, and thrice to get into Sandhurst; as Professor Ryan observes, "no mean feat!". And, the Professor adds, "the convenient door of the militia let him in as it had French!" One may well ask, "If Wilson had no qualifications, how did he attain, and so rapidly, to such

high rank? Influence?" The answer is: No. He does not appear to have had any special influence behind him, for he was far from being a magnate of any description. But he possessed something every bit as good as influence, if not better, and he was able to utilise it adroitly. He was a tireless schemer and intriguer in his own interests. That by itself, I well know, may undo rather than make a career. But Wilson was a schemer of an exceptionally skilful type. Indeed, scheming and intriguing was the one thing he was really brilliant at, and where he had no rival. He was well supported in that accomplishment by a certain attractiveness of manner and a remarkable flair for impressing the important and the influential that offset the disadvantages of his ugly and rather repelling looks. Professor Ryan says that it was said of him that "he was the greatest intriguer that ever wore the King's uniform".

Professor Blake, in his op. already referred to, gives us the following description of Wilson:

"No one could less have resembled the conventional picture of the military man than Sir Henry Wilson. His very appearance was unusual; the enormously tall and bony frame; the intelligent, ugly and curiously enigmatic countenance.

His conversation was equally unorthodox - an extraordinary compound of gravity and buffoonery; for even when discussing issues of life and death, he would frequently introduce into his discourse the language and the antics of a clown. These characteristics did not endear him to his army colleagues, by whom he was, indeed, profoundly mistrusted as a schemer .... Wilson all his life was devoted to the art of intrigue. Intrigue was the very fibre of his being .... His partiality for intrigue did not, in itself, differentiate him so greatly from other soldiers for, contrary to popular belief, it is by no means an uncommon feature of the military profession. What marked Sir Henry Wilson was his success at it. He was, of course, an able man ..... but it is, nevertheless, remarkable that a man, whose actual military accomplishments were singularly small, should ultimately have reached the post of Chief of the Imperial General Staff, the most coveted and influential position in the British army".

At the time of the Curragh Mutiny he ranked as a Major-General, and held the important key post on the High Command of Director of Military Operations, giving him access to all military secrets. All through that crisis, which in no respect whatever was his business, for, officially, he was

wholly outside it, we see his long, sinister, serpentine figure gliding furtively and recklessly through the groups of highly agitated and embarrassed soldiers and politicians and always for the one purpose, to keep the pot of insubordination on the boil.

Early in the Anti-Home Rule conspiracy, he formed a close liaison with Bonar Law and Milner, a diehard Conservative of pure German blood, and kept them fully informed and up-to-date on all the goings-on and military decisions of his employers and paymasters, the Liberal Government, and Colonel Seely, His Majesty's Secretary of State for War, his immediate lawful superior. By so doing, he was, of course, flagrantly breaking his statutory oath of secrecy, an essential pre-requisite for a holder of his high and confidential post, and betraying his lawful masters, nay, more, his country's lawful Government; but that gave him no concern or no qualms.

Wilson was completely <u>au fait</u> with the intentions of the mutinous officers, and, indeed, was largely their counsellor and director, constantly wiring them to keep firm and to maintain their insubordinate mood, letting them know what he knew, viz: (a) that the whole Tory Party and its

powerful Court and social influences were solidly behind them, and, (b) that the Government was afraid of them and, more so, of their powerful backers, and would, in the last analysis, do nothing against them; and they could all rest assured that they would suffer no loss, nor no hurt whatever to their future careers.

The secret information of the Government's intentions and plans in connection with the Orange rebellion, dispensed so regularly and so fully to Bonar Law by His Majesty's treacherous Director of Military Operations, was clearly of immense value to Bonar Law and his confederates, enabling him, as he has himself put on record, to forestall the Government at every material stage in developments, and, if not to checkmate, certainly, gravely to embarrass and incommode them. Not every antagonist possesses so useful and important a spy, permitted to carry on his spying by his indulgent masters who dock him neither in pay nor honours, nor in their confidences.

With one final phrase I shall end my comments on this none too savoury character by quoting Professor Ryan's summing-up on him. It is on page 191 of his book and is an admirable summing-up: "Mutiny there certainly was at the War Office and Wilson was its salesman. His unabashed, incessant habit

of playing politics while holding high rank in the Service was an inexcusable exhibition of disloyalty..... The titbits of information he carried, as proudly as a dog with a shopping basket in its mouth, to the Opposition leaders were useful to them in their campaigning against the Government. The effect of his behaviour on the morale of more junior officers was bad, but there is no evidence that it was decisive. He w as not of the metal to lead a mutiny. He encouraged Gough to "stand like a rock" and boldly advocated the r esignations of other people. But, when he himself wished that he could find a good reason for resigning, it is permissible to suspect that the reason would have had to be indeed compelling before he acted on it. If Gough had not taken the bull by the horns then, in spite of Wilson, the army in Ireland would have followed Fergusson's lead" (i.e. remained loyal). And Ryan goes on to assert that "Carson and Bonar Law were equally certainly mutineers, for they invoked their followers to defy Parliament". Finally, to borrow again from Ryan: "Wilson was appointed Chief Liaison Officer at the headquarters of his old allies, the French. Later, he commanded an army corps, and then, having won the favour of Lloyd George, who appreciated his pliant fluency, he was made Chief of the Imperial General Staff to supersede

the blunt, outspoken Richardson. He opposed British partition in the League of Nations - (once again not his business, K.R.O'S.);- he was created a baronet; he received the thanks of Parliament and a grant of £10,000 ....."

Thus was traitorous "Loyalty" handsomely rewarded; and, had Wilson's meteoric career not been cut short by the bullets of his slayers on the doorsteps of his house in London, on 22nd June 1922, he would have unquestionably been promoted a peer of Parlianent, and given an additional handsome grant by the grateful taxpayers. Truly, "loyalty", whether right or wrong, pays, or paid well in England <u>in illo tempore!</u>

As for the Mutiny, it seemed to us young Irishmen that the inconceivable had happened. Our sympathies were, of course, wholly against the mutinous soldiery, entirely behind Asquith and, for the nonce, constituted authority, and we were very angry at what we considered was an attempt by the army to side with Carson and disorder, against the constitutional and lawful evolution of Home Rule, that small measure of autonomy that we Nationalists had waited so long for and at that time would have been quite satisfied with.

I do not propose to go into the history of the famous Curragh Mutiny. It has been much written about. No later

than last year, an admirably succinct and graphic account of the whole discreditable affair was published by Professor A.J. Ryan; a book, I believe, that will be, for a long time to come, accepted as authoritative on the subject.

My uncle, Dr. Joseph Roantree, was at that time dispensary doctor for the Newbridge area which included the Curragh. Though a devout Catholic, he could hardly be described, in any sense of the word, as a Nationalist. His politics, insofar as he had any, leant definitely towards Imperialism, the Crown and the Castle. Hence, he was very much persona grata with the local British garrison and on close friendly social terms with them. He had the entré to the messes and lounges of the officers' quarters and made considerable use of them. I think he was attached to the military there in some kind of civilian medical capacity. He told me that though he was on extremely friendly, indeed, in some cases, intimate terms with the officers of the Third Cavalry Brigade under Gough, then stationed at the Curragh, he noticed, some time before the mutiny, a curious strain and strangeness amongst the officers towards himself. Evidently there was something in the offing and he was definitely not to be in the secret. When the mutiny broke out the relationship

between him and his officer friends was, for some unknown reason to him, for he was no politician, still more strained. Some little while after the actual mutiny, and when the whole affair was still on the simmer, he went, one evening, into the mess of the Cavalry Brigade, and found it empty save for one very junior young subaltern who was swallowing drinks as fast as the orderly could fetch them to him, and was clearly in a condition very much "distrait" and by no means in the full of his faculties. He invited my uncle to have a drink with him and proceeded to tell him in a vague and rambling manner that the Cavalry Brigade was finished, that all the chaps - save a few "dastards" - had or were resigning and leaving the Curragh as, like their Commander, none of them were going to fight the Ulster loyalists. When my uncle inquired what he was going to do, what job he was going to get, or could get, (he was not one of the many moneyed officers there) he assured him that that was all settled and, drawing a card from his pocket, showed it to him. This card, my uncle told me, showed that Second Lieutenant X, formerly of the Third Cavalry Brigade, had been assigned to the command of such-and-such a company of the Y Regiment, Ulster Volunteer Force in Belfast, where he was directed thereon to report for duty. And the young man

informed my uncle that all his comrades who had resigned, and who were prepared to fight for "Ulster", would be similarly accommodated.

Some days after this, in the course of his dispensary rounds, my uncle came across a large car full of cavalry officers halted by the roadside. Their car was punctured, a common enough fatality in those early days of motoring, and my uncle, who knew them all personally, got out of his car to see if he could help them in any way. His first question to them, he tells me, appeared to embarrass them very much. It was a very natural one to address to those acquaintances: "Where on earth are you fellows off to? Belfast?". They were so embarrassed that they answered him nothing, merely smiled sheepishly. But my uncle, from what he knew of the background of the affair, had no doubt whatever that Belfast was their destination. There can also be small doubt, I think, that, like the drunken young officer, they all had their cards of assignments in Carson's rebel army in their pockets.

I have, perhaps, given too much time to the subject of the Carson-Law conspiracy and to its grave concomitants - gun-running, private armies, rebel governments and mutiny in the British regular army, but I feel fully justified in so

doing, seeing that it was not only a turning-point in the lives of myself and my generation of Irishmen, but a turning-point that had a decided influence on subsequent history in other countries besides Ireland.

Before I leave this particular matter, I should like again to say that no student or would-be historian of the Orange-Tory revolutionary movement, and its reactions and reverberations, can be properly equipped for his task without a sound study of the Carson-Law partnership and its extraordinary doings. Again, I repeat, that, for that purpose, there is no book that I am aware of to touch Mr. A.P.Ryan's "Mutiny at the Curragh" (Macmillan & Co. 1956) on one of its gravest consequences. Reading that book,based on the fullest and most up-to-date information on the mutiny obtainable to date, one is struck by the halting, hesitant, weak-kneed and almost cowardly way the high-ranking officers responsible, and the War Off ice, dealt with the rebellious officers. There can be no doubt, on any study of the affair, that such generals as Sir John French and Sir Arthur Paget, of the very highest rank, the former being Chief of Staff of the Imperial General Staff, and the latter the General Officer Commanding-in-Chief for Ireland, behaved throughout the crisis in the most deplorable,

not to say, craven manner, changing their attitude to the officers with chameleon-like rapidity, from vague threats to beseechings and implorings. It is an incredible, fantastic story, as set forth in Ryan's pages, and goes a long way to explain the appalling reverses of the British army in the early years of World War I. Things could not have been otherwise with such mediocre, vacillating leadership at the head of that army. Gough and his mutineers were told that they need only obey "a reasonable order" to shoot - they, apparently, being the judges of what was reasonable; and they were being constantly given hypothetical cases where they might decline to obey such orders. Officers actually domiciled in Ulster were to be permitted to "disappear" (the actual word used by the War Office), and, when all was over, could reappear and resume their former ranks and places in the army without damnifying themselves in any way.

At one of the many conferences with Gough, Paget assured him that the Government was determined that no aggressive act on their part would start the conflict. At another meeting at the Curragh, Paget addressed Gough and 15 officers, telling them that he was their friend and asking them to treat him as their General and Chief, and that he would see that they were not placed in any position that they might object to (sic!). Why,

he asked, should they think that military operations were intended against Ulster when everywhere his troops had been received with ovation in Ulster? (Paget had a habit of referring to the men under him as "his". - K.R.O'S.)

"To such an extent", writes Gough in his memoirs, "was he prepared to avoid fighting, that he had given orders that if any battalion met with opposition in its march it was to turn and go back to barracks. And if fighting took place against Ulster forces, he would order all his men to lie down and not return the fire, and then he and his Generals would advance alone through the firing line and parley with the men of Ulster". There is much more of this extraordinary kind of stuff which, reading it today, the mind finds it almost impossible to accept as fact, coming from the Generalissimo staff of any army, especially of the great British army of those days with its proud prestige and tradition. But fact indeed it is. No wonder one of the officers, on hearing Paget, commented that they were expected "to fight a pantomime battle". It is a striking revelation of the calibre, the spirit and the outlook of the leaders of the British army and their incredible reactions to that big, albeit artificially fomented, crisis. In studying the history of the mutiny, one is literally

staggered by the fearsome awe of the top-level officers of His Majesty's army when called upon to face the Orange-Tory conspiracy and its sympathisers - their subordinates - in the army. It is clear they all had the utmost reluctance, even hedgers like Paget, who endeavoured by the most imbecile subterfuges to prevail on the officers not to resign, to take forceful action of any kind against the U.V.F. should they start a rebellion and, indeed, in that event, they had practically made up their minds not to oppose the rebels, at least not seriously. Had it been the other way, had their orders been to march against the rebels in "Southern Ireland" how easy it would all have been for them, and what harmony and absence of resignations would there not have been amongst them!

In marked contrast to the obsequiousness and strange servility of the top-rank officers in dealing with their subordinates was the very different manner of the latter. The attitude of Gough and his confederates to their high superiors was very far from respectful; on the contrary, it was an attitude, sustained to the last moment of the crisis, of arrogance and contemptuous impertinence. Those subordinates tick off their bosses with impunity, demand "explanations"

in writing of the orders and directions they give them. They declined to accept the word of General French and his associates, even though they asked him to give it, which insult hurt that General very much. No; they could not accept the clarification of the meaning of the orders unless put in writing and signed by their superiors. And this demand was duly fully co complied with by their obliging superiors.

This attitude of those high-ranking army gentlemen towards their subordinates can be compared with the equally flabby and almost sychophantish attitude of the Liberal Ministers when both groups came up against the apparently extraordinary prestige of politico-social Toryism. They seemed to be literally weakened, paralysed and mightily scared when, no longer able to escape facing the issue, they were compelled to confront their opponents face to face, as though the latter exuded some mysterious force having that enervating effect.

Though it is different to pardon this supine attitude in the case of either group, one must say that there was more excuse for the Government than the army leaders. The former, as we have seen, were not "of" the calibre, or level, of the hereditary rulers of the land. They were of the "hoi polloi" who, because of that "curse" , popular education, had climbed

brilliantly up all the rungs of the ladder of learning and now, by dint of their great ability, had not only won posts at the top, but had actually had the temerity to invade and get control of that sanctum sanctorum, the House itself.

I have already pointed out that much of the decision to "play the Orange card" was occasioned by that "invasion" and the need to chuck those clever plebians at least out of the Government if they could not be chucked out of "the House" itself. It was very different indeed with the men at the head of the army at the time. They were definitely authentic, "of" the right order and vintage and on the right level in that most important of all levels in English life, i.e., "Society". They were, most assuredly, dealing with their "equals" (in every respect including brains!) and had no need at all to be supine or servile, especially with their inferiors in their commands. It just shows how powerful and compelling was that strange aura emitted from the accepted Ruling Classes of England in those days. Outside, perhaps, the Junkerism of Prussia, and the Daimios of Japan of those days, there was nothing to approach it in the contemporary world.

As we all know, the whole ended in a miserable collapse by the Government and a complete surrender to the rebellious

officers, they being officially informed by the Army Council that it had all been a mistake, an unfortunate "misunderstanding It was a wonderful victory for Gough, and he and his mutineers were lionised wherever they went; received as heroes, and got a particularly fine triumphal reception at the Curragh which, of course, they had fully earned. Ryan tells us: "All ranks turned out and they were loudly cheered as they drove along the road through the camp. One non-commissioned officer has described it as 'the grand reception we gave our returning heroes'. Gough spoke a few words before entering his quarters, claiming that they all had the same right as other men in spite of the fact of their being soldiers, to follow the dictates of their conscience".

Thus had the new seed sown by Bonar Law that, in the case of civil war "soldiers are citizens like the rest of us" borne fruit in the very heart of the Royal army itself.

CARSON AND THE SOUTHERN UNIONISTS.

Carson was a master of the art - not indeed a very lofty one - of rousing the latent passions of the mob, and channeling the forces thereby engendered along lines directed towards the achievement of his political objectives. In truth, there was a good deal of the ochlocrat in him. His strong

but peculiarly negative qualities of mind, his dislike of complicated issues and his sticky adherence to facile simplifications were of enormous help to him in his campaign, dealing as he was with a very unsophisticated people, and leading as they did, with logical inevitability, to a complete disregard and repudiation of the law, when the law happened to come up against him. In this respect he had a huge and, as events proved, decisive advantage over his opponents who were, by their very principles, confined within the narrow orbit of the law and the Constitution. In addition to this negative pattern of mind, he possessed highly developed histrionic gifts that proved of the utmost value to him and enabled him to dramatise himself before his audiences with impressive effect.

In short, Carson was a first-class playboy, and a playboy luckily free from the handicap of too much humour which prevented him from seeing the ludicrousness of his claims, threats and many of his actions.

His audiences, being duly inflamed and impregnated with odium for their political opponents and all they stood for, were, like Hitler's, similarly deprived "for the duration", at all events, of that saving grace which, of course, made his work extremely easy and, ultimately, a considerable, if partial, success.

Now, when I say that Carson was a prime playboy, I do not mean that he was insincere, or that he conducted his campaign, not believing in it, with his tongue in his cheek. There is no doubt that he was sincere, but to an extent only. And he was far from being wholly consistent. But, for a long time, he convinced the mass of his followers, in the south as well as the north of Ireland, that he was very much both. Being a born actor (like many Irish politicians) and also a pretty astute psychologist, he saw the necessity, early in his political career, of enveloping himself in an aura and of building up and projecting his own special legend about himself. So, by his own exertions, and those of his admirers, the legend was duly created. And this was the legend: Carson was a man of inflexible and incorruptible principles who would yield his life rather than compromise any one of them in the slightest degree. Furthermore, he was <u>the</u> loyalist <u>par excellence</u>, loyal first to his King and country, and then equally so to all his friends, the least of whom it was just unthinkable for him to betray, or let down. In short, the legend said Carson was wholly honest, wholly sincere and wholly loyal. A fine picture, indeed, and one that had quite a respectable life.

Now, of all his friends and supporters, Carson's avowed favourites were the Southern Irish Unionists. And so he affirmed on numerous occasions. After all, as he so often reminded us, were the Southern Irish Unionists not "his own people"? and it was surely most natural for so supremely loyal a character to have a particularly warm corner in his loyal heart for "my own people amongst whom I was born and reared". Also was he not, in a very special way, their own particular representative seeing that he was M.P. then, not for any northern constituency, but for the Dublin constituency of Trinity College. Nothing hurt him more, or touched him to the quick more, than to be accused by his enemies that his policy would result in his letting "his own people" down; indeed, in nothing less than his flagrant desertion of them. That accusation had only to be made to have Carson bounce to his feet in a rage, to deny it in passionate terms. He was notoriously touchy on this point. A guilty conscience? We shall see and judge for ourselves from the facts.

During the debate in the House of Commons on Agar-Robartes amendment to exclude the four counties of Antrim, Armagh, Derry and Down from the Home Rule Bill, and for which amendment Carson voted, Asquith twitted him and his party on

letting down their southern friends. The Prime Minister sarcastically asked "these chivalrous champions of the rights of the Protestant minority" if they were going to leave the scattered Protestant minority outside these four counties "without any kind of redress or protection" and "take shelter in this oasis or Alsatia .... in which they may snap their fingers at their Roman Catholic fellow-subjects". And Sir John Simon, following the Prime Minister, said: "I can quite understand a certain hesitation on the part of honourable gentlemen opposite to speak, for we have been told that Home Rule is a thing which may shipwreck the position of the loyalists in Ireland. They feel a little hesitation in taking to their boats when they are leaving the most defenceless part of their body behind them". Carson, in reply, admitted he was "in very difficult circumstances" anent the amendment's effect on the southern Unionists; but, he asked: "Is it desertion? I do not agree .... Let me say for myself .... that, as a Dublin man .... I should be the very last, with all my relatives living in the south and west of Ireland and in Dublin, who would for one moment consent to what I believe would be in the slightest degree a desertion of any other part of Ireland". That was, undoubtedly, valiantly spoken and in complete harmony with the picture projected by the legend.

On 28th September 1912, "Ulster Day", the famous Covenant was signed, after solemn religious services in the province at which all the Protestant Chueches were represented, Protestant prelates, from the Primate down, Presbyterian and Methodist Ministers, etc. It had been preceded by a series of meetings in Ulster addressed by Carson, at which he emphasised the solemnity and gravity of the signatures they were about to make, telling them that "they were going to make mutual pledges one with the other, and any man who, having made that pledge, went back on it, or failed at the critical moment, was a betrayer of his brother ...."

That was certainly clear enough and strong enough. And here are the material words of that famous Covenant that 471,414 individuals, men and women (as many women as men) testified to by their signatures. Though pompous and ponderous, there is no doubt about their meaning:

> "Being convinced in our consciences that Home Rule would be disastrous to the material wellbeing of Ulster as well as the whole of Ireland .... all, whose names are underwritten, men (what about the women?) of Ulster, loyal subjects of H.M. King George V, humbly relying on the God (more than one God, evidently!) whom our fathers in days

of stress and trial confidently trusted, do hereby pledge ourselves in solemn Covenant throughout this our time of threatened calamity to stand by one another in defending for ourselves and our children our cherished position of equal citizenship in the United Kingdom, and in using all means which may be found necessary to defeat the present conspiracy (sic!) to set up a Home Rule Parliament in Ireland. And, in the event of such a Parliament being forced upon us, we further solemnly and mutually pledge ourselves to refuse to recognise its authority. In sure confidence that God will defend the right we hereby subscribe our names".

It will be observed that the pledge to-the-death here was against the setting up of a "Home Rule Parliament in Ireland"; not in Ulster, or any part of Ireland. Accordingly, it is clear that the Covenant would compel its signatories to refuse to recognise and to use "all means which might be found necessary", legal or illegal, seemingly, to fight against such a parliament in any part of Ireland; a very tall order indeed for the poor covenanters and their most consistent and loyal leader.

In the Christmas vacation of 1912, the nineteen Unionist

M.P.s. for Ireland wrote a joint letter to the Prime Minister giving notice that they proposed to move at the report stage an amendment excluding the Province of Ulster from the operation of the Bill. Their opposition to the whole measure was unaltered, but "we cannot be blind to the grave mischiefs which are involved in righteous resistance" - a belated confession, and, as it was their plain duty "to do whatever we can to avert the violence we foresee" they asked the Primate Minister to accept the amendment as "the only way to preserve the threatened peace of the realm" and assured him that, should he reject it, he would incure "a most heavy responsibility". This action was, of course, a complete betrayal of their covenant oath which was against the setting up of a Home Rule Parliament in Ireland. When we remember who were the only people then in the United Kingdom plotting to disturb the "peace of the realm" it is difficult to withhold one's admiration for the audacity and impudence of this letter. It is historically of importance as being the first occasion when the Ulster Unionists (Carson was the only Unionist M.P. for a southern constituency) deliberately backed Partition, thereby making their first great breakaway from the iron jacket of their covenant pledge. The letter caused serious misgivings to the southern Unionists, but they were quieted on the usual terms, that Carson was sure it would result in an abandonment of the whole Home Rule Bill

as he was convinced the nationalists would not stand for Partition in any shape or form. So that great purist was apparently bartering his high and much advertised principles on a gamble.

And on 1st January 1913, in a speech in the House of Commons proposing the exclusion of the nine counties of Ulster from the scope of the Bill, - but three months after his solemn pledge against Home Rule in Ireland - he turned once more to his beloved "own people", the scattered minorities of the south and west who, the faithful Colvin assures us "were always in his heart or in his mind." In this speech, an admirable example of righteous hedging, he said: "My firm conviction is, and I believe it is now shared by a majority of these people (no longer 'my own people') that, even by the exclusion of Ulster, these people (again!) would be in a far better position than they would be if Ulster were retained in the Bill". And he proceeded to argue the case from that angle. In a Dublin Parliament "a few representatives from Ulster would really have no power", but if Ulster were excluded they would have the same representation here in this House as they have now, and would take care, as far as they were able, at all events, that some watch should be held over the way they (the southern Unionists) were treated under the

administration of the new Government of Ireland". Furthermore, "they would have in Ireland itself an Imperial power and an Imperial force which could not be disregarded by the rest of Ireland". It would be hard to imagine, to put it mildly, a more specious piece of pleading than this coming from a leader whose incorruptibility and inflexible consistency were constantly stressed. The "infrangible principle" to fight to the death for southern as well as northern loyalists was broken and, according to this amendment of his original doctrine, or rather, this entirely new doctrine of his, desertion of fellow Protestants was a matter entirely of arithmetic. It was, for example, a grievous wrong and desertion of the worst character to throw over to a Home Rule Parliament 800,000 stalwart northern Protestants well able to look after themselves, but it was not desertion in any sense to exclude that hefty body of Protestantism from an Irish Parliament in which there would be some 200,000 of "my own people" left to the mercy of the southern Papistical wolves! The "infrangible principle" of Carson was thus reduced to a matter of counting heads.

Colvin has an interesting passage on this volte face of Carson's that, I think, well bears quotation because of its implications in more than one direction. "Carson then", he

writes, "was by that time considering the exclusion of Ulster (January 1913), if the worst came to the worst, as an ark and a refuge in Ireland. But he knew - he must have known - that the amendment which he proposed would be defeated. John Redmond - it was his calculation - would refuse it. That calculation envolved an estimate of statesmanship of the Irish Nationalist Party, for if that Party had been led (and controlled) by a Bismarck or a Cavour it might have accepted the Bill without Ulster, on the calculation that in due course that Province must come to them. There were, it is true, 200,000 more Protestants (or Unionists) in that Province than there were Catholics (or Nationalists); the Unionists, moreover, had the power of business and of industry; but, politically, the population of Ulster was so arranged as to give the Unionists, over the whole Province, a bare majority of one Member in the House of Commons. The Nationalists might well calculate that, as sometimes happened, a majority of one might be turned into a minority of one and that the harvest of time would bring Ulster into their rickyard. (The Nationalists, though, could not forestall a gerrymander of the Province. K.R.O'S.), But, (as Carson no doubt knew) if the Irish Nationalists could calculate, they could not wait.

The heady stream of nationalism and of victory intoxicated their minds". And so, on Colvin's evidence, and on his own, Carson stands convicted as a mere gambler, gambling on the fate of no other than "his own people". Very far indeed from the Simon Pure of his legend!

How uppermost in their minds and how bothersome to the entire Conservative Party was this most awkward question of the fate of the Southern Unionists is disclosed very often in their correspondence and speeches. It was not a pleasant subject; very definitely a skeleton in their cupboard, indeed; and they felt it keenly. For instance, in Law's revealing letter to Carson of 18th September 1913, wherein he records the results of his interview with the King and Churchill; the letter is an astonishing revelation of Law's intemperance, indeed, iconoclastic recklessness, but it also discloses his (then) steadfastness for the cause of Southern Irish Unionism, a steadfastness that, as we know, did not endure. Referring to coming civil war, Law reports therein that he also told Churchill "that here in England there would be no half-measures; and I said to him: suppose it comes to this: the whole of the Unionist Party say that Ulster is right, that they are ready to support them (sic!) that if necessary all the Unionist members

are turned out of the House of Commons -, does he suppose that the army would obey orders to exercise force in Ulster? I said to him that in that case undoubtedly we would regard it as civil war and would urge the officers of the army not to regard them as a real Government but to ignore their orders. I said to him also that of course we realised as clearly as he did, not only the seriousness, but that actual calamity of allowing things to come to such a point. I said also I saw no way out of the difficulty. I spoke to him of the two possible bases of a conference . . . . dwelt even more strongly on the impossibility of our agreeing to any form of Home Rule with Ulster left out unless there was a large measure of agreement in favour of it among the Unionists in the south and west".

This "impossibility was, as we know, in due course, got over very readily and expeditiously and the Southern Irish Unionists left to stew in their own juice without the powerful aid of their near 900,000 co-religionists in Ulster. And it is strange to gather from Bonar Law's words in this letter that he, seemingly, was contemplating a civil war to, amongst other things, save the Southern Unionists from the horrors of Irish Home Rule!

How guilty the conscience of Unionism was concerning the fate of the Southern Unionists is disclosed palpably in the

last sentence in this letter of Bonar Law. He concluded it thus:

> "The whole question as to the exclusion of Ulster really turns upon this - whether or not it would be regarded as a betrayal by the solid body of Unionists in the south and west".

Indeed, the letting down of Carson's "own people" was causing quite a lot of anxiety to Law. At one of his secret meetings with Asquith in October 1913, the latter tells us that Bonar Law made a proposal for "the permanent exclusion of the four north-eastern counties plus perhaps one other, with the option of inclusion at a later date, if these counties so decided". Colvin says it could not have been a firm offer as Bonar Law "was doubtful whether Lord Lansdowne, who thought that north and south should sink or swim together, and held strong views about deserting the Irish loyalists, would consent to this".

Actually, on the day before the conversation between Asquith and Bonar Law, Lord Lansdowne wrote a letter to Carson which is revealing on the position and attitude of the Unionists of the south and west of Ireland. Referring to the proposals for the exclusion of Ulster counties then being mooted he declares that if they mean business "we shall have

an extremely difficult card to play". And he goes on: "The Unionists of the south and west are, it is true, helpless and inarticulate .... But they are quite powerful enough to provoke a serious outcry against us if we throw them over. They will argue that, in the past, they have r esisted Home Rule, not merely owing to our affection for Ulster, but because we regard it as dangerous to the United Kingdom as a whole, and disastrous to the Unionist minority in other parts of Ireland, where that minority is in special need of protection .... But I have grave doubts whether such a settlement (i.e. Partition in some form) will, after all, prove to be within reach. The geographical puzzle to which you refer (your second point) is one of the rocks upon which it will probably split, and it seems to me that if you are charged with the betrayal of a section of your Covenanters, you will be in a place just as tight as that in which we shall find ourselves if we lay ourselves open to the imputation of having bartered away the liberties of our friends in the south and west".

Lansdowne, it should be noted, was one of the leaders of Southern Irish Unionism; he held very considerable landed property in the Co. Kerry and elsewhere in the south of Ireland.

About the same time, the venerable Lord Barrymore wrote a letter to the "TIMES" expressing the perturbation of Southern Unionists at the way things were going. Writing as Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Irish Unionist Alliance, he put the case for his people "which was in danger of being overlooked because the determination of Ulster to resist by physical force overshadowed everything". The Southern Unionists were, nonetheless, opposed to Home Rule. They had held great meetings in Dublin, Cork and Limerick, and in almost every county of the south and west. They had subscribed, mostly in small sums, £10,000. They deserved well of their country. They foresaw with the greatest alarm the financial ruin, the social disorder, the disruption of Empire involved in Home Rule, and their demand was to lay the facts before the British people in a general election. Colvin, who had an extremely wobbly wicket and knew it on this aspect of his hero's activities, dutifully endeavours to explain it away as well as he can:

"Carson knew it all", he tells us, "he himself was a man of the south; he had been fighting their battle as well as he knew how .... was he playing the right air? He was a man of the south. He had taken up the north, as his manner was in law cases - to concentrate on the strong point of his own,

on the weak point of his enemy's case, never thinking that the Liberal Government would ever seriously attempt - or the Irish Nationalists permit - the alternative of Irish Home Rule without Ulster. His whole design was to wreck the Bill. Yet", goes on the frank but not too well-informed Colvin, as subsequent history showed, "this mad alternative - mad because Home Rule was manifestly bankrupt without Belfast - was coming gradually more and more into practical politics." Once again we perceive that Carson was not standing four square on the rock of principle, but was conducting a vast gamble, a terrific racket, and relying for its success on his last card of all, and this time not the Orange card, but the obduracy of the Irish Nationalist Party against Partition in any shape or form. And, in the last analysis, that Party, by accepting Partition, let Carson down!

Another strong pro-Southern Unionist was Lord Arran who wrote to Carson from Louth on 9th October 1913, arguing strongly and unanswerably that Ulster, or part of Ulster, could not compromise by accepting exclusion "as they had sworn in the Covenant to take all means necessary to defeat the present conspiracy to set up a Home Rule Parliament <u>in Ireland</u>". And his Lordship underlined "<u>in Ireland</u>". "Many of us outside

Ulster", he proceeded, "signed this Covenant relying on the word Ireland, and my point is that if Ulster accepts, as a compromise, a Home Rule Parliament with herself excluded, she would be false to the Covenant she swore. I entirely agree with you that we must use all our physical and armed force to prevent Home Rule, but not only for Ulster, but for the whole of Ireland, as sworn by the Covenanters".

Thus was Carson, at the very moment when he was engaged in eating it, faced with his original principle, the principle of death rather than Home Rule of any kind for Ireland, or any part of Ireland. On 28th November 1913, Carson and Bonar Law were in Dublin and the Unionist Societies of Leinster, Munster and Connaught presented them with some 40 addresses in the great dining-room in Lord Iveagh's house. The two leaders were entertained to a luncheon in the Kildare St. Club, and, at night, they addressed a great meeting, representative of the Unionists of the south and west, in the Theatre Royal.

Carson, in his speech, once more expressed his conviction on which, of course, his whole policy of force was now founded, that Ulster was the key to the situation, that in her resistance lay the hope of safety, not only for herself, but for the south. "If you carry this Home Rule Bill", he declared,

"you can never enforce it so long as Ulster is firm. Ulster will stand firm to the end", he assured them. At this there were cries from the audience of "So will Dublin!". Like Hamlet's ghost, the reactions of his new exclusive policy, "No-Home-Rule-for-Ulster" on "his own people" kept pursuing and haunting him.

So late as March 1914, on the Debate on the Second Reading of the Home Rule Bill, we find him getting up in the House of Commons and, in the face of his recent demand for the exclusion of Ulster, or portion of it, make this quite shameless declaration: "We will never agree to the sacrifice of the south and west whatever may be the benefits which may be offered to Ulster". Nothing could be clearer or more categorical than that affirmation and, we might add, in the light of history, nothing briefer than that emphatic "never".

As time went on and, despite the marching and drilling of the Ulster Volunteers in the north, culminating in the gun-running at Larne, the southern end of Carson's Irish Unionist Party was passing from mere anxiety and perturbation to anger. On 2nd May 1914, his old friend, Lord Ashtown, wrote to him from Galway: "As far as I can make out, is not the offer of the exclusion of Ulster till there is a Federal settlement

and then Ireland is to be one unit? Does not this mean the exclusion of Ulster till Federalism comes? Doesn't it mean the throwing of the southern Unionists to the wolves .... The Unionists round here are not satisfied. I had six letters this morning. One stated plainly that 'it seems Ulster, Carson, Bonar Law and Balfour mean to hand us over to the Nationalists .... All politicians are damned rogues' - I quote in full; I was nearly leaving out the last part". The truth of the averment of Ashtown's correspondent must have stung Carson; for, of course, that was exactly what he was then planning and what he eventually did. Ashtown emphasised that "they want to understand that there will be no consent to Home Rule in any form at all". After thanking God that Balfour was no longer leader of the Unionist Party, he concluded his letter on this plea: "Don't agree to a compromise that will hand us (i.e. Southern Unionists) over to the Nationalists". Simple enough even for the distinguished recipient of the letter; for a man who loved simplification it could not fail to have reminded him of the original target.

About the same time, Lord Arran, in a letter to the "TIMES", compared the Ulster Unionists to "the stronger element of a crew of a leaking ship, who, feeling themselves

sufficiently strong to force their way to the boats, decided to cease manning the pumps and to save themselves, leaving women and children to their fate".

That, indeed, was a bitter one for the two leaders, especially the uncompromising Carson, to have to swallow. By this time, seeing the poor support they were receiving from their Ulster allies, the Unionists of the south and west under Lord Midleton and Lord Barrymore had formed a committee to protect their position; and that committee, we read, resolved and agitated against the Conservative policy on the Amending Bill (i.e. Partition). In particular, this committee desired to place on record their deliberate and unanimous conviction that the exclusion of any part of Ireland would gravely aggravate the menace of the Home Rule Bill to the future safety and contentment of the Irish people".

Carson, who was said to sympathise strongly with their fears, assured them that he would do nothing without consulting them and that there was no danger of any compromise, as the Government would not come to terms with Ulster unless Redmond assented, which consent he thought "highly improbable". Again expediency and the gamble; no longer high and inflexible primciple.

Those meetings came to nothing. The die was cast against the southern Unionists, and they were doomed to that awfullest of fates, unprotected incorporation with the wild, barbaric and papistical "Southern Irish" from whom Carson had sworn, on his life, to preserve them. Yet they fixed their hopes on the r ejection of the Bill in toto and were suspicious of any amendment relating to, or in any way bearing on a Partition solution.

On 14th May 1914, Midleton wrote a letter to Carson expressing the doubts and fears of the Southern Unionists and therein reported the "unanimous opinion of men representing all parts of the south and west that if the Home Rule Bill fell through at the last moment" although there might be some trouble with mobs in places like Limerick and Sligo .... it was impossible to get the mass of people to show any interest in the rejection of the Bill".

A brilliant and most realistic estimate in all faith! I can only observe that if that was as near as a Southern Unionist leader like Midleton could go on surmising such a contingency, then it is not difficult to understand how and why his landlord caste disappeared so completely, leaving hardly a vestige behind it in the nation, in such a short time after those protective barriers of Dublin Castleism, on which it had

for so long relied, had been withdrawn.

On 27th June, Midleton wrote again to Carson, enclosing some notes of the Dublin meeting of the southern Unionists:

> "The utmost loyalty and confidence was shown by all present with regard to yourself, and they were most unwilling to take any course which could, in any degree, militate against your operations. But there is undoubtedly very great uneasiness amongst them, and I feel myself some doubt whether, if the result should be contrary to your expectations and some agreement is come to on the Ulster amendment, if nothing is done for the south, they will not ultimately feel that they have lost their opportunity".

In other words, His Lordship saw through Carson's wangling pretty clearly and was asking him, in very polite language, what would become of his much-loved southern Unionists if his "expectations" were not realised; that is, if his gamble did not come off.

The final stage of Carson's desertion of his "own people", the Unionists of the south and west of Ireland, happened in the year 1916, the famous year of the Easter Rising in Dublin. After the trail of executions and deportations, the British

again got a conscience-jerk and, changing face overnight, set forth, once more, for an agreement of some sort on Home Rule. Accordingly, Asquith announced in the House of Commons, on his return from interviewing the insurgents in Dublin, that the dominant impression on his mind had been "the breakdown of the existing machinery of Irish Government" and that he had commissioned Lloyd George to negotiate with the Irish Party leaders with a view to a compromise which would enable the Government of Ireland Act to be brought into immediate operation

On 10th June 1916, Redmond announced to a Nationalist meeting in Dublin that Lloyd George had proposed that the Home Rule Act be brought into immediate operation, but that an amending Bill be introduced providing for the retention of Irish M.P.s. at Westminster, and for the exclusion of Six Counties fro the operation of the Act, and for a short time after the war.

On 12th June 1916, Carson was in Belfast, and addressed a meeting of the Ulster Unionist Council on Lloyd George's proposition, viz: Home Rule for Ireland save for the six Ulster counties for a duration. The U.U.C., whilst affirming its unalterable objection to Home Rule, decided "in the interests of the Empire" to give Carson full authority to negotiate with Lloyd George on the basis of the definite

exclusion of the Six Counties of Antrim, Armagh, Derry, Tyrone, Down and Fermanagh. This meeting of Ulster Unionists was followed by another meeting in Belfast, a meeting of Nationalists from the aforesaid Six Counties. This meeting was addressed by Joe Devlin, M.P. for West Belfast on the Lloyd George proposition, and decided by a large majority to accept the principle of temporary exclusion of the Six Counties.

These proceedings caused extreme excitement and anger to many thousands of Nationalists and Unionists. All the southern Unionists were up in arms, holding protest meetings whereat they pointed out, with much force, that, in making special arrangements for the six Ulster counties, the northern Protestants, with Carson at their head, had been guilty of breaking the solemn Covenant to which they had subscribed, and, in many instances, subscribed with their blood, but three years since.

Carson and the Ulster Unionists put up the best argument they could against the unsavoury charge of treachery that their quondam friends and allies were levying at them. They argued that, far from letting them down, they were keeping the Covenant "in spirit if not in letter" because a separated Ulster with a Catholic minority under it would be a better

guarantee for the just treatment of Protestants in Catholic Ireland than if the whole Protestant body were to form a minority in a Catholic State. It became known that Lloyd George had given a most binding pledge inwriting to Carson that the Six Counties would be definitely excluded from the operation of the Home Rule Act, and could not be included again without a special Act of Parliament.

Not only were the Unionists of the south and west deeply perturbed and incensed at their wholesale betrayal, so also were a considerable number, and they the best, of the Unionists of the north. One of these was the Church of Ireland Rector of the Parish of Lower Langfield, Drumquin, Co. Tyrone. I knew this reverend gentleman well. He was a medium-sized, thick-set, grey-bearded man, impulsive and talkative in manner; at that time, nearer to 70, I should say, than 50. As well as being a clergyman, he was also a small landed proprietor, and, in that capacity, had occasion to do considerable business with my father from time to time. My father had one locally famous case in which his reverence figured in strange company for him. I need hardly say that the old man was a vehement Unionist and an Orangeman to wit. His Orange sermons, designed to warn his heroes against the evils and dangers of the Scarlet Woman that

sitteth upon the Seven Hills, were read by all in the local papers with zest or amusement. In the case in question, my father acted for Rev. James O'Kane, the Parish Priest of the Parish of North Cappagh just beside the town of Omagh. The Parish Priest had rented from the Rev. Stack a piece of ground at Killyclogher for the purpose of constructing a new national school. The piece of ground so r ented was meared on one side by the Killyclogher Burn, a lively and rapid little stream that rose in the heart of the big mountain of Mullagh-harn that dominated the district. The school was in a ctual process of erection, and it was Father O'Kane's wont to purchase from his riparian neighbour, Mr. William Lyons, sand carried down by the river and edging in acres his side of the stream. One night there came a great rainstorm and, when Father O'Kane visited the school to see what the position was, he found, to his surprise, that a substantial geographical change had been effected by the terrific fresh the heavy rains caused that night in the little burn. Indeed, the original position had become so altered that he hardly recognised it. The fresh had transferred all Lyons's valuable acreage of first-class alluvial sand across from his side to Father O'Kane's side of the stream. On consulting my father, the

priest learned that, thereafter, he need pay Lyons nothing for the sand, as the sand that was his yesterday was today Father O'Kane's, or, rather, his landlord's, Mr. Stack's. So the priest, ignoring Lyons, applied to his landlord, the Rev. Stack, for leave to take the sand which was now his, a request that was readily granted, and presumably his men were busily engaged extracting the sand for the building of the school. This, naturally, vexed Lyons no end. Eventually the parties found themselves before the Assize Court in Omagh one bright summer's day, Father O'Kane to meet two claims of Lyons's, viz: (1) to desist from digging and taking sand which he claimed was his property, and (2) to pay him a certain sum to cover the sand extracted from the burn's margin since the fresh. My father had engaged Denis Henry, K.C., a splendid lawyer and advocate, but that great curiosity in Northern Ireland, a Catholic Unionist. He was known generally as the "Catholic Orangeman" as he was the official Unionist candidate for the doubtful constituency of North Tyrone. After the adjournment for lunch on the day the case opened in Omagh Courthouse, a little group, consisting of Father O'Kane, Rev. Mr. Stack, his chief witness, Denis Henry, my father and myself, were discussing the fate of the case in the central hall of the

Courthouse. None of us was feeling too happy after William Wylie's devastating cross-examination of our witnesses. And Father O'Kane, turning to Denis Henry, inquired: "Oh, Mr. Henry, do you ever think we shall win?" "Of course, Father O'Kane", replied Henry, "of course, we'll win. How can you doubt it when we have the clergymen of the two foremost churches on our side and myself as a go-between". And Father O'Kane did win, getting his verdict on the well-known legal axiom that the boundary between two riparian owners is the centre of the stream. And if the stream overnight changes its course and throws half your neighbour's land onto your side, it is just too bad, but the principle holds the same.

Canon Stack then was the revered and redoubtable personality that came forth violently against Carson and his Covenanters for breaking their solemn covenant pledge to use "all means which may be found necessary to defeat the present conspiracy to set up a Home Rule Parliament in Ireland".

After Carson obtained from the Ulster Unionist Council on June 12th its approval for the exclusion of the Six Counties the Rev. Mr. Stack went round Tyrone speaking and writing against the Ulster Unionist betrayal of the Covenant pledge. These activities of his culminated in a famous sermon he

preached in his church of Lower Langfield, West Tyrone, on Sunday, 8th July 1917.

Taking as his text "They kept not the covenant of God" from Psalm L XXVIII, 10, he traced the fate of those throughout scripture who broke their oaths from the case of Judah and the Ten Tribes and the Gibeonites, Jephthat (Judges XI.30) and David, to Zedekiah (Ezekiel XVII, 33), and Saul's rash oath (1 Sam. XIV, 27).

In that famous sermon the good old man laid great stress on the awful sanctity of an oath, instancing, in particular, the Third Commandment: "Thou shalt not take the Name of the Lord thy God for falsehood, for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh His Name for falsehood" (Ex. XV. 7). Other quotations of his are:

"When a man sweareth .... to bind his soul with a bond, he shall not break his word, he shall do according to all that proceedeth out of his mouth". (Num. XXX. 2).

"Suffer not the mouth to cause thy flesh to sin; neither say thou before the angel, that it was an error; wherefore should God be angry at thy voice and destroy the work of thy hand". (Eccles. V. 6).

"The scripture", he declared, "teaches how solemn is an

oath-bound covenant. Though rashly made, obtained by fraud, against the popular will, no lapse of time - no excuse of patriotism or Imperial necessity can change it; its breach is punishable by dire national calamity, by the curse of God on the ring-leaders, and their families' ruin".

Turning specifically to the Ulster Covenant, he refers to the official pamphlet issued by the Ulster Unionist Council and that circulated some 10,000 copies in Great Britain, the colonies and America. The pamphlet, it seems, consisted of letters to the press, and Mr. Stack's point of view is that, having been issued under the imprimatur of the U.U.C., they became part and parcel of the Ulster Unionist gospel. In the first of those letters the Covenant, he says, is thus defined: "I would ask the electors of Great Britain seriously to consider what manner of men they are, who have sworn a most solemn and binding oath to resist Home Rule to the very death". And Mr. Stack proceeds: "Can the Council be mistaken as to the nature of the Covenant - the very foundation of their existence drawn up after days of thought and prayer by some of the cleverest men? Surely not. Or can they have deliberately lied to gain, by false pretences, the help of the British electorate? Ten thousand times, No! Then, this must be their official

definition of the Covenant, that it is 'a most solemn and binding oath, to resist Home Rule to the very death'. If this view needs support, we have it in the Covenant itself and in its administration. 'Ulster's Solemn League and Covenant' declares that we take this pledge 'humbly relying on the God Whom our fathers in days of stress and trial confidently trusted ..... In sure confidence that God will defend the right'. It was administered after Divine Service, ordered by the Church, with special forms provided. Indeed, the Covenant might be termed a 'Sacramentum' or 'military oath' sworn by nearly half a million men and women to resist Home Rule'. Hence a Provisional Government for Ulster was formed and the U.V.F., some 150,000 strong, armed and drilled. Yet, at the first summons the Council yields - abandons four-fifths of Ireland, including one-third of Ulster with its Covenanters, casting them to the wolves, if only six counties may escape. 'The children of Ephraim being armed and carrying (rifles) turned back in the day of battle'. By what casuistry can this betrayal be reconciled with the Oath of the Covenant 'to resist Home Rule to the very death'? The heri-keri demanded of the fringe counties by the noble six, for 'paramount Imperial necessity' was useless. None such existed. And those counties,

having been inveigled by misstatements into momentary surrender of the Covenant, now justly reclaim its aegis". And things were worse still, his reverence pointed out.

"There has been a further breach of faith. Our leaders pledged themselves to the U.V.F. that while they served in the Ulster Division there would be no tampering with Home Rule. That pledge was broken when, last year, the Council provisionally accepted Lloyd George's proposal to set up immediately Home Rule for four-fifths of Ireland. It is also broken by entering the Convention whose task is Home Rule. The Sinn Féiners are honest; they never concealed their faith, but fought and died for it. Ulster surrenders her's without a blow.... So long as the Covenant stands, our duty is to reject Home Rule, even if proved the only solution of the Empire. This is shown by God's Word, above explained".

And he concludes: "We 'have sworn a most solemn and binding oath to resist Home Rule to the very death'. We mean to keep 'The Covenant of God'. Break God's Covenant, court disaster. Magna est Veritas et praevalebit. God save the King! God defend the Right! No surrender!"

We may leave Carson and his Legend to the Anathemas of this worthy old clergyman of that Church to which Carson had always proclaimed his undying loyalty.

A few more quotations disclosing the uneasy conscience of those leaders with regard to their obligations to the Southern Unionists may not be out of place here:-

(1) Lord Loreburn, the late Liberal Chancellor, in his famous letter to the "TIMES" of September 1913, had drawn attention to the possibility of a plan of "general devolution" being adopted, a plan of giving Home Rule not only to Ireland, or parts of Ireland, but to Scotland, Wales and parts of England as well. The second possibility that arose at that time was to hold a conference on the basis of the exclusion of the Protestant parts of Ulster and the concession of Home Rule to the rest of Ireland. Upon this, Bonar Law, according to his memorandum of 18th September, which he wrote describing his recent conversation with the King, that it would be impossible "unless it secured a large measure of approval from the Unionists of the South and West Ireland, for I am sure that the leaders of the Unionist Party would not give their consent to any scheme which would be regarded as a betrayal of the loyalists of Ireland".

(2) Bonar Law to Carson reporting his interview with the King: "The whole question as to the exclusion of Ulster really turns upon this - whether or not it would be regarded as a betrayal by the solid body of Unionists in the south

and west". (18th September 1913).

(3) "Bonar Law sent copies of his correspondence with Carson to Lansdowne at Meikleone (Perthshire), but immediately a frosty wind begins to blow from the direction of Perthshire. For Lansdowne viewed the possibility of excluding Ulster with the greatest misgiving. He felt strongly that to exclude Ulster and allow Home Rule for the south and west would be to betray the whole past tradition of the Unionist Party. Lansdowne was himself a great landowner in Southern Ireland. ..... Many other Unionists took the same view although they possessed not an acre in Ireland. The right wing of the Party had always objected to Home Rule, not merely because it was unfair to Ulster, but because they denied the concept of a separate Irish nation. To them, Britain was a unity and to break up that unity by creating a national state in Ireland seemed almost an act of sacrilege. It was true, as Lord Randolph Churchill had observed, that the Orange card was the best card to play against Home Rule, but this did not mean that the majority of Unionists were prepared to accept a settlement which gave a national parliament and executive to the rest of Ireland even if Ulster still remained a part of the United Kingdom". ("The Unknown Prime Minister" - by Robt. Blake, p.157).

(4). "..... I gladly recall that you made it clear that we could not entertain the project unless it were consented to by the loyalists of the south and west .....".

(5) To the King's Private Secretary, Lord Stanfordham's proposals for a Conference on the basis of excluding Ulster from the operation of the Home Rule Bill Bonar Law replied: inter alia, on 4th October 1913: "The proposal, as I understand it, is that before entering into a conference we should agree to the present Home Rule Bill if N.E. Ulster were excluded from it ..... I am certain that if it were known from the outset that the Unionist leaders had entered into a conference pledged beforehand to such a proposal there would be wild outburst of resentment against us in the south of Ireland which would be reflected with almost equal violence in England".

(6). Blake, in his "The Unknown Prime Minister" (p.159) writes that Bonar Law's "doubts about the actual merit of a partition settlement, as opposed to its danger to party unity, came more from his reluctance to 'betray' the southern Unionists than from a belief that Home Rule for the south was fundamentally wrong".

(7). Bonar Law's Notes of 15th October on his conversation with Asquith refers to his difficulties with regard to partition, chief of them being:

(i) danger of the Unionists in the south and west thinking that we had betrayed them, which would make any action on our part impossible if they were unanimous in their view".

(8). By 26th January there appears a change in Mr. Law's sacrosanct conscience anent his supporters in the south and west of Ireland. In a letter to Lord Stamfordham he writes: "On our part also, no proposals were made, but I did indicate that while our objections to Home Rule remained unaltered, we were ready, in order to avoid civil war, to take as the basis of discussion the exclusion of Ulster from the operations of the Home Rule Bill, accompanied by the modifications which would thus be necessary, including the consideration of safeguards for the minority in the rest of Ireland".

By that time the minority about whose interests he was so fearsome were beginning to be shadowed in that scrupulous conscience of his.

(9). Later, much later, after the Rising of 1916, when the Asquith-Lloyd George proposals were put forward for a settlement, the following portion of a resolution resolved by the

Ulster Unionists Council, on 12th June 1916, is, I think 5
eloquent and, in all the circumstances, uncommentable:
"..... (3) And, further, we hereby pledge ourselves as follows: That, in the event of a settlement being arrived at on the basis above mentioned (i.e., exclusion of the Six Counties) we shall use all the influence, power and resource of Ulster (i.e. the Six Counties) in the future for the protection of Unionists in the Counties of Cavan, Monaghan and Donegal against injustice or oppression at the hands of the Irish Parliament or Government".

This delightfully hypocritical and insincere "resolve" was evoked by the strong protest at the meeting of the delegates in the Ulster Unionist Council from the aforesaid three counties. Those delegates protested thus: "That we protest in the strongest possible manner against the proposals of the Government to revive the Home Rule controversy, owing to the continuance of the war, and during the absence of so many Covenanters serving in His Majesty's forces. And we further protest on behalf of those Covenanters from the three counties we represent against any settlement of the Irish question which excludes them from Ulster (sic!) But, if the Six Counties consider the safety of the Empire depends on the continuance

of the negotiations on the basis suggested by the Government the responsibility must be clearly understood and be theirs, and the delegates of the three counties must abide by their decision".

A curiously inconsequent protest. Those whole proceedings disclose a number of extraordinary inconsistencies, not to say contrasts, in the much proclaimed simple and straightforward policy of Carson and Law.

Their original opposition to Home Rule was certainly simple and direct enough. It was, as they averred, because it would throw their co-religionists and co-loyalists in the south and west to the Nationalist and Catholic wolves, their "hereditary enemies". And against such a terrible fate the battle had to be fought to the death. Then came a drop, a big drop, from that rigid and forsworn line. They were, willy-nilly, after all prepared to compromise. Yes; the south and west can have its Home Rule, but "Ulster" must at all costs be preserved, even at the price of the awful fate of those faithful fellow loyalists of theirs. But, once again, another terrible wrench takes place in the Carsonian conscience. Not even Ulster, but only two-thirds of it can be saved, with, despite the Covenant, Carsonian acquiescence, throwing to the "Southern" wolves, not only the Unionists of the south and

west, but good pledged Ulster Orangemen in the three forsaken Ulster counties. Apparently then, a gospel that began rigidly on the clear basis that not one single Protestant Unionist in Ireland was to be put under the heel of papistical Home Rule finally resolved itself into preserving the privileges and seemingly the skins of an elite within an elite, the Orange population of but six Irish counties. And this, we were told, was because of the security needs of the Empire. So, to sum up, it was wholly right, betraying nobody and keeping well within the terms of the covenantal oath graciously to permit a Dublin Parliament to rule over the 300,000 Protestant "loyalists" in twenty-six Irish counties so long as those in six were secured and preserved from that tremendous evil, in the resistance to which civil war itself was justified. It did not occur to these "loyal" gentlemen that if so many thousands of their fellow Unionists were to be sacrificed it was hardly worth while preserving even the elite within an elite, seeing that the protective enclave was and never could be homogeneous with its great 35% minority. The obvious alternative never occurred to them; that, if it was indeed a question of Empire security, it would be far better and safer, not only for that security, but for the security and maintenance of the unitary character of the

United Kingdom to have self- sacrificingly agreed to no exclusion, no partition, and the establishment of a State in which the Protestant element would amount to a million persons, at least a fourth of the entire population of the country, with the immense safeguards and privileges that, for the sake of unity, the south would undoubtedly concede that element.

The selfish blindness of Orange and English Tory implacability in this regard led directly and indirectly to the break up of the integrity of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland and to that dissolution of the British Empire that is still in progress.

CARSON, THE PRECURSOR OF SINN FÉIN

Arthur Griffith, as the world knows, was the father of Sinn Féin. I have yet to discuss him and his policy here, but, for my immediate purpose, may I remind the reader what that policy was. Griffith wanted the Irish M.P.s. to abandon the alien parliament of Westminster and, with the elected representatives of County Councils, boroughs, urban and rural district councils, to assemble in congress in Dublin and proceed to legislate therefrom in the country regardless as to what England thought about them, or whether their activities were right or wrong in the eyes of the law.

That was the bare bones of his idea which, as we know, was ultimately adopted by the country with outstanding success. There was, of course, much detail in the plan to be worked out through committees or "ministries" for the various national interests - education, local government, land settlement, courts and so on; and, though Griffith, at the time, did not contemplate the use of force, he was far indeed from being a doctrinaire passivist, and there was a distinct place in his plan for an army, if and when required, as it ultimately was.

Now, it is not at all likely that Carson and his

confederates were readers of Griffith's newspaper "Sinn Féin" wherein this novel and striking doctrine was preached week after week, and, for a short period when it ran as a daily, day after day. But it is truly remarkable how closely Carson followed out this Sinn Féin plan in his tactics.

A few words on Carson's methods and their development before I leave this aspect of things shall, I hope, demonstrate the closeness of his planning to the Griffith scheme. Let us follow that planning briefly, step by step:

The big initial date in the Orange insurrection was, as I have already pointed out, the 2nd February 1910, when Carson supplanted Long as Leader of the Irish Unionist Parliamentary Party, and of all organised Irish Unionism. The second big date followed 19 months later, on 13th November 1911. Bonar Law succeeded Balfour as Leader of the British Conservative Party, thereby becoming that highly responsible functionary in the British constitutional system: "Leader of His Majesty's Opposition". In the September of that year, Carson took the first practical step in his incipient rebellion. The violently contested Lloyd George Budget had been, at length, quietly and unobtrusively

passed by the House of Lords, and Carson took that "surrender" as a warning to all "Loyalists" that the traditional barrier to Ireland's claims was fatally weakened and they would, thenceforward, have to rely on "themselves alone" (Sinn Féin abháin!). Accordingly, he summoned a meeting in Belfast of the "Four Hundred" to arrange, as their "first imperative duty" for the establishment of the "Provisional Government of Ulster" against the passage of that "most nefarious of statutes", the Home Rule Bill. These "Four Hundred" were a singularly heterogeneous collection comprising nominees from Unionist clubs, Ulster constituencies, County Grand Orange Lodges, Derry Apprentice Boys, etc. The one feature this singular body shared was that its members were all nominees by favour of the great leader; none of them were there by reason of the fact that they had been elected thereto by the votes of the Ulster people. Towards the establishment of a Provisional Government the Four Hundred appointed a "Commission of Five" - only one of whom was, in any sense, a lawyer - "to take immediate steps, in consultation with Sir Edward Carson, to frame and submit a constitution for a Provisional Government of Ulster".

Now, a government of any kind is little use without an army, and that was not long in appearing behind the wake of

anarchical and treasonable speechifying. Colvin tells us how the Ulster Volunteer force was conceived and born:

"It happened that one of the members of the Provisional Executive, Colonel Wallace, was both a soldier and a solicitor ... Being a lawyer, his first idea was to put the movement on a legal basis.. According to law, any two Justices of the Peace had power to authorise drill and other military exercises within the area of their jurisdiction and application was duly made by Colonel Wallace and another officer of the Belfast Grand Lodge of the Orange Institution 'for lawful authority ... to hold meetings of the members of the said Lodge, and the Lodges under its jurisdiction for the purpose of training and drilling themselves, and of being trained and drilled to the use of arms, &c. &c.'". And Colvin, who does not always deceive himself, adds "There was an undeniable candour and, at the same time, a certain irony in their statement of the purpose for which this authority was required. '... they desire this authority as faithful subjects of His Majesty the King ... only to make them more efficient citizens for the purpose of maintaining the Constitution of the United Kingdom as now established and protecting their rights and liberties thereunder'".

This pseudo-legal coverage for the creation of a rebel army, given by two accommodating Belfast J.P.s. was made

possible by the fact that, on their return to power in 1906, the Liberals dropped the renewal of the annual Peace Preservation Act, better known as the "Arms Act" which had been in operation since 1881, and in different forms and guises since the Union, and before. The date of the "legal" founding of the Ulster Volunteer Force was 5th January 1912.

Later in that month, January 1912, an event of great importance has to be recorded. The new Orange revolutionary authority took its first overt and supremely successful action in proclaiming the long-announced meeting of the Right Honourable Winston Spencer Churchill, M.P., His Majesty's Home Secretary, to address a meeting of Ulster Liberals in Belfast. It is only one, like myself, who lived through that period, can know the enormous prestige that that bold act gave the rebels.

The next big date in the sequence to be borne in mind is 9th April 1912, the day of the "Great Shake Hands" when, at a large demonstration in the Show Grounds, Belfast, the two leaders, Carson and Bonar Law, met on a common platform for the first time, shook hands ostentatiously, swore eternal friendship and alliance between them, the latter, in most emphatic terms, dedicating the great English Conservative Party to the whole-hearted backing of Ulster Orangeism in its rebellion against the

Home Rule Bill. It was certainly a red-letter day for Carson. He had won one of his most doubtful battles and had swallowed English official Conservatism and its wretched little leader. That curious meeting of the "Two Fuehrers" might, to compare small things with greater, be said to be a long-distance foreshadowing of the celebrated meeting of two other dictators - Hitler and Mussolini - in Rome 27 later - both also promoted to power on the bayonets and bombs of their particular private armies. Thus is history always foreshadowing and repeating itself, in small events no less than big ones. Actually, this meeting in Belfast between the Irish and English Fuehrers was arranged and designed primarily to scarify British Liberalism on the very eve of the introduction of the third Home Rule Bill. That Bill was introduced in the House of Commons by Asquith two days later, on 11th April 1912.

We come now, in passing, to 23rd September 1912, "Ulster Day", the day on which the Covenant was signed whereby something short of 450,000 signatories pledged themselves to resort to any means, legal or illegal, to stymie the setting up, anywhere in Ireland, of a Home Rule Parliament.

Inside the nine counties of Ulster, then comprising about 1,200,000 inhabitants of whom a little more than 50% were

non-Catholics, some 447,197 persons pledged themselves in solemn Covenant by their signatures, some in their own blood as an earnest of the unrelenting "grimness" and "dourness" of their determination to die in the last ditch for their convictions. Of that total, 218,206 were men, and 228,991 were women; so women exceeded men by more than 10,000, showing that the Ulster female was a more warlike type than her male!

That Christmas of 1912, a Christmas box was sent by 19 Unionist M.P.s. for Irish Constituencies to the Premier, Asquith, demanding the exclusion from the operation of the Home Rule Bill of the whole 9 counties of Ulster, quite regardless of the fact that in 5 of those counties there were clear - in many cases overwhelming majorities in favour of an all-Ireland Parliament, and of their "solemn league and covenant" to fight to the death against anyone, particularly any Unionist anywhere in the country being compelled to live under "a Home Rule Parliament in Ireland".

The next outstanding date in the growth and development of "Ulster's" contingent governance was 22nd September 1913. The big happening on that date had, of course, been built up by two years of organising, recruiting, drilling and arming of the Ulster Volunteers. Some little while before that date Carson had brought off another "coup" in his triumphal course by not

only collaring all the Protestant churches in Ulster, but, by being able to direct the Protestant Bishops in Ulster to supersede the appointed church services in regard to the Nineteenth Sunday after Trinity. "With this end in view", the Hon. George Peel tells us, "the Archbishop and Metropolitan, together with four Ulster Bishops, addressed a joint pastoral to the 'Dearly Beloved of the Lord' of their aggregate flocks. In this singular address they appointed 'a special form of prayer with suitable Lessons and Psalms' on the excuse that 'the dangers that threaten us are so great amd the possibility of civil war and strife is so very real'. Further on, Peel continues: "Hence, at the close of July, an open-air demonstration was held at the Forth River Football Grounds near Belfast. After Captain Craig had struck the dominant religious note of the hour by declaiming that 'Sir Edward Carson had been sent from Heaven', the leader rose to speak ..... he announced a secret of State:

'What we must do', said Carson, 'I can put to you very briefly; we must spend our time in preparing to keep our Covenant. For my own part, I hope in September to call together the whole of the Ulster Council and I hope we shall sit in our own Parliament from day to day, adopting all necessary means of committee, and by gaining information from

the country through the clubs. I hope we shall sit from day to day until we have completed all our arrangements ..... It may be, I believe probably it will be, an illegal procedure. Well, if it is, we give a challenge to the Government to interfere with it if they dare!' ".

That was really a momentous announcement; a notable step forward was now to be made. The Ulster Council, i.e., the miscellaneous Four Hundred, were to constitute "our own Parliament" which was to work by committees of itself, and was to sit continuously from day to day until all plans had been perfected. Touch was to be kept with the country through the Unionist clubs, but, unluckily, it did not appear that any General Election was in prospect. If the masses were not to be 'lured into a sense of security by rumours of a General Electien', where did any substantial hope for popular sanction for the new Government come in? This vital fact was kept in occult abeyance ..... At length, on September 24th 1913, at the Ulster Hall, Belfast, the hour had arrived for the presentation to the world of the Provisional Government.

On that ever-memorable morning ..... a crowd had assembled to watch the Four Hundred arrive on the scene of action. There was a very complete muster consisting of 'members of the nobility, leading divines, gentlemen of high

military rank, landed proprietors, members of parliament, lawyers, doctors and leaders of trade and commerce' (Irish Daily Telegraph) representatives, in fact, of all classes except the people; the people were not there.

After prayers, General Sir George Richards and Colonel Hackett Payne, his chief of staff, were given leave to enter, and then the Marquis of Londonderry rose to describe and expound the new system of government with a feeling of 'awful responsibility'. Having made the conventional reference to their 'unscrupulous foe' he said that after two years of steps taken in logical sequence 'our machinery is completed'. He eulogised the Five who had been responsible for working out the details of a constitution: 'to the labours of that Commission we can all testify ..... today we shall have a further report from them'. That day their plans for a Provisional Government were to receive 'the final touch'.

A bewildering transformation scene was now set in motion. First, the Four Hundred created themselves by fiat 'the Central Authority of the Provisional Government'. Then, by another act of spontaneous generation, the Central Authority delegated its powers to the Standing Committee of the Four Hundred, who had thus metaphysically returned to life pro tem. More confounding still, the Standing Committee itself dived under

water and reappeared instanter as the Executive Committee of the Provisional Government. Dripping with various nomenclatures, the Provisional Government now stood on the bank and shook itself, and every drop seemed to be transmogrified into a committee, or an official, or a board, of sorts. Sir Edward Carson was, of course, appointed head of the Central Authority whence radiated, like the spokes of a wheel, or the arms of a starfish, an Executive Committee, a Military Committee, an Ulster Volunteer Committee, a Volunteer Advisory Committee, a Personnel Board, a Finance Board, a Railway Board, a Transport Board, a Supply Board, a Medical Board, a Finance and Business Board, a Legal Committee, an Education Committee, a Publication and Literary Committee, a Customs, Excise and Post Office Committee. To mark the affiliation of 'Church' and State, even chaplains were appointed, together with an Assessor. Sir Edward Carson multifariously headed each Board and Committee, in his character as the Briareus of Ulster, the hero of a hundred hands. What were the functions of heterogeneous bureaucracy? Alas! all that desirable information was dipped and immersed again into mystery by the passage of an unanimous resolution that their functions 'shall be as defined hereafter'..... Such were the steps now adopted 'for taking over the

Government of the Province in trust for the British Nation". Mr. Peel, at this stage in his very clever book, the "Reign of Sir Edward Carson" proceeds to criticise this odd constitution, declaring that, "for want of a better name, the constitution might be termed a self-created aristocratic bureaucracy" in which the people had no part whatsoever. And he goes on: "Now occurred the most extraordinary of all events. If the ebb and flow, the flux and reflux, of human affairs and fortunes are stupefying and endless, so it was now in the case of the Provisional Government. The enormous edifice of administration had scarcely been unveiled to the people when, suddenly, in that same moment and in the twinkle of an eye, it was withdrawn from human vision and melted dimly into the mist.... In plain terms, it was intimated that the hour for putting the constitution into practice had not yet struck". Side by side with the erection of this formidable civil structure of government, the work of organising, drilling and equipping the Ulster Volunteer Force went on with unabated e energy for, had not their Fuehrer reminded them that "all governments must in the ultimate resort depend on the force that is behind them".

On 27th September 1913, a grand parade of the four Belfast regiments of the U.V.F., about 8,000 men, paraded at the Show grounds at Balmoral, kindly lent for the occasion

by the Ground's "non-political" owners; and were received by the Fuehrer Carson himself and his G.O.C., General Sir George Richardson and F.E. Smith, the two latter mounted on suitable chargers. When Carson arrived he was received by the massed bands blaring out "God Save the King" and by "the world's largest Union Jack" being broken on its lofty flagstaff, but, according to Peel, "the breeze was too faint to sustain the gigantic pennon, and it hung listless, sullen, rebellious and unmoved". Outside the officers, few arms were borne by the Volunteers on this occasion, though their arming had been begun, as was manifest by the numerous seizures of arms, disguised as "crockery", "bicycles", "hardware", "electricity plant", that the authorities seized every now and again. Had they essayed the display of more arms it would have been dangerous for their funds, for, as Peel reminds us, "it would have cost a ten shilling licence to carry arms". That sensitivemess about carrying arms was to wear off in the course of the following years until, after the Larne gun-running, arms were carried openly and defiantly without the payment of the lawful State tax for so doing. It is curious to reflect that during all that arming and organising of rebellion in one part of the country,

the law ran with merciless vigour against its would-be upsetters in another part of the country little more than 100 miles away. The city of Dublin was, all during the August and September of 1913, very seriously disturbed with vast massed strikes of workers led by the late Jim Larkin. For a period the whole port of Dublin was paralysed and no tramcars ran on the streetways. There were riots and innumerable baton charges by the police, the Royal Irish Constabulary being brought in from the provinces to augment the Dublin Metropolitan Police. Unlike the much worse defiance of the law and the Constitution in Belfast, there were many arrests in Dublin, including, of course, Larkin himself. Indeed, so bad and so partisan were the activities of the police in dealing with Larkin and his followers that they drew adverse comment from quarters that could, in no sense, be accused of sympathy with the labour cause. Sir James O'Connor, for example, a Conservative Catholic lawyer, thus comments on the Larkin riots in his history: "I have read the evidence at the subsequent inquiry into these transactions. I have seen the photographs which appeared in the Freeman's Journal; one of them showed policemen beating with their batons men on the ground. The conclusion I formed at the time is one which I have seen no

occasion to alter. It is that certainly at this meeting on Sunday (31.8.1913) and possibly on the previous night, the police, who were mainly members of the Royal Irish Constabulary, imported from the country, showed great lack of control which ought to be expected from a disciplined force. Their conduct was subsequently investigated and they were practically exonerated from blame; the (Hardinge) Commission, however, finding that 'in isolated instances there was the use of force which was unnecessary' ". And he tells in a footnote on the hight of August 30th, 1913, the R.I.C. smashed 10 labourers' dwellings for which compensation had to be paid.

NATIONALIST REACTION TO CARSON'S PROTO-SINN FÉIN MOVEMENT.

While Carson was going about organising his rebel government and his armed forces, without let or hindrance from His Majesty's Ministers who, during it all, remained passive if garrulously indignant spectators, Irish nationalism was, though peaceful and law-abiding, certainly not disinterested. Irish nationalism was, in fact, thinking hard and was about to undergo a striking, indeed, a revolutionary change. That process was a slow and gradual one, but it was nonetheless sure and, in the circumstances, inevitable.

As long as Carson confined himself to the speechmaking that he was so fond of, no matter how violent and inciting his words, Irish Nationalists remained quiet and, indeed, indifferent to his activities, full of an unshakable faith in the bona fides of the great Gladstone's Liberal successors who were then solidly and firmly ensconced in power at Westminster. Irish Nationalists were sure that they had nothing to fear and that, should Carson and his Orangemen riot, the Government would soon see to that. The day was gone at last, they fondly thought, when privilege and ascendancy were all powerful in Ireland and capable of blocking her national progress.

In 1912, the year of the Asquith Home Rule Bill, Irish

Nationalists were full of optimism as to the future and, indeed, elated at the bright prospect of a native parliament being so near to them. The way, at long last, seemed clear for the speedy realisation of their modest demands in national autonomy. John Redmond's prestige never stood higher. He was regarded as the Irish Moses who had led his people out of bondage and was about to lead them into the promised land. Another thing, too, never stood higher in the history of Irish Nationalism - the policy of constitutional agitation through Parliament which then seemed supremely vindicated by Redmond's leadership. And, conversely, yet another thing never stood lower in that history - the policy of physical force. I have already referred to this phenomenon in these pages - the elimination of the gun in Irish politics, largely effected through the leadership of Parnell and Gladstone. At the period I have arrived at, the gun, as a means of obtaining the national objective, was almost, but not quite as dead as the dodo. To the great mass of people it was repugnant. True, there were few guns, save sporting guns, in the country till Carson's Volunteers came on the scene. But, apart from that altogether, public opinion in nationalist Ireland could then be said to have been overwhelmingly opposed to that concept which was considered outmoded and futile, if not actually uncivilised.

Yes, we were all Home Rulers in Ireland in those days, and nothing more than Home Rulers. I remember being present, indeed, walking in the ranks of the huge Home Rule demonstration in O'Connell St., Dublin, in March 1914, to celebrate the introduction of the Home Rule Bill in Westminster and to give heart to our friends and leaders in that august assembly. I remember there were great numbers of us students in the march, each of us holding aloft a rod on which was affixed a white card bearing the slogan in green letters "We want Home Rule"! That monster demonstration, at which there were said to have been over 200,000, was addressed not only by official Party leaders but by Patrick Pearse and Eoin MacNeill, two prominent separatists. They spoke in Irish and Pearse, though he made it clear that he had never, nor never would, render allegiance to the King of England, advised the multitude: "Let us unite and win a good Act from the British. I think it can be done. But", he added, "if we are cheated once more, there will be red war in Ireland". Prophetic words!

But, on this matter of the gun in politics, a little qualification is necessary here. Whilst the vast mass of Catholic and Nationalist Ireland were, at that time, firmly

convinced "Constitutionalists", there unquestionably were elements throughout the country, small everywhere, but larger in urban centres such as Dublin and Cork, who maintained the separatist ideal, despised "constitutionalism" and "constitutionalists", and looked to arms as the one effective means towards winning Irish independence. Actually, there were two types, or bodies, of separatists then in existence: one, Sinn Féin, founded and headed by Arthur Griffith, who, though not spurning arms, set out to give passive resistance to alien rule a trial towards the achieving of the restoration of the Grattan monarchy; and two, the Irish Republican Brotherhood, the remnant of Fenianism that aimed at achieving the Republic "vi et armis". Both bodies had their papers, the former, "Sinn Féin", brilliantly edited by Griffith, and the latter, "Irish Freedom", under the forceful editorship of Sean McDermott and Dr. Patrick McCartan. In Dublin, these bodies, small as they were, were by no means inarticulate or lacking in organisation ability. For example, I was invited by some "fire-eating" self-avowed anti-English students, of which there was always a certain sprinkling, to attend a meeting in Beresford Place, organised by the Dublin Separatists, to ptotest against the coronation of George V as King over

Ireland. The meeting was addressed by John Devoy, Countess Markievicz and Dr. McCartan and they certainly gave us full value in their fiery speeches, heating up our volatile blood to boiling point. I and my fellow-students who attended that meeting were not, of course, so unrealistic as to be separatists. We were there through idle curiosity; but it was amazing, as I have said, how the violent speeches, with their attacks on England, and caustic phrases such as "the palaver of the Aberdeens" (a phrase I have since remembered) lit up the dormant Irish in us and caused us to cheer wildly when the Countess produced and burned a small Union Jack. Such bold, reckless courage on their part filled us with admiration, which was turned to alarm when the D.M.P., mounted and on foot, proceeded to break up the meeting and to stampede us all into O'Connell St. where we ran into a stream, rather a mixed flood of loyalists, celebrating the coronation, cheering for the King, and nationalists booing him, not because of any violent antipathy to the good man, for not two per cent. of them were republicans, but because of their dislike of the red, white and blue favours the Rathmines and Rathgar invaders were sporting, and which, in their eyes, stood for the Union and no Home Rule.

It was a strange paradox that, at the very point in history when Irish nationalism appeared to have turned its back on physical force for ever, Irish Unionism had whole-heartedly embraced it and clasped it to his bosom. The first overt act of force of the Orange rebels occurred in the February of that year when they successfully prevented Churchill, one of H.M.'s. Ministers, from addressing Ulster Liberals in a public hall in Belfast that the latter had lawfully rented from its proprietors, the Corporation. This act, whilst bringing considerable kudos to Carson, aroused, for the time being, much resentment in nationalist circles; and that resentment was reflected in the vast crowds from all over Ireland that travelled to Belfast to hear the "proclaimed" Minister speak in an alternative and improvised venue at Celtic Park Football Grounds. But resentment soon died off and the episode was forgotten. Why worry! the cause of Home Rule could not be in safer hands, and, anyhow, the Bill would presently be on the Statute Book. Great was the faith of Irish Nationalism at that time in the Israel of British Liberalism!

The Volunteer movement that Carson inaugurated, according as it grew and spread over the Province, and became more robust, could not fail, in time, to interest a race in

which a love of soldiering and martial doings were traditional. In the beginning, however, the general attitude of Nationalists to that movement was one of ridicule, if not of contempt. They felt it would soon fizzle out, and, anyhow, that if it, by any stretch of imagination, became serious, the Liberal Government would not tolerate it but would promptly suppress it. The ridicule was understandable, for I confess it was rather amusing and fantastic to see adult men, so consciously "grim and dour" (for the benefit of the Cross Channel press, of course) tramping along the Ulster roads and lanes, garbed in solemn bowler hats and "Sunday-go-to-meeting" blue serge suits (the original uniform), carrying ridiculous wooden guns across their shoulders.

The U.V.F. was, as we have seen, "legally" founded by two accommodating Belfast magistrates on 5th January 1912. By that summer, it had grown considerably in numbers. In my small town of Omagh, as soon as the shops closed, one would see groups of men making their way to yards, squares and greens and fields whereon to undergo instruction in drill and "the arts of war". All during the long summer evenings this kind of thing went on. The individuals taking part in them, if "townees", were mainly composed of small shopkeepers, shop assistants, artisans and labourers; if country-folk,

they were mainly of the small-farmer and cottier class. The professional and educated elements, in both town and country, were generally, but not always, conspicuous by their absence.

As I have said, the Nationalists at this early stage confined themselves to good-humoured banter at the whole business. Our local nationalist weekly, the "Ulster Herald", ran a series of cynical and very amusing studies of local celebrities in the new Volunteers, hitting deftly and with a subtle precision on the weak or ludicrous spots of such individuals. These articles were written, of all people, by the District Inspector of the R.I.C., Mr. Conlan, who was a Catholic with nationalist sympathies. I remember two in particular. The local "commander" of the Ulster Volunteers was the son of one of the drapers in the town. He was a thin, rather diminutive type, and, since he had become the district generalissimo, grew a most impressive moustache of the handle-bar variety. Because of his size and great self-assurance, he was known as "Cock-robin A...." The commandant, so it seems, thought the production of this magnificent moustache not sufficient to uphold the dignity of his office; so, though he had never been on a horse's back in his life, off he went and purchased a suitable charger, from the back

of which he was wont to review his troops on important occasions On the first of these occasions, a big ceremonial parade in Auchinleck's Meadow before Carson and Richardson, the commandant had the misfortune to fall from his steed whilst the company were standing at ease. This was first-class grist to Conlan's mill, and, in his article that week, he described the humiliating episode and explained it by saying that the commandant's horse felt something was wrong and looked round to see who was on his back. On beholding A...., the horse was so amused that he laughed so much that he shook, and the shaking threw the rider.

A prominent backer of the U.V.F. at that time was the Rev. Canon Stack, Rector of Lower Langfield, the same who afterwards denounced Carson for breaking his Covenant by his desertion of the southern Unionists. He was a very old man and quite a character. Conlan, in describing the armament of the local Volunteers in one of his articles, wrote that, apart from the wooden guns, the most valuable weapon they possessed was "one rusty canon". I include these trivial details to help to give some idea of the general nationalist outlook at the time, an outlook that, within a comparatively brief period, was to react so radically.

The big event for the Nationalists in that year of 1912 was, of course, the introduction of the Home Rule Bill in Parliament by Asquith and its getting through its First and Second Readings. One of the finest speeches on behalf of the Bill was the speech of Winston Churchill, made in the House of Commons in that August, wherein he gives a true reflection of the Irish Nationalist outlook of the time. "Speaking as the representative of the younger generation, looking at things with the modern eye", he declared that Ireland had so diminished in importance relatively to Great Britain, that old fears of a hostile Ireland in peace or war had lost their force, and that Home Rule no longer raised issues comparable to those involved in foreign or labour policy. The Irish claim, he said, had become steadily more moderate. The Irish were not asking for separation or even for repeal of the Union. And, anticipating a famous phrase of later years, he said of the Irish demand that "never before has so little been asked, and never before have so many people asked it "Nothing", he continued, "nothing that even a hostile Irish Government could do could affect the efficiency of our defence ..... In any case, if the Irish were so absurd as to wreck the constitution now to be given them, the Imperial Parliament could always resume its delegated powers and, if necessary, vindicate law by force".

The position then obtaining with regard to Home Rule could not have been put more truly or more clearly. When the Bill passed its second reading, the whole of Nationalist Ireland broke out into spontaneous rejoicings. All over the country in towns and villages, bands turned out to celebrate the event; there were parades and speeches galore welcoming the measure and praising the Irish Party and its Liberal allies for their successful exertions on behalf of the "Cause". In the town of Dungannon, Co. Tyrone, in almost the heart of Ulster, the Nationalist demonstration, to the amazement of the Unionist spectators, carried Union Jacks as well as green flags - the tricolour was then unknown - and, as they marched through the streets, they sang, to the even greater amazement of those Unionist spectators, "God Save Our Fenian King"! to the air of the British anthem. Nor was that a pose or a stunt. In my opinion, it can be said with truth that, never since the rule of the British Raj began in Ireland, was the British Monarchy more popular than at that time. With very little effort in the right direction, it might well have been given to King George V to have reawakened in the Irish their ancient and traditional attachment for Kingship in a reformed national background.

But that was not to be. On the other hand, as the days and months rolled by and the U.V.F., under virtually protected conditions, continued to expand and develop, and, above all, to acquire considerable supplies of arms and ammunition, and, as side by side with the progress of that force, there were clear signs of weakening by the Government on the Home Rule issue, with much talking about partition and the need for compromise to assuage the contingent outlaws, Irish Nationalism, especially young Irish Nationalism, began to lose its patience and to grow uneasy and restless and to demand from its leaders some antidote to the, seemingly, triumphant advance of its successful Orange adversary. It should not be overlooked that the arming of Carson's Volunteers did not, by any manner of means, commence with the Larne episode. They began to arm, in any serious degree, during 1913, when substantial consignments of rifles escaped the Customs and police officers and found their way to their units. Of course, many of the consignments were seized in transit by the authorities; in particular, one very heavy one addressed to Lord Farnham, H.M.L. for the Co. Cavan, a serving officer of H.M.'s army.

By that September, open parades of armed Ulster Volunteers made their appearance and were reported in the

press. And it was the political effect of those parades of armed men, more than anything else, certainly more than any speeches in Parliament, that made the Liberal Government talk compromise with their warlike political opponents. The Liberals were soon to demonstrate that they had no stomach for the use of force, under any circumstances, against the Tory rebels.

In truth, in the face of all this unopposed martial preparation by their political enemies, it was far from easy for Nationalism, particularly its youth, after the long constitutional fight but recently crowned with victory, to see that hard-won victory snatched from it, or whittled away through the efforts of the aforesaid adversary; and, bitterest pill of all, by the successful use of the very anti-constitutional methods that it had been so strongly advised against, and had, in fact, renounced. The original feeling of contempt for the U.V.F. "playboys" was passing, or, rather, being transferred to the Government, and their own Nationalist leaders, whilst something very like admiration was taking its place. Whether it was a colossal bluff or not, the fact was becoming clearer and clearer to the young Nationalists that those U.V.F. fellows were achieving things and that the Nationalists were losing what

little they had achieved. That fact, to them, was more eloquent than all the eloquence of the Liberal and Nationalist politicians. Unquestionably, those U.V.F. fellows were giving them a real example of how to put Griffith's Sinn Féin preaching into practice. The Ulster Unionists did not appear to care one hoot for the threats and angry verbal explosions directed at them by the Government and its Party men. Indeed, their leaders treated the Government with deliberate and insolent contempt, defying them to do their worst whilst they went calmly and steadily on, day after day, night after night, perfecting their military organisation, as if there were no Liberal, or indeed, any other kind of Government in existence; which, in truth, there was not, as far as they were concerned.

The attitude of those dissident fellow-countrymen, of the young Nationalists, was superbly audacious; and that wonderful example of Sinn Féin in practice began to impress them deeply, and the idea began to take hold of them, and they began to think more seriously of Griffith and his "mad chimerical notions" albeit very cautiously as yet.

The U.V.F. appeared quite definitely to be on the march. The months of constant drilling and instruction, directed by professional soldiers on His Majesty's Army Pay List, were

beginning to show in the improved discipline and the carriage of the Volunteers. Also, they were being, bit by bit, got into uniform - a kind of brown material cut like the British tunic with brown trousers and puttees. And, most effective of all, they were undoubtedly getting armed, slowly but surely. Even more impressive than the arms that their squads and companies occasionally carried was the news, reported almost every few days, of consignments of arms destined for the north being seized by the authorities: 1,000 rifles here one day, 500 there the next day, with thousands of rounds of ammunition. To the young Nationalists it was looking very much as though the tables had been turned. The "loyalists" were now the outlaws, the rebels, the "physical force men", and the Nationalists had now become the "loyalists" and the constitutionalists. Was there ever a more extraordinary, more paradoxical situation in Ireland! And what made it much more bitter for the young Nationalists to bear was the fact that this time the "physical force men" appeared to be winning hands down, and the constitutionalists appeared to be losing.

The young Ulster Nationalists was, naturally, much more keenly affected by these happenings than his southern

counterpart, for he was in the midst of it all, and every day had it hammered home to him with even greater force. And every night too, for motors and motor cycles were rushing freely through the province on military exercises every night, keeping him awake - those early engines were extremely noisy.- From his bedroom windows, lying comfortably under his sheets and quilts, in unwilling and angry tranquillity, he would spend the hours of darkness watching the signal lights of Carson's army winking and blinking on the hillsides around his little town, doubtless transmitting cryptic and epoch-making messages to the Ultima Thule of "King" Carson's dominions.

Calls to the leaders to do something, to take some effective action, began to grow in volume from day to day. But, apart from more and stronger speeches and angrier denunciations of Carson and his Volunteers, which they, of course, contemptuously ignored, those leaders did nothing. Anxiety amongst the people began to drift into alarm and that growing alarm was mirrored in letters, reports and articles in the press. Many were beginning to think that there was something, after all, in that discounted "crank" and sorehead, Pearse's notorious dictum that the Nationalist without a gun cut a much more ridiculous and sorrier figure than the

Orangeman with one. At long last, something indeed did happen. The Nationalist discontent at events found at last an outlet, and an outlet of a most significant, but by no means unexpected character, though one which came from a most unexpected quarter. A "group of young unknown men" decided that Ireland must now have her own defence force to protect her gravely menaced interests, and that the source whence that aid could come was her own manhood. For this purpose, the group, headed by Dr. Eoin MacNeill, held a public meeting in the Concert Hall of the Rotunda, Dublin, on 25th November, 1913. The meeting was organised and backed by bodies and groups reflecting certain aspects of national thought by no means in harmony with that of the official Party - such bodies as the G.A.A., the Gaelic League, the National Foresters, Sinn Féin, the I.R.B. and the A.O.H. (I.A.A.). In fact, official nationalism was wholly conspicuous by its absence therefrom. Nevertheless, not only was the meeting a huge success, being attended by over 13,000 people, but from it shot out an active and forceful movement that was spontaneously and enthusiastically taken up by the people, and led, within the ensuing decade, to achievements that no one then conceived possible. Hence it is that the date, 25th November 1913, should be regarded as one of the crucial

dates in latter-day Irish history in conjunction with the other dates so singled out in this treatise.

Thus were the Irish Volunteers founded, for the express purpose of defending Irish rights. Within six months the movement had spread throughout the whole country. Every city and town, every village and country parish had, within the following twelve months, its Volunteer unit drilling and training enthusiastically every evening after business hours as its prototype had been and was doing in the north.

And here I must not omit a curious and exciting happening shortly after the foundation of the Irish Volunteers (I.V.). In that December, Eoin MacNeill went down to Cork to address a meeting inaugurating the Volunteers in that city. In his speech in the City Hall there he said:

"The action of the Ulster Volunteers, interpret it as you will, is the very essence of nationalism. They show that, whatever English parties may say, they are going to have their own way in their own country, and when you whom I am addressing come forward and show that you too are going to have your own way, we will command the respect, not only of every English political party, but of the whole civilised world. 'The North began, the North held on, God bless the Northern land'. And now", he concluded, "I ask you to do

as the young men of Galway did, Catholics and Nationalists alike, I ask you to give three cheers for Sir Edward Carson's Volunteers".

But the young men of Cork, despite their reputation, were not, on that occasion at all events, as subtle as the young Galwegians; for, instead of obeying the learned doctor's request, they created a riot and stormed the platform. I should state here that this attack was generally believed to have been organised by the A.O.H. element in Cork who were hostile to the whole Volunteer idea and sought a way of destroying it. I have referred to this incident because it is of significance and gives a good idea, in contemporary language, of the separatist attitude to the U.V.F. and the arming of Irishmen in general.

In Ulster, the position was curious and not without humour. In counties where the population was divided sharply, such as the Co. Tyrone, it was a common sight most evenings in spring and summer to see big parades of the rival Volunteers passing each other on the streets and roads. As they passed they would, to an "Eyes right!" command from the rival commanders, give each other "the salute courteous" dipping their colours as they marched by.

Arms were the great necessity of this new army. In this way they were at a serious disadvantage in comparison with the U.V.F. which had been obtaining military supplies in very considerable quantities for months past, having at its back much of the wealth and resources of the then immensely opulent kingdom, which they conspicuously lacked. Lackadaisical and patient to malfeasance as the Liberal Government had been with Carson's army, it soon woke up to action when it became a matter of dealing with an Irish National Volunteer force. Within a week of the founding of the Irish Volunteers the Government issued proclamations prohibiting the importation of arms into Ireland. This swift and sudden intervention to prevent the Irish Volunteers from arming by the Government, after they had permitted the Ulster Volunteers to receive large supplies of armaments, gave yet another drop to Liberal prestige in Ireland and, at the same time, a great fillip to Volunteer recruiting. It seemed then to us young Nationalists, as our pristine childlike faith in Liberal promises began to weaken and dissolve, that, after all, it was but the old, old game all over again. English governments, whether Tory or Radical, whether obscurantist or progressive, were, as the separatist press was constantly telling us, all the same where Ireland and Irish nationalism

were concerned. We were, in truth, as Carson honestly called us, "the enemy" and had to be treated as such. The Orange and privileged stratum in Irish society was still respected and maintained as a garrison and could do what it wished with impunity; even arm and prepare for rebellion; but, all things to the contrary notwithstanding, the Irish Nationalist was, apparently, still, as he had ever been in official eyes, a Croppy Boy, and "croppies" must lie down. We young Nationalists were, indeed, growing more and more bitter and anxious as the weeks passed, bringing with them fresh setbacks to our cause and fresh triumphs for the Orange opposition. It was not the Arms Embargo in itself that aroused our ire, but its timing - just after the birth of our volunteers. The traditional Irish suspicion of the Englishman, for years moribund and now being re-aroused in the nationalist mind, saw in this and similar actions of the Government a return to the truer, and, it was beginning to re-think, more real John Bull. In the August of 1913, the great Larkin civic strike broke out resulting in the closing down of the Port of Dublin and the almost complete stoppage of the city tramways system for several weeks. Larkin's speeches were admittedly very violent, but certainly not more so than the speeches of the Orange and British

conservatives that we had been listening to daily for the preceding two or three years. Larkin and his movement, it is true, were not popular in either nationalist or unionist circles. The former regarded him as an athiest anti-clerical; the latter as a violent demagogue, and both as an exponent of extreme bolshevistic socialism. The middle classes, who ruled both the big parties, feared him as the leader of the "Have nots" wanting to collar the goods of the "Haves". There was, therefore, little or no sympathy with Larkin in either camp. He was dealt with very differently from his fellow rebels in Ulster, being prosecuted for seditious utterances and imprisoned. At the time, though, this did not stir nationalism in general, many of the younger Nationalists growing daily more and more disillusioned regarding the famous "union of hearts", saw in the speedy enforcement of the law against seditious Larkin, and its staying against the tenfold more seditious Carson, yet further evidence of the true wolf showing behind the growing rents in the sheep's clothing.

There were soon to be even bigger and more glaring rents in the said sheep's clothing.

But to return to the Irish Volunteers. As we have seen, Redmond and the official nationalist organisations boycotted the new force from the beginning, though its ranks were filled

with their supporters. Indeed, one of his chief lieutenants, Richard Hazelton, M.P., wrote a strong and, seemingly, inspired letter to the press advising the people to ignore the new movement. But Redmond misjudged the intensity and enthusiasm of the populace for the volunteer movement and fondly hoped that, like so many Irish societies, it would diminish and peter out after a few months. Instead, however, it grew and spread over the country like wildfire, getting stronger and more organised every week. Redmond and his colleagues could not be expected to look upon this new independent body, thus rapidly developing, with equanimity, particularly as none of its leaders were supporters of official nationalism. Clearly, it was a mistake in tactics not to have ordered the Redmond men to go in at the very beginning and take control, as they could easily have done. The position, from their angle, had to remedied, and remedied it was in the only way it could be; a crude and clumsy ex post facto way.

Redmond, accordingly, set about negotiating with the new "upstart" leaders of the Volunteers to that end. He first proposed that a Central Council should be appointed comprising seven members, viz: three to be appointed by the Provisional Committee of the Volunteers, and three by Redmond, with Eoin MacNeill as chairman. Some informal negotiations took place in January 1914, on that proposal

but nothing came of them. Eventually Redmond, determined to secure control of the Volunteers, now that they were growing at an alarming rate, wrote a letter in May to the press in which, after stating that 90% of the Volunteers were supporters of his, which was then probably the case, he demanded that the Provisional Committee should be reconstituted by the addition of 25 nominees of his thereto. Redmond's power in the land was very great at the time and the chiefs of the Volunteers had no alternative but to accept that proposal, and Redmond, by that device, got complete control of the Volunteers. Though that high-handed and arbitrary action of Redmond's annoyed very much the dissident elements of nationalism in the country, it did not harm his prestige in any way with the vast mass of the people. On the contrary, it enhanced his prestige. I well remember the satisfaction of nationalism in general at the action. Even my own circle of Independent Nationalists, strong critics of Redmond as they were, applauded him for it. Conservative Nationalism, then (as now) the mass of the nation, breathed a sigh of relief at the step and regarded it as the saving of the Volunteers from those dangerous "wild physical force men" whom they had always dreaded, fearing that all those people wanted was a reckless flare-up with

England to avenge the Fenian fiasco, if for no more practical reason. Their only criticism of the move was that it had not been taken at the beginning.

Redmond's identification of his Party with the Irish Volunteers caused the movement to expand and spread with still greater speed, bringing into its ranks a highly respectable, conservative element "with a stake in the country" that, theretofore, had stood aloof from it, with a notable and highly desirable increase in all-necessary funds. Indeed, in many places, so great were the numbers joining up that there was often not sufficient organisation to deal with them all.

As for myself, I was mainly in Dublin at that time, a young barrister, just called, living in digs in Phibsboro, and on the lookout for briefs. The Volunteer movement had greatly sweetened the relationship between the various sections of nationalists and I found that the cloud that hung so darkly over Mid-Tyrone Nationalism, since the Murnaghanite split, was very considerably lifted, enabling us "Schismatics" to renew friendly intercourse with the Redmondites. Thus, I found myself much in the company of the late Joseph Malachi Muldoon, a fellow Tyrone man and also a fellow barrister, called to the bar on the same day as myself.

He was a strong Irish Party man and, like most of that type, a sworn-in Hibernian. At his suggestion I joined a company of Irish Volunteers of which he was captain and which carried out its exercises in a barn or hall not far from the Richmond Hospital. I think it was called the St. Michan's Company. There I drilled and became, in time, the company's adjutant. But I fear I was an irregular attendant as I had to be out of Dublin so frequently, on circuit down the country to the County Courts of Tyrone and Fermanagh, or attending the Assizes at Cavan, Fermanagh, Tyrone, Donegal or Derry.

The fateful (indeed "fatal") year 1914 opened with a further attempt to arrive at a compromise on the big political issue. It took the form of a series of conferences between the Government and the Tories on the one hand, and the Government and the Nationalists on the other. The Nationalists soon discovered that they and they alone were expected to make concessions. And, in fact, they did agree to accept a form of partition on a temporary basis. Orange Unionism was, as ever, adamantly <u>non possumus</u>, fully conscious of its strong position with the vast bulk of the wealth, prestige and power of the kingdom, and indeed, as was presently proved, the Crown forces themselves behind it. Against a position so strong

the over-riding majority in the elective chambers of the legislature and of the electorate in the country were, of course, useless. And, anyhow, Liberal leadership had, from the beginning, been so weak and supine before Carson's organised sedition that, by that time, young nationalism was beginning to lose faith in it and to expect little from it. Young Nationalists and old Nationalists and, in particular, the Nationalists of my native province, were all solidly and deeply opposed to the permanent partition of the country in any shape or form. Hence the proposal made at that time to exclude the Six North-Eastern Counties from the provisions of the Home Rule Bill for six years was as repugnant to them as Carson alleged it was to him who turned it down on the ground that it amounted to a "sentence of death with a stay of execution for six years". Nevertheless, that was the proposal, Redmond, in his wisdom, agreed to "as a final and ultimate limit of concession". But, in the face of Carson's attitude, neither that proposal, nor any other mooted then or since, came to anything. During most of that year the ill-fated Home Rule Bill was battling its way through Parliament to the accompaniment of wild and shockingly disorderly scenes organised by the Tory gentlemen in the "world's finest club", culminating by Carson,

after a violent speech, histrionically leading out his Ulster supporters and betaking them all by train and boat that same night to Belfast where they were "to concert measures of resistance".

About this time, too, the Government were beginning to be forced into taking serious notice of the Orange r ebellion and had, seemingly, at last decided to make, at all events, some overt attempt to vindicate the law. To that end, they dispatched additional troops to the province and were contemplating the concentration there of a strong force of cavalry and artillery when, at that moment, - the 20th March, to be precise - the notorious Curragh Mutiny broke out, reducing their plans to smoke and a shes.

I have already said something about that celebrated affair and here shall speak only of its reactions on Irish people as I observed them. I was, at the time, out with the North-West Bar on circuit on the Spring Assizes. The North-West Bar was, probably, the most mixed in membership of the six circuits into which the Irish Bar was then divided for Assize purposes. Its political and religious complexion was mainly Unionist and Protestant, with one example of that strange freak, a Catholic Unionist, in the person of the delightful and popular Denis Henry; but there was a goodly element of official Nationalists like Ned Kelly, M.P. and

Martin Maguire, and a few Presbyterian Liberal Home Rulers like Tommy Patton, Marcus D. Begley and Gerald Dougherty. And it possessed a small rump of very young barristers such as the late Louis C. O'Doherty, the late Basil McGuckin and myself who, whilst not then avowed Sinn Féiners, were strong critics of the Irish Party and its leaders, and were on the lookout for some kind of a feasible national movement. When the mutiny broke out, I was, I think, in Enniskillen or Omagh. The news fell upon us with all the staggering force of a bombshell, and it was with the greatest difficulty that we could credit it at all. When, in due course, it was authenticated beyond all doubt, it dominated our minds and thoughts, putting entirely into the shade the legal business of the Assize. Barristers on circuit were handsomely catered for in those days. Those circuiting bars were really travelling clubs, and clubs well furnished with amenities and comforts - all for a price, of course, which, for those days, was certainly not low. Every circuit town like Omagh, Enniskillen or Derry had its Bar Mess for which purpose rooms, generally in the local County Courthouse, were assigned. Here, the barristers met for lunch and dinner or for a chat during the proceedings of the Assize Court. Despite the differences in religion and politics, the greatest goodwill and bonhomie existed and

and was encouraged by the traditions of the Bar amongst the members. Indeed, to see Nationalist and Unionist political barristers eating and drinking and waxing merry in those messes, one found it hard to believe that they were the identical characters who, but a few weeks previously, were hurling insults at each other across the floor of the House of Commons or at the hustings during an election. But, when the Curragh news came in there was an immediate and sudden freeze. A strain was felt by all: and Unionists and Nationalists tended to segregate and discuss the terrific news in hushed voices. I well remember noticing in particular the Unionists collecting in little groups and knots on every available occasion in the Mess rooms as though drawn together by a magnet, to discuss the unbelievable event, and they certainly seemed far from elated at the news, judging from the perturbed expressions on their countenances.

The startling and unprecedented occurrence drew us Nationalists, orthodox and dissident, together. We would gather round Ned Kelly who, as official Party M.P. for East Donegal, was presumed to be "in the know", and debate the pros and cons of the incredible situation. Our unanimous view was that, whatever else England would stand for

she would never tolerate indiscipline and mutiny in her army, particularly in its highest ranks. Always, down the ages, she had been traditionally severe, even harsh, in punishing insubordination in the army, with the result that she believed she had, and prided herself in having the world's finest army where discipline was rigid and sacrosanct. And that view was practically universal in Ireland, even among the Unionists, many of whom, as I have instanced, were disturbed rather than pleased by the event. Nationalists felt that the Government could no longer continue the role of inactive garrulity, that they had no alternative but to take stern measures against the mutinous officers, and we had not the smallest doubt that, thus tested, English determination would assert itself, and the rebellious officers put in their proper place. As Ned Kelly observed, "the Government would either have to govern or abdicate to Carson and Bonar Law".

When, in due course, the whole business petered out into an apologetic retreat by the Government and its army advisers, and the triumphal return and full restoration of the rebellious officers, there was deep dejection and bitterness of heart in the nationalists' ranks; for it was beginning to become crystal clear to the Irish man-in-the-

street that no matter what happened, no matter how outrageous or challenging to authority the conduct and activities of their antagonists in politics, Asquith's Liberal Government could not, nor would not fight to the end the battle of Home Rule against the Tory-Orange confederacy.

Now, I well know that, due to the weakness and, indeed, cowardliness of the army High Command, and of the King's Ministers, the Curragh Affair, in the strict letter of the law, technically escaped from being a "valid" mutiny (to put it that way). But, be that as it may, it unquestionably was one in spirit and heart; and nothing could excuse, on the one hand, the insubordinate and insolent attitude of the mutinous officers to their lawful superiors; and, on the other hand, the apologetic and c ringing attitude of the latter to their delinquents. The explanation of such conduct was, of course, that the officers concerned were well aware of the power and support they had behind them.

Professor Ryan, in his book on the Curragh Mutiny, says truly of Carson with regard to one or other of the many peace conferences, that he attended such "in the happy position of counsel, quite certain of the verdict being in his favour, listening to appeals from the other side for a settlement out of Court". And, at this stage, the same could be said to be the happy position of the Curragh and, indeed, of all other potentially mutinous officers.

Carson's statement of the position at Antrim on 26th September 1913, was entirely true. He declared: "I see it has created something of a commotion that they have at length ascertained that we have this great General (Sir George Richardson) amongst us ..... I tell the Government more than that. I tell them we have pledges and promises from some of the greatest generals in the army that when the time comes and, if it is necessary, they will come over and help us".

As we have seen, the employment of the "neutral" and strictly "non-political" army as an engine in his designs was avowedly one of Bonar Law's objectives. In this respect he went far further than Carson. From the very beginning of his leadership of the Tories he set himself out to undermine and seduce the army which he was well-fitted to do by reason of the powerful network of social and economic contacts he commanded through the wealthy conservative organisations, to say nothing of his utilisation of such valuable high-ranking informers, drawing government pay, as Sir Henry Wilson. Indeed, since that January, he had been plotting a nefarious thing for any responsible parliamentarian, but particularly for the leader of the avowedly constitutional party - nothing less than the paralysis of the annual Mutiny Act. The plan was to oppose the passing of that measure

unless his amendment to it was accepted. The amendment - an obviously impossible one for any government to accept - was that the army was not to be utilised in suppressing an Orange coup d'etat in the north of Ireland. The Mutiny Act is the Act which gives legal status and authority to the British army. So as to prevent the army's possible misuse as an agency of tyranny or dictatorship, the Act's life is only for twelve months, at the end of which period it automatically expires and has to be specifically re-enacted. Were that not done, the British army and navy and the entire British defence forces would have no existence, their personnel becoming no more than ordinary subjects with but the rights and duties of such. Bonar Law had resolved to carry out that scandalous project despite the menacing war clouds then gathering over Europe, knowing full well that the House of Lords, that "Branch of the Tory Party" as Lloyd-George, with reason, called it, would make it possible for him to accomplish it. His plans were ready, and he was about to give the signal to let go when the Curragh Mutiny occurred. There was then, of course, no need to do so, for, as the "Morning Post" wrote "The army has killed Home Rule".

In reading the history of that time one is surprised at the extraordinary influence that that very mediocre little

bourgeois had over the great landed and industrial magnates that dominated the Party he led. The conspiracy to defeat and bring to nought the Mutiny Act was a case in point. It must have gone much against the grain of traditionalists like Balfour, the Cecils, Salisbury, &c., yet Bonar Law was able to get them all round to his anarchical point of view. Lansdowne was decidedly unhappy about it. He wrote Law that he "dreaded the step"; yet he, like the rest of them, had not the stamina to stand out against the little iconoclast and firmly to reject it. Law, however, was obliged to write Lansdowne a few letters to assuage the latter's scruples. I quote some significant passages from that of the 30th January 1914, which appear to me to be most revealing on the writer's calibre and outlook, and on which comment would be superfluous:

> "You were quite right that logically our case is not complete as long as the Ulster leaders do not undertake to abide by the decision of the electors but there is no help for that, for certainly, no such pledge could be given by them. One of two things must happen. Either the Government will have an election selected at their own convenience after they have made .... the proposals for the protection of Ulster .... Such an election would seem to me to be as bad for us as anything could be .... for I am afraid that a great many people would think these proposals so reasonable that Ulster would not be justified in resisting and that it would settle the Irish question. The other possibility is

that they would go on with their bill, and, from a party point of view, that would be advantageous to us, I think, for it would mean bloodshed in Ulster; but I am convinced Asquith will not take that course. It seems to me, therefore, that it is a question between an election more or less forced on us by what we will try to represent as the plain issue: Shall the army be used to coerce Ulster without the consent of the electors? Or, on proposals for Home Rule which to moderate men will not appear unreasonable".

Readers can judge from that extract whether Law was a statesman or an unscrupulous politician.

I must here take leave of Mr. Law. If he appears again in these pages it will be only incidentally. He was surely one of the strangest and most incongruous characters that ever the whirligig of time threw up on the top level of British politics and that reached the highest and most prized office thereon. His four years' governance of Britain's ancient and proud Conservative Party left, as history has shown, a sad legacy behind it of a party bereft of much of its quondam prestige and moral aura, with its two great sacrosanctities - the United Kingdom and the United Empire - grievously damaged and fractured beyond repair.

But perhaps the most astonishing thing about Mr. Law was his last chapter. Despite the fact that in his will he expressed the wish that he should be buried beside his wife in the cemetery at Helensburgh near Glasgow, his wish was

ignored. Accordingly, this man who did so much to harm the British political structure and whose Premiership was one of the briefest on record - only 209 days - was vouchsafed the same honour as the great Gladstone - a state burial in the national shrine of England. In actual fact, it was the first time since the Gladstone funeral in 1898 that a Prime Minister was buried in Westminster Abbey. The pall-bearers were the highest in the land - no less than the Prince of Wales, the Speaker of the House of Commons, the Prime Minister, Balfour, Asquith, Carson, Austen Chamberlain, Ramsay Macdonald and Lord Edward Talbot. The Archbishops of Canterbury and York took part in the service, and Kipling, the prime "jingo", who was specially invited, had the gratification of hearing his "Recessional" - a peculiar hym indeed - sung at the close of the service.

To Asquith it was fitting that "we should bury the Unknown Prime Minister by the side of the "Unknown Soldier". But, to the man of today, in possession of all the subsequent historical facts, it almost seems that at the obsequies of that strange little iconoclast, high official England was waking both her Kingdom and her Empire.

I have said that 1914 was the uear of unique crises in a

world still at peace. It began with the army trouble that erupted at the Curragh; and, following hot on the heels of that commotion, came the Ulster gun-running.

April seems to have been the month, par excellence, dedicated by the gods for latter-day revolutionary outbreaks in Ireland. On the 24th of that month in that year of 1914, occurred that comprehensive act of overt rebellion, the illegal landing of guns at Larne, Donaghadee and Bangor - the very day on which, but two years later, the Provisional Government of the Irish Republic was proclaimed in Dublin.

For some time before that gun-running the Government, partly waking out of its coma whenever it came to facing the "loyal" rebels and their English Tory confederates, had strengthened the northern forces of the Crown by substantial reinforcements of military and police drafted into the province from the south. I remember the excitement in Omagh when those reinforcements arrived. In the current issue of the newspapers appeared photos of the two (can I say "rival"?) forces parading outside St. Columba's Protestant Parish Church, doing "military honours" to each other as though they were units from the armies of two allied or extremely friendly countries. Carson, for example, in a letter to Law of 20th March, written from Craigavon, wrote that "the Government had been moving troops and police all day through

the province and from the south". And, when about the same time, Churchill ordered the Third Battle Squadron of the navy to Lamlash in the Scottish Isles of Arran to patrol the Ulster coast, it looked to many people that Carson's serene and undisturbed reign in Northern Ireland was at last going to be challenged. However, when the big crisis came within a month of all that activity, the gun dropped from the nerveless hand of Authority before triumphant Anarchy.

Despite the larger reinforcements of the London Government in the north, Carson's U.V.F. still seemed to be cock-of-the-walk there and to have things all its own way. For instance, it maintained large armed squads at the Old Town Hall, Belfast, the seat of the "Provisional Government", and at Craigavon, the seat of Carson's chief lieutenant, Craig, and Carson's own headquarters when he visited Belfast. Out of respect, no doubt, for their "friendly rivals", the military had been withdrawn from Belfast and concentrated at Hollywood, a town some 12 miles or so distant therefrom, and patrols of Carson's Volunteers kept watch during the night along the loughshore.

Montgomery Hyde, Carson's most recent biographer, gives us this delightful vignette of the attitude of the forces of law and order towards he forces of rebellion: "Indeed, the forces, both naval and military, in the neighbourhood of

Belfast were already fraternising with the Volunteers. The officers and petty officers of H.M.S. Pathfinder visited Craigavon and both they and the Volunteers engaged in signal practice together". Could anything be more fantastic? Could one imagine a similar situation occurring at that time in Dublin between the K.O.S.B. Regiment, then stationed there, and Redmond's by no means "disloyal" Volunteers?

In the latter half of that April I was staying in my home in Omagh where I was attending the Quarter Sessions in Co. Tyrone. I shall never forget the huge excitement in our house on the morning of the 25th April. The maids had the most alarming stories that Carson and his U.V.F. had seized Belfast and were engaged, mirabile dictu! in bloody conflict with the "sojers and the polis". The rumours that floated about and that came to our ears afresh with every new visitor to the house were incredible and outlandish in all conscience, but to us, hardly more so than the facts themselves as, in due course, we read them in the morning newspapers. Whilst I remember it vividly, still I cannot find words adequate to describe our reactions to that extraordinary episode. We knew, of course, that, as I have said, there had been, for some time past, a considerable amount of clandestine guns and ammunition

finding their way into the hands of the U.V.F. and we also heard talk enough from the local Orangemen - for there was really little secrecy about the whole business - that we might presently expect a gun-running performance on a big scale; but few of us took that constantly repeated rumour very seriously. We were still influenced by the equally constant assurances of nationalist leaders that it was all a big game of bluff with Carson "the king of the bluffers" directing it; and, anyhow, that Government had the situation well watched and well in hands. Such announcements generally concluded with the exhortation "Trust Redmond and Asquith!" - as a kind of "Amen" to their prayer.

Yet, despite everything, there it was in black and white in the morning newspapers for all to see. Together and individually we read and re-read down through six or seven columns of full and detailed report, hardly believing our eyes.

Now, I do not propose to describe in any detail the Larne &c. gun-running, for this is no precise history of those times. I must, however, for my present purpose, make some references to it.

In bald outline, what happened was that on the night of 24th April, the steamer "Clyde Valley", bought for the purpose

and re-christened the "Mountjoy II", after the boom-breaker at the siege of Derry in 1690, sailed into Larne Harbour with a cargo of 35,000 sound, up-to-date Austrian and German rifles and 3,000,000 rounds of ammunition. The "Mountjoy II", having tied-up at the landing stage there, the work of unloading her armament was at once begun and lasted well into the morning of the 25th. The hinterland of the province had been well prepared to receive and distribute that cargo. The truth is that the U.V.F. took over virtual possession of the greater part of Ulster that night and morning, and held it without let or hindrance until the last rifle and the last round of ammunition was unloaded and safely and securely deposited at its prescribed destination. Crawford, the ex-shipyard apprentice, who organised the trans-shipment of the arms from Germany, had them packed in units of five rifles and 500 rounds of ammunition to facilitate delivery. The Volunteers dislocated all telephone and telegraph communications to military and police barracks and governmental and official centres, held up the police and customs men everywhere; in some cases confined them to their stations or temporarily imprisoned them, who, it may be said, showed little or no inclination to resist or interfere with them. The strong

military concentrations in the area they ignored, as well they might, for they were all sound asleep in their beds, and the last thing they were thinking of, if they were thinking of anything, was of taking any thwarting action against Carson's "loyalist" Volunteers. At the disposal of the Volunteers were 600 motor vehicles. That does not sound remarkable in these days when motor cars can be counted by the thousands, but, 40 years ago, when cars were few and far between and largely the monopoly of the wealthy and the well-to-do, that was a remarkably large figure to concentrate in one limited area. This factor alone was eloquently significant of the rich and powerful influences behind the rebels. The episode is notable for one single happening, having regard to the no-far-distant future; that, during it, the first Crown servant lost his life through violent and unlawful action. He was a coast-guard, intercepted by the U.V.F. at Larne. True, he died of a weak heart, killed by the shock; but his death was unquestionably the outcome of an illegal act of rebellion and, therefore, the U.V.F. must be, in law, held accountable for it.

One thing to bear in mind about this act of rebellion is that it was, in more senses than one, no surprise. In the first place, it was talked about and rumoured all over Ulster

for weeks beforehand. In the second place, seeing that the unloading at Larne lasted several hours in the presence of thousands of Volunteers, with the harbour, during that period, sealed off completely from the legitimate authority of the Kingdom, with the greater percentage of Ulster's available motor vehicles (a considerable number came from the south) rattling through the highways and byways of the province all night long and into the early hours of the morning, the boasted secrecy and carefully concealed surreptitious character of the action cannot be accepted. It was a time of "Open Sesame!" for Carson and the U.V.F. Every door, every highway of the King opened for and to them. All during the long hours of the operation, practically every step of which was known to the police, and, through them, to the military, no Crown servant, with the exception of the poor, conscientious coastguard, made the slightest attempt to interfere with them - least of all Dublin Castle and its denizens.

And not only in Ireland, but in Germany, where the arms were bought and loaded on the steamer "Fanny" , everything worked in Crawford's favour with almost clocklike precision. It was, in truth, rebellion made easy on all fronts with the doubtless unconscious help of the home government by its own

inanition, and that of the German Government by its conscious inaction. The latter w as at least understandable in the circumstances. The atmosphere between England and her powerful rival, Germany, had been deteriorating markedly since the death of Victoria, and, at this time, England, certainly the England of Toryism and the masses that read the million circulation "Daily Mail" were far advanced in hatred of that rival. The feeling on the German Junker side, the real rulers of the Reich, was correspondingly alerted and bitter towards its inevitable antagonists. The Kaiser was, naturally, tremendously interested in Carson's Ulster campaign and, we know, had daily reported to him the speeches made and the movements in Ulster towards a greatly-to-be-desired revolt and civil war. Such an occurrence would, of course, be of great assistance to his warlike preparations aand plannings. He must have read with much relish and satisfaction such statements as that of the Right Honourable Thomas Andrews that were then issuing from Ulster platforms and the Ulster press. That Right Honourable gentleman, a prominent member of the rebel "Provisional Government" declared that if "we were deserted by Great Britain, I would rather be governed by Germany than by Patrick Forde and John Redmond and Company". And so also the words of Carson's chief lieutenant, James Craig, the future Minister and Chamberlain of the King:

"There is a spirit spreading abroad which I can testify from my personal knowledge that Germany and the German Emperor would be preferred to the rule of John Redmond, Patrick Forde and the Molly Maguires". And, particularly so, the encouraging words of the Conservative leader, Mr. Law himself: "It is a fact which I do not think anyone who knows anything about Ireland, from old prejudices, perhaps more than anything else, from the whole of their past history, would prefer, I believe, to accept the government of a foreign country rather than submit to be governed by the honourable gentlemen below the gangway".

The understandably keen interest of the Kaiser in Carson's subversive movement was demonstrated when H.I.M. went out of his way to invite Carson to luncheon during a holiday visit of his to Germany in August 1913. To so honour the relatively obscure leader of a small regional party in a foreign parliament was wholly unprecedented. It is true that Carson went out of his way, afterwards, to deny that the Ulster position had been discussed at all at that luncheon, and, I suppose, we had better leave it at that!

Whether because of the personal contacts then formed between the great and the small autocrat, or because of the

growing tension between the two rival empires, or both, there can be no doubt but that Carson's agent, that flamboyant and eccentric little character, Freddie Crawford, found his conspiratorial movements in the fatherland a case of virtually "roses, roses all the way". It is true that Crawford has written a sensational account of his adventures in gun-running in Germany and on the high seas between February and late April in that year, and endeavours therein to project himself as a cross between a Sir Francis Drake and a mystical evangelical saint. His, to me, at any rate, highly imaginative account is plentifully besprinkled with theatrical and highly coloured episodes in all of which he figures histrionically, such as drawing his gun on his captain and entire crew (he being on his last legs with malaria) thereby terrifying them into action on his instructions, his bribing of an important German customs official with a ten pound note, his boarding one of his "mystery" ships from Llandudno Strand when a harbour was conveniently by, and, choicest of all, his being bidden by celestial, other-world voices to "go on with the guns tonight and don't lose sight of them until you have handed them over to Ulster". Certainly an unusually long and prosaic speech, and, in the vernacular, too, for such a Voice to utter!

Crawford had one unanswerable advantage in this record of his doughty deeds: they are all without corroboration and founded wholly on his own unsupported statements. And we Ulstermen know well how adept certain of our fellow-provincials are at - to use the well-understood Ulster term - "telling the tale".

The late William O'Brien, M.P. of the "All for Ireland League" has some comments on the Carson gun-running in his book "The Irish Revolution" that I think are sound and that bear quotation: Referring therein to Ronald MacNeill's book "Ulster's Stand for the Union" he writes: "The book, in fact, makes it clear that the cargo could never have started from Germany without the connivance of the most highly organised bureaucracy in the world ..... How this enormous weight of armaments (15,000 rifles and bayonets had to be brought from Austria) could have been assembled and packed in a single German port and conveyed through the Kiel Canal without attracting the eye of a single German official during the month while the operation lasted, is a miracle which is only deepened by Mr. MacNeill's ingenuous explanation". That explanation runs as follows in MacNeill's book:

> "Whether any suspicion had, in fact, been aroused remains unknown. Anyhow, the barges were ready laden with a tug waiting until the tide should serve about

midnight for making a start down the Elbe and through the canal to Kiel. The modest sum of £10 procured an order authorising the tug and barges to proceed through the Canal without stopping and requiring other shipping to let them past. A black flag was the signal of this privileged position, which suggested the 'Jolly Roger' to Crawford's thoughts and gave a sense of insolent audacity when great liners of ten or fifteen thousand tons were seen making way for a tugboat towing a couple of lighters".

Mr. MacNeill, in his innocence or candour, seems to me to give a lot away in this paragraph; indeed, it appears to solve the whole "mystery".

A last quotation from Mr. O'Brien on the Crawford affair:

"From the beginning of February to the 24th April Mr. Crawford was fooling about the seas with his pirate craft, the "Fanny" with every conceivable precaution to attract attention - now flying from Hamburg to Belfast ..... now cruising in Danish waters, in the Bristol Channel, off the Tuskar - at one moment transhipping his armaments from one ship to a second and a third one - at another losing the "Fanny" altogether and rushing about from London to Holyhead and besieging telegraph offices with wires to inquire for her - and the Fleet paid no more heed to his peregrinations than if Mr. Churchill's dreadnoughts and destroyers were so many painted ships upon a painted ocean".

So "secret" were Crawford's activities, that the press in Germany and England had articles and reports, from time to

time, on the "mystery" ship, the "Fanny" and her cargo of rifles, bayonets, machine guns and ammunition. The real secret is, who footed the bill for that highly expensive enterprise, estimated to have cost, including the arms, close on £200,000, which, today, would equate to more than £2,000,000. Was it Tory wealth only, or Tory wealth aided by generous German terms?

I have said that the effect of the Curragh Mutiny on Irish Nationalism was terrific, as indeed it was; but it was mild compared with that of the Larne gun-running; and, particularly so, on young Nationalists. It created in us a deep mental and psychological reaction, and violently shook our faith in constitutionalism. True, it shook such faith violently, but mirabile dictu! it did not shatter it; and, despite everything, so ingrained had we become with constitutionalism and looking to the Imperial Parliament, that it was not until more than two years later that we turned irrevocably and finally to the gun as the true medicine for the redress of our great national grievance.

After the Larne affair, when we paced the roads we were constantly passing companies and platoons of the U.V.F. in their new dun-brown uniforms and puttees and armed with

first-class Mauser rifles and bandoliers across their shoulders bulging with ammunition. Our feelings of frustration, admiration, envy, defeat at those scenes can be better imagined than described.

I have said that though separatism was, in those days, dead, or nearly dead, nearly every sizable town possessed a tiny sprinkling of diehard separatisis - generally old Fenians or their sons. They were, of course, a very insignificant element in the community, hardly an element at all; but they were respected as idealists, living in a world and an age to which they did not belong. I happened with one such person one day to be watching a rather big turnout of Ulster Volunteers marching brazenly up the High St. in Omagh, past the Police County Headquarters, nearly every man armed to the teeth, when my companion remarked to me, admiringly: "Fine! The first lot of Irishmen to tramp the King's highway armed against a Statute of the British Parliament since the Fenians. More power to them!"

And that was the general attitude of the separatists, or "Irreconcilables" as they were more often called, then, towards the U.V.F. and, indeed, they were not wanting in giving practical expression to that outlook as, for example,

when Dr. Patrick McCartan, the Dispensary Doctor for the Gortin district in Co. Tyrone, a wellknown and avowed Republican, took part personally in the Larne gun-running with his own motor car and, it was said, was rewarded by the gift of seven good rifles for his army from his new allies.

Armed and uniformed parades of Ulster Volunteers were, from the Larne affair onwards, the order of the day in Ulster. I myself saw many of them, as well as big reviews of the "troops" when 10,000 or 20,000 of them would march past Carson, Craig, or their generalissimo, Richardson, an Englishman on the King's Pay List and receiving his salary thereon from a benign "enemy" government. These rebel parades were frequently attended by English lords and politicians, and sometimes distinguished strangers and even foreigners would be the guests at those reviews, and be permitted the privilege of taking the salute from the saluting base at the march past. One of those distinguished strangers was to be one of England's prime enemies in two months' time, no less a personage than His Excellency the Baron Von Kuhlmann. Listen to William O'Brien on this individual 's visit: "He was not a poor spy carrying his life in his hands, but a German Minister of the first consequence and an intimate adviser of the Emperor.

And Baron Von Kuhlmann's visit, be it marked, a few months before the outbreak of the war, was made, not to the Sinn Féin leaders or to the south, but to Belfast, where he was lionised by the military commanders of the Ulster Volunteer army and was enabled to inspect 'eight battalions armed with Mauser rifles and accompanied by two Colt machine guns and a Maxim'!. Who can doubt what sort of report was carried back to His Imperial Master by Baron Von Kuhlmann who had seen nothing but a province teeming with armed rebels, a King's army honeycombed with mutiny and a government paralysed with vacillation and terror". Who indeed!

April 24th, 1914, must also go down on our special register as another of the crucial dates in the Orange-Tory rebellion. Before that date/Asquith Government, had it the purpose to do so, might have been able to do something effective to disperse Carson's private army and re-establish their rule in Ulster; after that date they could not, in my judgment, have done so without having to face armed conflict and bloodshed and, in all probability, a widespread civil war. For, with all that drilling, gun-running, armaments and threats, it is not possible to see how the U.V.F. could avoid a fight if challenged by the Government. Through very shame

they would have had to resist in arms the King's Government's attempt to suppress it and confiscate its arms. In that event, things might not have turned out just as simply as a conflict between Carson's rebels on the one hand and Crown forces on the other. What was much more likely to happen was that there would have been a landslide secession movement of the officers in the extremely Toryised and partisan army with great numbers of them joining the rebel ranks thereby leaving the government with the merest skeleton of an army, useless for any purpose and possibly a bigger danger to itself than to any enemy. No, the time had passed when Asquith's Government could take direct action against the rebels; something more was now required before anything of the kind could be attempted with effect.

The date is a highly important one, too, for Irish Nationalism, for its events made the more serious and farseeing of its leaders realise that their only hope lay, not only in a great Volunteer body, but in an armed volunteer body. Hence it was that Larne gave a terrific impulse to the Irish Volunteer movement. All Volunteers and their leaders became, overnight, keen and enthusiastic for the spread and equipment of the force, and the efforts to obtain arms were quickened up and greatly increased. And, in truth, they were miserably