PART. I.

ORIGINAL

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

ROINN COSANTA.

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS.

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Witness

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

Identity.

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

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STATEMENT BY COMMISSIONER KEVIN R. O'SHIEL,

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

1. Background.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

county remained tranquil throughout the rising.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

111. Early XX Century Omagh.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

1V. The Boer War Period.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

V. English Schools.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"I forgot, Sir".

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"O'Shiel, leave the hall!"

I asked feebly and miserably:

"Where shall I go, Sir?"

He retorted:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

V1. Late Victorian Ireland.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

V1. The Liberal Avalanche.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

V111 - The Genesis of Tory Supra-Constitutionalism.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

IX. The Tories Declare War on Liberal Rule.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

X. The Mid-Tyrone Election, 1910.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

XI. - Those Tranquil Pre-1914 Times.

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

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

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

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21
BURO STAIRE MILEATA 1913-21
No. W.S. 1770

ORIGINAL

PART II

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

ROINN COSANTA.

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS.

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 1770.

Witness

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

Identity.

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

Commissioner, Irish Land Commission, 1923 to date.

Subject.

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Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness.

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ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21
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World events, therefore, were never dramatic, seldom even critical, and their reactions on a region like Mid-Tyrone were negligible. To speak symbolically, as far as the people of Ireland were concerned, Ireland was their world, and Tyrone, for all practical purposes, was their country. Hence it was, no doubt, that on the local horizons, local events assumed a size and an importance out of all proportion to their intrinsic merits, and held practically the sole attention of the community. And that circumstance might well be one of the reasons why the bitterness of the split lasted for so long. There was, indeed, little external cause to deflect countrymen, townsmen or parishioners from the happenings of their county, town or parish. Another consequence of this was the vast importance of the local weekly papers, the Unionist "Tyrone Constitution" and the Nationalist "Ulster Herald". Only a small minority of the townspeople, and an extremely small percentage of the rural population wasted any money or time on any of the Dublin or Belfast dailies. Their respective weekly papers were universally brought home with their supplies from the town on the market day, and their columns,

filled with accounts of local Court proceedings, weddings, funerals and political meetings - all printed in detail and the speeches nearly verbatim - and other local trivia, were avidly devoured, line for line, by the members of families or read out at the firesides for the aged and the illiterate. And the leading articles in those papers, nearly always on some phase of politics or religion or local or county problems, provided their readers with their weekly quota of food for thought and political guidance which they accepted as almost gospel truth.

The years that just preceded the battle for the second Home Rule Bill were, indeed, singularly tranquil in Ireland. True, in parts of the West and South there was some agrarian trouble - cattle-driving, boycotts of "grabbed" farms, and the like; but, taking the country as a whole, it would be true to say that, up till then, there had rarely been a more peaceful period since the conquest than those early years of the Liberal Government, from 1906 to the formation of Carson's "Ulster Volunteer Force". Save for those isolated agrarian outbreaks, endemic in their localities, the country was almost wholly

free from crime, certainly from serious crime. And, too, the period was conspicuous for the complete absence of the gun as an "arbitrator" in political issues - in itself a truly remarkable achievement, and one that a student of Irish history can but marvel at. Of course, things had gone well for the Irish; they held the balance of power in the new Parliament, and there was no longer any need to resort to violence for political ends.

In those days there wasn't an Irish Nationalist that did not believe that Home Rule was "in the basket", and put "in the basket" by virtue of those constitutional methods which Parnell had converted the country to after the fall of Fenianism, and which Gladstone had done so much to popularise by his obvious sincerity on its behalf. The wishy-washyness and half-heartedness of the Liberal Leaders on Home Rule were not at all apparent to Irish Nationalists at that time. On the contrary, the Irish were convinced that Liberalism was impregnated by the same good faith and resolution of Gladstone, that his aura had, by no means, faded away, and that presently they would behold a full-blooded Home Rule Bill, firmly set in the Parliamentary stocks, and, in due course, recorded

on the Statute Book. The metamorphosis, in so singularly brief a period, of a people proverbailly Anglophobian and deeply distrustful, with good reason, of the promises of English politicians, into a people wholly friendly to, and having implicit, if pathetic, confidence in the "Great Liberal Party" - to use the term on every believer's lips then - was nothing less than a miracle.

And, still more remarkable was the corollary to this miracle of Gladstone's - for he was its chief architect- the complete turning away from physical force as a means of securing the national objective. Parents, elders, politicians and, particularly, the Church, with the horrors of the abortive rebellions and outrages of the not so remote past engraved on their memories, and a bright faith for the future in their hearts, combined to eradicate the physical force tradition from the mind and soul of the country, as they had, in an earlier generation, combined (sub-consciously, of course) to eradicate the language. To that end they never wearied of counselling the young and ardent against the "criminal folly" and needlessness of repeating '98, '03, '48 and '67, in supine efforts to free Ireland by the sword. That the pen, and more particularly, the tongue, especially when

operating on the battle field of "the floor of the House of Commons" were mightier weapons than the sword, was the favourite test of those countless admonitions.

And, unquestionably, that ceaseless anti-physical force propaganda, in season and out of season, certainly had its effect, and its deep effect, on the youth of my generation. We turned away from force as a practicable or defensible weapon for achieving self-government, as we would, or should, turn away from sin itself. Yes, indeed; it was nearly on a par with that. Physical force, as a policy in Nationalist Ireland was, as we thought, dead as the Dodo, and - I was about to write - buried, long before the critical years that followed 1910. Little did we then realise that it was far from dead; that it was a giantess but refreshing herself with deep sleep before her violent resurrection in 1911-14, and before her bloody efflorescence in 1916-22. And still less could we foresee that, in that efflorescence, our generation, the very generation that had eschewed the mad goddess, would be her sacrificial priests, offering victims of blood on her altars, in many cases our own blood.

In those days of a reviving and hopeful Nationalism I used to go, occasionally, to lectures on Irish history and politics given usually under the auspices of the U.I.L., at one or other of its branches or halls (though I was never a member of that League). Though the U.I.L. was a body strictly pledged and bound to constitutional methods, a surprising number of its lectures dealt with our warlike past, and quite the most popular subject of all was on the Rising of '98, and on the personalities of the famous rebels that took part therein. We had eschewed our physical force past, but we still liked to hear about it, as the reformed sinner is tempted so strongly to recall the trespasses of his past life. How those eloquent "demosthenes" of the National Party used to put our young blood on fire with vivid descriptions of the battles of that great insurrection - Vinegar Hill, Wexford, Enniscorthy, Ballynahinch, Randalstown! Then, seeing that they had lit us up and made our young hearts thump, they became somewhat guilty of conscience and, in their concluding remarks, set out to "bromide" us, ending on a sober and apologetic note on the sword, excusing its use in the past because there was then no alternative, nothing comparable to the

sublime but deadly constitutional weapons of their day, the Pen and the Tongue, that had got us so far on our way without the firing of a shot, or the shedding of a drop of human blood.

With the triumphal advance of Liberalism with "Home Rule" writ large on its banner, a real and a most curious "Union of Hearts" began to manifest itself between British Nonconformist Liberalism and Irish Catholic Nationalism. That two such disparate and largely contrasting interests should become such close and friendly allies was, certainly, something of a phenomenon, but it was nonetheless real for all that. An English, or Scotch, Welsh or Irish (Protestant) Liberal was, in those days, the Nationalist Irishman's brother in a way that the Orangeman or, for that matter, the Catholic English Unionist certainly was not. Nationalist Ireland was convinced that "Democracy" was, at last, firmly entrenched and well "in the saddle" across the Irish Sea, and that the recently emancipated proletariat in the four countries of the British Isles were united by a close fraternal bond, and ready to advance as allies, side by side, to win their respective victories that no Tory or Ascendancy chicanery could,

thenceforward, deprive them of.

Our chosen leaders never wearied of impressing upon us that there was a strong New England in being and in power, an England that we could absolutely trust and back, a Liberal England solidly erected on the lasting foundation of the great Gladstone's own principles, and enveloped in the aura of his prestige that, we could take it, would be as incapable of letting Ireland down as Gladstone himself would have been. The Government and the "Great Liberal Party" were "Gladstone's Men", that should be enough for us. And it was!

Alas, the no far distant future was soon cruelly to reveal how misplaced was that pathetic new faith in the integrity of English Liberalism, and how far from being "Gladstone's Men" Asquith and his colleagues were.

X11. -

We must now return to the arena of Westminster and follow

the fatal events that were then being enacted on that famous "Floor".

All parties - Liberals, Unionists, Labour and Irish - were exceedingly surprised at the wholly unexpected result of that first General Election of 1910. And all parties, save the Irish, who were, naturally, highly elated, and the Labour, who had, for the first time, established itself as a distinct unit in the Parliamentary machine, were deeply disappointed at the result. The consummation they wished least and feared most had come to pass. There could only be a government of the British Isles by and with the consent of the Irish Parliamentary Party; and, well they knew the price they would have to pay for that consent. Asquith and some of his colleagues were believed to have a deep aversion to take office at the head of a government dependent on the will of the Irish Nationalists, and there were rumours that he contemplated resignation. However, if he had any feelings of that kind, he successfully surmounted them and resumed office again as Prime Minister of a Liberal Government.

Thus, the first "battle" in the so-called constitutional struggle ended in a decisive Liberal victory. Comparing small events to great, to, let us say, the American Civil War, it was the "Bull Run" of the struggle for Tory supremacy, as Bull Run

was the first fight in the struggle for white supremacy, though with a diametrically contrary result. It was obvious to all, save those who would not see, that the Liberal victory at the polls had ensured the life of the Budget in its initial form. But the Tories declined to see, and continued to oppose it, though it was strange that they could not have known how futile and foolish that course was, and incredible that they failed to have anticipated its reactions, fatal as they were to be to Tory supremacy. But, like the Bourbons, as we shall see, they had learnt nothing from their original folly, in elevating that not very harmful and far from revolutionary measure to the height and importance of a major constitutional issue.

The next "casus belli" was the Parliament Bill, designed to break the absolute veto of the House of Lords. This particular issue, unlike the Budget issue, lay wholly beyond Tory choice and initiative. It arose from and was rendered inevitable by the ill-judged action of the Lords in electing to defeat the Budget, and a string of other quite legitimate Liberal measures, during the previous four years. It is highly probable that had the Budget not been thrown out by the Lords there would have been no Parliament Act, or any other attempt to interfere with the veto in any way, at least for some years to come. Looking back on that period, and having regard to the personalities involved in

those contentions, it is exceedingly dubious whether anything in the nature of a Parliament Act would ever have been called into existence for the sole purpose of clearing the way for the passage of a mere Irish Home Rule Bill through Parliament. If something of the kind was required of such a measure, some way of side-tracking it by agreement between the big English parties would, probably, have been worked out, and resorted to. And, anyhow, if the imbecile opposition of the Tories to the Budget had not occurred there could have been no Parliament Act, for there would have been no need for it. In such circumstances, the Home Rule Bill, 1912, would certainly have been thrown out by the Lords and Asquith would unquestionably have had no constitutional alternative open to him but to appeal to the country with, judging from the way the latter general and by-elections went, the almost certain result of his defeat. A Tory Government would succeed him, and "Home Rule" would once more go into the moth balls without there having been a gun landed in Ireland.

LIFE IN DUBLIN, 1910.

Before I deal with that critical year, 1910, and its second general election, I must say something about my own doings, and about the Dublin of the period, whither I went as a student. My father, being a solicitor, it was decreed that

I should read for the Bar, the idea being that my younger brother would, in due course, become a solicitor and enter my father's office. Actually, when his time came to choose a profession, my brother opted for medicine.

It so happened that, some time about the year 1903, I think, my father's business increased so much that he was obliged to take in a partner. The old M.P.'s son, George Murnaghan, had been articled to my father, and when he was admitted a solicitor, my father made him his partner and so the firm of Shields and Murnaghan, Solicitors, was established. This partnership lasted till the death of my father, a period of 40 years, and was a very happy and harmonious one. The firm is carried on today by George's son, Gerald Murnaghan.

Hence it was that, early in October 1910, I went to Dublin and commenced lectures in Trinity and King's Inns, with the object of becoming a barrister as soon as possible; for my father was then very delicate and his whole anxiety was to get his sons settled before anything happened to him. Actually, he need not have been so anxious, as he did not quit this world until his 91st year.

This first term as a student was a memorable one for me. It was my first taste of the joys of virtually unrestricted freedom. I had been brought up strictly, and my long spell of

ten years in English schools, with not more than two months in each year spent at home, made me appreciate all the more that new free world, with few restraints and a pleasing feeling of personal independence, into which I now entered.

My train from the north got into Amiens St. terminus a little after midday and, as I had a number of rather bulky and old-fashioned leather cases containing my modest student's chattels-personal, and as Dublin was completely unknown to me, I hailed a side-car (no taxis then) and, having had my luggage duly parked thereon, bade the jarvey drive me to an address in Harcourt St. Dublin jarvies and their cars and, much more so, their cabs, were proverbial - one of the sights of Dublin - and in complete harmony with the city's then staple adjectives - "Dear" and "Dirty". It would be quite impossible for anyone who knew not that period to imagine what they were like; or, for that matter, what the metropolis herself was like. As for the city, let it suffice here to say that it fully justified its epithet "Dear, Dirty Dublin". As one who saw and lived for more than ten years in that pre-Truce Dublin, I find it difficult to discern any close r elationship between the beautiful, clean, spick-and-span Dublin of today with the tawdry, slatternly, smelly, filthy old Dublin of yesterday. But yes: the two Dublins had one thing in common. Dirty and dilapidated as she then was,

the Dublin of yesterday, as the Dublin of today, retained her air of dignity and tradition that never fails to impress those who see her for the first time. She was down at heel and tattered, after more than a century of dispossession, but, behind her rags, she still bore herself in queenly manner; she was still the chatelaine, the grande dame - the thousand-year-old metropolis.

In "Dearness" in its unsentimental meaning, and in dirtyness it would be difficult to beat the hack cars and cabs and their drivers. One of the duties of the city's special police force, the D.M.P., was to see that such vehicles were kept in tolerably clean and proper condition; but, judging from their general appearance at that time, as I remember them, that duty was not taken seriously.

My side-car, or "hack", as such a conveyance was usually termed, maintained faithfully the well-earned reputation. It was dirty and tattered. The horse was a miserable creature with a hollow back and wretched harness, and, today, would not be tolerated in harness anywhere in the country. The jarvey was the personification of "broken-downness" - to coin a suitable term; unshaven, with a heavy, drooping moustache that entirely concealed his mouth and made his words sound as though they came from under a blanket. A dilapidated old bowler ("Jerry") hat, green with

age, was pulled down on his head over his ears; and an overcoat, originally black, with a worn velvet collar, also transformed by age into the national colour. His heavy meat-red jowls, and the unmistakable odour that carried to you with his words, indicated clearly that he was no "bigot" where "refreshments" were concerned. Multiply him three or four hundred times and you have, with few exceptions, the typical jarvey of "Dublin's Fair City" at that time.

His watery but shrewd eye, having sized me up as a greenhorn and I, having made his task easier by asking banal and innocent questions about the buildings we passed on our way, he presently queried: "'Tis your first time in the city, sir?". Then: "'Tis a long piece from Amiens St. to Harcourt St., sir. 'Tis away across the city, at the other end entirely". For the rest of the way he regaled me with sad tales about the cost of living and the high price of oats and hay for his horse and for repairs for the necessary wear and tear of his chariot. Indeed, things were so bad that he seriously considered giving up his philanthropic vocation on behalf of the public. After what seemed to me an interminable time, he pulled up at a house in Harcourt St. When my luggage was taken off the hack I tendered him 2/6d. The look of astonishment that came into the good man's fzce would have had to be seen to be believed. With a perplexed smile and a frown,

as though not knowing whether to laugh or be angry, he held the half-crown out in the palm of his hand, asking me: "What's the manin' of this?" Being well-primed at home by my father on the grasping and avaricious character of Dublin's Jehus, I reminded him that his legal fare was but sixpence and I had given him five times that amount. Then his face brightened, and he informed me in patient explanatory tones that I was quite correct as regards the city proper, but we had, en route, to cross through portion of the territory of the independent township of Pembroke, and that circumstance immediately negatived the 6d restriction within the city boundaries. I, of course, was bewildered and got away finally with giving him an additional 1/6d. which he accepted with the air of one who was making a great sacrifice to my innocence.

It was a considerable time afterwards that I discovered what a "whopper" he told me, for, of course, one does not pass through any part of Pembroke going from Amiens St. to Harcourt St.

Well, I have only dwelt on this jarvey and his hack because he was such a typical feature of that now dead "Dear Dirty Dublin". Those jarvies were certainly an extraordinary community to be found in any capital city. And not only were they tawdry and avaricious beyond words; they were also extremely unprogressive - "conservative" if you like. Their union, or association, was

strong enough to prevent the motor taxi appearing on Dublin streets long after it had superseded the horse-drawn vehicle in nearly every other big European city. We had to wait for the first Cosgrave Government and the cleaning-up rule of the City Commissioners for that to happen. The jarvies had a powerful "democratic" organisation called the "Anti-Taxi Association". One of the privileges of this enlightened body was to precede the Irish Leader's carriage riding, 300 of them, on their respective "chargers", and each holding up his pennant, a short staff crowned with a card bearing the slogan: "Anti-Taxi Association - Dublin wants no Taxis".

The first students I fell in with in Dublin were Trinity students. I was not long attending lectures before I contacted a number of fellows with whom I was destined to be very friendly. Curiously enough, they were mostly, like myself, Northerners, though I had never met them before coming to Dublin. One was the late Fred Dempsey, son of Sir Alex Dempsey, the prominent Catholic doctor of Belfast. Others were Jack Mitchell of Belfast and Leslie Alderdice of Newry. They were law students, the two latter for the solicitors profession, but Dempsey, like myself, for the Bar. Dempsey lived in Trinity, high up in No.2. He was Nationalist in politics, and, though his father, the distinguished doctor, was a steadfast supporter of the official

Irish Parliamentary Party, Fred held independent views, and, like myself, was highly critical of that Party. Mitchell was a g good, congenital, true-blue Unionist, as was Alderdice; but neither was very intense, being Unionists in much the same way as the former was a Protestant, the latter a Presbyterian. Neither was, in any sense, very political and did not show any strong feeling for, or interest in politics at all. Indeed, I remember Alderdice offering me, on one occasion, a front rank ticket to a big meeting of Southern Unionists in the Theatre Royal which was addressed by Bonar Law. I was not able to accept his offer, and I know he didn't bother his head going to it himself, so I suppose he gave it away to someone else.

This lack of political interest was particularly the case with Alderdice who was very romantic, with a curious, yet attractive, un-northern indifference to the display of his feelings. He was extremely musical and was quite a maestro at the piano which made him in great demand for students' "hooleys" and "skites". It goes without saying that he took a keen interest in the fair sex whom he tended to idealise. Mitchell, too, was, shall I say, as strongly drawn to the opposite sex, but, unlike Alderdice, he was not too "choosey" regarding them, and certainly, he could never have been accused of idealising them. Through those first friends - all, now, I fear, dead -

I made several other contacts among the students with some of whom I became very friendly. There were, for example, Simon the New Zealander, Mannix and Power, two medicos from Cork and Kerry respectively, Catholics, and two Jews, Michael Noyk and Eddie Lipman. The latter was to become one of my closest and (save for one other) my oldest personal friend. He is, thank God, still alive and in the full of his health. Noyk and Lipman were the first Jews I ever met in my life. I knew little about that race and, what little I knew was, in many respects, inaccurate. Indeed, I had a vague kind of an idea that they had passed away from human society as a distinct race or community centuries ago, sometime after the Crucifixion, leaving little trace behind them, and it was certainly a surprise to me that they still existed, and existed in considerable numbers. Brought up as I had been, in an environment where the pull in the community was a religious and not a racial one, and in an environment where not one in a thousand had seen, much less spoken to, a Jew. I was wholly free from anti-Semitic prejudice Of course, I often heard as a child from nurses and others all about how the cruel Jews crucified Our Lord on the Cross. It was only long after I had left my childhood behind me that I learnt that the Crucifixion was an entirely Roman and not Jewish form of execution and was carried out by Roman soldiers, or,

possibly, Phoenicians in the Roman army under Pontius Pilate. Apart from that, I also knew Our Lord to be a Jew, likewise all the Apostles and the first Popes, and this knowledge seemed to neutralise, or soften to some extent the first averment; or, at any rate, to prevent a sweeping condemnation of an entire race. However, be all that as it may, I found them singularly human, very goodhearted and highly intelligent.

A little knot of friends collected around us and Fred Dempsey's room at No. 2 in the College provided a convenient focus for our gatherings together. Thither, when we had nothing better to do, or, to speak more candidly, to avoid doing something better, e.g., our lawful studies, we would resort. There were nearly always some members of the group there; if not, we waited and it was not long till one or other of our comrades made his appearance, as often as not accompanied by a new friend or two, not necessarily students.

Great, indeed, and mighty (so we thought, at all events) were the discussions that would break out at these gatherings on every conceivable topic under the sun - (to give them their general order of priority, or rather, of interest), sex, sport, religion, literature, medicine (gynaecological and forensic mainly), law, history, politics. Yes, I have truthfully had to put politics last. The students, neither Protestant nor

Catholic, Unionist nor seemed to take any particular interest in politics - Irish, imperial or world. Indeed, they seemed to avoid, to fight shy of the subject. Perhaps that was due to the fact that the company was mixed politically, and the agitator, Carson, was, at the time, deliberately devoting his considerable though negative talents to the ignoble and dangerous task of inflaming political opinion and putting the opposing sections, particularly in the North, at each other's throats for the purpose of defeating Home Rule, and thereby bringing down the Liberal Government. Mere students that we were, and not very responsible at that, perhaps the times, with Carson's "hotting-up" campaign going on in the outside world, gave us a restraint in approaching that vexed subject that was lacking in many of our elders, But, whether that was the reason or not, there was, amongst students in that particular year of 1910, a malaise - a fed-upedness - on politics that made the subject almost distasteful to them. Some of this, in the case of Nationalist students, was, unquestionably, caused by the aftermath of the Parnell tragedy that sickened politics for two generations. Another reason for it was that there was no place for the young man, particularly for the educated or enterprising young man, in the political organisations of that

time. The U.I.L. and the A.O.H. smothered the country in a strong network of branches and lodges under the powerful and autocratic control of elderly men in Dublin who would brook no criticism whatsoever of their methods or proceedings. The good supporter of the party at that time was expected to be one thing and one thing only - a good "Yes" man to Dublin Headquarters. Hence, there was no scope or outlet for the development or display of individuality or personality in any respect, and so, youth held aloof from the vast machine of official Nationalism.

I have been present very often at all-night discussions in Fred Dempsey's rooms, though I was never a resident of the College. The College rules were that no female should be on the premises later than 6 p.m. and that no living-in freshman should be outside the premises, without special leave, after 10 p.m. Any other male, student or not, could remain on in a student friend's room till any time he liked in the morning; there were always "bulldogs" on the door to let him out.

Many's the all-night discussion in Dempsey's rooms was I at. Men from other rooms and from outside kept dropping in during the night, adding their quota to the eternal discussion on all manner of subjects treated with the fullest freedom - for we were all but recently liberated from more or less strict

Victorian homes I must say that those unarranged and largely impromptu sessions, composed of barely post-adolescents, in which every subject under the sun was touched on, until the sun reappeared in the sky above the Campanile, had a really extraordinarily wide educational value. Youth was teaching youth unconsciously, each contributing his own little quota of learning and experience to the general consortium, and each receiving back a much larger amalgam of both. Those assemblies frequently lasted the entire night, and were refreshed and restimulated, as the hours passed, by new men pushing open the door and joining in. Dempsey's was not, of course, the only place where those sessions were held; several others were going on in other parts of the establishment at the same time. Trinity did not, it is true, permit her junior students to go out after 10 p.m., but they were seemingly free to do what they liked in their own rooms and houses - to work, to talk or to sleep all night. These sessions of immured students were clearly a very valuable, albeit unprescribed part of the institution's curriculum, and, from my experience of it, I have often thought that universities without a living-in system miss a great deal of the corporate benefits that a residential, collegium system has to give. Hostels in non-residential

universities may supply something akin to it, but I can't say; certainly, "digs" and lodgings in great cities do not.

I have said that, in general, politics, particularly Irish politics, were hardly touched on amongst students in Trinity, a phenomenon due, in my opinion, to the mixed character of Trinity studentry and to the disparate, intense and extremely centrifugal background of the two great sections of the Irish population to one or other of which the students belonged. This was true for most, but not all of the year. And it certainly did not apply to the fellows and professors, a goodly number of whom were strong politicians, mostly Unionists, though there were a few Liberals among them, and at least one man with definite pro-Irish convictions who was not afraid to avow them. The latter was my friend and fellow-countyman, Professor Joseph Johnston, now a Senior Fellow of the College, still amongst us, and, I am glad to say, very much alive indeed. Joe Johnston hails from the Dungannon district in Co. Tyrone, where his folk, like my own forbears in a nearby area, were strong farmers. He had a brilliant academic career, taking all before him, first in the Royal School, Dungannon, and afterwards in T.C.D. In the latter he sat for the Fellowship examination, at that time the most difficult test in the College, and passed it with record marks and at a record age; he was just twenty-one. In Ulster

he was, naturally enough, claimed for what he undoubtedly was, a brilliant young Ulsterman from whom great things were expected, not least in the Unionist cause. But Joe, to the no small surprise and disappointment of his Unionist admirers, turned out to have convictions in the other direction, and to be strongly opposed to the doctrine of violence and illegality that was then being preached widespread in the north. His first "opus" was an extremely able and cogently reasoned criticism of the Carsonic campaign which was published in pamphlet form and created quite a stir. It was quite unique in being a political treatise, wholly free from polemics and bias of any kind, the ticklish theme being treated on a highly objective and logical plane that deeply impressed its readers. This courageous and altruistic action brought the "boy" Fellow little or no material gain; indeed, the contrary was the case. Many of the Protestant schools in Ulster, on which he had the right to rely for a supply of students, in his capacity as tutor, ignored him, and, I think, that he and his family must have had a pretty lean time during those years. Joe has always placed unhesitatingly at his country's disposal, whenever called upon, his fine ability and exceptional knowledge and experience. At the time of the Boundary Commission, his work on the economic side was outstanding, and his evidence before that Commission devastating.

I know that Judge Feetham, the chairman, was greatly struck and not a little embarrassed by its clarity and force. Why it was not accepted by the Commission is a story for another day.. I am glad to place here on record, for the eyes that may see this statement in future, the many valuable and unrewarded services to his country by this patriotic Irishman.

Trinity was, of course, a post-Reformation foundation. She was established as a centre of Protestantism, and became, in succession, a shrine of Hanoverian Whigism, and, in later times, a strong upholder of the Union, always returning, since 1801, two Unionist M.P.s. In 1910 her parliamentary representatives were Sir Edward Carson and James H. Campbell, later Lord Glenavy. Now, though she was unquestionably tolerant and fair in her treatment of her Catholic students, even in times of strong stress and passions, her fundamental colour escaped and broke out occasionally, and, invariably, on one particular day in the year. Curiously enough, the day chosen for this annual ebullition was, of all days, no other than the National Festival, 17th March.

The outburst was a piece of organised hooliganism, unworthy of a venerable seat of learning, and it was in double bad taste that the day selected for it was St. Patrick's Day. That day was traditionally celebrated by the Lord Mayor's procession through the streets of Dublin. This was a colourful affair,

led by the Mayoral State carriage, drawn by a fine pair of horses carrying his Lordship, resplendent in magnificent scarlet and gold robes, with the heavy chain of office round his shoulders, with his lady, his chaplain and the city mace-bearer. Following him, in other carriages, came the Aldermen and Councillors of the city attired in slightly less resplendent scarlet robes, and, behind them, numerous bands leading the various city guilds, national and other associations.

It was a completely harmless pageant that no one could take exception to; but, for some extraordinary reason that I could never fathom, its passage past the main gate of Trinity on its way to O'Connell St. was always a signal for a violent attack on it by the Trinity students who had concentrated there in force for that purpose. And those attacks were far from being mild token affairs. Missiles of various kinds, including rotten eggs, were rained at the procession and, in particular, at the Mayoral carriage, and often found their mark.

The designed and unprovoked character of the attack inflamed the populace, who made violent assaults on the college, breaking its windows and charging the gates. It ended in a desperate melee between students and citizens, when, eventually, the gates would be closed and the students withdrawn within its walls. It caused, of course, a lot of quite unnecessary bad blood betwee

the city and the university. I have seen the enraged mob, on one occasion, headed by the famous Jim Larkin, burst through the iron gates, knocking students over wholesale, and charge against the great oaken door confining the entrance arch until it vibrated, from which they had to be driven by reinforcements of the D.M.P. I have never understood why the authorities of the College did not take initial action to stop the disgraceful performance by, say, firmly prohibiting the students from creating what was nothing less than a riot in the centre of the capital on the National Day, under pain of rustification. But they never did: on the contrary, they seemed to tolerate, not to say, encourage the brawl. Its annual occurrence, so provocatively offensive to national sentiment, did much to make Trinity unpopular with the general populace, despite the number of leaders she gave to the nation.

In the afternoons I attended lectures at the King's Inns. There I met men from U.C.D. and quite a number of men who were well past students' years, but who were taking the Barrister degree. The King's Inns were much more politically inclined or, perhaps given to more open expression of politics than were the fellows in Trinity. Apart from lectures, each student had to keep Commons to get credit for his course; that is, he had to eat at least four dinners in each of the four law terms. Those

dinners, composed as they were of men of different religions, politics and ages, were pleasant affairs; and, after the presiding Benchers for the night had taken their seats at their table on the dais, and grace had been said, the talks and discussions that ensued were lively, often interesting and often warm. Politics were certainly not tabu; on the contrary, they were much in evidence. The official party element, and, particularly, the Hibernian element, were strongly represented. Many an argument Dempsey and I had with the Party element, and, occasionally, with the Unionist stalwarts. It was at those dinners that I met another man who was to be a lifelong friend of mine - the late Edward M. Stephens. Dempsey was due, when he got his degree, for the north-east circuit, and I for the north-west. There happened, at that time, to be quite a number of north-eastern men eating Commons; some of these were Nationalists of a very political type, strong backers of the official Party and the Hibernian Order. These disapproved very much of Dempsey's anti-Party sentiments, seeing that he was the son of Sir Alexander Dempsey, and the nephew of Belfast Councillor Dan Dempsey, both great pillars of support of Joe Devlin, the Hibernian president, and Belfast nationalism. They often cautioned Dempsey to mind himself if he wanted briefs on his circuit. They never bothered doing so to me; no doubt, they looked upon me as a bad job, seeing that I came from a

notoriously schismatical nationalist, or rather, anti-official Party stable.

Outside their lecture time, students employed their leisure in a variety of desultory ways. If they were athletically inclined (which I wasn't) they could join football, hockey, tennis or swimming clubs of which there were many available, not only attached to the s chools and colleges, but outside, and to which students were always welcomed. Some few were beginning to play golf, like Lionel O. Munn, who was a member, for a short time, of the North West Bar, but this game, moderate indeed as it was then compared with today, was beyond the reach of most students. A social side for s tudents, certainly a mixed social side, hardly existed at all. Women were beginning to come to the universities and the professions in growing numbers. Trinity barely tolerated them, although she was the first university in the British Isles to admit them to her degrees, keeping them strictly apart in their Elizabethan Society and ousting them all outside the sacred gates by 6 p.m.

The National University, in this regard, was, curiously enough, much more liberal, the girl- and boy-students mixed freely in U.C.D. on equal terms. But girls in both universities were not then very numerous and most of them were to be found in the medical or arts schools. Men students generally had to

resort to their own wits in providing themselves with female society, and they sought this everywhere - on the highways and byways, in shops and cafes and - above all and before all - from the footlights. The latter were, far and away, the most prized, but few men could rise to the dizzy monetary level of running one of those fascinating but extremely knowing ladies of the world. There was more scope at Pantomime time in the winter when the theatres were filled with teams of beauteous chorus girls who might permit themselves to be escorted back to their digs in Queen's Square, Brunswick St., the traditional quarters of the general run of theatricals in the Dublin of that day; and, indeed, were not remiss at being "paid attention to" during their sojourn in the Capital - provided always that their student swains were not paupers (which the large majority of them were).

In those days the theatres and music halls filled the place that the cinemas have now largely taken. There were, of course, no radio or television, and no popular and widespread motoring. Hence, students were more or less tied to the city during their college days.

There were three music halls, or variety theatres that catered for or helped to cater for the amusement of the masses - The Royal, The Empire (now the Olympia) and the Tivoli. The

last two were cheaper, and the more popular with the students. The average student endeavoured to "do" at least one music hall a week. If in funds, there were more visits, for these halls were extremely popular. There were a host of favourites appearing from time to time in Dublin variety - Happy Fanny Fields, May Moore Duprez and, occasionally, the famous but naughty Marie Lloyd. On the male side I remember Eugene Stratton the "White Nigger" with his pleasant coon lyrics, such as "The Lily of Laguna"; Little Tich, Arthur Prince, the ventriloquist, Dublin's own Horace Wheatley, and, occasionally, the great Harry Lauder. The Gaiety catered for the legitimate drama which we students didn't bother much about, and for light musical comedy and grand opera. We were very fond of the musical comedies of which there would be a fresh one every year. I remember "The Belle of New York", "The Merry Widow", "Miss Hook of Holland", "The Student Prince", "The Chocolate Soldier", "Light Blues". Those were the days when the beauteous musical comedy "queens" reigned in the hearts of many youths. The stationery and tobacco shop windows were filled with postcards and cigarette packets with cards bearing the images of those charmers - Ellen Terry, Mary Anderson, Lily Langtry, Ellaline Terriss, Maria Van Brugh, Gladys Cooper, Dorothy Ward and a whole troop of others that I cannot now recall. The fellows invested

freely in those postcards, framed them and hung them up on the walls of their digs. I think mine was a much more sentimental, not to say, romantic, generation than the present one.

There was also the Queen's Theatre in Brunswick St. (now Pearse St.). Despite the name, this was the home of turgid nationalist melodrama where "England's cruel red" was execrated and Ireland's stainless green hoisted on high.

The Abbey Theatre was going through its birth pains, but, mainly because it had no bar licence, was not frequented much by students.

Before passing from the theatrical scene, I must refer to one other aspect of it, and that a rather important one. That was opera, the love of which was traditional in Dublin for generations. In those days, no less than three opera companies visited the city in the year, each giving a season in the Gaiety Theatre. On those occasions the theatre would be packed out from top to bottom for the entire term of the company's visit. Indeed, an extraordinary feature of those visits was that the "gods", which was never more than partially filled for ordinary drama, were filled to overflowing for opera by a highly appreciative and enthusiastic audience of city artisans, workers and musically inclined students. Custom permitted, during the

intervals, a man or woman in the "gods" to sing one or other of the solos from the particular opera being produced, and I was often astonished how excellently those solos were rendered.

Those students whose homes were in Dublin, or who had friends or connections in Dublin, fared much better; and, indeed, could knock out a very pleasant time, for those were the days of elaborate, frequent and lavish entertaining in people's homes. In this respect I was luckier than many of my colleagues, for I had doctor-uncles practising in Dun Laoire (then Kingstown), and Bray - brothers of my mother. And I also had contacts with barrister and solicitor families through my father. I was at many a private dance and dinner in the houses of such people. And, looking back on them now, I appreciate more than I then did what a godsend they were to us impecunious students. We thought nothing of walking to the houses where those dances were held and walking back to our digs in the early hours of the morning, unless, on the very rare occasions when we were privileged to escort to her home a beauteous damsel; the privilege necessitating the hire of a cab - a definite pecuniary embarrassment!

As an example regarding myself; there were a number of families in the Rathgar area that were very kind to me, who used to give frequent dances in the year. One was the Hanrahans who lived in Highfield Road. Mr. Hanrahan was a solicitor, Clerk of

the Crown and Peace for the Co. Fermanagh, although he was a Corkman and a brother-in-law of Mr. Riordan, Crown Solicitor for the County Tyrone, to whom my father had been apprenticed. Mrs. Hanrahan was an exceedingly charming lady and strikingly good-looking. They had a family of one boy, Jack (also a solicitor) and two or three bright and clever girls - one was a Mod B.A. of T.C.D., a rare thing then - with much of their mother's charm and good looks. The Hanrahans often gave dances a and I thought nothing of going there, dancing all night and walking back "in the clear air of the morning" to my humble digs in Cabra Park, Phibsborough. That, of course, was the usual thing for students on limited allowances. And we (certainly myself) had generally only ourselves to look after, being seldom privileged or perplexed by having to escort to her home a fair companion. Indeed, in this connection, our chief bother (an acute and recurring, but, fortunately for our peace of mind, not a chronic bother) was when our wretched hearts weakened towards a fair one, we could do nothing worth-while on our small students' allowances to pursue any advantage that her dazzling eyes told we had, and, willy-nilly, had to deny ourselves. These lavish affairs in the homes of the well-to-do were the high-water mark of the student's (certainly my) social outlets. They were convivial and pleasant and the full and plenty

catering end certainly appealed to the young "digs" sojourner, accustomed as he was to hard commons.

But there was often a certain stiffness and formality about those home dances that took something from the pleasure for the average unsophisticated and bashful student. On such occasions, whites, full tails and gloves for men and, of course, programmes for all, were de rigeur. That element of embarrassment and stiffness was absent from a kindred type of relaxation which was much more informal and very popular with students. That was the dances or "do's" - as they were called - held at such rendezvous as Muldoon's at Tallaght, and certain small halls in Harcourt St., Harcourt Road and elsewhere in the city and suburbs. Those "do's" were eminently respectable and were financed by subscriptions well within the students' slender means, payable at the door.

Muldoon's, a farmhouse on the banks of the Dodder, was very popular in the summertime and easily accessible for the unvehicled from the city via the Blessington steam tram. For those affairs, formalities in dress and programmes were discarded. By no means all that frequented them were students; indeed, the majority of young men at them were already launched in life, one way or another, and in command of considerably more resources than the student, which circumstance had its effect in their

greater attraction for the fickle sex. The refreshments provided were in the nature of high teas, the ladies usually providing the more tasty ingredients attached thereto, the products of their own fair hands. In so doing, there was, doubtless, an element of self-interest, because tea and cakes were the only "extras" in the luxury line then open to young ladies with reputations to guard, when on their own and in close contact with young men. The convention of the time, seemingly, decreed that, to be steered round the dancing floor and sat-out with later by such young men, was stimulus and compensation enough for the young woman of that day.

As I have said, for girls to smoke, or quaff a glass of any alcoholic liquor, was fatal. True, there were a few ladies who never failed to turn up, and who smoked openly and brazenly, and, tell it not in Gath! who had actually been seen s wallowing more than one glass of intoxicant in the company of gentlemen and who were paid great attention to by the Lothario and Don Juan element amongst the men; but such were labelled as "fast" and rather cold-shouldered by most of the women who, I rather think, were not a little envious of them.

The men fared much better at these "do's". They had the consolation of tobacco and alcohol, the latter nearly always in the form of bottles of Guinness which, at 1s.9d. a dozen, did

not break anyone. In this respect the "do's" differed from the more formal home-dances, as I shall call them. At the latter, under the roofs of established and worthy citizens, champagne flowed plentifully in those days and was partaken of, liberally enough, by the fair ones; but the line for them was everywhere drawn at tobacco.

During my student career I was in many "diggings" in Dublin My allowance, as I have said, was modest, for my parents had a thrifty northern outlook on money and did not believe in indulging their children. My mother, especially, held - and I now think with much truth - that character has to be created in children, and that it can only be created, in any worthwhile sense, by constant exercises in self-restraint and self-denial, though how far she succeeded in this wise with regard to myself is a dubious matter. However, be that as it may, I had to make-do as well as I could on my allowance which, modest as it was, was better than that of a good number of my comrades. I discovered after some experience that "digs" in the south side of the city were actually and relatively much higher than those on the north side. I had pals in "digs" up in Cabra Park, Phibsboro', who, I found, were excellently boarded and lodged for £1.1.0. a week. Accordingly, I hied me to that remote

region on the margin of the Fingal fields where, during the long summer nights, the craking of the corncrakes soothed one's sleep. Now, alas, the corncrakes have gone and a tidal wave of bricks and mortar have swamped their nesting meadows.

After some searching, I found a suitable digs in Cabra Park, kept by a Mrs. Casey, whose husband was employed in Mountjoy Brewery. Both Mr. and Mrs. Casey were amongst the hardest-working people I have ever come across and richly deserved every shilling they made. They had a growing young family at the time, but so well-disciplined were they that one never heard them. Mr. Casey was an accomplished musician. He played the 'cello, and it was an inspiration for us idling students to see the way that little man set off after his tea, after a hard day's work in the Brewery, to play in one of the theatrical orchestras, or as an occasional extra in Clarke-Barry's dance orchestra, then the "de luxe" dance band in Dublin.

On changing my residential venue from the south to the north side, I got into an entirely different segment of student life by reason of the fact that two of my fellow-diggers were National University medical students with close contacts with the big Mater Hospital nearby. The medicos were undoubtedly the students <u>par excellence</u> in those far-off days. Their formidable numbers, nearly outnumbering all the other faculties together, gave them

great importance. Then the requirements of their very special studies, by no means confined, as were the studies of other students, to the classrooms - their attachment to hospitals and their residence therein at certain stages in their long course, their close association with lady medicals and nurses, made them the envied of the men in the law, engineering, science and arts schools and, generally speaking, gave them a gratifyingly free expansive life with plenty of human interest not vouchsafed to other students.

But, if the medicals were the envied of studentdom, they certainly had a different reputation outside the colleges . Landladies dreaded them, and many would decline to board and lodge them, once they ascertained that they were medical students I well remember, when going my rounds looking for digs, being often asked by landladies at the door if I was a medical student, and, on one occasion, having to produce my legal text-books to convince the good lady.

Yes, the medicos bore a reputation then for wildness and disorder that, indeed, three generations of them had richly earned. I have neither time nor space here to give any specific instances of the extraordinary scenes and episodes in which they figured, but they were numerous in my time and comprised quite a mythology of their own back over the years, and a mythology that

had the advantage of having numbers of their great "legendary characters" - their Cuchulaiins, their Finns and Ossians - or, more correctly perhaps, their Bricrius, alive and transmuted by the gods into eminent surgeons and physicians, high-grade specialists looked up to by everyone, and clearly highly worthy of emulation.

The sprees and parties and practical jokes of the medicos were notorious; and many of them, in addition, suffered from a strange amnesia regarding their weekly bills.

On the whole, I fear that my generation of students was, generally speaking, more given to enjoying life and having a good time than to its books, and in this regard the medicals held the palm. That, perhaps, was mainly due to the "times that were in it". The world that Ireland was then part of had been, for the greater part of a century, and was a tranquil, lazy, opulent world, a vast part of which was under the British Raj; and, as far as one could see, was likely to remain so for a thousand years. Those were, indeed, for people of the student class, at all events, happy, carefree days, with a background of solidity behind them, and a promise of timeless security before them. Nobody, accordingly, felt it incumbent on him to die of overwork; and the average run of students saw to it that they lost no popularity nor earned the nefarious epithet of "swot" by bulging out their bare pass degrees with honours or

scholarships.

Again, in this respect, a goodly percentage of the medicals distinguished themselves and, in particular, they distinguished themselves by the production of a special type - the "chronic". The chronic medical enjoyed an extraordinary prestige amongst students. For them, he was enveloped in a sort of aura, and his exploits, his carousing achievements, his prowess amongst the fair sex, his contempt for professors and "swots", and his ability in failing examinations caused him to be looked up to with something akin to awe by the younger men. I knew a number of those "élite", and often envied them their nonchalance, and their great popularity.

Their popularity increased in accordance with the number of years "chronicism" they had put behind them. I knew one, or, rather, I had but a bowing acquaintance with the great man, the primate of the entire "corps chronique", with no less than 18 "chronic" years to his credit. Another had 14 such years behind him, and there were numbers with 10, 8, 6, down to the mere neophytes of the caste with but 2 or 3 years "after them". The curious thing was that, ultimately, most of those chronics qualified and made, in many cases, excellent doctors. Numbers of them, when World War I broke out, managed to get through their long-deferred finals, and joined up in the medical services of

the British army and navy, where the adventurous life was certainly agreeable to, and suitable for them, and where a remarkably high percentage of them made good, returning from the wars with their breasts lined with rows of medals.

As I have said, the generality of Dublin students were not too study-greedy "in illo tempore". A considerable percentage of them, a far greater percentage than today, did just the minimum of work to "save their bacon", and preserved their time for fun, pranks and the bars, which were their clubs, and where they could regale themselves and wax merry at the minimum of expense, a pint of stout being 2d, a bottle ditto, and a glass of whiskey 6d - the latter generally beyond the average student's pocket. Many a good night had the writer and a friend or two on what was then known as a "cart-wheel", the five shilling piece, a beautiful, large, deeply-rimmed silver coin, with St. George killing the dragon on its reverse side, now obsolete, like the golden sovereigns and the half sovereigns

I have referred to the lack of interest in politics amongst students of all colleges. That was true; though were you to ask them what politics they were, they would, with few exceptions, reply that they were Nationalist or Unionist, as the case might be, just as they would say Catholic or Protestant, if asked their religion. Unionists were always

the one brand, orthodox; but it was somewhat different with Nationalists. Most Nationalists were backers of John Redmond and the official Irish Party; but, now and again, one came across others who deviated in greater or lesser degree from the official Party line, independent Nationalists, like myself, or from Co. Cork, "All-for-Irelanders", whose prophet and leader was that picturesque figure, the r edoubtable William O'Brien. During the whole of my course as a student, I never met one who avowed himself a Sinn Feiner, or an extremist or separatist in any shape or sense. Indeed, the students that I came across all had an unconcealed contempt for the Sinn Feiner, the Separatist, and, of course, for the Republican. They regarded such as being either idealistic idiots, baying for the moon, or designing mischief-makers, paid and employed by the Castle to subvert and destroy the Home Rule movement. I remember a group of typical medical students attached to the Mater Hospital discussing a loquacious but somewhat eccentric old lady, a patient there, who was rather given to expressing subtle but biting views on English royalty, or on matters English, generally. Apart from that, she was decidedly difficult and exacting as a patient, which did not make her over-popular with the nurses and the medicos. She had had a rather tough argument with some of them, and this was being gone over by the group,

when one of them remarked gravely that "he would not be at all surprised if she was a bloody old Sinn Feiner" and the rest of the group thoroughly agreed with him about that awful possibility in her case. This was my nearest approach to Sinn Fein until after I had been called to the Bar. It goes to show what a slight hold Sinn Fein, and the Separatist movement, had at that time, but, five or six years from the Easter Week Rising, on the educated youth of the country.

True, there were a number of seats held in the Dublin Corporation by Sinn Fein and I.R.B. elements, but their names were almost unknown to the great bulk of students, who, anyhow, took no interest in Dublin ward politics, despising the Corporation as a corrupt and hopelessly inefficient body.

Apart from the Dublin of studentdom, there were, in those days, at least half a dozen different Dublins, each living its own self-contained life, and having greater or lesser contacts with the other Dublins.

There was, first of all, Castle Dublin - the official Dublin of the British Raj, headed by the Lord Lieutenant, and comprising the officers of the army of occupation, the heads of the Civil Service quartered in the Castle, and in various Government Departments, scattered throughout the city; the heads of the R.I.C. and D.M.P.; the law officers of the Crown, and the Judges

of the Court of Appeal and the High Court. These constituted a ruling caste, a separate section of society, living an Olympian and largely exclusive existence in the midst of the commonalty, meeting in exclusive clubs such as the Kildare St., the Sackville and the Hibernian United Services Club. They were, such of them as were permanent, nearly all strong Unionists of a definitely Orange tinge, many of them English, particularly in the higher ranks, with little or no real sympathy for the people or their aspirations. It is true that when the Liberal Government came into power, the political chiefs then appointed, such as the Earl (later Marquis) of Aberdeen and Augustine Birrell, his Chief Secretary, were avowedly sympathetic with Irish Nationalism in its Home Rule form; but the permanent chiefs of the Castle Civil Service, never changed on a change of government, remained "semper idem" adamantly hostile to Irish nationalism, even in its feeblest form, and avowed protagonists of the Union, which they regarded as being synonymous with loyalty.

Occupying as they did, pivotal and keystone positions in the country's machinery of government, they were a constant and effective clog on the ameliorative or sympathetic efforts of any of their political heads. And, curiously enough, the Lord Lieutenant's and particularly his wife's real sympathy for, and interest in the Irish people, made them intensely unpopular with

with "loyalists" throughout the country, many of them going out of their way to snub the official representative of the King to whom they avowed such deep loyalty, by declining to accept his invitations, and by maintaining a constant underground movement of criticism and abuse against him and his Court. So many, indeed, of these "loyalists" behaved in this manner, that Aberdeen, like the man in the gospel who invited the wedding guests, went out into the highways and byways and repaired the lapses and lacunae in the ranks of his Court by the well-to-do lawyers and doctors of the city, largely of nationalistic hue, albeit of a very weak shade. The energetic, kindly and very democratic Elspeth Aberdeen (she was a fine Scotswoman) set about, with those new "courtiers" establishing many good institutions such as her White Cross campaign against T.B., run by an organisation called the "Women's National Health Association", with branches and helpers all over the country, and with its own monthly paper "Slainte".

These Castle people, as I have said, kept much to themselves, but, looking back on it now, what a wonderful time of it they all had! Those were the days when a £1 contained 20 full-blooded shillings, each one of which would buy more than 10/- today; when there was no super-tax and very little

income tax, and when there were very many wealthy people, several with large unearned incomes, especially in the British army. Hence, there was a perpetual round of festivities to pass the time and kill ennui, for neither in the army of occupation, nor in the Civil Service of the Castle, was anyone likely to die from over-work in those genial, leisurely days. There were luncheons, garden-parties, dinners, balls galore, varied by house-parties for hunting or shooting in the winter, and fishing in the summer.

As I have just said, those Olympians were certainly not killed with work. Was it any wonder that Dublin had the reputation of a "Dream City" for them, a veritable ambrosial retreat which they were overjoyed at being posted to and which they loathed leaving. Apart from the remarkable number of wealthy people occupying such posts in the Dublin garrisons, the Curragh, Newbridge, Kildare, in the upper ranks of officialdom and the great circulation of money, another factor, and a most important one, made all that pleasant, festive, leisurely life possible, viz: the existence of that now-defunct social species, a necessity to the maintenance of the opulent life - the domestic servant. In those days they were to be had, male or female, butlers, coachmen, footmen, housemaids, parlour-maids nursemaids, cooks in abundance, and for really miserable wages

(£50 a year, all found, would be the maximum, and £18 to £20, all found, the more than average for housemaids). It was a poor house, indeed, that could not afford a few of them.

Grafton Street was then, far more than it is in our proletarian era, the fashionable street of Dublin, the shops displaying goods and wares that were on a par with Bond Street at its most opulent Edwardian days, and of a quality and luxury that are certainly not to be seen often there, or elsewhere in Ireland, or indeed in the British Isles nowadays. Dublin's "Haute Monde" "did" Grafton St. religiously two or three times every day. In the mornings and afternoons it would be crowded with men and women, attired in the fashion of the moment, sauntering leisurely and aimlessly up and down its pavements. Both sides were lined with the carriages and the autemobiles of the affluent, in charge of liveried coachmen and chauffeurs. The latter were then gradually, but very slowly, tending to replace the former, which were still very much in the ascendant numerically. True, there were not many Rolls Royces, but there were quite a number of large Daimlers and Darracqs, and a sprinkling of Argyles - then very popular makes for the people with the money. Motor cars were built with the chassis much higher off the ground than today, so that, to speak to an occupant, it was often necessary for the "not so tall" to

stand on the footboard that was then fitted to every car. That was a very favourite and much-sought perch, for the socially ambitious young ladies to display themselves in public, particularly in a fashionable area like Grafton St., whereby they proclaimed three things: firstly, that they knew motor-owning people, and opulent ones at that; secondly, that they had pretty dresses completely a la mode, and thirdly, that they had shapely legs and ankles - all very legitimately ambitious and very, very young-ladyish! This, I know, is but a trivial circumstance; my reason for inserting it and a lot of other trivia like it, is to try to recall, if possible, some of the atmosphere of that vanished era; and atmosphere is composed of countless atoms of trivia.

Frequently during the week, the Lord Lieutenant's large Rolls Royce limousine was to be seen parked outside Switzer's, or some other shop, for the convenience of Her Excellency's shopping, a large D.M.P. man on guard beside it. This big car could always be readily recognised by the large white square that stood up, vertically, on the roof just over the chauffeur's seat, and that indicated to all and sundry, and particularly to the police, that that was the vehicle of the King's representative, and all traffic and everything else must clear the way for its passage. The white square was a veritable "Faugh a ballagh", and certainly always had the desired effect.

Amongst the idle, sauntering Grafton St. crowds would always be a fair quota of students, consuming the time they should have been working, replete with pipes or cigarettes in mouth, velour hats of various hues, canes under their arms and, of course, gloves - ever on the lookout for the "glad eye" from the complementary sex. In the afternoon, great numbers of the ladies of fashion repaired, either with lady friends or men friends, to the fashionable restaurant of Mitchell's to drink tea, or, many said, something stronger than tea. Ladies in those days were not supposed to want anything so "unrefeened" for their particular sex as alcohol. A lady, young or old, seen drinking any strong drink in public, was at once the object of stringent criticism, and highly uncharitable assumptions. And, of course, were she to enter a pub, with or without an escort, in the free and nonchalant way her daughters and grand-daughters do today, her reputation was lost, and lost irrevocably.

But then, as now, ladies were human; and the urge came upon numbers of them to desire to seek a stimulant. Nature, 'tis said, will out, and again, that she abhors a vacuum; and nature was met in this regard by Mitchell's, which was known as the "lady's pub", by the ingenious method of, at the lady's wish, of course, lacing her coffee or tea with a goodly ball of brandy or whiskey. And, if the lady liked five or six, or more cups of tea or coffee, who was to say her nay, or who was to

point out the finger at her? And, even if she did come out into Grafton St. a little wobbly, there was always her cab or carriage, owned or hired, to drive her home, and a uniformed commissionaire to show her safely into it.

As the afternoons waned, the fashionable Grafton St. crowds would thin and gradually dissolve, and the carriages and limousines that, for the most part of the day, lined both sides of the street, would gradually take their departure. And, just at that point of time when the last persons and the last vehicle of fashion had vanished, and the last shop had closed, suddenly and unobtrusively out of nowhere, seemingly, another parade would enter the famous street. The "haut monde" would give way to the "demi-monde". Fugitively and furtively would this new parade trip swiftly and softly down the street, in ones and twos, and even threes, onward to the shady side of O'Connell St., under the questioning and none-too-friendly eyes of the police, leaving, hanging on the air in their wake, a curious, sugary perfume.

There were indeed many worlds in Dublin then, all leading, more or less, a kind of corporate life of their own with, of course, contacts, weak or firm, with the other worlds. Apart from the official Castle world and its many rings of satellites, and the adolescent world of the students, there was the big

professional world comprised of barristers, solicitors, surgeons, physicians, engineers and university professors. That particular world could be said to form largely the "intelligentia" of the city, though that claim could be far better established by yet another world of poets, writers, painters, dramatists, musicians, actors and actresses, with their various romantic hangers-on and admirers that was traditional in the city, and that, at the time I am writing of, formed a powerful though limited Bohemia, radiating much influence on national and metropolitan thought and politics. Though members of this "Bohemia" were patronised from time to time by the Castle world and the professional, they were very far from having any close ties with those, to them, disparate and highly conventional sections of the community. The professional world, like the Castle world, were great entertainers and dispensers of hospitality. Entertaining, and on a lavish scale and constantly - luncheons, dinners, balls, etc. - came readily and easily to them, for they were an affluent class, housed in great homes in the fashionable squares of the south side, or in the suburbs, with numerous servants and excellent cellars. The surgeons and physicians, graduates of Dublin's three medical schools, were the largest element in this world, and the most conspicuous in the field of hospitality. The life

of a prosperous Dublin medical man at that time was one long round of entertainment. How they ever managed to grapple with their work, to keep themselves up in their growing science, was a puzzle to many. But they not only appeared to do so, but to command and get very high fees. It was a sight to see the great medical men of the squares setting forth on their calls in those days.

There were few motors, of course, and sidecars or "jaunting" cars were their vehicles. And very smart, indeed, they were, beautifully built with strong, light springs and rubber tyres, with the owner's "crest" on the polished backboard and on the harness, and drawn by splendid horses. It was a sight to behold those comely machines flying through the streets of Dublin, driven by liveried coachmen, sitting on one side, and the doctor on the other, crowned with a shining "topper", the coat-tails of his morning dress streaming out behind him.

When such a vehicle entered a quiet suburban street, it was "news" indeed. On the car's entry, automatically and, as if by one movement, the discreet blinds and curtains on the windows of neighbouring and opposite houses would be cautiously drawn back and many pairs of curious eyes would fix themselves on it to ascertain, first of all, where it was going to stop. Eventually the car would pull up at a house and down would hop

the tall, handsome doctor in his topper and tails and, above all, his small black bag, and rush or run (never walk, he was far too busy for that!) to the halldoor, where he would be received like a prince.

The other professions also kept up a high standard of entertainment, but perhaps just not so lavishly as the medical. This professional world was the mainstay of Dublin's social clubs. There, lawyers and doctors met to kill a few hours of the day or night. Those clubs were ridiculously snobby and exclusive in those days, and drew the line at what they called "business" - a conscious piece of English snobbery that seemed to have established itself firmly in the Irish capital. But, in the snobbish line, the professionals were themselves paid out by the Kildare St. Club, who would not tolerate anyone so "declassé" as a doctor or a solicitor amongst their membership. Only one of the latter was ever admitted to the Kildare St. Club, and for obvious reasons, viz: the solicitor for the Inland Revenue Commissioners!

The present-day democratisation of this once aristocratic and exclusive club, the quondam Dublin rendezvous of Ireland's territorial Lords, and their blood connections, has been one of the many great miracles wrought in the past 30 years or so. This professional world, I need hardly point out, was not very

nationalistic or pro-Irish, save in a very faint-hearted "genteel" way that would not compromise their entente with the Castle people, and the Imperialists which they so much prized. They were, as a body, incorrigible climbers and place-hunters, constantly on the lookout for honours and jobs, as such classes always are in a subjugated country, playing up to those whom they imagined, often falsely, were their betters, or who had influence. Every now and again some of the doctors, and a few of the solicitors, would succeed in getting themselves knighted, or made Privy Councillors, and entitled to term themselves "The Right Honourable So and So". Even an odd Lord Mayor, or City Sheriff, of Dublin or Cork, attained to a knighthood, and, indeed, in a few isolated cases, to the dizzy level of a baronetcy. Hence it was that one of Dublin's sardonic wits dubbed the town "The City of Dreadful Knights".

Outside those worlds was the large and very opulent world of the big commercial men, nearly all retail princes, like the drapers - Switzers, Brown Thomas, Todd Burns, Pims, and the grocers - Findlaters, Williams, Leverett & Frye - owners of large emporiums (beyond Guinness and Jacobs there were few manufacturers) who could buy and sell many in the other worlds but whom the other worlds did not "recognise" because they were "engaged in trade". All very silly, and now, less or more,

a thing of the past in our democratic and republican atmosphere - buidheachais-le Dia.

There was also a political world centred on the Corporation, which was then composed of about ten Aldermen and sixty Councillors, and which governed a city not half as populous as the Dublin of today. Of course, great areas that are now within the municipal confines of Greater Dublin then were divided into independent townships. North of the city there was Howth with its own Urban Council, and southwards you ha the townships of Pembroke and Rathmines-and-Rathgar. Those adjacent townships were, of course, in reality nothing more than the greater suburbs of Dublin. They had been created by Unionist Governments in the past for the purpose, no doubt, of salving some metropolitan areas from the Nationalist avalanche which they had foreseen would inevitably engulf the city; and for many years, those townships were under Unionist control. But, at the time I am writing of, the only real Unionist stronghold left was Rathmines-and-Rathgar. Pembroke was nationalist of an eminently reputable and inoffensive type; and Howth was also highly respectable and politically nondescript. The reason for the quality of the Councillors in those three townships was that the townships comprised good-class residential areas, where the professional and well-to-do classes who made

their livelihood in the city, whither they went every day, had their homes. These suburban townships were, indeed, Dublin's premier dormitories, and, as these urban areas were all comparatively recent in origin, unlike Dublin, and as they contained no factories or mills of any description, there were few, or comparatively few, artisan or labourers' dwelling-places.

There were other "urbanalities" somewhat further out - the coast townships - Blackrock, Kingstown, Dalkey and Killiney-and-Ballybrack; all, too, under eminently respectable conservative governance, and all now absorbed into the large and Mayorless borough of Dún Laoghaire.

Rathmines, as I have said, was a Unionist stronghold all during my student days, and for many years afterwards. When the noisy, electric tram rattled over the Portobello Bridge camel-back, you found yourself in another world, and sensed an indefinably different atmosphere from that of the city you had just left. The first thing that brought it home to you was the sprinkling of Union Jacks flying from numbers of the shops, and sometimes even from the tall towers of the conspicuous Town Hall. True, Union Jacks were not rare in the city, particularly in Grafton St. and College Green, but they were generally only flown there on festive occasions such as the King's birthday, Trinity Week, etc. But in Rathmines there were, at all times,

a few on display. Undoubtedly, the mainstay of Rathmines Unionism was the large element of Protestants of various confessions residing within the township. But, though they were united and well-organised with their associations and clubs, Protestants by no means constituted an absolute majority of its citizenry. Indeed, I don't think they exceeded a third. It was clear then that a very substantial percentage of the Catholics voted for the Unionist and ratepayers' candidates, not so much because they shared their politics, but, rather, because they were good men of affairs, and ensured sound, economical urban administration; and, strangely enough, in this regard, a Unionist M.P. was generally returned for that constituency.

The typical Rathminsian, and even more so the Rathgarian, was a remarkable type. To begin with, he had developed a most peculiar accent which, immediately he opened his mouth, revealed his venue. It is quite impossible to describe the accent in mere words, and it is greatly to be regretted that it disappeared before the coming of recording; a record of it should have been made and preserved in the national archives. The best description I can give of it is that it was what the "Rathmines Johnny", as the city "Jackeen" contemptuously referred to him, thought was a good-class English accent. English accents, as

we Irish know, are hard to imitate with any degree of accuracy; and a fortiori, all the harder when, like the vast mass of Rathminsians in those days, one has never been to England. The Rathminsian was terrifically, indeed embarrassingly loyal to King and Empire, on certain aspects of which, its army and navy, for example, and its world-wide conquests, he was intensely interested and extremely well-informed. After that, his big interest was the delectable "loyal burgh" of Rathmines. As for Ireland, for the greater part of it at all events, his interest was nil. And, indeed, as I am determined to make this narrative as candid as possible, I must say this for the Rathminsian: when his much-vaunted loyalty was put to the great test in World War I, he was certainly not found wanting, but joined up at once in the Dublin Fusiliers, and, in nine cases out of ten, never saw his beloved Rathmines again.

But, to return to the Dublin Corporation of those days, At that time, that Corporation possessed an unenviable and, I fear, well-earned reputation for inefficiency, extravagance and corruption. Nepotism was widespread in the City Hall, influential corporators having no qualms in placing their relations and connections into well-paid, cosy and often redundant jobs in its various services, regardless as to whether or no they were suitably qualified for them. For the greater

part of the first two decades of the century, the city was completely in the hands of ward politicians, many of them of very doubtful character. There were pickings and prizes to be got in being an Alderman or a Councillor, say, for example, in voting on contracts or awarding tenders, which were not to be despised or sneezed at. After all, every office has, or should have, its particular perquisites and rewards, and why not that of the unpaid member of a public body? At all events, such was the simple creed of those City Fathers of 40 years since.

The Corporation was, of course, Nationalist in its political complexion, though there was a small group of Unionists returned for wards in places like St. Stephen's Green, and in the ex-townships of Drumcondra and Clontarf. Though the vast majority of the Corporation was Nationalist and, more or less, pledged supporters of the Irish Parliamentary Party led by John Redmond. National politics really played a very small part in municipal affairs, only revealing itself in occasional resolutions supporting Home Rule and the Irish Leader, or whether or no the King, or other royal personage, or representative, was to be officially recognised on his visit to the city. With them the thing that counted and loomed large on the horizon of Cork Hill was ward politics of a definitely corrupt character; the last thing that most of the City Fathers

bothered about was ratepayers' interests, as was amply reflected in the conditions of the streets and municipal property generally, the large number of their employes and the, for those times, exceedingly high level of the city rates.

In this delectable body the ruling element was the publicans. At that time, nearly two-thirds of the corporators were publicans, or backers of the powerful publican interest. Many of them rose to the dizzy eminence of the Lord Mayoralty and the City Shrievalty, and quite a number of them succeeded in getting themselves knighted.

While such was the general structure and set-up of the Corporation, I must refer to a fine but, unfortunately, very limited stream of fresh blood that, in the early years of the century, had been infused into its moribund corpus, by the capture of some dozen seats by Sinn Fein candidates. They comprised such well-known figures as Alderman William Cosgrave, Seán T. Ó Ceallaigh and Seán McGarry, all still happily with us. and Aldermen the late Dan MacCarthy and the late Tom Kelly. The Sinn Féin Councillors were all men of integrity and character, dedicated to an altruistic nationalism and, far from seeking for, actually despising rewards or bribes for their public services. From the day this small but very active group took their seats in the Municipal Council, they waged a determined and constant

warfare against the corruption, intrigue and œaucus rule of the Corporation, often with unexpected success. And that was about all they could arrive at, for they were neither numerous nor powerful enough to effect what was their real objective, a clean sweep of the Corporatorial Aegean stables.

The work they accomplished, and the success they achieved in their crusade towards clean administration, was out of all proportion to their numbers and importance at that time. Naturally, they were not at all beloved by their fellow-Councillors of the orthodox political creed. And, as Home Rule rose more and more distinctly on the horizon, like an illusionary morning sun, that gallant band of Sinn Féin reformers lost considerably in numbers to the Party men, so that by the year 1910, they had dwindled down so much that they were powerless to effect any change of consequence in the then prevailing conditions. The times were deadly opposed to "Extremism", "Separatism" and "Republicanism" in every shape and form. Hence, the seasoned ward politicians could rub their hands with satisfaction in the realisation that there was not, nor was there likely to be any serious threat to their venal sway. They had matters all their own way, so far as control of the city was concerned, and battened on that situation.

Finally, there was proletarian Dublin, the biggest and, in more ways than one, probably the most important of all the many Dublins. For where would the others be without it? The upper and white-collar levels of this Dublin were mainly concentrated in such suburbs as Phibsborough, Drumcondra, Glasnevin, Clontarf, and, in the smaller terraces and villas of Rathmines, Rathgar and Pembroke in the south city. Below this white-collar line was the vast mass of unskilled labour of whom, perhaps, the only coherent and articulate element were the dockers, organised into a powerful trades union, and led by Connolly, Larkin and O'Brien. This great proletariat was wretchedly housed in those dreadful Dublin tenements, where conditions were unbelievably squalid.

During the last decade of the nineteenth, and the first part of the twentieth century, Dublin had been undergoing a vast change in her social andeconomic life. With the coming of better transport facilities in the shape of suburban railway lines and electric tramway extensions, the better-off classes on the north side relinquished their residences in the graceful old Georgian squares and streets, such as Mountjoy Square, Gardiner Street, Temple St., Great Denmark St., Henrietta St., Rutland Square, and re-established themselves in such pleasurable outlying suburbs as Blackrock, Kingstown (as it then was), Dalkey,

Killiney, and as far away as Bray and Greystones on the south, and Howth, Sutton and Malahide on the north.

And so, those beautiful, dignified old houses, that had sheltered so many generations of opulent Dubliners, fell into the hands of a new and not-too-savoury class, a kind of urban gombeen man and every bit as bad as his rural cousin, known as a tenement or slum landlord. Those tenement owners bought up rows and rows of those deserted Georgian houses for a song and set out the rooms as "tenements" at exorbitant rents to very poor and needy families. Often there would be as many as three or four families inhabiting a few rooms.

Dilapidated and decaying as were those fine old houses of the Grattan period, their exteriors still managed to preserve some traces of their quondam dignity. But their interiors were another matter altogether. No words of mine could possibly convey any notion of their condition. In many cases the hall-doors had been removed, and the first thing that met the eye, on entering the hall, was the rotting staircases with their smashed and broken balusters, and many of the steps missing, the wood having been removed by the inmates for firing in the winter. Then there were the great old rooms, bereft of all furniture save the most miserable makeshifts, with the faded paper of two generations back peeling off the high walls in long ribbons

because of the damp; with holes in the flooring so that you had to mind your step, and the laths showing through the broken plaster in the ceilings. What beds! What dirt!

There was never, by any chance, water laid on, and, of course, no flush lavatories; the result was an indescribable accumulation of filth in the yard, the passages and the basements I have been in numbers of those tenements, visiting some of the miserable denizens, and it often took me all I could do not to be overcome with the all-pervading stench of stale human ordure. How those unfortunate people put up for so long with those shocking conditions in the heart of a great modern European city is a matter to be wondered at; and it is still more to be wondered at how any so-called Christian could make money, with an easy conscience, on such human misery, indeed, depravity. And make money and flourish those slum owners did. Numbers of them got elected to the Corporation, in some cases by their "grateful tenantry" and were looked up to as highly respectable and worthy citizens of "no mean city".

A complement, and an essential one to that institution of slum proprietary, was the nightly "flittings" of whole families. Many a night, in winter no less than summer, did I encounter them on my way home to my digs - an ass a cart loaded up high with the pitiable "Lares and Penates" of the family, trotting

furtively and swiftly through the darkened streets to another wretched habitat, followed by the family, usually a long one, on foot, the mother, the father, and one or two of the elder girls bearing the later editions.

A "flit" was the last straw, if a few shillings could be scraped together to pay for the hire of the ass and cart; for, were they to remain, the sheriff's men would be in on the morrow, and their pathetic scraps of property put under the hammer, and the proceeds thereof handed over to that "improving landlord", the slum proprietor, towards the arrears of rent.

It was from those slums that, in those days, the newsboys and paper boys sallied forth in the evenings to sell the various editions of the city's three evening papers - the Evening Mail, the Evening Telegraph, and the Evening Herald. As the issues were released to them, the streets would resound with their sale cries: "Late Buff", "Final Pink", "Final Mail" - the colours indicating the particular paper, which were all produced on newsprint so tinted. And, now and again, the city would ring with that then most exciting slogan, bringing everybody out with their pennies (newspapers were then only ½d each), "Stop Press Ed-it-ion", a cry that, today, the Radio has silenced. The newsboys of that time were, from the standpoint of appearance, pathetic figures. They were, literally, in rags;

old, torn, cast-off coats and trousers, fastened by pins, strings and laces in place of buttons, and often with no shirt behind them. The vast majority of newsboys had no stockings or shoes, andwent about barefooted in the midst of winter, blue with cold, half-starved and famished, and with noses perpetually on the run.

Nevertheless, despite the obvious misery and extreme discomfort of their existence, there was no gayer, brighter or wittier crowd of youngsters to be found anywhere. Their successors today are well-dressed and well-nourished "toffs" compared with them.

Before concluding this section on life and conditions in the pre-World War I in Dublin, I feel I must draw attention to one of the most striking differences between the two periods - that in the social and economic position of women. In those days, as I have pointed out, no woman smoked tobacco or drank alcohol, or, if she did, she indulged her "vice" in secret. To have done so in public would at once have bestowed on her the vary harmful epithet of "fast". And, of course, if she was seen entering or leaving a publichouse, with or without an escort, her r eputation would have been irretrievably lost, were she of the "respectable classes". Of course, highly

respectable old ladies, street vendors in Henry St., Moore St. and elsewhere in the city, and the equally respectable wives of highly respectable labouring men, would go into a "lounge" occasionally and discuss their troubles and affairs over a few harmless "pints of plain". But they belonged to an independent class of society that could defy convention with impunity; and, anyhow, they were all safely beyond the "canonical age". For all other classes of women, without exception, the position in this respect was as I have stated.

Dublin was then, as, indeed, it is to an extent today, despite the wholesale emancipation of women in the meantime, mainly a man's city. However, even 40 years ago, when a man counted much more, domestically, than he does today, the Dubliner would take his wife and children out "for an airing" on Sundays and holidays. And, being an extremely gregarious species, he would generally arrange with a married pal to join in with him and bring his wife and family along too. Accordingly, they would engage the services of a Jehu for the day and take their families for a "drive in the country" on the sidecar or cab, as the case might be. Where necessary, two or more vehicles were hired. On Sundays and holidays one would see long lines of those festive equipages, loaded with families, setting forth on the various roads leading out of the city to the coast, the hills or the

country. Dublin being then very much a man's city, it was accepted by all and sundry, as a matter of course, that your adult male Dubliner required, from time to time, a certain amoun of stimulant, in the form of his native black beer, to enable him to stand up to the trials of life. Accordingly, when the vehicleshad covered a few miles of its odyssey, the Jehu would be directed to pull up at a wayside tavern, whither the two "family men", having assured their spouses that they "would not be a minute", would repair. In my walks in the Dublin environs I often s aw, on holidays and weekends, as many as a dozen cars or cabs, filled with women and children, anchored outside some favourite pub, the jarveys collected together in a group convenient to the pub's entrance.

Those wives and offspring would often have to wait thus outside the tavern until the spirit stirred their lords and masters to return and continue the trip. "Tempus fugit", as we all know, and nowhere more speedily than when we are engaged in "taking our ease in our inn". This fact was well known and provided for in those days. For example, the pubs always stocked a good supply of large and colourful chocolate boxes, tied up in brilliant ribbons. After the lapse of a certain period of time, one or other of the men, but never the two (or more) together, would issue from the pub, laden with a few such

boxes, and would duly present them, with suitably mollifying and felicitous words, to the angering ladies. This was understood to constitute adequate compensation for the delay to date, and to keep them harmoniously occupied for a further period. The "message" having been delivered, the donor would return to his friends in the tavern with the self-satisfied air of a man who could not escape being conscious of his admirable qualities as a husband.

Later, very much later, should the gentlemen's business have still further unavoidably detained them, a curate (never the husbands at this juncture) would be dispatched to the ladies in waiting bearing a tray containing glasses of "port wine" for them (not, in such circumstances, deemed to be alcoholic). By that time, no doubt, their ladies were seething over with wrath, and had had quite enough of the "country air".

What I have described with, I hope, not too much exaggeration, were commonplace scenes on Sundays, holidays and non-working days, forty years ago, in Dublin and its environments.

Dublin was then, indeed, very much a man's city, and nowhere was that fact clearer or more striking than in the pubs. They were, of course, almost exclusively male retreats; and

you were at once aware, when you entered them, of the absence of the "hand that rocks the cradle", for, as is the case today, there were no barmaids save in the hotels, of course. The great majority of Dublin pubs at that time were, to put it mildly, extremely uninviting, not to say, unsavoury places for anyone in which to spend his leisure. Their principal feature - in many cases their only feature - was a long, narrow bar counter, at one side of which the curate stood against a background of bottles and casks, and on the other side, the clientele. There were seldom any chairs, and never anything in the nature of armchairs or upholstered seats. There might be a few stools at the counter, and rough deal benches lining the walls, but nothing else in the nature of seating accommodation. The floor was invariably covered with a thick layer of sawdust, renewed from time to time during the day by fresh shaking from the sawdust box. In some cases the sawdust was replaced by straw. The sawdust was necessary to absorb the spillings from the tumblers and glasses, and the expectorations of the numerous pipe smokers, then a very general habit. Hotels and "uppish" bars supplied spittoons for that product, but they were not regarded as necessities in the general pubs.

Those pubs were certainly tawdry and unkempt places, but the strong and very cheap drink of the period soon made men

oblivious of their drab surroundings. Drunkenness then, amongst all ranks of society, was far from unusual. Scenes Scenes of extreme intoxication, that are now unknown, were then commonplace. One saw, too often, old and young, in every possible stage of inebriation, from fighting-mad, shouting and bawling and so-called singing, to lying in a doped slumber on the filthy floors. At closing time, in particular, and, indeed, much earlier in the day, there were men to be seen, swaying about on the streets, heading indeterminably for their homes. These unseemly sights are very, very rare today in Dublin, and, indeed, in Ireland. Three events have wrought their obliteration: the great increase in the price of drink, the lowering of its specific gravity and, perhaps most of all, the inclusion of women in the "drinking classes". It is only within the last twenty years that Dublin's "publand" has been brought further up to the level of modern conditions and civilisation, and we can thank its post-war invasion by the women mainly for that merciful piece of progress.

I have endeavoured to give a rough picture of the Dublin of my student days in the s econd d ecade of this century. I am well aware how inadequate that picture is. But, possibly, some of my points and recollections, perhaps the most trivial, may be of some assistance in the future to the student of those times, enabling him, it may be, to catch a reflected gleam

of that Dublin of the Tens, the last decade of the great pre-Armageddon age. I hope so. It is always difficult to describe, much more to recapture in mere words, the atmosphere of a vanished period, even one that we have lived through, and, in particular, that of forty years ago.

What changes has man not seen in that comparatively short space of time - changes vast, fundamental and revolutionary in every aspect of human activity and outlook, no one of which in the days of my youth would have been thought feasible at any time. Yet they have all come to pass within a single lifetime.

LEADERS IN THE "ORANGE CARD" WAR.

Before I deal with the next big battle in the war between Tory supra-constitutionalism and the Liberal right to rule, I shall proceed to give, briefly, my impressions of a few of the more outstanding of the leaders in the great fracas. For one cannot ignore the human element, so important in all historical situations, if one wishes to size up, anyway accurately, an historical or political crisis. The personalities of the dramatis personae in all such circumstances count enormously, influencing in greater or lesser degree, and often dominating the salient events in the issue.

I shall begin with the Prime Minister. Henry Herbert Asquith was very much of a flunkey, a toady, where those he looked up to were concerned. Having regard to his background and career, an unusual if not disparate sequence, he could not perhaps have very well escaped being such. Springing as he did from a Non-conformist family, and a poor and uninfluential one at that - his father was a wool-spinner and weaver; his mother the daughter of a wool-stapler - he definitely bore the mark of the despised and disliked "chapel people".

By the sheer force of a superb intellect, he carved his way through school and college, with no money behind him, by dint of a series of scholarships, finally crowning his scholastic life with a first class in classics at Oxford and the degree of barrister-at-law. Thus equipped, he could hardly fail to make his mark, even in the extremely aristocratic and snobbish English world of the time, despite its power and influence and despite its arrogant contempt for those not regarded as being on its Olympian level. And, of course, he did make his mark, and made it at the highest level.

His natural leanings towards the great and the mighty in the land were enormously strengthened when, in 1894, he married Miss Margot Tennant, the daughter of Sir Charles Tennant, a wealthy iron-master. This lady was a very different proposition

from his first wife, the quiet and unambitious Helen Melland, and came from a very different stable. Margot Asquith was a brilliant woman, with a captivating, if somewhat eccentric, personality, a lover of the limelight, a socialite of the first order, in constant and conspicuous circulation in the haute monde all her mature life. In that world, an incredibly opulent and leisured world in those days, she was on terms of the closest friendship and, indeed, familiarity with the aristocracy and the plutocracy, from the Court and the peerage down to the squires and the great magnates of industry and commerce. She dragged her Herbert, by no meals unwillingly, into that glittering world that, at heart, he had always yearned for but, till his second marriage, could never enter. Soon, under her escort, he was hob-nobbing with the Balfours, the Cecils, The Lansdownes, the Littletons, the Stanleys, etc., ete., political opponents no less than political allies, but all of the beau monde, spending the weekends in their castles and stately homes (indeed, this became quite a hobby, almost an addiction of his) and, generally, passing as much of his time in their agreeable company as he possibly could manage.

This flunkeyism, this social weakness in Asquith's character, gravely handicapped him in leading a highly controversial struggle against the deepest prejudices of his latter-day intimates.

Here is a quotation from Spender's "Life" of Asquith that is revealing on this side of his character. It refers to the winter of 1905-06 when the Liberals were returning to power after twenty years in the wilderness, and there were many anxious and important discussions going on amongst them as to the structure of the future cabinet, and the agenda for the session:

> "It is characteristic of Asquith, and of the relations of Party leaders at that time, that he was staying at Hatfield as the guest of Lord Salisbury during the two most critical days in the formation of the Liberal Cabinet. Having said all that he had to say to Campbell-Bannerman, he reached Hatfield in time for dinner, and, after dinner, as his wife records in her diary, 'threw himself into the social atmosphere of a fancy dress ball with his usual simplicity and unself-centredness'".

The atmosphere was, undoubtedly, a congenial one; but, we might be allowed to question its suitability for a leader in a reforming and progressive Liberal Government, whose avowed purpose was the abolition, or, at least, the weakening of Tory supremacy, the maintenance of which was the causa causarum of his host.

This kind of life, to a man like Asquith with a definite social (though not intellectual) inferiority complex, could not but have a profound influence on his outlook, and on the ardour

of his reforming Liberalism. Generally, one would expect to find a person of his origins on the extreme left, or radical wing of Liberalism, but there was not a spark of radicalism in Asquith. He was a thorough-going Whig, as close to Conservatism as his position as the wearer of Gladstone's mantle would permit. Before he became Prime Minister he sided always with the right-wingers in the Liberal Party. He was known to have criticised Gladstone's Home Rule Bill as being untimely; and he was an active member of the imperialist Liberal League which, led by the reactionary Rosebery and including such men as Sir Edward Grey and Haldane, strongly supported the war against the Boers and opposed the anti-war "Little Englanders", like Sir William Harcourt, Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman and Lloyd George, as vigorously as the Conservatives themselves. Rosebery had repudiated Home Rule after Gladstone's death, and considered it should not be put forward again by the Liberals, unless and until it had been sanctioned by a majority of the electors of England, the "predominant partner" in the Union; and Asquith and other Liberal Leaguers, though they did not go quite so far, were all for putting Home Rule at the end of the longest finger possible. Asquith, at heart, cared little for Home Rule; and he certainly did not relish being placed in the position of having to father it through Parliament, if for no other reason than that

that position seriously undermined his popularity in the castles and mansions to which he had won an entrée, through his second wife, and to which he had grown so addicted.

Hence, when he succeeded Campbell-Bannerman in 1908, at the head of a Government with an overriding Liberal majority at its back, that awkward and alien foundling was kept well in the background. Somehow I could never regard Asquith as having his heart seriously in the fulfilment of any item of the new progressive Liberal programme. He was lacking in that deep Gladstonian earnestness for the cause and aims of his Party that, in large measure, Campbell-Bannerman, and, as regards his own particular radical objectives, Lloyd George and, on the opposite benches, Bonar Law possessed. He struck one as being very much of a dilettante in this respect, without much conviction in the hopes and aims of the "great Liberal Party", at the head of which fortune had placed him. True, he enjoyed the eminence and prestige of his office of Prime Minister, and he delighted in his House of Commons life, for that was the place, par excellence, where his excellently flexible and highly trained brain could display itself to the fullest advantage, and he certainly enjoyed exercising it. Nevertheless, provided that he had to hold office as a Liberal and not as a Conservative, he would clearly have been much more at home as

head of a government of Roseberys, Greys and Haldanes, eminently respectable imperialists and very close, in kidney, to the Balfours, the Cecils and the Hartingtons. Asquith was kept to the bridge, and to the wheel of the Liberal barque, mainly by the zeal and vital momentum of the powerful radical-cum-Labour forces behind him, constantly prodding at his back. When I return to the political sequence of this narrative, we shall mark his reactions at the various stages of the crisis which, I think, will bear out, on the whole, my estimate of his character.

David Lloyd George was a very different "cup of tea" from his leader. His origins and background were wholly different. To begin with, he was not English. He was a Welshman, a Celt, with all the emotionalism, the excitability, the tendency to hyperbole and a very liberal share of the trickery and unreliability of his race. He was a full-blooded peasant and had an abundance of vitality and high natural intelligence, inde indeed genius, that, despite his meagre education - only that of a national school - enabled him, an unknown, penniless and obscure Welshman, to carve out for himself a meteoric career that swept him, Like Asquith, eventually to the Premier's chair. Lloyd George was no flunkey, no toady. Coming as he did from sturdy peasant stock, from the fundamental, the primeval

stratum, he had no need, or t emptation, to be doubtful or unsure of his position in society as Asquith had. And, unlike Asquith, far from having awe and veneration for the peers of the ruling caste, he had, in his earlier days, at all events, an almost venomous contempt for them, nearly primitive socialist in character, which he took no pains whatever to hide. In those days he was a fiery democrat and, of course, a Radical wholehogger, all for the "have nots" against the "haves", particularly if the former were Welsh "chapel people". Later in life, he shed much of his wild demagogy and his radicalism, but, d espite the innumerable blemishes on his character, for e xample, his appalling treacheries to friends and foes alike no one, at any time in his life, could have accused him of toadyism.

What was this "man of the people's" attitude to Irish Home Rule? It is true that he began his public life as a fervent Welsh Nationalist, as a leader, with Tom Ellis, of the newly-founded "Young Wales" movement "CYMRU FYDD" (Wales for Ever"), and w ent around his native land a dvocating two things in unmistakably clear and forceful language, viz: disestablishment of the Anglican Church in Wales, and Home Rule for Wales. Indeed, he was all his life a protagonist of Home Rule - for

Wales wholeheartedly; for Ireland, yes, but very half-heartedly. This differentiation appears curious until the reason is sought. And reason there was, and a strong one too, though not one of principle. Lloyd George was, deep down in his Nonconformist peasant heart, anti-Catholic and anti-Papist. His great idol in the Liberal Party, on whom he largely patterned himself, was Joe Chamberlain; and when the latter broke with Gladstone on Home Rule in the 'eighties, Lloyd George nearly followed him into the Liberal-Unionist camp. Two things dissuaded him therefrom; one was the advice of his wise old uncle, William George, the village cobbler and Baptist preacher who reared him, and who perceived that the Liberal Party was in for a lengthy boom, and the second was the departure from the Liberals of most of their aristocratical support, thereby intensifying the strong "class" favour of the conservative Party and, at the same time, leaving many gaps to be filled by bright and active proletarians such as Lloyd George. "At one time" writes his recent biographer, Malcolm Thompson, "the Whigs had included in their ranks the cream of high society, the wealthiest and most noble families; compared with them the Tories were a socially inferior party, representing chiefly the rustic gentry of the countryside .... Liberalism was driven to seek new supporters among the freshly enfranchised masses and to devise

policies and programmes that would gain their goodwill". These circumstances created Lloyd George's opportunity; they posted for him the road for his political travels and his goal. Hence he remained with Gladstone though, as the same biographer tells us, very frankly, "he had no great enthusiasm for Irish Home Rule, though he realised the case for it. But, to evangelical Nonconformity it was distasteful, as holding a threat of Rome Rule, which a generation nurtured on Foxe's Book of Martyrs, held in deep abhorrence". Such was the source and secret of Lloyd George's lukewarmness on Irish Home Rule, and it explains his silence regarding it in his speeches when the great controversy was raging, remarkable for so voluble and radical a politician. It also throws a beam of clear light on what was almost his last act on the Irish question: his famous and oft-quoted letter to Carson of 19th May 1916, wherein he enjoined him that "we must make it clear that at the end of the provisional period Ulster does not, whether she wills it or not, merge into the rest of Ireland".

That was the real Lloyd George, so far as Irish Home Rule was concerned. For once in his life he revealed his sincere and inmost belief. On that fundamental point he and Carson were not divided, all appearances to the contrary notwithstanding. As we proceed, we shall see how this conviction,

this prejudice of his, coloured all the critical approaches to Home Rule that he was called upon to make.

BIOGRAPHIES OF WINSTON CHURCHILL, BALFOUR, BONAR LAW AND CARSON.

The Battle for the Parliament Act, 1910.

With the return of the Asquith Government to power after the general election in January 1910, the Liberals registered their first victory in the determined Tory onslaught against them. But they had, indeed, suffered grievously at the polls, having lost 103 seats to the Unionists, and, worse still, lost the predominant power in the new House of Commons that they had enjoyed for 4 years, to Redmond and the Irish Party. Indeed, the new Government, though it comprised purely Liberal Ministers, was in every effective sense an inter-party Government, relying upon a coalition with Irish Nationalists and Labour and kept in office wholly by the goodwill of the former.

The election, as we know, was caused by the blind obdurance of the Tories in refusing to pass the Budget for the year 1908-09 which had been sponsored by the new Chancellor, Lloyd George. There was nothing really very revolutionary or untoward in that Budget that could possibly have justified the bringing of the government to a standstill, and the forcing of a dissolution, but the Tories hated the new Chancellor and

and elected to treat his by no means immoderate and, as it subsequently turned out, virtually uncollectible duties on land values as "unconstitutional" and "revolutionary". Had Asquith remained Chancellor, there can be little doubt that the Budget would have passed through with little ado. But with Lloyd George, the Tory "bete noire", in his shoes, they jumped at the Budget, as a dividend-paying target, on which to launch a major assault against the government, in pursuance of their general campaign for supremacy.

The forcing of the election on such an issue was a particularly stupid move on the part of the Conservatives, in their own interests, as time was to tell; but, apart from that, there was much in the Liberal contention that it was unconstitutional. Not for 250 years, or more, had a Finance Bill been blocked by the unrepresentative House. The traditional contention of the Commons had ever been that, seeing that their's was the elected House, it alone should have full control over moneys voted by Parliament. Whatever disputes and doubts there might have been about their right to that claim, were considered to have been put to rest, finally in the year 1860, when the Commons asserted, and vindicated, their sole right of control over all money bills. Actually, that particular bill was hardly a money bill at all.

Nevertheless, their claim was admitted and established. It was a bill for the abolition of duty on paper which, having passed the Commons, was thrown out by the Lords. As a result, Lord Palmerston, the then Premier, brought in Resolutions which secured to the Commons exclusive power over the collection and expenditure of all moneys for governmental purposes. The electorate at the recent general election had once again vindicated that right of the Commons and had repudiated the Lords' action. There was obviously nothing now for the latter to do but to pass the Budget as soon as possible and with the best possible grace.

The enactment of the Finance Bill was imperative and urgent, for the Treasury had fallen into arrears to the tune of £30,000,000 and the public services of the Kingdom and Empire, for nearly nine months, had to be carried on by borrowed money. But, at that point, a new crux arose from quite a different quarter, to harass still further a much bothered government. This time it came from the Irish Nationalist Party, the Government's main prop behind its existence. The Nationalists were in Parliament for one reason, and for one reason only, as they frankly avowed, viz: to get a Home Rule Bill for Ireland transferred into an Act of Parliament. During the previous four years of the Liberal Government, the Nationalists were

powerless to exert any pressure on the Cabinet regarding Home Rule, as the Liberals then commanded a majority of 214 over the Tories, and a clear-cut majority over Tories, Nationalists and Labour of no less than 175. With such strength they could do what they liked, and they did. And Home Rule was the last thing they thought of, or bothered about, ignoring, as they could well afford to, the constant reminders as to their promises thereon of their Nationalist allies.

But now the position was entirely changed, and the Government was soon to know it. Asquith, unlike Campbell-Bannerman, was always suspect by the Irish as being too much under the influence of the old Whig, imperialist wing of the party. He was, at any rate, very indeterminate in character, lacking the strong convictions, and certainty of direction of his Liberal predecessors in office, and far from possessing the qualities of leadership essential to deal with the grave crises before him that were, even then, gathering momentum. As Haldane truly said of him: "He has fewer views of his own than most of us".

Redmond and Dillon certainly were well aware of this, and with the urging of their supporters in the Irish Party and in Ireland, and goaded on by the growing volume of caustic criticism from antagonists, such as All-for-Irelanders and Sinn

Féiners, they put up their point of view, indeed their demand, to the Government in no uncertain manner. And so, just before the opening of the new parliament, Redmond presented an ultimatum to the Master of Elisbank, the Chief Liberal Whip, for transmission to the Prime Minister. This document laid down his terms for a continuance of the Irish-Liberal alliance. They were threefold:

(1) The Government to introduce the Veto Resolution and Bill at once;

(2) The King to be asked at once to guarantee the creation of new peers if the Parliament Bill were rejected by the House of Lords; and

(3) The Budget to be postponed "until after the foregoing".

This ultimatum was received by Asquith and his colleagues with indignation and anger. It was intolerable to them that mere Irishmen should aim a sword at the heart of His Majesty's Government. And, next day, the Premier, having informed the King of the Nationalist action, assured him that "of course the Cabinet was agreed that no such assurance could, or would be given". A little later, on 25th February, the Chief Whip, on the Cabinet's instructions, told Redmond that it could not give him the assurance for which he asked, and that he must act on his own responsibility, as they would on theirs. And, thereupon, there ensued a ding-dong battle between those ill-assorted allies that continued for weeks, with Redmond

returning again and again for his assurance, and always receiving the same answer. Asquith appeared to be adamant that the Budget must first be presented to the Commons, and in essentially the same form as it had left the last House. If the Irish wanted to turn the Liberals out of office, they could do so, "and the blood be on their own heads".

Nevertheless, despite Asquith's firm "non possumus" attitude on Redmond's demands, and greatly to the surprise of all, a complete change presently came on him. He performed a regular somersault, so that on April 5th we find him rising up in the House and moving the Veto Resolution and, shortly afterwards, introducing the Parliament Bill, as well as re-introducing the belated Finance Bill. Redmond had won. And before that month was out, the famous and "heinous" Budget that the Tories had waged such war against, with such high cost to the country, went through the House of Lords in its original shape, with all its "highly unconstitutional" features and without a single speech against it, much less a division.

On 6th May 1910, King Edward VII died somewhat unexpectedly and was succeeded next day by his son, the Prince of Wales, as George V "of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, and of the British Dominions Overseas, King, Emperor of India, Defender of the Faith". The passing of the popular Edward,

and the proceedings in connection with his funeral and the accession of the new monarch, caused a halt in the violent controversy between the two big British parties which was growing, day by day, more and more bitter.

The Kaiser, who had come over for the funeral of his uncle, was naturally interested, and telegraphed his Chancellor, von Bethman-Hollweg, his impressions of contemporary England wherein he described the great hatred of the Ministry, and the highly unsettled conditions of the country.

Suffragettes - a female species utterly alien and incomprehensible to the continental mind - breaking windows, burning churches and letter boxes, and "eminent lawyers and statesmen" arming and drilling to resist an Act if Parliament".

Here, I think, his late Imperial Majesty was somewhat previous, for at that time, beyond threats, there was no overt act of private army organising, drilling or arming. That was all to come later. Apropos this statement of the Kaiser, it was truly observed that it was "scarcely surprising if some foreign governments concluded that Great Britain had lost her ancient sobriety and self-control, and had entered on a period of civil strife and turbulence".

The death of Edward VII struck the perturbed Premier as being a good opportunity to endeavour to come to terms with the

Tories. Accordingly, in that June, Asquith met Balfour and proposed a conference between the parties on the questions that divided them, and to this Balfour agreed. The conference was composed of four members from each party on the Government side, Asquith, Lloyd-George, Lord Crew and Birrell; on the Tory side, Balfour, Lansdowne, Austin Chamberlain and Cawdor. The far from bellicose Mr. Asquith was extremely delighted by the acceptance of his conference idea, and he could not refrain from giving expression to his pleasure in colourfully heroic and singularly hyperbolistic language, wholly alien to his natural sober and measured prose. "The Nation" he declared, "witnessed an incident unparelleled in the annals of party warfare ..... the combatant forces, already in battle array, piled their arms while the leaders on noth sides retired for private conference".

This inter-Party conference gave a six months respite to the Tory-Liberal war. It held nearly 30 sessions, and, though nothing came of it, there escaped from it certain very significant orientations that reflected curiously on the whole queer build-up of that very "ersatz" war. From these orientations, it is clear that there were powerful forces in favour of a settlement, and it is probable that those forces might have won through, had it not been for intransigents like Carson and

Bonar Law. There were wheels within wheels, of course, as there always must be when personalities like Lloyd George have a hand in the game. We know now that that ambitious politician was, even at that comparatively early stage in his career, playing a hand of his own, working through his "alter ego" on the opposite side, F.E. Smith, through Balfour for a "National Government" from which his leader, Asquith, was to be excluded, a condition that, seemingly, gave him as small concern as its eventual achievement did seven years later. But Asquith, as we know, was a personal social friend, and, even more so, his wife, Margot, of Balfour, and nobless oblige ordained that, in that regard, the latter could not be party to Lloyd George's intrigue against his leader. And there was still more going on. The Irish Party, always suspicious of Asquith, was constantly on the qui vive. For example, on 5th June, Dillon wrote to Redmond that "it looked as if we were faced with another attempt to bolt on the part of the Government". And, towards the end of that month, Redmond has put on record that he had been invited to meet Walter Long, 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".

Lloyd George and F.E. Smith were at that time unquestionabl working together for a "common purpose" Ministry which would involve settlement of the constitutional issue, the granting of

a measure of Home Rule, and a bigger navy, the latter a sop to the Conservative imperialists.

Balfour was, undoubtedly, attracted to the plan, but felt that, because of his commitments to the Irish loyalists, he could not well, at that late stage, change over to Home Rule. In other words, he found it virtually impossible to get out of the strait jacket of non possumus Unionism which, willy-nilly, he had worn for the better part of his political career.

Getting on to the end of the conference's life, there was a remarkable stirring in the Conservative press that was far too unanimous and contemporaneous to be fortuitous, indicating the measure of support, in most unlikely quarters, there was for a thorough-going and final settlement of those balking, irritating and nearly endemic issues.

"Pacificus", in a letter to the "Times" on 22nd November, wrote: "Ulster Unionists cannot champion Home Rule; but they might, nevertheless, submit to it, without loss of dignity or self-respect". And the "Times", with a balancing Leader, inclined clearly to a settlement on that basis. The "Morning Post" actually broached all-round federal Home Rule, and was followed, in similar vein, by the "Daily Telegraph", the "Globe" and the "Daily Express".

It was clear that the wiser, more responsible and more far-seeing elements in English Conservatism were becoming alarmed at the shape and the direction the Tory campaign against a Liberal Government was taking, and at the rising tide of bitterness and disruption it was causing in the community. They were beginning to perceive that, far from destroying Liberalism, it was becoming more and more likely that the campaign would destroy that precious heritage, the British Constitution, of which they had always regarded Conservatives to be its particular custodians. But they were presently to discover that it was then too late to stay the course of the heady current that they had themselves so largely helped to create, or, rather, that there was no man of sufficiently big calibre to take over command to that end before it was too far gone. That eleventh hour eagerness for a settlement by those Conservatives is certainly an interesting and revealing light on the affair, and goes to show how really little Home Rule, as an issue, mattered to official English Conservatives. They never fought it on a point of principle, but merely as a card - like the Budget Bill and the Parliament Bill - in the struggle to destroy resurgent radicalism, and thereby to maintain in permanent pattern the traditional ascendancy rule of their caste and order. But, in so doing, they had let the Djinn

out of the bottle with a vengeance, and none of them could then have contemplated, despite his undoubted disquiet, the great and irrevocable havoc that that demon was to do to their constitution and to their Empire before he was rebottled, at least partially; for he is still abroad, the more's the pity!

Carson, the prime enemy of any Anglo-Irish settlement on the basis of any kind of autonomy, was as much on the alert as Redmond. He, too, was an Irishman, and had all an Irishman's distrust of the "Sassenach". He was, of course, well aware of all the planning and intriguing that was going on behind the scenes, and of its nature; and he decided to take speedy action to destroy effectively any possible chance of agreement on the main issues. To this end, he first circulated a wound robin document for signature amongst the Conservatives and Unionist Clubs, reiterating the faith of the signatories in the Union and condemning "the unauthorised scheme of 'Home Rule all round' which had lately been canvassed in certain papers". He, of course, collected quite a large number of signatures to that document, including that of Walter Long who, but four months previously, had, as we have seen, been inviting Redmond to discuss a Home Rule settlement with him. Verb. Sap.!

On 17th November, at a time when the press campaign for a peaceful solution was at its height, Carson attended the annual

meeting of the National Union of Conservative and Constitutional Associations, and there moved and, of course, got carried a resolution exhorting "all Unionists throughout the kingdom to maintain unimpaired their unalterable opposition to the policy of Home Rule" or to the weakening the Union between Great Britain and Ireland". And, in order to smash utterly the peace movement in so far as Unionists were concerned, he referred to the press reports and denounced as "an infernal lie ..... on the authority of Mr. Balfour himself" that their leaders "were mediating a surrender of my rights and those who think with me in Ireland". ("My" rights was good and royal!) And Carson concluded his speech there with this remarkable pledge to his "fellow-loyalists" in the south and west of Ireland, which he failed to keep, and which has never been forgotten by those, and their successors, whom he so badly let down: He told them that it had been suggested that the question might be solved by the grant of a separate parliament to "Ulster". The Irish Unionist Party had considered the proposal and had asked him to say that "Ulster" would never be a party to any separate treatment; that "Ulster" would never desert those who thought with them in the other parts of Ireland. "If we sink we sink together", he concluded, "but, with God's help, we'll win". These activities of Carson's, of course,

gave the coup de grace to the last hope of those on both sides who were earnestly working for, and looking to, the conference for a settlement by general agreement. Actually, the conference had held its 29th and final session a few days earlier.

Asquith and Crew saw the King, who reluctantly agreed to create sufficient new peers to carry the Parliament Bill through the House of Lords, if that course were ever necessary, but he insisted that there would first have to be a General Election in the event of the measure being rejected by the Lords. The Bill was, of course, thrown out by the Lords, and Parliament was dissolved. That December saw the country, for the second time within a year, in the throes of a fierce and bitter General Election.

The proximate issue was, of course, the rejected Parliament Bill, but there were other great issues involved, for the enactment of which the Parliament Bill was but the clearing of the road. Indeed, not only the whole Liberal programme, but Liberal Government was at stake. For the real issue, dominating all others that, though kept well in the background, was the '<u>causa causans</u>" of the war, was the perpetuation of effective Tory supremacy, and the "divine right", not, this time, of the King, but of the House of Lords. And the Government had not been long in office before Tory intentions

on its life began to manifest themselves, and most of the Liberals were aware as to what the game was, and of the need to prepare to meet it, if they valued the political future of themselves and their party. Certainly, Campbell-Bannerman had no illusions on the subject, and had not only propounded drastic proposals effecting the structure of the House of Lords, modelled on an old plan of John Bright's in his radical days, but had persuaded his colleagues, even his sediment of Whigs, that nothing less than his plan would enable him to redeem his promises to the electorate to "find a way of making the will of the House of Commons prevail". And when, within the first three years of the Government, no less than two of its major measures - the Education and the Plural Voting Bills - had been wrecked by the Lords, it was manifest to the most guileless Liberal M.P. that the sooner that something like Campbell-Bannerman's plan was law, the better for them and for their Party's programme. For example, on 22nd February 1909, Ponsonby, M.P. for Stirling Burghs, moved that, in view of the repeated rejection by the Lords of measures passed by the Commons, legislation should be introduced in that session securing that the will of the Commons should prevail within a single parliament. And Asquith, who was, indeed, no Campbell-Bannerman, replied that there was no controversy as to the

magnitude, or urgency, of the issue. For twenty years it had overshadowed the whole field of British politics. The House of Lords, he declared, had become more and more identified with a single party; and Lloyd George, more directly, called it a branch of the Unionist Party, which, in effect, it was.

The issue was now knit for the second battle in the famous "war", called into being by the Tories, and an extremely bitter and vitriolic battle it was.

Again, the timorousness and lack of earnestness of Liberals about Ireland's claims was revealed by the complete absence of Home Rule in their official election manifesto, and in most of their election addresses, and the silence of their leaders on that subject in their speeches to the electorate. The Prime Minister only once mentioned Ireland; that was when he was heckled by a man at a meeting in his own constituency of East Fife, and then he contented himself with a mere reference to his Albert Hall speech the year before when, it will be remembered, he put forward a policy for Ireland "which, while explicitly safeguarding the supremacy and indefectible authority of the Imperial Parliament, will set up in Ireland a system of full self-government in regard to purely Irish affairs", which was all that Irish Nationalism then claimed.

Indeed, during the whole election, Asquith's official

attitude, as revealed in his speeches, was that expressed by him at Bury St. Edmunds - "the sole issue of the moment was the supremacy of the People; and it was sought to confuse the issue by catechising Ministers on the details of the next Home Rule Bill". Other leading Liberals, such as Grey, Haldane, Lloyd George and Churchill, were also quite silent on the very important Home Rule issues. That was not surprising in the cases of Grey and Haldane, who were unrepentant Whigs, but it certainly was in the case of Lloyd George, who had come forth as a freedom-loving progressive left-wing democrat. Churchill, I think, did make a few references to his favourite device for rendering Irish Home Rule harmless, viz: "Home Rule all round". But if the Liberals were coy and shamefaced about referring to Ireland, that was certainly not the case with the Irish National and Irish Unionist leaders. For example, Redmond in Wexford was in fine form attacking the Lords from an Irish angle. "The House of Lords", he then declared, "had offered and insulted and starved and murdered the Irish race. Thank God ..... when the future of Irish freedom was still hanging in the balance ..... the Irish Nationalists struck the blow that had precipitated the ruin and destruction of the House of Lords". A splendid piece of Celtic hyperbole, of Celtic "huel", shall we say, from a man of Norman descent!

Carson raised the question of Home Rule several times during the election, and, in a letter to the "Times", and particularly at Macclesfield, where he addressed to the Prime Minister a series of queries as to the sort of Home Rule intended, with special reference to its financing. Those queries were, of course, ignored.

But, if the Home Rule issue was not ostentatiously put forward by the Liberals, there can be no doubt that it was a factor, and a big factor, in the general issue. Everyone knew that Home Rule for Ireland, since Gladstone's leadership, and, certainly, having regard to its specific reindorsement by Asquith in his famous Albert Hall speech of 10th December 1909, was a major commitment of British Liberalism. Certainly Carson and the British Conservatives knew it, for they fought the election largely on Home Rule, noising abroad all over the country, and in their newspapers, that if it became law it would mean the smashing of the Union, and the destruction of the British Empire. Of course, it would have meant no such thing; actually the contrary. Are we not sick and tired of hearing these times from the Northern Unionists how they have preserved the Union in regard to the Six Counties despite the fact that they have local Home Rule? How then could the granting of their measure of Home Rule for the whole 32 counties

constitute the "smashing of the Union"? If that argument is right, it would have been much more consistent of them to have declined for the Six Counties any form of Home Rule, and remained wholly united to the Westminster Parliament. But even had the election been fought without reference to Home Rule from any quarter, the British Parliament, unlike our Oireachtas, which is enclosed within the tight jacket of a rigid written constitution, is supreme as regards its legislative powers, and does not require that any of its intended acts should, or must, be first placed before the electorate. There are instances of statutes enacted by every P arliament that the people had never an opportunity of voting on. Take, for example, the highly important Finance Acts: most of their provisions, of acute interest to the taxpayer, have become law without any reference to him. Indeed, as we all know, the taxpayer and voter is deliberately kept in the dark about what he shall have to meet where the Budget is concerned. Secrecy is the very essence of those all-important measures, and we know how responsible people, like Ministers, who have broken that secrecy, have fared; They were forthwith deprived of their ministerial seals and gravely damaged, in some cases ruined, in their careers.

Well, that second election was memorable for the violence and vituperation that poured forth from Tory platforms on the heads of the Government. Their "bete noir" was, as I have said, Lloyd George. They held him principally responsible for the Parliament Bill, and they accused him, by no means untruly, for he was then an advanced radical, of harbouring a determination to weaken, if he could not abolish, Tory dominance in national affairs. They detested him, though they could not despise him. His dangerous and subtle ability, and astonishing powers of invective prevented that; indeed, drew from them a most unwilling but, nonetheless, real respect. To the Tories the little Welshman was the great iconoclast of all they held sacred, and, during the election, they gave full vent to their hatred of him by lambasting him as an unscrupulous demagogue, a Billingsgate rowdy, a lowdown Radical "tyke" from Wales - the very worst of the species - bent on bursting up the Empire and destroying the aristocracy and the gentry, the country's national leaders.

Winston Churchill, Lloyd George's then "fidus Achates", came second, and a very close second in Tory loathing. In a sense, their detestation for him, the detestation of their bluest blood, was even deeper; for was he not of the authentic Tory line, the nephew of a duke of England, a man whose blood

and tradition should have made it utterly impossible for him to be anything else but a Tory, and a leader of Tories like his revered father. To have him deserting to the Liberal, nay, the Radical side, to have him becoming the intimate of that low Welsh rabble-rouser, was surely too much for decent blood to stand. Hence this terrific bitterness against Churchill, manifested in a nearly unanimous action by their marching out, en masse, on the first occasion he took his seat in the House of Commons as a Liberal.

Redmond, of course, they also disliked as the "Dollar Dictator", the man who had the Government in his pocket, whom they represented as an Anglophobe, whose dearest prayer was that England and her Empire might be overtaken by disaster. Actually, the opposite was true of Redmond, despite his occasional lapse into "rebel" rodomontade; he was the last of the great agitators for United Kingdom unity, as I hope these papers shall prove; in other words, the last of the real Unionists.

Asquith they regarded as nothing more than the miserable puppet of Redmond, and the British Radicals and Socialists, bound to them hand and foot and compelled to do their every bidding.

However, be that as it may, and even had the election been

fought without any reference to Home Rule from any Party, the British Constitution, being untrammeled by any written organic law, is supreme in all its acts. It is wholly unrestricted with regard to its powers of enactment, and does not require for their subsequent validation that any of its acts should, or must, be placed before the electorate in the first instance, even those supposed to effect that vague entity the "existing (British) constitution". It was then, and is today, particularly now, the House of Commons - probably the most sovereign and flexible legislative body in the world.

Despite all those wellknown legal and constitutional facts, the Conservative Party, in furtherance of its offensive against a Liberal prevalence, did not hesitate, for want of a stronger argument, to resort to the artifice that the people must first vote, at a General Election, on any bill of importance before it is introduced in Parliament. And this novel and, as far as I know, unprecedented artifice they used on no less than three occasions, viz: when the Lords rejected the 1909-10 Budget, and with regard to the Parliament Bill and the Home Rule Bill. Only in the case of the Parliament Bill did they get their General Election, which, as we have seen, went against them. This pose that the Conservatives were taken short, were tricked about the imminence of those Bills they did not like,

particularly about the Home Rule Bill, is disclosed as false by the facts of history themselves. During the controversy over the Budget and the Parliament Bill in the previous year, Carson clearly had no illusions. He did not even pretend to be taken short. On 14th April 1910, he rose in the House of Commons. "The Government", he said, "go to the country on the Budget Bill. They come back here and find themselves in the position that they are unable to pass it without the Irish Members". And he declared that if that happened, as happen it did, the Liberal Government would have to put through a Home Rule measure as payment to the Irish for their support of the Budget. And with true "rebel" rodomontade he went on to adumbrate on the "scandalous Liberal-Nationalist bargain leading to that devoutly-to-be-wished objective of the Irish, "the dismemberment of the Empire".

Again, when the mysterious conference, composed of picked Liberals and Conservatives, and held after the death of King Edward VII in the May of 1910, finally broke up on that November, there was no mystery at all about the reason for its dissolution; it was on the Home Rule question. Lord Lansdowne, one of the leaders of British Conservatives, had no illusion on the matter. Speaking in Portsmouth on 28th November 1910, he declared: "Mr. Asquith, to my mind, makes it perfectly clear

that the first step that will be taken will be to deal with the question of Irish Home Rule". Nor had the veteran anti-Home Ruler any misgivings thereon; for, in a letter to the "Times" of 8th December 1910, he wrote that Home Rule was the first issue. Likewise, Mr. Lyttleton, another Tory leader, declared in his election address specifically that "the Parliament Bill once passed, a Radical Government, if faithful to its pledges, would carry Home Rule". Lastly, to quote the then leader of the Conservative Party, Mr. Arthur Balfour, himself, in a message to the "Times" (12.12.10) in the very month of the election, wrote that "the avowed intention of the Government was, after dealing with the Second Chamber, to grant a sweeping measure of Home Rule to Ireland. And, of course, he was quite right, whatever about the "sweeping" character of the measure.

This evidence all goes to show how hollow and insincere was the Unionist argument against the Home Rule Bill (and mark its main argument) that that Bill's passage through Parliament was unconstitutional because it had not been placed definitely before the electorate. Amongst the storm of views, aims, intentions, accusations and counter-accusations that so heavily charged the atmosphere during that hectic election, a very few significant and historic statements must be recorded, for 'twere pity they were lost to posterity.

Captain Craig, Carson's chief lieutenant, later to

become Viscount Craigavon of Stormont and first Premier of Northern Ireland's "Home Rule Government", speaking at Lisburn, said: "Perhaps the time had arrived" he told the Orangemen there that December, "when they should change their tactics .... and spend money hitherto used in the sister counties, in buying arms and ammunition ..... In a short time the Unionist clubs would be reorganised" he promised them, "and he would advise all the young men of the countryside to join, and to employ some old soldiers to train them in military tactics, and God help Mr. Birrell and the Nationalists if they came near them". This extraordinary and then novel utterance had two distinctions: it was the first time that language deliberately instigating armed resistance to a prospective British statute was heard from a political platform in the British Isles since the Fenian days, and it was the first time ever that it was heard from a Unionist and Conservative platform. At the time, it passed practically unnoticed, being generally regarded as a bit of Orange platform braggadocio. And that is all that might have come of it had the ideas thus expressed not received the powerful and eminently respectable support that they were destined to get.

The result of the second General Election of the year 1910 came as a complete surprise to everybody, but most of all to

the British Conservatives and the Ulster Unionists. It had been thought, and generally expected, that the enormous expenditure of money by the Tory oligarchy and their numerous wealthy supporters, the terrific and continuous onslaught of their powerful press and oratory, the menacing and abusive character of their language would startle the vast mass of indeterminate voters into plumping solidly for them, thereby bringing down the Asquith Government and replacing it by a strong and enduring Tory regime that would get going on those "reforms" of the franchise and parliament that would ensure the future and continuance of Conservative influence and rule.

But nothing of the kind happened. Despite the terrific and unscrupulous efforts to intimidate them with the bogeymen of revolution and chaos, the electors returned an almost exact replica of the outgoing Parliament. It is doubtful whether in history so exact a parallel can be found in analagous circumstances for such a happening. The Liberals went out 275 strong, and came back with but the loss of three. The Unionists, of all blends, went out 273 and came back exactly the same strength as their Liberal opponents, that is, with the loss of one. The Labour Party and the Nationalists both bettered themselves by two additional seats, coming back 42 and 84 respectively. The people gave a definitely "as you were"

verdict, again placing the Irish Party into the position of dominance; indeed, with a perceptible slant in favour of the Government's programme seeing that the majority of the progressive parties over the Conservative was 126 as against the former 122.

Again, Irish Nationalists, British Labour and British Radicals hearily welcomed and rejoiced at the Kingdom's conclusive verdict and at the position created in Parliament by that verdict, but not so, or to the same extent, British Liberalism, or, rather, British Whiggery. It pined after the delectable position it had enjoyed in the 1906 election that returned it to power, free from all entanglements, with its allies. But, pine as they would, they had no choice before them but to accept the position, if they wanted to continue on as a government. The first thing they were confronted with was the Parliament Bill. The Whigs clearly saw that now they could not escape that duty, distasteful, indeed, as it was to them, and to their social contacts in the opposite party, for, not alone were the Irish determined on it, but so were their own large and very articulate Radical element and, of course, their Labour confederates.

The Orange element in Ireland, having been duly inflamed by Carson and his British Conservative friends, were bitterly disappointed at the result, as they felt sure that their new

tactics of violence and threats in language would win out, and result in a great Unionist victory, and the utter rout of the Liberal-Radical Government combination that they abhorred. This deep chagrin soon manifested itself in a new and even more bitter and defiant note in their speeches. In January, for example, before the new King was crowned, doubtless to intimidate him suitably, and his newly-restored statutory advisers, Captain Craig (later Lord Craigavon) gave forth these truly loyal sentiments. He warned England, from his personal knowledge, that Germany and the German Emperor would be preferred to the rule of John Redmond, Patrick Ford and the Molly Maguires. The motive behind that threat becomes more significant when we recall what the world situation was like at the moment they were uttered. "The year was one of continued excitement" writes Mrs. Stopford Green. "The coronation in June was quickly followed by the "Agidin" claim in July. It will he remembered that War with Germany was thought inevitable; officers were ready for their marching orders, and the fleet lay with sealed orders awaiting the signal to set sail. The close of the grave railway strike in England was determined by the extreme danger of the foreign situation and the pressure which the Cabinet, under such perilous conditions, brought to bear on industrial magnates in England".

The wild talk of arming and promoting a rebellion against unpalatable laws was not the mere mouthings of chagrined Orangemen that could be ignored. It began to grow apparent that there was much more behind it than that; that, in fact, the idea appeared to have the incitement and backing of at least a section, and that an influential section, of the official Conservative Party. On 15th February 1911, for example, we find that the Right Honourable Mr. Walter Long, M.P., one of the leaders of that Party, stated positively ~~that~~ in the House of Commons in the Debate on the Address that, speaking for the whole Conservative Party, "we are opposed to Home Rule in any shape or form. We believe that Home Rule is not necessary at all for this country or for Ireland". That, of course, was all right and quite unobjectionable as a statement of his and his Party's views on that issue. But, most significantly, he added that, in his belief, founded "on information coming to us first-hand", such a measure would produce something akin to Civil War if imposed on the minority. Referring to this particular period, the Hon. George Peel, in his book "The Reign of Sir Edward Carson" writes: "It seems that even at this early date, long before the Home Rule Bill had been introduced in 1912, vague breathings and mutterings of armed resistance and so forth had been vented abroad. In January 1911, these rumours were

investigated and rebuked in an article entitled: "The Alleged Arming of Ulster": "We are glad to be able to refute a story which is being circulated to the discredit of Ulster. Rumour has recently asserted that this province, which boasts of its loyalty to the Crown and Constitution, is arming against the prospect of Home Rule. This, it was stated, is not true, because there had been no unusual importation or sale of arms. A special inquiry on the spot established the fallacy of 'the wild legend of an Ulster rising'. 'The issue of Home Rule must be fought out in Parliament ..... To resist the decrees of Parliament by force of arms is to wage war against the Crown'".

That admirable and sound statement of the law appeared in no less an organ than the "Daily Mail" of 19th January 1911 - an uncompromising mouthpiece of Tory orthodoxy. At that period, at all events, the very idea of armed rebellion against a statute of Parliament was still anathema in orthodox Conservative and constitutional circles. As Mr. Peel truly comments: "The particular significance of this investigation lay not in the special conclusion arrived at, whether accurately or otherwise, but in the fact that, any rate, early in 1911 the Ulster leaders had not yet felt their way sufficiently to announce, and even advertise, their plans as was done later.

They had still to see whether the Unionist Party, as a whole, were firm for them". That was the rub: if they armed the Orange population and drilled it for a rebellion, would British organised Conservatives support them? If not, it would clearly be useless to proceed with the project, and it would most certainly have had to have been abandoned for some other artifice well within the meanings of the Constitution. As Mr. Peel writes:"However, as the months of 1911 passed onward, the situation gradually cleared up to the extent that Mr. Balfour and Mr. Walter Long, the two Unionist leaders in the Commons at that date most concerned with Ireland, presented an absolutely uncompromising front against Home Rule in any shape or form. For instance, in May (19.5.11) Mr. Balfour stated, with reference to the yet unknown Home Rule Bill of the Government: 'I cannot imagine any Bill which they can produce to which I will give my assent', and generally the mood of the leaders was well expressed by Professor Dicey, the literary champion, in writing that the mere suspicion that any Unionist leader favoured Home Rule all round would be 'death to Unionism' (latter in Times 21.7.11)".

Ignoring the blatant falsity of the Professor's averment that Home Rule would mean 'death to Unionism' - the contrary, indeed, would more likely have been the case as things

transpired - that evidence shows that the life-roots of the anti-constitutional conspiracy were already in existence, brought into being, unquestionably, by some degree of agreement and understanding between the Ulster and British confederates in the Tory Party.

King George V opened his first Parliament on 6th February and, a fortnight later, the Parliament Bill was reintroduced and had its first reading. Next month it passed through its second and third readings in the face of strong opposition, and went up to the House of Lords. Another achievement of that noble House in that same month we certainly must not overlook. On 7th March, the famous Budget of 1907-10 slipped quietly and with lamb-like softness through the Upper House, without a noble Lord therein to say 'boo' to it, despite the terrific struggle, and furore, the members of that august assembly created against its enactment but a few months beforehand. Following the passing months, 11th May of that year must be noted. Since the reintroduction of the Parliament Bill, the Unionists, British and Irish, had busied themselves organising resistance to its becoming law. On that date there was a luncheon in London of peers and commoners, to organise resistance to the Bill, and Lord Curzon, freshly arrived from

India, where he had been a singularly indiscreet and tactless Viceroy, gave a strong lead to the company. "Let them make their peers", his lordship dramatically declared, "we will die in the last ditch before we give in". From this historic phrase there sprung the terms "Ditchers and Hedgers" - the former the inflexible uncompromisers, and the latter the weak-kneed compromisers, when, shortly afterwards, as we shall see, the question of passing the Parliament Act by the House of Lords came up for ultimate action. And it will be noted that "dying in the last ditch" would not be in respect of Home Rule, but in respect of the Parliament Bill.

June came, and with it the coronation ceremony and festivities in connection with the new King. In July, George V of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, King, Defender of the Faith, Emperor of India" visited in state "that part of his United Kingdom called Ireland". The new monarch was a very different individual from his father, lacking the latter's personality, bonhomie and, indeed, his broad human sympathies and intuition. George V's lack of personality, his pedestrian "ordinaryness" and his obvious lack of knowledge of, and, hence, disinterest in Ireland, produced, naturally, no very enthusiastic reactions towards him in the Irish. Nevertheless, on his visit to Ireland that July, he was

accorded a very cordial reception as he and his Queen and family drove through the thronged and beflagged streets of the capital. Dublin Corporation officially ignored the visit, but numbers of Aldermen and Councillors attended the functions on their own. A highly surprising and unexpected attendant was the Lord Mayor himself, who, from having graduated to his high office along the irreconcilable Nationalist road, having only the year before, in anticipation of that royal visit, been the proposer of the resolution against it, that was carried in the Corporation, suddenly decided to attend the loyal proceedings in his official capacity, to offer, on behalf of the city and its denizens, his humble duty to his liege and sovereign. Accordingly, he ordered out the city's State coach and, vesting himself in all the panoply of his State robes of office, replete with gold chain and sword, he awaited, with his lady, the arrival of the coach. But his coachman and his footmen never appeared; the mayoral grooms declined to harness the horses and the mayoral coachman to drive it. There was nothing left for His Right Honourable Lordship and his lady but to hire a public conveyance and hie them forth to the official grand stand in that very ignominious, and only alternative, for the First Citizen of the country's First City. Royalty, apparently, thought little of the Lord Mayor's blitz

conversion to loyalty, for he returned, as he came, with ne'er a prefix to, nor an affix after, his name.

King George and Queen Mary visited the Royal College of Maynooth, as his father had done, and got there, in contrast to the city's official "non-video", as warm and as friendly a welcome. They were received by His Eminence, Cardinal Logue, His Grace, Archbishop Walsh, a number of other Bishops, Dr. Mannix, the President, and the Professors of the College. The Royal Standard and the Papal flag flew side by side, in unique harmony, over the college; a loyal address of welcome was read to the royal pair. Comparing those royal visits of George, his father and his grandmother, and their unquestionably friendly reception by the Irish people, with "the times that are in it", one can only be staggered at the unbelievable changes that have taken place in this land, in the historically short period of little more than 40 years. O tempora, O mores! The new spirit of friendship towards the monarchy in the Nationalist world, created by, what looked like, the resolve of the Liberal Government to have Home Rule enacted and stimulated by the royal visit behind what looked like a clear Home Rule atmosphere, was given expression to by John Redmond. Speaking at Woodford, Essex, he went out of his way for the first time to stress the loyalty of Nationalists to the Crown

and Empire. True, Redmond was duly denounced for this utterance by "Irish Freedom", the Dublin Republican organ, for betraying Irish Nationalism "in an orgy of Imperialism", but, nevertheless the sentiments he had expressed did, at the time, with Home Rule coming solidly up the way, represented the outlook of the vast majority of Irish Nationalists.

It seems that on 14th July the Cabinet informed the King that their only way out was to ask him to carry out the pledge he gave them secretly in the November of the preceding year, on the eve of the General Election, on which he had insisted, as a condition for the giving of the pledge, and create adequate peers to secure the passage of the Bill through the Lords. The King, reluctantly, undertook to discharge his undertaking, and, on 21st of that month, Asquith informed Balfour, the Conservative leader, that he had secured the King's consent to so increase the personnel of the upper house. This news came as a bombshell on the Conservative Party, who had such a poor opinion of Asquith and his Cabinet, as fighters, that they were sure they would compromise in some way rather than take the extreme and awful step of "involving the Crown". To their infinite surprise, they had decided to do it; their Radical element, backed by the Nationalists, had, seemingly, been too strong for them. That evening, a meeting of peers

which Balfour, as Conservative leader, attended, was summoned, and met at Lansdowne House. It came to the conclusion that the only prudent course open to the peers was to sink further opposition to the Parliament Bill "now that they were no longer free agents". But it soon transpired that the Lansdowne meeting by no means represented the united opinion of the entire Conservative Party in the matter. There sprung up a very defiant and aggressive body of peers, wholly opposed to the "surrender", and backed by many of the Conservative M.P.s. This dissident element gave a dinner on the night of 26th July in the Carlton Club to its leader, the aged Earl of Halsbury, and was attended by peers and commoners of his way of thinking. Carson was the principal speaker, and he let himself go in characteristic hyperbole, talking of the conspiracy "to destroy your Constitution which has existed for 700 years". As though, by any stretch of the imagination, the puny Home Rule concession could possibly be said to do that. If it could, then, a fortiori, the Six County Home Rule that now exists, and that Carson accepted, has done, and has been doing, that for the last 36 years.

Just prior to this meeting, on 24th, to be exact, Asquith moved in the House of Commons that the Lords' amendments to the Parliament Bill be disagreed with, and was howled down, not by

the Irish "bogmen", but by the "gentry" of the Unionist Party. The next day, the party of gentlemen carried out another well-organised brawl in the very bosom of the "Mother of Parliaments" Unlike the Irish Nationalist rows, none of the gentlemen were expelled; the whole House had to be adjourned to meet their humour. But, despite that unseemly and ineffective display of chagrin, the House of Commons passed the Parliament Bill through all its stages by substantial majorities, and sent it up to the House of Lords. That noble assembly was certainly in a quandary when the detested measure returned to them, with its emasculated limbs fully restored. They said that they were then faced with but two courses, and no more: either to reject the Bill again, or to pass it. The former was what they all had at heart, if it could be done without the terrible concomitant of filling their gilded chamber with "riff-raff" and the "dregs" of the Radical opposition, perhaps even - unbearable thought! - a considerable splashing of terrible Irish "bogmen"cas well!

The Parliament Bill, as I have said, went up to the House of Lords, and, on 10th August, came before the peers there for their final decision on it. It was known that there were not only misgivings about the action to be taken, but that a large majority of their lordships were in favour of giving up the fight and endorsing the Bill. That was the case, as events

proved; but it was also the case that a very substantial and implacable element of diehards had been organised by Lord Willoughby de Broke and Lord Lovat, organisers of the English Covenanters and Volunteers as Auxiliaries for Carson's army. Indeed, so strong was this opposition, that many felt the "Hedgers" would be vanquished by the "Ditchers" and the Bill discarded.

An amusing and curious debate ensued, with high pitches of strong and bitter feeling amongst those erstwhile friends in the great cause. Feeling reached its highest level, understandably, when the elegant and pompous Lord Curzon, the creator of the "Ditchers" and the inventor of the very term, rose, not to back Halsbury and de Broke, but, to the surprise of most there, to lead the "Hedgers". After many speeches of shame-faced explanation on one side and uncompromising defiance on the other, the vote was eventually taken - resulting in the passage of the Bill by a majority of 17 votes. The vast mass of peers abstained from voting and left the determination of the issue to the active "Hedgers" and, of course, the "Ditchers". I think the actual figures were 44 for the Bill and 27 against. For the second time, the great Ulster-cum-Tory bluff was called.

Thus vanished the second of the cards that the new Toryism was playing for its ends. There remained in their

hands but one card, the Home Rule card, the "Orange card". And it was soon evident that that card, the possible "ace" in their hand, was going to be played by Carson to its fullest possible extent. How full that extent was to be depended on one thing, and one thing only, then by no means specifically apparent: was the great British Conservative Party prepared to back Carson, at least in his contingent rebellion? After the action of the peers in regard to the Parliament, and, having regard to the support they received thereon by the bulk of the Conservative Party in the Commons, led by its leader, Balfour, Carson and his Irish supporters had every reason not to be oversure of support from that source.

However, nothing daunted, and seeing that the House of Lords, the great fortress of himself and his English confederates, for the maintenance of whose "Divine Right" they had all been fighting, had been irreparably weakened, Carson and his Irish supporters determined that his best course was to push on and expand his physical forceand illegal activities. In the words of Mr. Colvin, Carson's biographer: "the (former) attacks on the Union had been defeated in Parliament, and at the polls, but in 1911, the capitulation of the House of Lords left Ireland bare to the enemy (sic!), and in Ireland there was this stronghold where the fight could be continued, the Protestant

north". And so to Protestant Ulster, Carson and his Parliamentary Lieutenants and confederates hied themselves.

On 23rd of that September, Carson summoned the Orangemen, and the members of the Unionist clubs in Ulster, to meet him at Craigavon, his chief lieutenant, James Craig's, residence on the south shore of Belfast Lough, just outside the city. Thither, we are told by the same biographer, over 100,000 people (not all men, by any means) marched in columns of four (p presumably the men) and assembled in a large meadow in front of the residence. Before such an audience, Carson's histrionic and melodramatic qualities were bound to tell, and he was in the full of his peculiar form. Throwing out his chest and squaring his shoulders, he told them in his deep, brooding Dublin accent that "we will yet defeat the most nefarious conspiracy that has ever been hatched against a free people". Hardly a measured understatement, and running the risk of having him labelled as a "typical exaggerative Paddy from the south", only that the Orangemen and their English supporters were equally hysterical in their language, as we shall see. He went on to tell them that they had to "maintain the British connection, and their rights, as citizens of the United Kingdom and British Empire", which, of course, Home Rule would certainly not disturb. Then he struck a more ominous note,

what he called the "logical conclusion". "We must be prepared, in the event of a Home Rule Bill passing, with such measures as will carry on for ourselves the government of those districts of which we have control. We must be prepared ..... the morning Home Rule passes, ourselves to become responsible for the Government of the Protestant Province of Ulster .... Our motto is", he declared, "We rely upon ourselves". There was Griffith's gospel of Sinn Féin being put into actual effect, against a harmless statute of the King's Parliament, to which those first "Sinn Féiners" were perpetually proclaiming their undying loyalty. One wonders had Carson been secretly studying Griffith's famous book "The Resurrection of Hungary"?

Teo days afterwards, Carson met 400 delegates from Unionist Clubs and Orange Lodges in Rosemary Hall, Belfast, who resolved unanimously as follows: "That we, delegates of the Ulster Unionist Association, the Unionist Clubs of Ireland, the Loyal Orange Institution of Ireland, in united meeting assembled, recognising that the public peace of this country is in great and imminent danger by reason of the threat to establish a Parliament in Dublin, and knowing that such a step will inevitably lead to disaster to the Empire, and absolute ruin to Ireland, the degradation of our citizenship in the United Kingdom, and the destruction of our material prosperity

and our civil and religious liberties. Hereby we call upon our leaders to take any steps they may consider necessary to resist the establishment of Home Rule in Ireland, solemnly pledging ourselves that, under no condition, shall we acknowledge any such Government or obey its decrees ....." They passed a second Resolution too: "That inasmuch as H.M's. Government has intimated its intention to pass a measure of Home Rule for Ireland, and, as we have again and again expressed our determination not to submit to Home Rule, the time has now come when we consider it our imperative duty to make arrangements for the provisional Government of Ulster". Thereupon those 400 non-elected but arbitrarily nominated "delegates" took it upon themselves to appoint a commission of five to frame a Constitution for their self-appointed Provisional Government, declaring "the powers and duration of such Provisional Government to come into operation on the day of the passage of any Home Rule Bill, to remain in force until Ulster shall again resume unimpaired her citizenship in the United Kingdom". A number of points emerge from this curious and confused statement that are worth noting. First, the definite evidence, despite the resolve expressed to resist "a Parliament in Dublin" to the death, that Carson was then considering what he ultimately effected, viz: the abandonment

of his own particular people, the Southern Unionists, whom he represented in Parliament as M.P. for Trinity College, Dublin, and, secondly, the absurd statement about "resuming" their citizenship in the United Kingdom, which a Home Rule measure would never have deprived them of.

From that event the physical force preparations quickened up rapidly.

In this wise was the "Ulster Provisional Government" founded. But you cannot have a Government without a force of some kind to maintain it, and to carry out its behests, and so we find a Colonel Wallace, "both a soldier and a solicitor", conveniently at hand to take the first step in establishing an army for that purpose. We read in Colvin: "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 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 in the use of arms'". And Colvin adds, with much frankness: "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". They were going to be "decent loyal rebels" at all cost! Even the enactments of the rebel government were to be passed "by the Central Authority, by and with the assent of His Majesty the King". The date when the Belfast Justices of the Peace granted Wallace's application to drill is another fatal date of that history that should not be forgotten. It was 5th January 1912.

Before I pass from the year 1911, I must draw attention to a very special date. It is 13th November. On that day Bonar Law was elected Chairman, or leader, of the Conservative Party in succession to Balfour. That is the third fatal date in the latter-day history of the United Kingdom, and of the British Empire; the first has already been recorded, viz: 21st February 1910, when Carson replaced Walter Long as Chairman of the Irish Unionist Party. Balfour had lost considerable prestige among his own Diehards and, of course, the Ulster Unionists, by his leading the "Hedgers" in the

Parliament Bill affair. But, apart from that, he had been, for some time, growing uneasy at the way the great Party that he led was being seduced from its traditional constitutional road, and deflected along the way of rebellion and physical force. Coming, as he did, from aristocratic and very conservative stock, with constitutionalism inbred in his blood, his system could not but react, uneasily, to the violent campaign of anti-law and order which Carson, with the enthusiastic backing of some of his own lieutenants, was flaming up in the country. To my mind, Balfour was growing uneasy in the highly responsible position he occupied, of leader of the King's Opposition, and wanted to get out of it before things grew worse. It is true, of course, that, when he had thrown off the mantle of leadership, he was often as bad as the worst of them, in his contribution to the hotting-up campaign. For example, in the very next month after his resignation, we find him, on his native heath, at Haddington, attacking the Prime Minister himself as a "traitor" who had struck a "felon blow" at the State. But that was merely showing that, despite his climb down from high and dangerous responsibility, he was still semper fidelis "to the cause", and could be as good as the wildest of them - then a la mode - when he liked. But, it is clear to me that the main reason for his abandonment of the

Conservative leadership was, not age or health, but anxiety with regard to his responsibilities therein, should that Party back rebellion in Ulster. There could not have been a worse leader selected in his place than Andrew Bonar Law, the son of a Canadian-Scottish manse, whose main religious tenet was a profound fear and horror of "Popery", and particularly of the Irish edition of "Popery". I have given my idea of his character elsewhere and need not waste time on it further. And the curious thing about Bonar Law's election was that it was a pure chance, a freak of fate, that got him the chair; for, if ever there was a dark horse, he was one.

The two obvious contenders for Balfour's vacant chair were Walter Long and Austen Chamberlain, and between these two there was very considerable rivalry in the party with, at one time, a danger that that rivalry would divide the whole Tory organisation. Chamberlain was not liked by the dyed-in-the-wool Tory "True-blues" because he was a Liberal-Unionist and, as such, should not be made the leader of Conservatism; and Long had many enemies and rivals in the Unionist rank and file who were not prepared to back him. Anxiously, the friends of the Party unity hunted for a "compromise" candidate. First they thought of Carson, but he would not leave the chairmanship of the Irish Unionist Party. Eventually, one was found, a most

unlikely one, the man whom Asquith described as "meekly ambitious" - Bonar Law. And Law, with the powerful support of the Aitken press, was duly elected - a most fateful election for all the great interests of State and constitution involved, as all who read the history of that time can now plainly see.

With Bonar Law's election in Balfour's stead, the "Orange Card", the card of physical force, and no compromise whatsoever on any kind of all-Ireland autonomy, that was to be played had every prospect of achieving the purposes expected of it. Colvin records in his book on Carson that "Before going to the meeting, Bonar Law had gone to Carson and offered to stand down in his favour; and Carson, again refusing, had urged Bonar Law to go forward. And so it came about that when Mr. Long moved, and Mr. Chamberlain seconded the proposal, Sir Edward Carson ± left the rooms and returned with Mr. Bonar Law, like a bride on the arm of her father". A fatal union, indeed, for England, Ireland, and what was once the great British Empire!

From this action, it was obvious that Carson and Law had agreed to carry out the former's policy of violence; but, less than six months later, that alliance was to be given definite and unmistakable shape, as we shall see presently. Everything was going splendidly for Carson, and the playing of his last card, his "Orange Card". Everything, but one thing. That

Hamlet's ghost, that wretched skeleton in the harmonious cupboard - the Southern and Western Loyalists of Ireland, that Carson so often swore he would never desert, no never, no matter what the cost. At Croydon, for example, he declared: "We will stop at nothing if an attempt is to be made to hand the Loyalists of Ireland over to those whom we believe to be the enemies of our country, and who certainly are the enemies of yours". Despite all his protests of unending fidelity to those people, who were, in a way that the Ulsterians were not, his own people, the Loyalists of South and West were not feeling just a hundred per cent. happy.

To go back to Colvin again: Having stated that his hero did not mind most Liberal taunts, he goes on to give an exception: "But the Liberals touched him more nearly in another and more subtle line of attack - the attempt to divide the Unionists of Southern Ireland from the Unionists of the north. His heart was with the people among whom he had been born and bred, but he realised the difference between these two, and the danger of division. In the north, the Unionists were compact and powerful - at least half of the population - and in control of its territories, its industries and its economic power; in the south, they were a scattered minority ..... protected only by the power of the British occupation, a

sacrifice, were that arm withdrawn, to the vindictive savagery of an ancient fued. Conceal it from themselves as they might, there was for these Southern Unionists a dilemma, which grew the more dreadful as it approached, either to go into exile, or submit to a triumphant enemy"(sic). How strange those prospective fears of "the enemy" seem today anent the actual position in the Republican part of Ireland! And, so great were the fears that, according to Colvin, a desperate temptation assailed those poor Southern Loyalists: none other than "to make terms (with the "enemy", presumably) while terms could be made".

Carson knew all that, and he also knew that the Government were proceeding slowly, if deliberately, with their Irish policy Hence he proposed, according to his biographer, Colvin, "a demonstration which would both frighten them and impress the country, and that must be done in Ulster. The Irish Nationalists, he calculated, would not have Home Rule without the north; and if he could prove that the north would not have Home Rule, he would bring the whole thing to a stand". And, Colvin also tells us, Carson was convinced that the one hope for the Southern Loyalists lay in northern resistance. "It seemed to him", writes Colvin, "as plain as a pikestaff, that to finance Home Rule would be utterly impossible without

the taxable resources of Belfast ..... To stop Home Rule in Ulster would ..... prevent it for all Ireland".

So that was the depth and height of his frequently avowed pledges of faith to his own Southern Unionists. They were all based on a gamble, the gamble that, because "Ulster" would not accept Home Rule, ergo, Redmond would not accept Home Rule without the north, and, therefore, the whole Home Rule agitation would collapse and wither away; and Carson would be the saviour of southern, as well as northern, loyal susceptibilities.

One of Carson's strongest opponents at that particular time was the Right Honourable Winston Spencer Churchill, M.P., the Home Secretary. In nearly all his speeches and public pronouncements, at that time, Churchill denounced Carson, and the agitation of violence and force that he was conducting. For example, at Dundee, his own constituency, on 3rd October 1911, he spoke scornfully of "the squall which Sir Edward Carson was trying to raise in Ulster, or, rather, in that half of Ulster of which he has been elected Commander-in-Chief. Are we never," he asked, to be allowed to examine this great issue free from party rancour? Sir Edward Carson says 'No' .... He will attempt to set up, in Ulster, a provisional, that is to say, a rebel Government, in defiance of laws which will

have received the assent of Parliament, and of the Crown .... These are his threats ..... We must not attach too much importance to these frothings of Sir Edward Carson ..... I daresay, when the worst comes to the worst, we shall find that civil war evaporates in uncivil words". But Churchill, ever a man of action, was not content with making speeches throughout the country. He would go to Belfast and make one there in the very heart of the rebel city. Accordingly, for that purpose, the Ulster Hall had been taken by the Ulster Liberal Association for 8th February 1912. But those good citizens reckoned without their real host. On 11th January 1912, the Standing Committee of the Ulster Unionist Council unanimously resolved that "it observed with astonishment the deliberate challenge thrown down by Mr. Winston Churchill, Mr. John Redmond, Mr. Joseph Devlin and Lord Pirrie, in announcing their intention to hold a Home Rule meeting, in the centre of the loyal city of Belfast, and resolves to take steps to prevent its being held".

This high-handed action to forbid the Ulster Hall, a Corporation property open to all citizens to assemble for lawful purposes, to one of His Majesty's first Ministers, shocked not only Liberals, but friends of the Unionist cause. For example, "The Times" wrote: "We cannot pretend to rejoice in the decision of the Standing Committee ... As a matter of political

ethics, their action is hard to justify, and, even from the point of view of mere political tactics, its wisdom is open to question".

Carson, of course, endorsed the banning of the Ulster Hall to a meeting of his political opponents, and the upshot of it was that he and his fellow rebels in Belfast won out, prevented His Majesty's First Lord of the Admiralty - as the Right Hon. gentleman had become in the interval - from going to and speaking in the Ulster Hall, and compelled him to resort to a canvas marquee in Belfast Celtic Football grounds. As Colvin truly observes, Carson and his friends "had, in effect, forbidden a Minister of the Crown to do a thing and the Minister had obeyed them". Carson had won his first victory in the campaign of the "Orange Card", and, though he knew he had, he did not at that time realise its sweeping effect. For example, though the Liberals made a big show by drafting into Belfast five battalions of Infantry, a squadron of cavalry and a detachment of Royal Engineers; yet, on that same day, 6th February 1912, Asquith sat down and wrote to the King that, although the Bill, as introduced, was to apply to all Ireland, the Irish leaders were to be warned that "the Government held themselves free to make changes, if it became clear that special treatment must be provided for the Ulster counties, and that,

in this case, the Government will be ready to recognise the necessity, either by amendment, or by not passing it (the Bill) on under the provisions of the Parliament Act".

Carson's victory was much greater than he could possibly have realised. Not merely had a Minister of the Crown been prohibited from addressing the supporters of his Party in a public hall in one of the King's cities, and that the most loyal but the principle of Partition had been given birth to and had been accepted by Carson's chief political opponent, the Prime Minister himself, albeit tacitly at the time. Much was to flow from those events.

No wonder the Unionists were jubilant, and their jubilation manifested itself in speeches from their leaders, more and more bellicose. Asquith was to introduce the Home Rule Bill in the House of Commons on 11th April 1912, and, accordingly on 9th of that month, Carson and his new ally, Bonar Law, betook themselves to Ulster to work up the mobs there. And then, in Belfast, before a great multitude of Orangemen, Carson announced that "Mr. Bonar Law and I have shaken hands on this business and we are going to see it through". After which, Bonar Law gave the Orangemen this message on behalf of the Unionist Party: "Though the brunt of the battle will be yours, there will not be wanting help from across the Channel". And a few days later,

at Balmoral, before a crowd of 100,000, Bonar Law, with Sir Edward Carson, Lord Londonderry and Mr. Walter Long, took the salute of the Ulster Volunteers, as they paraded before him in serried ranks. As Carson's biographer, Colvin, with remarkable candour, observes, regarding that event: "We are now unhappily accustomed to force in civil affairs, but to the 70 or 80 Members of Parliament who looked on at that great demonstration, it must have been a startling phenomenon, a formidable threat to that system of government by consent which had been taken for granted in these islands for a hundred years and more". A "startling phenomenon" and "formidable threat" of physical force to ordered democratic government it certainly was, endorsed and countenanced as it was, by the presence and the words of the Chairman of the British Conservative Party, and the Leader of the King's Opposition. None of those witnessing it saw then, or could guess at the long shadows it was to cast in front of it, and the long progeny of "private armies" it was to beget, not only in the British Isles, but in Europe, and the British Empire.

But, as though the endorsements it had received were not considered sufficient, the rebel parade received the blessings of certain sections of official Christendom. We are told that the Primate of All Ireland, and the Moderator of the Presbyterian

Church, opened the day with prayer, and blessed the drums and lethal weapons. The Leader of His Majesty's Opposition harangued those warriors in this wise: "You are the men who know what you are fighting for, and love what you know" - a quotation from Cromwell's speech to his Ironsides. "You are a besieged city", he informed them. "The timid have left you. Your Lundys have betrayed you; but you have closed your gates. The Government have erected by their Parliament Act a boom against you to shut you off from the help of the British people. You will burst that boom. That help will come, and, when the crisis is over, men will say to you, in words not unlike those used by Pitt - "You have saved yourselves by your exertions, and you will save the Empire by your example'". What a pity Bonar Law, and his companions on that occasion, are not here today to see what their policy of violence has done to the Empire by their example!

Colvin comments (with truth): "Inspiring as such words were, there was more in the presence of Mr. Bonar Law than in his speech, for, standing there and taking the salute, he was making, not only the Ulster cause but the Ulster policy, his own. There was a symbolism in this presence at the saluting point of a military review, of which, were it for good or ill,

none could miss the significance. And, to make it more obvious - the Ulster Leader and the Leader of the whole Unionist Party Carson and Bonar Law - each grasped the other's hand, as though formally ratifying a compact, made thus publicly on the eve of battle". And Walter Long, the cool, English squire and prominemt figure in the Party of the Constitution, declared with, Colvin says, "English bluntness" - not sedition, of course - that "if they are going to put Lord Londonderry and Sir Edward Carson into the dock, they will have to find one large enough to hold the whole Unionist Party". "Thus", finally comments Colvin, "on the eve of the Home Rule Bill, not only the Unionists of Ulster, but His Majesty's Opposition, were ranged together in defiance of a proposed law". To which we say, "Quite so".

On 11th April 1911, the Prime Minister, Asquith, presented the Third Home Rule Bill to the

House of Commons. Carson's attack on the Bill was mainly twofold: that if Ireland was really a nation the Bill did not go anything like far enough. The police were to be reserved from them for six years; in religious matters they were denied discretion in their own schools and in legal matters there was an appeal outside them to the Privy Council. Mr. Asquith called the Irish a "nation", yet maintained "in this Bill unimpaired and beyond the reach of challenge or question the supremacy, absolute and sovereign, of the Imperial Parliament". On the other hand, he affirmed that the Union was good for Ireland. "The one boast of every Irishman now", he said, "whatever his political creed may be, is the advancing prosperity of his country and the progress that her citizens have made". "What", he proceeded, "is the object of the United Kingdom? As I understand it, it is that all parts shall be worked together as one whole, and with the object that the poorer may be stronger by the co-operation of the richer". In the course of his speech he made this interesting point: "I would like to know when a statesman takes up a question with that line there, what argument is there that you can raise for giving Home Rule to Ireland that you do not equally raise for giving Home Rule to that Protestant minority in the

North East Province?" (And, a fortiori, one would have liked to have asked Carson, for not giving Home Rule to the close on half-million Catholic minority which is a third of the total Six-County population! - K.R.O'S.)

In the debate Churchill played a different tune from his, up to then, strong man role. "It was impossible", he declared, "for a Liberal Government to treat cavalierly or contemptuously ..... the sincere sentiments of a numerous and well-defined community like the Protestants of the North of Ireland". And he went on: "No Liberal will deny that it is the right of every citizen, nay, a duty, provided the circumstances are sufficient, to resist oppression". Then, retreating from that dangerous encouragement to Carson and his rebels, he pointed out the perils of unconstitutional resistance. "The utmost they (the Protestant north) can claim is for themselves ..... Do the counties of Down and Antrim and Londonderry, for instance, ask to be excepted from the scope of this Bill? Do they ask for a Parliament of their own, or do they wish to remain here?"

Sir Edward Grey, a few days later, referred more vaguely to a solution. "If Ulster defeats the solution we propose, or makes it impossible ..... some other solution will have to

be found which will free this House and put the control of Irish affairs in other hands".

But it was not until 11th June 1912, when the Bill was in Committee, that the question of the exclusion of portions of Ulster came to a head and, for the first time, took tangible shape. On that date, two young men, the Hon T. Agar-Robartes, Liberal M.P. for a Cornish constituency, and his friend, the Hon. Neil Primrose, a son of the Earl of Rosebery, recently elected as a Liberal, proposed that the four North-Eastern counties of Antrim, Down, Armagh and Derry should be excluded from the jurisdiction of a Home Rule Parliament in Dublin.

Carson declared that he would vote for the Robartes' Amendment, which he did, but, at the same time, declared that he would "never agree to leave out Tyrone and Fermanagh". So that it would seem that even at that early date the assignment of those two counties with anti-partition majorities had been decided on by the Unionists. And Carson made clear his real reason for backing the amendment which was, not that he wanted any form of exclusion compromise as such, but because, in his opinion, exclusion would make the whole Bill unworkable. He recalled an utterance of Birrell's that, without Ulster, Home Rule would be incomplete and ineffective and said:

"I agree with him. I believe it would be almost impossible ..." Accordingly, on his own showing, he was demanding Partition purely and simply as a foil, "a card" with which to destroy Home Rule for Ireland in any shape or form; and, by destroying Home Rule, destroy also, for many long years to come, at all events, a British Liberal Government.

"Ulster asks for no separate Parliament", he declared, "she never has, in all the long controversy, taken that course ..... and you need fear no action of Ulster which would be in the nature of desertion of any of the southern provinces. If Ulster succeeds, Home Rule is dead. What I said there (i.e. a little earlier in Dublin for the ears of his own South Irish Unionists) is exactly what I am saying now, that Ulster will ask for no separate Parliament". That was the great gamble that he had deliberately decided on: rouse "Ulster" up to demand an exclusion of territory sufficiently large, and Irish Home Rule was dead as the doorpost. It was the typical ascendancy outlook ingrained and begotten in him. Can any good come out of Nazareth? Can the "south" set up on her own successfully without the "north". A gamble that, as events proved, he lost, and lost badly.

Lloyd George opposed the Robartes-Primrose Amendment.

"What", he asked, "is the demand of Ulster (sic!). Not that she should be protected herself, not that she should have autonomy herself, but the right to veto autonomy to the rest of Ireland. That is an intolerable demand". And that was exactly Carson's demand, Carson's gamble.

On 17th June 1912, Bonar Law, the leader of His Majesty's Opposition, rose up in the House of Commons and delivered himself of language that no leader in England claiming to be head of the constitutional party had ever before uttered and uttered inside those precincts dedicated to the rule of law. He said: "They know that if Ulster is in earnest, that if Ulster does resist by force, there are stronger influences than parliamentary majorities. They know that in that case no Government would dare to use their troops to drive them out. They know, as a matter of fact, that the Government which gave the order to employ troops for that purpose would run a greater risk of being lynched in London than the loyalists of Ulster run of being shot in Belfast".

Bonar Law, Chairman of the British Constitutional Party, had thus out-Carsoned Carson, and had done it with undisguised contempt for the Royal Government and its forces for law and order that he was deliberately, and of malice aforethought,

outraging and daring. He also did it with complete impunity and immunity. Carson, up to then, had never gone quite so far in his language; later, of course, he followed the example of his new pupil and certainly levelled up with him - even he could not excel him - in barefaced incitement to violence and rebellion against an Act of Parliament. It will be remembered how, but a year or so beforehand, he deprecated the very idea of the army being subverted from obeying orders to put down insurrection, even were that insurrection caused by the privileged "loyalists" of Ulster.

Prior to Bonar Law's leadership, Carson and his Orangemen were the sole disseminators of sedition and contingent treason which public opinion was inclined to dismiss as the rantings of an irreconcilable and bigoted, but not very formidable element in the north-east corner of Ireland that would, in due course, simmer down and be forgotten. Bonar Law, however, by out-Carsoning Carson, and by committing the great Conservativ Party to Carson's fatal gamble, gave the new irregularism a menacing and decidedly dangerous directive that was destined to have a determining influence on subsequent British and Irish politics and indeed on that of many other countries as well.

From the day Balfour wisely stepped down from the

Conservative leadership and was replaced by Bonar Law, the conspiracy against the life and future of the Liberal Party grew more audacious, more reckless and, of course, much more formidable. It could well afford to do so because it had immensely strong backing. All the social prestige and the then enormous wealth and resources of the aristocracy, the upper middle class bourgeoisie and their powerful press, were solidly and enthusiastically behind it.

As an instance of the immense social prestige of Tory aristocracy in those days, Austen Chamberlain, who was only on their social fringe, used to say that he could always tell the state of his own political fortune by the number of fingers, two or ten, the influential Lady Londonderry gave him when they met!

The speeches of the leading Conservative statesmen of that day soon began to reflect the new anarchism. Even today, after more than forty years, they make extraordinary reading as the propaganda of an avowedly law and order party. I do not propose to waste time here by filling these pages with excerpts from those lawless orations. They are on record in ample measure for posterity to read and benefit from. I shall content myself by giving some quotations from

the new Conservative leader's statements, and those of his ally, Carson, on some of the pivotal occasions in his revolutionary career. I should mention that, at the time of his very unexpected election to Balfour's vacancy, it was vainly hoped by several that a shrewd, cautious Scots-Canadian like him would exert a beneficial influence on the Party and maintain it on the strictly constitutional causeway of its time-honoured traditions. True, Carson had been going around declaring that the new Conservative Chief was behind his policy of violence, heart and soul, but that was discounted in many quarters. However, they had not long to wait before Carson's averment was proved true, and a hundred per cent. true at that.

Bonar Law began at once on what Asquith called the "New Style". In one of his first speeches as leader in the Albert Hall he announced that the era of compliments amongst politicians was ended and delighted his audience with a speech of a corner-boy character, described as "full of bitter jibes and stinging scores". The Government were "Gaderene Swine", "Humbugs", "Artful Dodgers", "Tricksters", etc. "This", says Spender, "was the new note which was to become thriller with every month to July 1914".

On the eve of the introduction of the third Home Rule

Bill, Bonar Law, with several prominent English Conservatives, crossed over to Belfast and addressed a series of meetings throughout the Six Counties. At Omagh, he declared in the presence of Carson that he shared the feelings of his audience on the Home Rule question and "intended to support them to the utmost of his power." And at Belfast he gave them "this message on behalf of the Unionist Party: though the brunt of the battle will be yours, there will not be wanting help from across the Channel". And at the great meeting at Balmoral, a few days later, Carson, having proclaimed that "if necessary, they would treat the Government with force" oratorically demanded of Bonar Law that "you and I, in the presence of this, our nation (sic!) should shake hands over this question", which confirmatory act was duly accomplished by the confederates, and their pact thus ostentiously sealed.

Apropos this Balmoral (Belfast) meeting, Carson's biographer, Ian Colvin, comments, with truly surprising candour: "In the Show Ground at Balmoral . . before a crowd of people estimated at 100,000, Mr. Bonar Law, Sir Edward Carson, Lord Londonderry and Mr. Walter Long took the salute of the Ulster Volunteers. We are now, unhappily, accustomed to force in civil affairs, but to the 70 or 80 Members of Parliament

who looked at that great demonstration, it must have been a startling phenomenon, a formidable threat to that system of government by consent which had been taken for granted in these islands for a hundred years or more. The manhood of loyal Ulster, an army ..... of between eighty and ninety thousand men in military order and showing in their carriage the effects of drill and discipline, divided into columns, marched on either side of the little pavilion in which these four men stood". And he goes on to tell us that a "solemnity characteristic of Ulster made the demonstration the more impressive. The Primate of all Ireland and the Moderator of the Presbyterian Church opened the day with prayer".

Thus was the first private army officially launched in the Liberal and Constitutional Europe of the early decades of this century, launched before "H.M.'s. Opposition" and blessed by the leaders of the "loyal" churches. Not one of those looking on at that great parade of contingent rebels saw into the near future the large crop of spiritual children that were to emanate in Europe and elsewhere from that original private army.

As the candid Colvin further observes: "Thus, on the eve of the Home Rule Bill, not only the Unionists of Ulster,

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PART III

ORIGINAL

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ROINN COSANTA.

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS.

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 1770.

Witness

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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 a ction 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 safe-guards 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 settle-ment, 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

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PART IV

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21
BURO STAIRE MILEATA 1913-21
No. W.S. 1770

ROINN COSANTA.

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS.

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 1770.

Witness

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

Identity.

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

Commissioner, Irish Land Commission, 1923 to date.

Subject.

National Activities, and Dáil Éireann Land Courts, 1900-1921.

Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness.

Nil.

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Form B.S.M. 2

ORIGINAL

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BURO STAIRE MILEATA 1913-21
NO. W.S. 1,770

short of arms or equipment of any sort, in which respect they cut a pathetic figure vis-vis Carson's well-armed men. One of their biggest handicaps was a lamentable shortage of funds. True, particularly after Larne, funds were pouring in from America, Australia, Canada and, indeed, the world generally, but they were nearly all addressed to and found their way to the Redmondite and Hibernian element on the Executive who, from the beginning, feared and disliked the movement, and, at no time, meant business. But, though the founder members of the Volunteers were thus doubly handicapped, they had no intention of allowing the grass to grow under their feet. They resolved on decisive action to secure adequate arms for their men, without which, as they fully realised, they would be little more than a feckless and worthless mob; for you cannot discipline and control would-be soldiers for very long without putting arms into their hands. In this resolve the leaders were much assisted at that time by Redmond's belated but nonetheless welcome endorsement of the Volunteers, and his call on all Irish Nationalists to join them, to get arms and defend Ireland's rights which looked very much like being filched from her. In other words, to safeguard Home Rule: to see that the Home Rule Bill was made an act and put into effect at the earliest possible date for all Ireland. In

In considering this phase of Irish history it is important to remember that at that time not 2% of the Volunteers were convinced separatists, seeking an opportunity to use the new force to strike a blow for a sovereign Irish Republic. Home Rule and nothing but Home Rule was then the "ne plus ultra" of Ireland's demand, and nothing more. So much was this the case that the avowed separatists amongst the Volunteer leaders were not prepared to make or force an issue towards this target. The late Darrell Figgis puts that aspect of the position well in his book "Recollections of the Irish War". He writes therein: "It must be remembered that at that time none doubted that within a few months Home Rule would begin to come into operation with the transfer of services. And John Redmond plainly said to me that he had no intention of forming a new government with so incommensurable an organisation in the field of dispute of his authority. In Ireland, therefore, the two chief political organisations, the United Irish League and the Ancient Order of Hibernians, were warned; and the new movement began to encounter suspicion and hostility where once all had gone well ..... with a great wisdom and skill the leaders of the Volunteers had, during these early months, avoided all suspicion of opposing political organisations and so had averted hostility.

The fruits of the political crop were, apparently, ripe to harvest, and the Volunteers had been presented as a drilled alte alternative, should that harvest be threatened. Indeed, this was true political wisdom, spoken in all sincerity by the leaders of the revolutionary side of the movement, such as Eoin MacNeill and Roger Casement. It was not the faith of revolutionaries like Tom Clarke. But both were agreed that, however their ends might differ, the Volunteers, to be an effective body, must be kept as a separate organisation, free from political control. Otherwise (it was argued) they would cease to be a drilled disciplined force and become a parade of political fustion, neither picturesque nor practical. And now this danger, long foreseen and adroitly averted, became a continual anxiety, with the alternative of a disastrous split".

Not only in equipment, finance and powerful support had the U.V.F. the advantage over the I.V., but also in unity of aim and leadership. In only one matter had the I.V. the advantage of the U.V.F. - in numbers.

The excitement and furore in the country caused by the successful Orange gun-running coup in the north had nearly faded away, and we had begun to take the constant and unmolested armed activities of the Orange Volunteers for granted, and as part of the day's routine scene, when,

suddenly, the Irish Volunteers produced "Howth" as their complement to "Larne".

The date was July 26th, 1914: an important one indeed; and another date for our "Special Register". On that Sunday morning, some 1,200 Irish Volunteers marched out of Dublin to Howth where they took possession of the Pier. And, as in the case of Larne, the local police and customs officers were prevented from interfering with the work in hands, and the telegraph and telephone wires were disconnected from Dublin.

Erskine Childers' white yacht, which had been lying out at sea behind Lambay Island, making herself as inconspicuous as possible, then sailed into the harbour and tied up at the pier held by the Volunteers, where she discharged some 1,500 Mauser rifles, of old but serviceable pattern, and some 45,000 rounds of ammunition. This cargo, having been safely landed and distributed amongst them, the Volunteers re-formed ranks and marched back to Dublin, most of them proudly bearing rifles on their shoulders. The authorities were taken completely by surprise. For some time after Larne, they had manifested a keen and alert interest in the Irish Volunteers accompanying their parades with strong posses of police, an honour they never, or hardly ever, bestowed on the Ulster Volunteers. They were, very naturally, anticipating an arms

coup like that of Larne; but, as the weeks passed and nothing untoward occurred, save harmless parades of armless men, they lost interest and ceased to interfere to any serious degree. Nevertheless, the Mind of British officialdom, most certainly the Mind of Dublin Castle, had a wholly different outlook on Nationalist Volunteers from what it had on Orange Volunteers, no longer "loyal" as they were. And they reacted accordingly to form and tradition.

At the end of the Howth Road the returning Volunteers found themselves barred by a double rank of bayonets with men of the King's Own Scottish Borderers behind them, supported by a large force of D.M.P. under no less a person than their Assistant Commissioner himself. This individual, Mr. W.V. Harrel, peremptorily demanded, in the King's name, the surrender of the rifles to him. On this point an argument ensued between the police officer and Darrell Figgis, representing the Volunteers, as to the legality of such a demand. The "pour parleys" came to nothing and things ended in a rather serious scuffle when Harrel stupidly ordered his men to seize the rifles, in which two soldiers and three Volunteers were injured, the latter by bayonet thrusts. Whilst renewed parleys were taking place, the Volunteers, save for a frontal facade,

broke ranks and made off stealthily with the rifles, leaving only 25 in the hands of the Crown forces.

Thus did 1,500 rifles and 49,000 rounds of ammunition get into the possession of the Irish "Home Rule" Volunteers. It was, undoubtedly, something; but, of course, it paled into insignificance beside the vast armoury that was delivered so smoothly and safely into the hands of the "Anti-Home Rule" Volunteers but a few months earlier. However, such as it was, it was most welcome to that virtually armless body.

The traditional partisanship of the Castle had seldom, in its history, been more clearly or more patently demonstrated and the demonstration was certainly not lost on the Dublin crowds. They were simply seething with indignation and anger at the Clontarf affair. Carson's men could parade in force and inarms at will in the northern part of the country without let or hindrance, as 5,000 of them did the previous day in Belfast, but when Nationalist Volunteers attempted to do likewise on a much smaller scale in the south, the gun, bayonet and truncheon of "constituted authority" were instantly invoked and put to effective and deadly use.

The emotion of violent indignation that swept over the Dublin crowds that day affected even Harrel's D.M.P. units, a dozen of whom refused to obey his order to seize the rifles

and were at once put under arrest.

After the inconclusive affair at Clontarf, the troops were ordered back to Dublin. They consisted of 110 men of the K.O.S.B. Regiment, under Captain Cobden, who was joined at Fairview by an additional 60 Scottish Borderers under Major Coke. An irate, undoubtedly noisy and hostile, but by no means unruly, crowd followed the soldiers on their return, booing and jeering them; though, beyond some stone throwing, there was no great violence offered them. As against this view, current and generally accepted at the time, the evidence of the Borderers concerned before the Judicial Commission that inquired into the affair was that 25% of the troops were "badly hurt". That, however, is a very relevant term, and certainly did not, as it could not, include a single case of any soldier being knocked out. No doubt the perpetual jeering and booing irritated the troops, but that could not excuse the wanton firing on the closely packed crowd in Bachelor's Walk, particularly by trained units from an army that boasted of its high discipline. Volleys from some 21 rifles were discharged on the unarmed people, resulting in the killing of a woman and two men and the wounding of 38 others.

The Judicial Commission, comprised of three judges, found

that the Volunteers were not "an unlawful assembly" and that the soldiers were not justified in firing, but failed to come to any decision as to whether an order to fire had been given.

I have referred frequently to the partisan character of Castle rule; indeed, it is one of my principal contentions in this statement. Accordingly, I have deemed it well, at this point, to produce some more evidence of that lamentable and traditional bias in the then governors of Ireland towards the aspirations and sacrosanctities of the great mass of the governed. For this evidence I must skip a few years and turn to the records of the Hardinge Committee of Inquiry into the 1916 Rising. At a session of that Commission on 29th May 1916, Colonel Sir John Ross of Blandenburg, former Chief Commissioner of the Dublin Metropolitan Police, referring gratuitously to the Larne gun-running, said: "Some arms were smuggled into the north of Ireland, and they were secretly and unostentatiously distributed. That proceeding was, of course, very wrong, but the authority of the Government was not defied (sic!) ..... As soon as the arms disappeared from the port of landing, the police were unable to discover their whereabouts ..... Owing to the way in which the landing had been conducted in the north of Ireland, the police had not been able to put their

instructions into force, and the arms remained in the possession of their owners. (Again sic!) ..... He wished to say that the landing of arms at Howth was in open violation of the law. Mr. Harrel ..... went out with a large body of police, as it was his duty to do, and eventually succeeded in taking some of the rifles illegally landed there from the men engaged in this disorderly conduct".

That testimony must surely be a masterpiece of excusatory understatement by an Irish police officer in respect of an act of rebellion and defiance of the law that lasted the better part of a bright summer night. And it is certainly curious to see the Commission permitting a district police chief to adumbrate irrelevantly on matters and events that occurred a hundred miles away from his limited territory and within another police jurisdiction altogether.

Sir John of Blandenburg unquestionably spoke his mind and, in doing so, has supplied us with an admirable illustration of the theoretically impartial police mind on Irish matters; a mirror-like reflection indeed of Irish contrasts on the then official level.

As a balance and a corrective to Blandenburg's evidence I now give an excerpt from that of Sir James B. Dougherty,

the then Liberal Presbyterian Under-Secretary for Ireland: "The National Volunteers were the response of the Nationalists to the Volunteer movement in Unionist Ulster; and the gun-running at Howth was but a natural sequel to the gun-running at Larne. I do not care to enter into details as to the rise and progress of the Ulster movement. I can only say that those who led and encouraged it shouldered a very heavy burden of responsibility. They were, indeed, the persons who played with matches in a powder magazine. It has been sometimes said that Ireland has been made the playground of English politicians, and some confirmation of this saying in the present case may be found in the fact that the earliest attempt to import into the north of Ireland discarded rifles from continental armies was promoted and directed in London. Rifles bought in Hamburg were landed here. They were paid for by an English cheque, and persons most intimately connected with the reception and distribution of the imported arms were closely connected with the political organisation in the important London borough where the arms were found".

With these excerpts, which I shall let speak for themselves, I now pass from the Howth gun-running affair.

"Larne" and "Howth" were high level and exciting news in Ireland and Great Britain and, for that matter, throughout the world. But, when they were being enacted and given the

"place d'honneur" in the world press, a certain other event occurred that horrified the civilised world, though, when it happened, it caused hardly a tremor or fear or anxiety in any of the world chancellories beyond that of the two interested countries. That event was the assassination of the Austrian Crown Prince, the Archduke Charles, whilst he was on an official visit to Sarajevo, the capital city of the Austrian province of Bosnia. The terrible event, coming as it did in a period of almost doldrum tranquillity in the world at large, horrified everybody, and Servia, whence came the captured assassin, came in for an avalanche of abuse. But, beyond expressions of horror at the deed, the lamentable deed was not, at that moment, taken too seriously anywhere. People saw in it but another murderous outbreak by those barbaric Servians who, but a few years since, had savagely slaughtered their King and Queen as they lay asleep at night in bed. The world, though profoundly shocked at the murder, lost not a wink of sleep over it and, after the initial shock, dismissed it from its mind, content that the Austrians had caught the culprit and would deal out justice to him.

Other events were crowding in of much more moment, particularly to the peoples of the United Kingdom. One was the Government's Amending Bill which provided for the temporary

exclusion of the four predominantly Protestant counties in the north. This bill passed the House of Commons and went up to the House of Lords where it was altered to provide for the exclusion of the whole nine counties of Ulster - five with Catholic majorities - and its temporary character was eliminated. Somewhat later, on 12th July, the Ulster Unionists, moving from strength to strength, confident in the conviction that they were backed by the overwhelming weight of the wealth, the courtly and social prestige of the Kingdom and the assurance that the British armed forces would refuse to oppose their rebellion, proclaimed and named the "Ulster Provincial Government" which, the proclamation declared, would, on the day the Home Rule Act was signed by the King and put into effect, take over the governance of the province "in trust for His Majesty". In the light of today, it seems just unbelievable that such an outlandish position could have eventuated at any time without having been laughed out of existence. But, indeed, it was; and, seemingly, accepted and allowed to exist without any interference as something quite in the order of things.

Next came the Buckingham Palace Conference. This was undoubtedly initiated by the King himself who, from his

particular position and, having regard to his kingly responsibilities on the one hand, and his close social contact with the leaders and instigators of the rebellion, was, naturally, growing more and more unhappy about the way things were shaping in his hitherto solidly established realm. Some people say that George V was no Home Ruler, and that, at heart, he was on the side of the Ulster rebels. Others, that he was vexed and irritated at the quandary they had put the Crown and himself into. He certainly detested some of the Tory leaders, particularly Bonar Law, whom he never forgave for his rudeness to him, which Law's friends excused and dignified by the synonym "blunt frankness". He could not stand the unmannerly little Glasgow bourgeois, and who could blame him? My readings on that period lead me to believe that he had little "gradh" also for Carson with whom I don't think he ever had a personal or private interview. Carson's crude and irresponsible technique would, most certainly, not be in harmony with the rather sensitive little monarch's grain. I have little doubt, though, that he did dislike "Home Rule" or any kind of autonomy for Ireland, as the Crown always did, no matter who was wearing it, (even, all things to the contrary notwithstanding, the popular Edward VIII); but he recognised

it as inevitable and disliked, even more, the upheaval and disintegration that appeared to be going on in his political institutions and, particularly, in his army.

The King's Buckingham Palace Conference comprised a personnel of eight, viz: Asquith and Lloyd George representing the Liberal Government; Lansdowne and Bonar Law representing the English Unionists; Redmond and Dillon representing the Irish Nationalists, and Carson and Craig representing the Ulster Unionists. This conference was the result of two months' quiet but persistent pressure by the King on Asquith and others. A.P. Ryan, in his book, "Mutiny at the Curragh", describes very pithily how the conference came to be born, not without a gentle touch of satire: "He (the King) saw the Prime Minister in the middle of May and, once more, in the middle of June, urging him to take action with the assistance of Lowther. Asquith still did not feel the time was ripe. He was engaged in yet another series of negotiations behind the scenes. The wooing of Bonar Law and Carson was on again and it was being conducted in a most amiable fashion. All the leaders were now convinced that, somehow or other, some parts of Ulster must be allowed to contract out. Maps of this and that county began to be exchanged. Asquith, writing to ask Carson to let him have

one of these maps which had been prepared in the north, added a postscript to his informal letter: 'I see', he wrote, 'that my late lady friends are transferring their attention to you'! Mrs. Drummond had been making a nuisance of herself on Carson's doorstep.

A few days later, on May 28th, Simon, as Attorney-General, invited Carson to his King's Birthday dinner. As the bidden guest was still being publicly denounced for the part he had so openly taken in the gun-running, Simon anticipated that there might be some little awkwardness in accepting the invitation. 'I should be so proud and pleased if - for old sake's time - you found it possible to come .... I appreciate you may possibly feel a difficulty (though I trust not) and if you came you would add greatly to my pleasure ..... My own feelings of gratitude amd devotion to you for all you did for me will never be altered, whatever happens'.

I should, perhaps, in fairness, explain, before I comment on those letters, that the fulsome expression of gratitude in Simon's last sentence referred to the fact that he had "devilled" with Carson in his early days at the Bar. But the letters are really past comment. They surely speak for themselves in every way. Here we have the King's Prime Minister and, worse still, the King's Attorney General, the custodian

of his law and order, going out of their way to fawn on and entertain a man who was virtually a rebel in arms against the authority they were sworn to uphold. Carson, to give him his due, saw through them and their ilk from the beginning. He well knew, backed as he was by the real power and force in the kingdom, that he had little or nothing to fear from Ministers so supine, and never hesitated to give vent to his contempt for them. Unless we had it in black and white, could we believe that the Attorney-General, on the eve of drawing up an inditement against a subject for levelling war against the King, would write to him, begging of him to vouchsafe him the great pleasure of his company as an honoured guest at a dinner given to celebrate his King's birthday. I understand that Carson - to his credit - and, in this instance, with some sense of decorum, declined Simon's invitation.

The Buckingham Palace Conference lasted for only three days, from 21st to 24th July, breaking down finally and irrevocably on the future of the counties Fermanagh and Tyrone whose respective populations had small but decisive Catholic majorities. That conference can be said to have represented the last straw of hope for a tolerable settlement of the Irish question along strictly limited and constitutional lines.

With the Larne, the Howth, and particularly the bloody Bachelor's Walk affairs so recently in the public mind, it seemed to Irish Nationalists that, seeing that the King had directly and actively intervened, an All-Ireland Parliament would, with proper safeguards to allay Ulster apprehensions, at last result. And safeguards of a drastic character were expected by the Nationalists to be asked for, which the latter, for the sacred principle of unity, were fully prepared to concede. Hence it was that Nationalists were frankly surprised and disappointed at the Conference's failure. They were sure that once the King had taken a hand in it, success must follow.

However, there was not time to indulge in bitter introspection at the result. Events on the continent were taking a turn that was speeding the world into a terrible war at an alarming rate. The little black, or rather, blood-red cloud that appeared over the Balkan city of Sarajevo a month previously had, in the meantime, cast its sinister shadow over half Europe when we in Ireland were all absorbed in the fate of Home Rule. By the first week in August, events that we had hardly noticed had plunged Germany, France, Russia, Austria and Servia into war. Then, on 3rd

August, came the German invasion of Belgium, followed by the British declaration of war against the Central Empires on the following day.

August 4th was, in truth, a most momentous day for the British Empire and Europe, though, at the time, no one could have guessed at its historical consequences. I remember well how we devoured the newspapers in those days; in particular, I shall never forget our reactions to the report of the proceedings in Parliament on that crucial date; how, when Sir Edward Grey, the Foreigm Secretary, referred to Ireland as the "one bright spot" in the surrounding gloom there was a storm of applause from the intensely relieved House, and how Redmond made an unexpected ex tempore speech, indicating that no longer was England's difficulty Ireland's opportunity. That was the speech in which he made his famous offer to the Government. "I say to the Government that they may tomorrow withdraw every one of their troops from Ireland. I say that the coast of Ireland will be defended against foreign invasion by her armed sons, and for this purpose armed Nationalist Catholics in the south will be only too glad to join arms with the armed Protestant Ulstermen in the north". And he asked: "Is it too much to hope that out of this situation there may spring a result which will be good not merely for

the Empire, but good for the future welfare and integrity of the Irish nation?"

Redmond's statement certainly reflected the feelings of the vast majority of Irish Nationalists of all schools and sects. Even we "dissenter" Nationalists were delighted with it and acclaimed him for making it. But we also noted that Redmond's, to us, generous gesture evoked no response from his Ulster opponent. Indeed, the day after, Redmond received a direct rebuff from Carson who, in pursuance of his conciliatory policy, he sought out and had an interview with him in the presence of the Speaker. Gwynn describes what happened in his "History of Partition". Redmond, at the interview, "took it for granted that Asquith would agree immediately to put the Home Rule Bill on the Statute Book though its operation might have to be delayed. He had written to this effect to Asquith on the previous day and he now informed Carson of his attitude. But their interview showed that Carson was still determined to prevent the Bill from becoming law. Redmond reported the conversation immediately in a letter to Asquith, stating that:

> "I had an interview this afternoon with Sir Edward Carson in the Speaker's Library. The Speaker was also present. I found Sir Edward Carson in an absolutely

> irreconcilable mood about everything. So much so, indeed, that it was impossible to discuss matters calmly with him. The gist of our conversation was this ..... that if the Government dared to put Home Rule on the Statute Book, he and the Tory Party would obstruct the Appropriation Bill and revive all the bitterness of the controversy. He would not listen to any suggested way out of the difficulty at all, and is evidently in the worst possible temper".

Such was the attitude of Carson, the self-acclaimed super-loyalist, when that Empire for which he had so often proclaimed his undying love, found herself joined in deadly combat with powerful foes. As far as he was concerned, it was "To hell with the Empire", if it meant, even at that dread hour in its history, the mere symbolical placing of the Home Rule Bill on the Statute Book.

Thus came World War No. I to Ireland and her then rulers. I cannot hope to convey in words today the shock of that news to my generation in its youth forty years ago. I have already pointed out that the long spell of peace that European countries had enjoyed had banished the very conception of a major European war from our minds. The idea of such a war struck us as fantastic and, indeed, ludicrous. It was almost as incredible as though we hard that man had reverted to cannibalism. Yet, there it was without the shadow of a doubt.

All around us, wherever we looked, were tangible and unmistakable signs of its ugly reality. The roads, streets and railways were crowded with soldiers and sailors on their way to barracks or to entrain at stations, and reservists and half-pay men on their way to rejoin the colours.

An incident stands out in my memory of those days. A very happily drunken Royal Inniskilling Fusilier was staggering along John St., Omagh, chanting some ribald ditty to the cheers of a group of spectators, most of whom, like the soldier, were Catholics and Nationalists. At a point on his rocky route he slipped and lurched into a window in one of the offices in that street, smashing it to pieces. Pulling himself together and resuming his wobbly course, he told them to their vast amusement that they could "send the bill to Kaiser Bill".

There can be no doubt at all that for the first years of the war Ireland's sympathies were almost wholly on the side of the Franco-British allies. Apart from the events of the war itself, there had always been a traditional friendship for France in the country, that France to which so many thousands of the "Wild Geese" fled and where they found succour and honour. Our parents and elders remembered well the Franco-Prussian War of the 1870's when the country was strongly

pro-French and anti-German, a partisanship that was unquestionably emphasised by the fact that Victoria and her Court and all the ultra-loyalists were then as strongly pro-German and anti-French. At the time, thousands of young Irishmen were prepared to rush to the help of France and would have done so had they not been effectively checked by the British Government. The only fly in the amber of our Francophilism was that the French Republic was then ruled by men who were persecutors of the Church - "Atheists" and "evil-livers". But not even that lamentable fact had any effect on our enthusiasm for the cause of our "old friends".

In those days of constant surprises and crises, the event that excited and stirred the country most deeply was the invasion of Belgium. And not so much the invasion iself as the burnings, shootings and lootings that the newspapers told us followed in the wake of the conquerors. I can still remember those lurid reports and their profound reactions on our feelings. One morning it would be the razing of several villages or streets in Belgian cities and towns. On another there would be an account of the shooting of hundreds of civilians, and the decimation of long lines of captives. And then, worst of all, to the deep perfervid

Catholic conscience that predominated in country districts and the small towns, came accounts of the burning of cathedrals and churches and the tragic destruction of the great University Library of Louvain and the beautiful cathedral of St. Pierre.

I have since learned, of course, that many of those stories of German atrocities were, to say the least of it, greatly exaggerated and embroidered, and were, as often as not, clever projections of British propaganda. But, be that as it may, they certainly had what, doubtless, their writers intended, the desired effect on us. They filled us with something very like detestation and hatred for those Teutonic despoilers of "little Catholic Belgium" and undoubtedly gave recruiting an enormous stimulus.

This resentment affected and stirred every class in the country. For example, after the destruction of Louvain, the Dublin mob rose up and, in its anger and indignation, sacked and looted the German-owned pork shops in the city, and the D.M.P. had the greatest difficulty in preventing those premises from being set on fire. I think Dublin was the only city in the then United Kingdom where such riots took place. And this keen, spontaneous pro-ally spirit was manifested in a very remarkable way when the same Dublin crowds that had booed and

mobbed them less than a fortnight before, turned out in great force and gave the K.O.S.B. men of Bachelor's Walk notoriety a rousing send-off as they marched to the docks to embark for the front.

In those daye, Ireland was nearer the English point of view than she has ever been before or since. England had the country, for the first time in the co-history of the two nations, psychologically in the hollow of her hand. But, within a few years, she was destined by her crass stupidity and the inherent fear of the Irish of her ruling classes, to turn that abundance of goodwill and sympathy into hostility and hatred. Is it any wonder that an empire in the hands of such people has wilted and faded away in the post-war years?

The intense feeling for Belgium and sympathy with her in her grievous sufferings were manifested in a practical way when the refugees began to pour into the country. Associations and organisations sprang up overnight to help run the camps and centres where those unfortunates were stationed. The women-folk in my family, in common with most other families, whatever their religion or politics, busied themselves from morning to night on all manner of work for those new guests of the nation - knitting, sewing and making garments, and cooking and packing

food for them. Actually, there were no Belgian refugees accommodated at Omagh, or, as far as I can recollect, at any town in Co. Tyrone, so our women had to have their charitable products collected and sent off to where they were required. A popular "stunt" on the part of young women was to "adopt" a Belgian soldier, to maintain a correspondence with him and send him, from time to time, such comforts as tobacco, clothing, chocolate, &c. My elder sister did this and, though she knew French well, which language, I am sure, her soldier also knew, nothing would do her, in common with all her contemporaries, but to write to him in Flemish with the aid of one of those English-Flemish dictionaries with which the book- and the stationery shops were then flooded. The soldier always replied regularly to her, even from the trenches where he generally was, until, poor fellow, he fell in battle. He always wrote in a curious but quite comprehensible mixture of good Flemish and bad English!

Recruiting for the British army was, as I have said, very brisk after the invasion of Belgium; indeed, brisker than it had ever been; and that army was getting, for the first time, in considerable numbers, the splendid farming type of Irishman that theretofore had always completely avoided it. But

Kitchener, who had lately taken over Asquith's second portfolio of the War Office, was shouting for thousands, for hundreds of thousands of men to fill the innumerable gaps in his continental armies at the time being pressed back, with their French allies, further and further into France. Kitchener wanted far more men, and particularly Irishmen, for his tattered vanguards.

The fact that the Home Rule Bill was not yet law, despite all the talk and fuss, caused a decided hold-back in the country districts, and there was a danger that the pristine enthusiasm for the allies' cause might evaporate or die down if that much-vexed measure were not finally disposed of. Accordingly, on 15th September, to the great annoyance of Carson and Bonar Law, Redmond at last succeeded, after great pressure, in getting Asquith to put the Home Rule Bill on the Statute Book. The old Amending Bill had been dropped, but a new Suspensory Bill was passed at the same time. It provided that the Home Rule Act must not come into operation until a year after the termination of the war.

But Carson and Law need not have been so worried. Asquith's extraordinary promise to them in the House of Commons should have assured them that there was no substance whatever in their alarm. He announced that "the employment of force,

any kind of force, for what you call the coercion of Ulster, is an absolutely unthinkable thing. So far as I am concerned, and so far as my colleagues are concerned - I speak for them, for I know their unanimous feeling - that is a thing we would never countenance or consort to". He further gave the assurance: "which would be in spirit and in substance completely fulfilled, that the Home Rule Bill will not, and cannot, come into operation until Parliament has had the fullest opportunity, by an Amending Bill, of altering, modifying or qualifying its provisions in such a way as to secure the general consent both of Ireland the the United Kingdom".

A very confused, opaque and, from the then legal standpoint, inaccurate melange of words for a man gifted with the clarity of thought and facility of expression of Asquith to make. He forgot himself so much as to put "Ireland" as a separate entity on a level with the "United Kingdom" of which body she then formed part, and would have continued to have formed part had that Home Rule Bill eventuated.

Denis Gwynn, in his aforementioned book, writes:

> "But these promises did not allay the anger of the Unionists ..... Bonar Law was deputed to deliver a final diatribe of denunciation and then all the Unionist members walked out of the House in protest. Carson's biographers

> make full admission of their bitter sense of defeat: 'Thus ended at that time the great controversy over the ill-omened third Home Rule Bill. Mr. Asquith had requested Birrell to request Redmond that there should be no crowing over the victory, but it was, in fact, no victory either for Redmond or for Carson. In this judgment of Solomon, the baby was to be dismembered: both were left with ghastly fragments of that for which they had fought. Redmond had won the south and Carson the north; Redmond had lost a United Ireland and Carson had lost a United Kingdom".

For Redmond, it was indeed a Pyrrhic victory; but he could, at least, go forth and claim that he had "put Home Rule on the Statute Book".

Redmond's nationalism, during his long years of residence in London and his daily association with all manner of English M.P.s in the House of Commons, had, not unnaturally, become strongly impregnated with imperialism. He had come to believe sincerely in the benevolent greatness of the British Empire, and now that Home Rule had reached the famous book, Redmond felt himself free to go forth and advocate a wholehearted participation by Ireland in the cause of that Empire and its allies. And so he betook himself to Ireland, and there, at Woodenbridge, in the Co. Wicklow, he delivered, on 20th September, his first positive recruiting speech. That speech, whilst endorsed by official and conservative nationalism,

reacted violently on the separatist elements in the country, who, though by no means strong, had been consolidating and expanding their position through their half-grip, as it were, on the governing body of the Irish Volunteers. They determined to act at once, even though, as they well knew, it would mean a big split in the Volunteer movement. "A moment was chosen", writes Darrell Figgis in his "Recollections", "when an announcement to that effect would make the greater noise. Mr. Asquith was due to speak with John Redmond at the Mansion House, Dublin, on the night of the 24th September, and, on the night before, a statement was issued by the greater number of the original members of the Provisional Committee that John Redmond's nominees would no longer be deemed to form part of that Committee, that the original constitution of the Volunteers would be resumed and that a Convention would be called to elect a new Committee, which would be entrusted with the formulation of a sound national policy".

Thus, after almost a year of uneasy and inharmonious co-operation on the governing body of the Irish Volunteers, the shaky peace between the imperial nationalists and the separatist nationalists was broken irrevocably. The die was cast which was to shape the pattern of the new and very different Ireland in the not far distant future.

THE DUBLIN INSURRECTION
(1914-1916).

The scene in the House of Commons on the declaration of war against Germany, when Sir Edward Grey described Ireland as "the one bright spot" and declared that the "feeling there had made it unnecessary to take the Irish question into account", and Redmond pledged the Irish Volunteers to defend the coasts of Ireland with the Ulster Volunteers, and which concluded with the entire House, including Nationalists, O'Brienites, as well as Redmondites, spontaneously rising to its feet and fervently chanting "God save the King" can be said to have been the climax of the policy of the "union of hearts". That union was to fade and vanish completely and for ever in the course of the next four or five years. But the ardour was not to abate for some considerable time. On the contrary, it had still much of growth and expansion before its "diminuendo" set in. It was clear to the Liberals that if Redmond's prestige was not to be gravely injured, thereby affecting very adversely the war cause and recruiting in Ireland, they would have, at least, to plant the Home Rule Bill, covering the entire country, on the Statute Book. So Asquith, on 14th September, announced

that the parliamentary session would end at once when the Home Rule Bill became law automatically under the Parliament Act, but that, co-terminous with that event, the Government would introduce another Bill postponing the operation of the former till after the war and, at the same time, pledged itself to introduce another Amending Bill, designed to assuage the fears and qualms of the Ulster Unionists by some kind of partition, before Home Rule would become operative.

Thus did the sad shadow of self-government for Ireland reach the Statute Book at last; but, mere shadow that it was, it produced violent and very unloyal reactions against it on the part of Carson, unaffected, seemingly, by the fact that the empire of his prime devotion was locked in mortal combat with its foes. Not even for that empire in its hour of peril would he compromise to the smallest extent. In a manifesto to his followers, Carson reiterated "Ulster's" determination never to submit to Home Rule; but, at the same time, he urged them to be true to their motto of "our country first".

This manifesto was followed by one from the Irish Unionist Alliance (by that time having shrunk from being the organisation of all Irish Unionists to being that merely for those of the south and west) protesting against the "flagrant breach of faith of the Government", but, at the same time,

pointing out "the duty of Irishmen to undertake their full share of Imperial responsibility in the present national emergency" and calling upon its supporters to continue their efforts to secure recruits for the army.

On the same day yet another manifesto was issued; this time a highly important one, by no less a person than Redmond himself. Redmond issued his manifesto at a great demonstration of Nationalists at Woodenbridge, Co. Wicklow, calling on the people of Ireland to take their part in the great crisis "to the nation and the empire" and asking that Irish recruits for the expeditionary forces should be kept together in an Irish Brigade under Irish officers. Nor did the leader of Nationalist Ireland stop there. A little more than a week later, on 25th September, he, with Asquith, Dillon and Devlin addressed a great recruiting meeting in the Dublin Mansion House, presided over by the Lord Mayor of Dublin, the Right Hon. Lorcan Sherlock. Guarded by large bodies of police and of Redmond's Volunteers, this meeting was a great success, the Round Room being packed with an enthusiastic audience. Mr. Asquith declared that the Irish Brigade which would be formed would be "the free gift of a free people"; and the meeting concluded with the singing of "God save the King"

and "God save Ireland". Many other recruiting meetings, addressed by Nationalist M.P.s followed on this one throughout the country, which were well attended, and at which, at first, there was no interruption. The whole Nationalist Press, with hardly an exception, were unanimously behind the war and the campaign for recruits, and endorsed the unanimous action of the Dublin and Cork Corporations in removing the name of the great Celtic scholar, Dr. Kuno Meyer, from their lists of freemen. Stephen Gwynn, Tom Kettle and Redmond's brother and son were amongst those M.P.s that joined the British army.

Redmond and Carson were both, in their very disparate ways, avowed imperialists, all for maintaining and defending the vast, heterogeneous corpus known as the British Empire. Redmond had sacrificed much for that empire; but Carson, despite his declaration of love for it, nothing at all, unless we are to regard his betrayal of the Southern Unionists and the Unionists of the three Ulster counties, included under Home Rule, as his "sacrifice".

About this time, another and very different voice arose in the land and grew daily more articulate and insistent. That was the voice of "Sinn Féin", using that expression in its later connotation as incorporating all the various separatist and extremist sects and divisions of rationalism.

That voice did not, as it could not, remain silent at those wholly unexpected and, indeed, unparalleled actions and commitments of the Irish leader. Accordingly, on 24th September, the eve of Redmond's recruiting meeting in the Mansion House, the 20 original founder-members of the Provisional Committee of the Irish Volunteers, headed by Eoin MacNeill, issued their particular manifesto denouncing Redmond for consenting to a "dismemberment of Ireland" and accusing him of being willing to "risk another disruption by announcing for the Irish Volunteers "a programme fundamentally at variance with their own published and accepted aims and pledges, namely, that it was their duty to take foreign service under a government that was not Irish". In view of this development, they declared that the nominees of Redmond ceased to be members of the Provisional Committee and they concluded their manifesto by re-affirming, without qualification, the manifesto proposed and adopted at the inaugural meeting, repudiating any responsibility for the partition of Ireland and declaring that Ireland could not, with honour or safety, take part in foreign quarrels otherwise than through the free action of a national government of her own. Among the signatories to this document were: Pearse, Joseph Plunkett and Thomas McDonagh - all to be executed two years hence.

This action on the part of the Sinn Féin elements appeared not to be without substantial support in Dublin which support was demonstrated on the night of Redmond's recruiting meeting in the Mansion House by Volunteer parades through the city in support of MacNeill amid cheering masses of spectators.

Thus was the gauntlet laid down by the MacNeillites, and Redmond was not slow in taking it up. He appealed, with striking success, to the provincial centres of the Volunteers and, at a convention quickly assembled in Dublin on 30th September, a new provisional committee was elected for his section of the Volunteers with himself as President.

The Sinn Féin Secessionists reorganised their section of the Volunteers as the "Irish Volunteers" in contradistinction to Redmond's "National Volunteers". So there were then no less than three sets of Volunteers in the country, all deriving from and owing their genesis to Carson; a fact that Carson, far from trying to hide, acclaimed with pride. At the Primrose League in that May, he said: "I am not sorry for the armed drilling of those who are opposed to me in Ireland. I certainly have no right to complain of it. I started that with my own friends".

At that time, and for a long time afterwards, the

"Irish Volunteers" cut a poor figure vis-a-vis Redmond's Volunteers. According to the police reports just after the split, the Redmondite Volunteers amounted to 180,000, and the MacNeill Volunteers to but 11,000. But, by that October, the former had dwindled to 20,000 to 160,000, and the MacNeillites had risen to 13,000. The big drop in Redmond's Volunteers was, undoubtedly, largely due to the numbers thereof who had answered his call for recruits for the British regiments.

As I have said, the Irish, or Sinn Féin Volunteers were then, and practically till, and, indeed, after, the Easter Week Rising, a negligible, ill-armed body with comparatively little influence in the country. The people were all strongly on the side of the allies and, to that extent, pro-English for the first time in their history. The R.I.C. reports are exceedingly interesting on this aspect of things. For example, they reported in the previous June that, in the north "that distrust and hatred between Protestant and Catholic had never been so deep". A few months later, they reported that, during the mobilisation necessitated by the war, the U.V.F. and the I.N.V. were turning out together with their bands to escort the troops leaving for the Front. The same was true, in varying degrees, all over the country at that time. Ireland, as I have said,

became pro-English, and ardently pro-English, virtually overnight.

All those events, particularly the attack on Belgium, aroused the anger and pity of Catholic Ireland and led to large numbers of young men in the Volunteers joining the British forces. For example, in Enniskillen, young Wray, the son of a nationalist solicitor, led 300 men of the local National Volunteers into the British army, and from that war great numbers of them, including young Wray, never returned.

The outbreak of war worked a revolution in the state of Party feeling , reported the R.I.C. What an opportunity our British rulers had then of developing that uniquely favourable position in the "sister isle", an opportunity that they completely missed, or, in fact, never seized. The late Allison Phillips, Professor of History in T.C.D., referring to that time, writes: "From August 1914, to the end of 1915, the reports from every county agree that there were practically no displays of Party feeling. Ireland seemed, at last, united in a common effort for a common end. The union seemed symbolised by the support given to the Irish National Volunteers by prominent southern Unionists and the occasional fraternisation of the U.V.F. and the I.N.V. in the north. To those who know

Ireland and its deep-seated passions and antagonisms the mere list of the names of the notabilities who attended a great recruiting meeting at Warrenpoint on 7th July 1915, reads like a miracle. There were present the Lord Lieutenant, Redmond, the Lord Mayors of Belfast and Dublin and the Mayor of Derry". Carson was invited to this meeting but declined the invitation; he could not bring himself, even for the cause of empire, to stand on and speak from the same platform as the nationalist leaders, and never did.

But to return to the autumn of 1914; Redmond and the Nationalists were most anxious for the War Office to take over the National Volunteers, equip them with special uniforms, or at least, permit them to wear badges on their uniforms indicating their distinctive origin, as was granted the Ulster Division, and put them under the leadership of Irish officers. To this end, Redmond had a number of interviews with Lord Kitchener of Khartoum, who had replaced Asquith as War Minister, but he found him adamant. His sympathies were definitely anti-Irish. Indeed, he and his ilk in the War Office feared an armed and well-trained Irish Brigade under its own officers returning after the war to the country. He would make no concession whatever to Irish Nationalist sentiment, not even

to help the war effort, and he rejected the presentation of flags worked by enthusiastic nationalist ladies for the famous Irish regiments. There would be no special Irish Brigade, no special uniform or officer cuff markings such as the Scottish regiments long possessed. Irish recruits would just have to join ordinary regiments in the ordinary way. This was, in all conscience, bad enough, but Irish matters, as managed by the War Office, were much worse. Carson also had seen Kitchener about placing his U.V.F. and, though he found him difficult, there can be no manner of doubt that the chief British War Lord was vastly more friendly to Carson's attitude than to Redmond's. He was certainly vastly more accommodating, for we were presently to see a brand new Ulster Division in existence governed by its own officers and permitted, nay, commanded, to wear the U.V.F. political badge of the rebel U.V.F on the King's uniform, a sanction that theretofore would have been regarded as an outrage on the King and against all military tradition. This preferential treatment accorded their antagonists and their own overt and grievous snubbing by the War Office were big elements in the slowing down of recruiting in the south that followed. But, despite every encouragement that the friendly War Department gave them, recruiting was not much brisker in the north.

For example, out of the U.V.F.'s 85,000 men in August 1914, little more than 20,000 of those perfervid loyalists had joined up by the end of that September; and, at the close of 1915 the U.V.F. still amounted to the substantial total of more then 56,000 able-bodied men. It is well known that Kitchener and the War Office were deeply infected with the traditional official distrust of the Nationalist Irishman and made little attempt to disguise the fact that they were anxious to retain the Ulster Volunteers intact in Ireland as a reserve against the Nationalists. And that design was soon clearly reflected in the War Office's actions.

The southern Irish divisions were no sooner formed and given the minimum of training when they were posted off to the various battle fronts, taking their full share in the vanguard of the bloody battles that were raging in France, Flanders and the Dardanelles. The Ulster Division, on the other hand, was stationed at places like Finner near Bundoran and elsewhere in the north and kept in those camps so long that it became the object of severe criticism, a criticism that grew louder and more articulate when the heavy casualty lists of the southern Irish divisions began to pour in. Eventually, and much later, the Ulster Division did, of course,

go to the front and conducted itself with true Irish valour at Thiepval and elsewhere. I shall refer to that phase of events later; here, I shall only say that nowhere was there more surprise at its transfer out of Ulster to the front than in that Division itself. The rank and file, as I often heard in those days, were convinced that they were being held in Ulster as a garrison in case of any "fireworks" during or after the war, on the part of any of their 3,000,000 "disloyal" countrymen. And that was certainly what the distrustful Kitchener, the War Minister, wanted.

All the stirring and unprecedented events of that crucial year, coming as they did in rapid succession, made, as they were bound to make, a profound and indelible impression on the youth of Ireland. The average young Nationalist was, for a time, torn between conflicting ideas of duty, conflicting appeals and conflicting emotions. In my own case, I hardly knew where I stood. On the one hand, I found every day more and more of my contemporaries, my fellow-students of yesterday, donning the khaki, drawn to the army by the appeals of John Redmond, and, much more so, by the sufferings of invaded Belgium. That I should do likewise was frequently suggested to me; and, despite such setbacks

as the postponement of Home Rule, I was gradually becoming convinced that I should. The pressure from my friends, and my parents' friends and associates in the north was, though gentle and unblatant, very persistent, and was exactly symbolised by the refrain in the popular song of the year, generally sung at us by pretty girls:

"We don't want to lose you,
But we think you ought to go,
For your King and your country
Need you, you know".

A number, or, rather, a mixture of circumstances made me hesitate and held me back. In Dublin I had latterly begun to associate with a set of young fellows who, far from being extremists in any sense of the word, were keen critics of the official Nationalist Party and its war policy, and were most disheartened at the postponement of Home Rule. The Sinn Féin and advanced nationalist papers were then beginning to expand and to influence bodies of nationalists, mostly young, who, a few months previously, would have nothing to say to them. Subtly, clearly and constantly they appealed to and drew out the latent and nationalistic separatism inherent in nearly every young Irishman, thereby developing in us an extremely critical attitude towards the Party and the Liberal Government.

Because of my anti-Party background, this kind of propaganda got from me a ready response. In particular, we

had grown profoundly suspicious of the Liberal Government's efforts towards Partition, particularly us northern Nationalists But, whilst that suspicion was somewhat allayed by the placing of the Home Rule Bill on the Statute Book, it was again stirred by its postponement to some indefinite date "after the war", and particularly by Asquith's gratuitous and very definite assurance at the time to Carson and Law that they would never be forced to accept the Home Rule Act. But, anyhow, there it was on the Statute Book, such as it was, and the Redmondites could claim, as they did, that, in theory at all events, the great battle "on the floor of the House of Commons" had been won. The war was raging at its very height. The stories in the press and, more vividly through the lips of refugees, about the awful happenings in Belgium, a nation of small Catholic farmers like ourselves, stirred Ireland, young and old, to its depths.

So much has happened in the ensuing 44 years that it is quite impossible for anyone today to realise how deeply the nation was affected then by Belgium's plight. The urge to help Belgium was strong amongst us and only checked, as I have said, by two disappointments, viz: the postponement of Home Rule, the tacit official consent to partition, and the failure to form the 180,000 Irish Volunteers into an Irish army corps.

Had the War Office taken Redmond's request "on the hop" and absorbed the 180,000 Redmondite Volunteers into such a corps, given it a distinctive uniform, its own Irish colours and its own Irish officers, there is no question that the response in Ireland would have been overwhelming, and the future of Irish history might, in my opinion, despite all that had happened in that year, well have worked out very differently from what it actually turned out to be. Once again, English stupidity and incredible folly failed to seize and make every use of a unique opportunity in the furtherance of England's direct interests. Had such an Irish army corps been formed, I have no doubt at all but that I myself and my critical nationalist comrades would have all unquestionably joined up in it. But it wasn't; and, instead of it, there, before our very eyes, were the rival Ulster Volunteers, splendidly equipped, led by their own Volunteer officers whom they were permitted, against all army tradition, to elect; and, again, against all army tradition, proudly sporting, officers and men, on their tunics, the metal partisan badge of the U.V.F. with its red hand surmounted by the motto "We will not have Home Rule"!

That October, I returned to Dublin after the Autumn Quarter Sessions in the county, to pursue my calling as a barrister in

the Law Library of the Four Courts. But, truth to tell, with all the terrific happenings that were going on in the world around me, my heart was elsewhere than in my law work. In the train I met a young officer whom I knew as a halfway medico in Dublin and whom I always regarded as an "Extremist" and very anti-English, full of rousing old Irish martial ballads which, at the smallest provocation, he sang, and sang extremely well. And there was this Irish "rebel" (which I was not, at the time) sitting opposite me smartly caparisoned in the enemy uniform! His talk was most interesting to me and, though but my own age, he had seen a deal of fighting, had been wounded, and was now rejoining his unit, having been lately promoted a full lieutenant in, I think, either the Dublin Fusiliers or the Leinster Regiment. He was still quite anti-English and was quite frank as to his motive in joining up - "poor little Belgium" and his yearning to "get a belt at those bloody bastards and swine, the Huns". I listened absorbed to his tales and adventures and did not feel the time passing till our train slid along the platform at Amiens St. terminus.

As I made my way through the city to new "digs" that I had taken by letter in the northern suburb of Phibsborough, I could not fail to be reminded of the war, even if I wished to forget it. The streets were full of uniforms - soldiers,

naval men and those new curiosities that Irish eyes found it difficult to get used to - the "W.A.A.C.s" and "W.R.N.S". and other types of female warriors. And, regarding those women's corps, I must here interpose an incident concerning them which, though trivial in itself, illustrates the reaction of the "common or garden" man of those days to them. During the October Quarter Sessions of that year of the war, my father, on leaving the Omagh Courthouse, encountered its caretaker, Henderson, on the steps outside. "Mr. Shiels", said Henderson, to my father, "Will ye for goodness sake look at them!", and he pointed to the two Miss Millars, daughters of a local militia major, walking up the High St. attired in full "W.A.A.C." outfit. "What d'ye think of them? Did ever ye see the like?" - And, with an expression of extreme disgust, he added: "Wouldn' it make ye throw off, sir!?". Now, Henderson was a good, God-fearing Presbyterian, and the ladies, the object of his displeasure, were habilitated in khaki, it is true; but there was nothing either unseemly or unfeminine in their get-up save that the skirt was rather short vis-a-vis the prevailing fashion. What would Henderson say about the trousered females, young and old, that are commonplace today?

Companies, detachments,and, now and again, whole regiments

of troops were constantly marching along the streets to their various assignments. The latter, led by a band and fully equipped, were for the docks, en route for the Front, accompanied by crowds of friends and supporters, cheering them off. An entirely novel note in our insular capital was struck by the numbers of French and Belgian soldiers walking amongst the pedestrians on the pavements in their colourful uniforms and jaunty little "kepis". The hoardings and dead walls were papered over with posters calling on Irish youth to join up and do their bit for"King and Country" and informing that youth that "England expects every man to do his duty". (At a later stage, separatists altered the slogan to read: "England expects every Irishman to do her duty"). Nearly every dead wall in the city had an enormous outsize picture of Kitchener's forbidding countenance pointing a huge forefinger at us with the single pronoun in huge capitals "YOU!" I always thought that a particularly repelling poster; and it must have acted on the Irish, at any rate, more as a deterrent than as an inventive. Save in one case, those war posters were void of any appeal to Irish sentiment; that was, posters showing the ruined churches and monasteries and universities and schools of Belgium with pictures of clerics before firing squads, or

lying dead amongst the debris and rubble, with flashes calling attention to the "Huns'" vile treatment of a fellow-Catholic country.

In the sitting room of my digs I was much intrigued by an arresting and attractive miniature flag that I noticed sticking out of an empty flower vase on the mantel piece. It was the one thing in the clean but very drab and rather depressing room that really interested and held me. I have always had an interest in history and politics and prided myself on knowing and recognising the flags of all the nations; an interest which the war had greatly quickened in me. And I had grown accustomed to the habit, since the war, of suchlike miniature flags being displayed in drawing rooms and sitting rooms and pinned on the clothes of men and women, indicating their special predilection amongst the allies. They were often displayed in trios, the most usual combination being the French, Belgian and Irish (green with crownless harp) in nationalist homes, and French, Belgian and Union Jack in Unionist homes. But that particular flag beat me. Presently the door of the room opened and in came my fellow-lodger. This was none other than the future Dr. Brian Cusack. He was then a final year medico, having started in University College, Galway, and was then taking out his final courses in the city. He was a man

considerably older than I, having begun life as a teacher under the London County Council which, in due course, he relinquished for medicine.

In the course of our talk I discovered that, far from being enthusiastic for the allied cause, he had no belief whatever in the much proclaimed altruism and bona fides of England, and was extremely sceptical of the war news and, in particular, of English war propaganda, even doubting to my surprise, the stories of atrocities in Belgium. At times, I felt quite impatient and, indeed, vexed with him and his attitude of seeming indifference to the terrible happenings in Europe. But he was polemically very well equipped and well up on data about the origin and causes of the war, presenting me with a surprisingly new outlook on the matter, totally different from that I then held.

According to him, England had embarked on the war only because she was convinced that if she did not do so, Germany would replace her in the dominance of the seas and of the world markets. He pointed out that England was wavering up to the last moment, for she was convictionless as regards principles of any kind in the matter. Only a few days before the Declaration of War had not Sir Edward Grey promised the Kaiser

to remain neutral if he would oblige him by avoiding Belgium in his invasion of France, and that, despite the earnest appeal of President Poincare to the King to let the Kaiser understand that if he made war on France he would have France's ally under the Entente Cordiale, England, arrayed against him. He talked about Ireland and how Ireland owed England nothing, seeing the way she had behaved over Home Rule; and so the talk flowed on, Brian full of Ireland's wrongs, and finding in me a ready listener, my "Irish" being lit up by his words. Suddenly, it dawned upon me that I was face to face with that phenomenon of the day, dreaded by the respectable - an "extremist".

With my eyes constantly wandering to the fascinating little flag on the mantel piece as I was listening to Brian, my curiosity eventually got the better of me, and, at last, I asked him what country did it belong to. "It's the flag of the Irish Republic" he told me; and he explained to me the significance of its colours - green for the old, or Catholic Irish, orange for the new, or Protestant Irish, and white, the bond of peace between them.

Words can convey little idea of the effect of that intelligence on me. Even now, after the passage of nearly 45 years, I can recall vividly my emotional reaction to that

significant bit of cloth on learning its history. So there was an Irish Republic possessing its own distinct flag proclaiming its sovereignty, a republic of which I was, or might be, a citizen, a state which I could like and be loyal to, in a way that it was quite impossible to like or be loyal to England. And what a fine, bright flag it was - I thought - like a flame of hope. As I gazed on it, how dull and inanimate like a dead fish, Home Rule of any degree appeared vis-a-vis an independent republic, and a republic with its own distinctive flag!

It is impossible to explain why a little piece of coloured cloth - green, white and orange in parallel order, should have stirred me so deeply. All I can aver here is that it most certainly did. I could not help looking at it on every possible occasion, even finding myself, when I was leaving or entering the house, opening the sitting-room door to get yet another glimpse of it. The flag, the tricolour of the Irish Republic! Oh, if it were only possible and not just a beautiful chimera!

I saw a good deal of Brian Cusack during that year, living as I did for a good part of it in the same house with him. The late Dr. Charles McCauley, then but lately graduated, was lodging there too, and the three of us soon became fast friends

Charles McCauley, like myself, was, though no "out-and-outer", a sharp critic of the Irish Party, and, being a northerner, he was, naturally, a strong opponent of partition. Though I did not come round to his clear-cut Fenian separatism then, nor for a good while later, Brian's talks, always to me most interesting, completely cured me of all intention or desire to don the khaki and fight for John Bull. I began to buy and read advanced nationalist papers of which the moderate "New Ireland" was my favourite, and to which I used to send an odd article or letter. "New Ireland" was a weekly journal, at that time run by Denis Gwynn,as editor, and Paddy Little. Later, when Denis Gwynn joined up in the British army, Paddy Little became editor, and the paper became much more advanced. It was, then, however, regarded as quite an advanced organ of enlightenment and, whilst strongly critical of the ruling political make-up, was in no sense a separatist paper. Articles on the war and the brave conduct of the Munsters at Festeberte were side by side with articles advising Irish youth not to join up unless and until there was an Irish Brigade to receive them, and other articles advocating something very much like Griffith's Sinn Féin policy.

Recruiting for the Irish regiments, at first brisk, fell

off as the year advanced, and the Irish began to realise that they were as far away as ever from Home Rule and from that Irish Brigade that Redmond had been advocating, and that Asquith had promised him at the Mansion House recruiting meeting. But, worse still; after the retreat from Mons, the War Office replenished the badly shattered ranks of English infantry battalions by Irish recruits transferred from the Irish regiments they had joined. Furthermore, keen resentment was caused by the War Office transferring the entire artillery of the (16th) Irish Division to the Guards regiments. A matter of another character that was also deeply resented was the gratuitous and clearly organised attacks on Irish emigrants embarking at the Port of Liverpool for the United States. These assaults by jeering hooligans were so persistent that they led to the ships' crews refusing to man the ships bearing the emigrants, thereby putting a complete stop to trans-Atlantic migration for the duration of the war.

All these things combined to irritate and inflame Irish public opinion and cause the pristine enthusiasm in the country for the allied cause to die down, and the recruiting movement to lose its momentum. In 1915, the country could be said to be changing from strong pro-allyism, through disillusionment, to neutralism. Of all the Volunteer forces in existence, in 1915,

the Irish Volunteers and the Citizen Army alone displayed any activity in drilling and exercising. Considerable numbers of the Ulster Volunteers, as I have said, were stationed in various parts of the north and showed little indication that they were destined, at any time, for the battle front. Indeed, as I have already said, it was generally thought and freely noised about that they were not to be transferred out of Ulster at all, but maintained there in their traditional capacity as a loyal garrison. And I know that that idea of their ultimate purpose was quite common among them. Apart from those that joined up in the Ulster Division, there were many more thousands, nearly 60,000, I believe, that remained, as they were, members of a well-armed force that no longer functioned.

As for the Redmond-ite/Volunteers, they were in process of rapid decay, like a melting snowball. My battalion, though one of the first after the split to proclaim its allegiance to John Redmond, through its captain, J.M. Muldoon, just withered away and vanished into thin air. Growing, as I was, disgusted with prevailing politics, I had ceased to attend and can be said to have "demobilised" myself from it and a good while prior to that act of faith. That was my one and only connection with the Volunteers movement in any shape or form.

With the disillusionment over Home Rule, and over the alleged aims of the war, there came a big drop in the supply of recruits from Ireland, and a marked drift in the country from its pristine pro-ally enthusiasm to a kind of psychological neutralism - a neutralism that was growing more and more cynical and disinterested in all causes. It was only amongst the Sinn Féiners and their Volunteers that there was any enthusiasm for anything in the country. And, though their numbers were increasing very slowly, they had grown into a compact, confident body with a clear-cut objective and abundance of fervour, self-confidence and altruistic voluntary service at their command. But the general public, as I have said, steered clear of them - whatever abstract sympathy they m might have had with their target - an Irish Republic - they counted its achievement an utter impossibility and regarded them as an ill-balanced lot of idealistic - "rainbow-chasers", as someone had christened them. Even at that stage, the general public were far from being separatists, and, if they had lost their collective interest in the war, far too many individuals amongst them had strong reasons for a personal interest in it. Never before in history had so many young Irishmen of good nationalist and Catholic stock, from rural as well as urban regions, joined the British army, and, in

those days, one was constantly encountering young men in khaki, back on leave from the Front, staying with their relatives on either farms or town houses. And, were one to get inside one of those houses, one would inevitably see, in the "place d'honneur" on the walls or the mantelpiece, large framed photographs, more often than not, coloured, of sons, nephews, brothers or cousins in the uniform of British army officers or privates, between pictures of other relatives; often, incongruously, priests and nuns; and, from time to time, there were incidents that showed the anything but pro-Sinn Féin feeling in the country.

For example, on Whit Sunday, 1915, some 700 Irish Volunteers held a parade in Limerick. When returning to the station, after the parade, through the Irishtown quarter where many soldiers' families lived, they were furiously attacked by a crowd of women - wives of Munster Fusiliers. Another such instance occurred at Tullamore where a hostile crowd of townsfolk attacked the local Irish Volunteers, broke into their hall and damaged their property. Again, on November 19th, 1915, at Loughrea, Co. Galway, on the formation of a branch of the Irish Volunteers, the rival National Volunteers resurrected themselves from their moribund condition to parade through the town in protest and smash the windows of the shops and

houses of prominent local supporters of Sinn Féin.

Another extraordinary instance of the anti-Sinn Féin animosity of nationalist elements occurred at Carrickmore, Co. Tyrone - an area with a traditional sediment of extremism in its population. There at a Concert Hall, on 29th January 1916, attended exclusively by local Catholics, desperate hand-to-hand fighting broke out between the rival parties. The Sinn Féiners held the Hall, but were besieged by infuriated Hibernians. The Sinn Féiners shouted for the Kaiser and the Hibernians for the Allies, King George and the R.I.C. The fighting continued till a late hour when the Sinn Féiners abandoned the Hall and were escorted home by the R.I.C.

This year, too, the Government began to take tangible notice of the Sinn Féiners. In February, Sean O'Hegarty and James Bolger were arrested and deported to England under the provisions of "D.O.R.A." (Defence of the Realm Act); and several Sinn Féin and Labour periodicals were suppressed.

By July 1915, the Sinn Féin element had made its first big capture - the Gaelic League - electing a Sinn Féin Executive Council, which led to the resignation of its founder, Dr. Douglas Hyde, and his replacement by Professor Eoin MacNeill. The War Effort got another bad blow when, after the Whitsun recess, the Asquith Government was reconstructed on a coalition

basis, the Unionists being brought in. To the chagrin of even the official Irish Nationalists, Carson, the rebel "par excellence", the father, after centuries of Irish re-armament and Irish rebellion, secured the high law-and-order post of Attorney General. Redmond was offered a port-folio but refused it; and, when it leaked out that that port-folio was the minor post of Postmaster-General, there could be no doubt in the country that his former prestige and importance in British governmental circles had vanished. Thereafter, they could ignore and treat him as they wished, which, to a large extent, they did. He had given them everything for a shadow and he had no come-back.

This year, too, a Conscription Bill was passed, limited to men between the ages of 18 and 41. Everyone thought it was going to be extended to Ireland and that was certainly the Government's first intention. However, more prudent counsels prevailed and Ireland was excluded. Another of the many causes of friction between the two countries arose in connection with this measure. When it was passed, many young Irishmen in employment in England left for Ireland and were, once again, the objects of mob violence when embarking at the Port of Liverpool.

It was, as I have said, a time of transition; a time

when the long-accepted views of Nationalist Ireland were in process of a slow, but, nonetheless, sure and very radical change. Certainly, that was the case with the youth, with those of my own generation. My particular set of friends and acquaintances felt ourselves being more and more influenced by Arthur Griffith's famous paper "Nationality". We read it eagerly, column by column; its sharp hammer-like sentences sinking into our minds and staying there. But, whilst Griffith's brilliant journalism had completely captivated us, that was far from being the case with his novel political theory of the restoration of the kingdom, destroyed by the Act of Union, and which alone, of course, was entitled to the name "Sinn Féin". We saw the logic of his policy, founded as it was on the English Renunciation Act of 1783, as we could hardly fail to do, but we were not convinced of its feasibility, or of the practicality of its avowed means, passive resistance. Our views, at the time, on Ireland's political future were fluid, hazy and undefined in the extreme. Home Rule, as we had known it, we felt was dead, killed by those disparate and unconscious allies - Carson and the Liberal Government; but we also believed, in a kind of vague way, that, seeing that the war was being avowedly waged by the Allies for the freedom and rights of all small nations, our historic small nation could

hardly be ignored, must surely get something out of it at the Peace Conference, something that would be certainly an improvement on the last Home Rule Bill, at best, perhaps Dominion status; for none of us was so infantile as to expect any greater status; anything, for example, like the complete, sovereign independence of a republic.

Fred Dempsey and I had become such admirers of Griffith that we decided we must see him. We knew that he was wont to resort to the "Ship" tavern in Middle Abbey St., and thither one evening we repaired. Neither of us had ever seen him in the flesh, or in a picture, and so we had to ask the curate behind the bar if he were there, and, if so, to be good enough to point him out to us. He happened to be there. The curate pointed out to us, at the other end of the bar, near the door, a small, broad-shouldered, stockily built man with a large moustache, drinking stout with a few friends. We went over to him, introduced ourselves to him and told him how much we enjoyed his papers, which seemed to please him. We two young men, of course, meant nothing to Griffith, but he was kind to us in his shy, aloof way, and stood us a drink or two. He was, however, very quiet and non-committal, taking occasional glances at us through his pince-nez with his short-sighted, blinking eyes, and leaving the talking to his loquacious friends, only

too willing to oblige in that respect. Such was my first interview with one of the great Irishmen of his day.

It was about this time that I met a man who was to be my close friend for the rest of his life, a period of more than forty years. This was the late Edward Millington Stephens, B.L. I met him at a King's Inns dinner. He was one of the company sitting at my table. There happened to be a preponderance of Unionists amongst us on that occasion and the talk naturally turned on the war which, at the time, was not going well for the Allies. At a certain stage, a very arrogant young man, of extremely loyal convictions and with one of those extra-ordinary accents that are accepted as top-level "English" in this country, opened up on the somewhat controversial topic of Irish recruiting. The young man was horrified - "ashamed of being Irish", he sadly confessed - that so few had rallied to "the colours". It made his blood boil to see the countrysides and towns full of "great hulking fellows" who should be in the ranks doing their bit at the Front against the Hun. He said it was largely the fault of "us good-class professional chaps" not giving "the peasants" the lead they wanted. There should be an O.T.C., he said, attached to the King's Inns, in the same way that there was an Inns of Court O.T.C. in London;

and, according to him, "every bally barrister of military age should be kicked into it". In fairness to this very loyal young man, I should say that he had applied for and was awaiting his commission. Stephens got into a tough argument with this individual and, to my surprise, revealing himself as a strong nationalist of the extreme type, got far and away the better of the contest; so much so, that the loyal young man lost his temper and told Stephens he should be ashamed of himself for not wearing the King's uniform. Stephen's replied that the only uniform of the King he ever hoped to wear was the broad arrow of the felon. At the time, I was immensely taken with that retort of Stephens. In the argument I had supported him as well as I could against the other; so, when dinner was over, we walked back from the King's Inns together.

After that, and during the ensuing years, I saw a great deal of Ned Stephens and his wife, Lillo - still, thank goodness, amongst us. Ned's nationalism had been planted in him and his elder brother, Frank, by his famous uncle, John Millington Synge, the dramatist. He told me he remembered, as a child, Synge marching him and his brother out of the Mariner's Church, Dún Laoghaire, when, at a service there for the King's birthday, the organ played "God save the King". Ned's brother, Frank, a solicitor, was a fine Irish scholar. After some years in practice, he abandoned his profession and

devoted himself to the teaching of Irish.

Two more young Protestants of strong nationalist outlook, with whom I was very friendly, were Diarmuid Coffey, the son of the famous archaelogist, George Coffey, and Henry L. Conner, son of the late Judge Conner. Henry's father, as a King's Counsel, had been a rather prominent Unionist; but Henry's tendencies were decidedly nationalistic. In his case it was hard to explain this; but a reason might be sought in the fact that the famous '98 rebel, Arthur O'Connor, belonged to his family. Harry's nationalism, however, did not stop him joining up in the Royal Flying Corps. Before going off he left me books and papers relating to the famous Arthur O'Connor to keep for him, should he return, and he explained that his departure to the wars was more for the excitement of the thing and the gaining of a knowledge of flying, which interested him very much, than for any particular loyal reason.

As the year drew near to that fateful Easter Week of 1916, there was nothing in the atmosphere or pattern of the national life to give the slightest indication that anything untoward was on the way - certainly not a rising, of all things. The country had seldom been more peaceful, as can be seen from the police reports of the time. Crime of all kinds was almost non-existent; even that endemic affliction in Irish rural life,

agrarian crime. The country was crowded with soldiers and sailors, and, even though there was no longer any enthusiasm for recruiting, the military were far indeed from being unpopular. They were well received almost everywhere and entertained by elements in the population who, or whose forbears never had a British soldier within their dwellings before. In garrison town and military depot centres, dances were organised for the soldiers and those dances were attended by all and sundry - a great change from the past when the vast mass of Nationalists always boycotted them. The only piece of friction, the only jarring note on the otherwise tranquil scene, was the Irish Volunteers. But, even they caused little trouble save by the speeches of some of their leaders which resulted in certain of those leaders being incarcerated in prisons or deported from time to time. Those Volunteers kept up their marchings and manoeuvres with much persistency, and one was constantly passing companies and platoons, some of them armed indifferently with rifles of various models and periods. They certainly did not look a dangerous crowd in any military sense. Sometimes a unit marching by would be headed by a standard bearer carrying a large tricolour flashing gaily in the breeze like a flame. Always when I saw that flag

I stopped to gaze upon it with wonder and admiration. What an exciting flag it was, and what a lot it meant! The Republic, the Irish Republic! A glorious impossibility, of course, but it was good to contemplate its flag and dream for a few moments about it. And how drab and dull and commonplace beside it was the once stimulating green flag with the crownless harp; merely the emblem of a political party - the Nationalist - in the same way as the Union Jack was, in Ireland, at all events, the emblem of the rival political party - the Unionist.

Nevertheless, despite their meaningful banner, the Irish Volunteers, even on the threshold of Easter Week, cut little or no ice. Few in the country then believed in "MacNeill's ridiculous" and ill-equipped army, and no one, outside its own ardent devotees, took seriously its avowed objectives.

For the Easter holidays of the year 1916, I was, as usual, up in the north at my father's house in Omagh. There I had latterly got to know some of the local adherents of advanced nationalism such as Dr. Patrick McCartan, Mr. Dan McAuley and Mr. Peter Haughey. Dr. McCartan was dispensary doctor in the mountainous district of Gortin, about 8 miles from Omagh. He was an avowed republican, in the full-blooded Fenian tradition, and never attempted to conceal his opinions. I have told how he helped the Unionist gun-runners at Larne and got from them

some serviceable rifles for his own Volunteers in appreciation of his aid. This action of his, though bitterly denounced by the Hibernian politicians, was quite consistent with his particular brand of national principles, as I have already explained; and, if it infuriated the Hibernians, it gave him quite a standing amongst the Unionists which was of use to him later on, as shall be seen.

The doctor, at this time, became more conspicuous because he used to go about dressed in a lounge suit made of the green Volunteer uniform material. Dan MacAuley was at that time chief assistant in the office of the late Frank O'Connor, solicitor; he was a quiet, retiring man, who certainly took no active or open part in politics. The third, Peter Haughey, a dark, tense, but rather small Napoleonic-looking man, was a house painter.

These men, I later learned, were all advanced I.R.B. men. I got to know them and used to meet them occasionally from time to time, because I shared with them their strong views on the hopeless policy of the Irish Party. They knew me to be very sympathetic for a much more advanced national programme, and I suppose that was the reason that I received a message on the morning of Easter Saturday, asking me to go to Frank O'Connor's law office in John Street, where those people wanted to see me

on something of the gravest import. The person who actually gave me that message was my cousin, Vincent P. Shields, at that time a young solicitor's apprentice to my father, who was in very close touch with Dan MacAuley. My cousin, who was much better in with the "secret men" than myself, did tell me, in point of fact, that he thought a rising was contemplated in which the Republic was to be proclaimed. This news I found it frightfully hard to accept, but I had an instinct that there was something serious and grave in the air. I went to the office, as arranged, at 8 o'clock that evening. I remember the day as well as if it were yesterday. The evening was bright and clear, not yet dark, with the sun, a great red ball, beginning his descent behind the twin spires of the Sacred Heart Church. As I crossed Campsie Bridge, the swallows and house-martins were, I remember, hawking above the river for flies in great numbers for that time of the year in the north. The town was quiet after the weekly market, the shops closed and the streets almost deserted.

On knocking at the door of O'Connor's office in John St., I was admitted by Peter Haughey, who led me into an inner back room. In this room three men were seated; they were:- Doctor Pat MacCartan, Dan MacAuley and Denis McCullough. I said I had received a message from my cousin, Vincent, and that he

had informed me that the Republic was going to be proclaimed in Dublin. My own words I clearly remember. They were: "This is momentous news. Is it credible?". They assured me that there was no doubt at all about the news. The doctor had only returned that day from Dublin fresh from a meeting of the inner committee of the Volunteers, and the rising was planned for the next day. I inquired what action, if any, had been settled for our locality. Dr. MacCartan, who seemed to be the person there with the most recent information, said the orders were to assemble all available Volunteer units in or about mid-Tyrone at Carrickmore where there was a strong and, even then, largely sympathetic nationalist population, and proceed with them in the Enniskillen direction to the west where they were to make contact with the Connacht men. I was not then, and never have been, a soldier, save for my slight contact with St. Michan's Battalion in Dublin, but I did think that was a very dangerous plan for them to attempt to put into effect. I pointed out that they would r equire a large and well-armed force to carry out that order successfully, seeing that there was a strong military garrison in Omagh, and another, even stronger, one in Enniskillen, both much strengthened since the war; and, in between them, on their very route, there were numerous R.I.C. barracks. The position was as clear to them

as it was to me, but the doctor felt he was bound by his orders. He also explained to us that the reason for contacting the men of Connacht was that the Germans were sending an invading force with large quantities of arms and ammunition which was expected to land somewhere on the western seaboard, and it was essential to have as many men as possible there to meet it. The doctor thought he might be able to rely on anything up to 500 Volunteers; but I gathered that arms and ammunition were very scarce.

Denis McCullough was very much concerned about the need for helping the Dublin men. He seemed to consider that to be of prime importance; and, of course, it was. But how just to help the Dublin men any way effectively was the question. I suggested that with the very small and inadequate force they had at their command it might be better for them to abandon the western plan altogether and concentrate on blowing up railway bridges that would impede, to some extent, the transfer of military reinforcements to Dublin and the south. The question then arose about explosives for such work, but it transpired that they had none.

After some further general and rather vague talk, the little conference broke up, and we left O'Connor's office.

There was no definite decision as to what would be done other than what Dr. MacCartan had told us. Denny McCullough said he had ~~tried~~ to find his way back, I think, to the Belfast area and hold himself in readiness there for further orders. Dr. MacCartan said that he had to be in Carrickmore next day where there would be a Volunteer mobilisation. On leaving, I told them that if they thought I could be of any help to send me a message and I should be at home.

As I walked home in the charming spring evening, the terrific news with which I had been entrusted completely occupied my thoughts. I kept asking myself could it be true? Was it possible that we were on the eve of another Irish rebellion? Memories of my readings and of all I had heard about '98, Emmet's rising, and the Fenians ran through my mind. Would the Germans really invade the country and land men and arms in any quantity? I was very sceptical, not only of that possibility, but of anything effective being achieved with the comparatively small number of Sinn Féin Volunteers, not more than 20,000 at the outside, scattered in units of varying size throughout the country. If the forthcoming insurrection was to achieve any worthwhile result, it could only do so by a substantial German invasion. I ruminated, but I saw little prospect of that. Whatever about the

continent where the Germans seemed to be doing well, there was little doubt that John Bull was still master of the seas.

I, of course, never mentioned that meeting, or its purport, to anyone at home or elsewhere. My own folk thought I had gone on one of my usual fishing expeditions.

Next day, Sunday, I was expecting to hear from my cousin, or my friends of the previous evening, and, in due course, I did get a message from a man who arrived at the house on a bicycle, to the effect that Eoin MacNeill, the head of the Irish Volunteers, had cancelled all Volunteer mobilisations throughout the country. I must say, in all honesty, that the news came to me, personally, as a big relief; and I dismissed from my mind any idea that another Irish rebellion, at that late stage in our history, was, or could be, a probability. We must wait till the war was over and then get our leaders to unite and put our strong case for self-determination before the Peace Conference.

What, then, was my astonishment to learn, about noon of the next day, Easter Monday, that the rising had, indeed, broken out in Dublin where desperate fighting was taking place. I need not recount here the events of that week in Dublin. As for the town and district of Omagh, no place in the world could have been more peaceful. The police, we heard, did some

questioning of the few suspects that then existed, but they made no arrests. Unquestionably, Dr. MacCartan would have been arrested had he been found, but he had vanished. Many thought he had made for Dublin and joined the insurgents. Later, we heard there had been some mobilisation of Volunteers at Carrickmore, but it was most disappointing, hardly 100 men turning up. Doubtless, the MacNeill cancellation had something to do with this, for it was widely published. Dr. MacCartan, I think, endeavoured to reach Dublin when his own plans collapsed, but, failing to do so, went, as he certainly had to, "on the run" in Co. Tyrone for some time. The doctor was well-known; indeed, "notorious", for many years as an avowed republican and separatist. He made no secret of his extreme political principles. Apart from that, he was an able doctor and very popular with all classes and creeds in the country. His particular job was that of medical officer of health for the dispensary district of Gortin, some 8 or 9 miles from Omagh in the mid-Tyrone hills. In that district, there was a large house and demesne known as Beltrim Castle, owned and occupied by a family called Cole-Hamilton. After the rising, Mrs. Cole-Hamilton, a staunch Unionist in politics, befriended the doctor, putting him up whilst he was "on his keeping" for a very considerable time in her Castle. And, stranger still! If one

wanted to communicate with, or get in touch with the doctor, one had to go to a small stationery and tobacconist's shop on the Dublin road, Omagh, kept by a good Orangeman with the 18-carat Unionist name of Carson - Sammy Carson! I myself often brought secret letters there to Sammy which were all safely transmitted to the doctor. The Unionists had certainly a "gradh" for Dr. Pat MacCartan for the assistance he had rendered them during the Larne gun-running.

The reactions of the people of the north to the Rising were much the same as those in other parts of the country. They were, at first, exceedingly hostile, and many a bitter word I heard uttered against the insurgents by stalwart nationalists of long standing. They felt it had delivered a mortal blow, not to say a stab in the back, at that nationalist end-all and be-all, Home Rule; as, indeed, it had. And there were not a few, particularly among the older people, who feared that it would result in a long, diehard Tory regime that would impose a coercive reign of terror on the country akin to that of the Yeomen rule after the '98 rebellion. Almost everyone I met, Nationalists as well as Unionists, condemned Pearse and his colleagues on what they were unanimous in regarding as their wild and wickedly insane action; and, in this regard, the priests were at one with the laity, if not even more condemnatory.

I remember meeting one day a few of the local clergy and they did not mince words in condemning the rebel leaders as "cranks and soreheads", vain and selfish men on the lookout for notoriety. Home Rule, they said, had been killed and buried and not by the Orangemen, its natural foes, but by our own criminally irresponsible young Nationalists, seduced and led astray by the aforementioned "cranks". They fully endorsed all Redmond had said when, speaking on behalf of himself and his colleagues in the House of Commons on 27th April, he expressed the feelings of detestation and horrow with which they regarded the rising; and he joined with Sir Edward Carson who, in this approach, was not inarticulate, in the hope that no attempt would be made to use the rebellion as a political weapon against any Party.

Throughout the country, the condemnation of the Rising was virtually unanimous. From high and low came anathemas against it. Many of the bishops spoke in strong condemnation of the "mad and sinful adventure", and, as I have said, many priests spoke similarly. Public bodies appeared to vie with each other in registering their disapproval. The late Sir James O'Connor gives a selection of those resolutions in his History. Carlow U.D.C. recorded its "abhorrence of the appalling crime" and expressed themselves ready to assist the

the authorities, as far as in our power, to eradicate now and forever the elements of disorder in Ireland". Youghal No. 2 R.D.C. (May 5th) "condemn in the most emphatic manner the action of the so-called Sinn Féiners". Naas U.D.C. (May 11th) "strongest condemnation of the wickedness and insanity of the recent rising". Kinsale U.D.C. (May 2nd) "condemn in the strongest possible manner the insane and disastrous conduct of those dupes in Dublin and elsewhere in Ireland of the German Government". Galway U.D.C. (May 4th) "express our condemnation of the deplorable riots". Tralee U.D.C. "deplore with horror the outbreak in Dublin, which brings the blush of shame to every honest Irishman".

Those resolutions, in nearly every case, expressed the unanimous opinion of the Councils, and a remarkable feature in connection with them was that in numbers of instances they were passed after executions of the leaders had taken place, or whilst those executions were actually proceeding. Nevertheless, the executions played a prime part in changing the opinion and sympathies of the country. Long drawn-out and lingering as they were, it took them to wipe out completely and in a remarkably short time the hostile attitude of Irish Nationalist and Catholic thought to the Easter Rising. Before the last execution had been carried out in the barrack square at Arbour Hill, a profound and radical psychological revolution

had begun in a people that was and is notoriously conservative, in some ways to an almost obscurantist extent, and that had, after great toil, been wholly won round to purely constitutional agigation. And, within a year or two of the Rising, that psychological revolution was completed. Irish nationalism was, in that small space of time, transformed from constitutionalism and a pro-Empire outlook, not only to a violent anti-English and separatist outlook, but to a total renunciation of parliamentary methods, and a return to those of physical force and Meagher's "Sword"; a revolution even more remarkable, and infinitely more speedy, than that which it replaced.

Any of my moderate Unionist friends and neighbours, men of the professional and strong merchant class, seemed to me, in conversations I had with them, to dislike the executions as much as the Nationalists, though, of course, they never said so in so many words, confining themselves to pitying the victims of the firing squads.

As for the Orange leaders, some, at least, of them felt not a little guilty at the essential preliminary and basic part they and their Ulster Volunteers played in the affair. For it is undoubtedly true that, had it not been for them and their pre-war activities, the Easter Week Rising of 1916 would have been wholly impossible.

Shortly after the Rising I happened to be travelling by train from Omagh to Pomeroy on my way to my cousins at Altmore, there to spend the remainder of the Easter vacation. Among the passengers in my carriage there chanced to be a prominent local U.V.F. leader and a prominent nationalist solicitor. The rebellion was what was uppermost in every mind, and the talk of the carriage inevitably came round to it, despite the caution in the north in discussing anything appertaining to politics or religion at chance meetings. The company in the full carriage was clearly mixed - Orange and Green - and all were unanimous in their disapproval of the "mad" and "wicked" Dublin outbreak. The nationalist solicitor was particularly vocal against it; but, suddenly, he turned on the Orange leader and accused him and Carson of being the "fons et origo" of the whole tragic business. He complained more than once that there could have been no rebellion had it not been for the work of Carson "and yourself, Andy, and fellows like you. Every damn one of you are responsible for what happened last week in Dublin and damn well ye know it". Andy protested weakly and tangentially that that was ridiculous, that he and his were "loyal" and would have no truck with rebels &c. But the solicitor had no time for such tangents, kept on to his target that Carson and his U.V.F. made it possible for the "Dublin

Fenians" to arm and, having armed, to rebel. The solicitor got considerable assistance from the nationalist element in the carriage, but the Unionists present were not very articulate in support of their protagonist; all of them, including the protagonist, struck me as being decidedly guilt-conscious, if not exactly conscience-stricken about the events of the prior three years. Such a discussion on politics, in a public place in the north of Ireland, where a great psychological canyon exists between the two sections of the populace, was quite unprecedented; that it took place at all indicates how tense and all-absorbing was the topic of the rebellion in those days.

Altmore House, where my cousins lived, is situated, as I have pointed out, in a high mountainy county amongst the hills of East Tyrone. The house itself is 900 feet over sea level and, adjacent to it, is a large reservoir that supplies water to the town of Dungannon, eight miles away. A short mile from the house, the little hamlet of Cappagh, with its white-washed houses, crowns the top of a "brae" through which the road to Dungannon runs. When I arrived at the house I found everyone in a state of considerable excitement. It appeared that, that morning, a company of military had arrived from Belfast and had quartered themselves in Cappagh. The purpose of their occupation was stated to be to protect the waterworks from

damage or poison. That, curiously enough, was a phobia that was widespread in those days. In many places, such as Dundalk, Drogheda, &c., military and National Volunteers, side by side, guarded reservoirs and waterworks. Soldiers in the Altmore hills created great local excitement as, not since the middle of the eighteenth century, had British soldiers been seen there.

The guard at Altmore were drawn from the Royal Irish Rifles and were all young, indeed very young, Belfast lads. Few, if any, of them had ever been far outside that city and none, I am sure, had ever been on a farm. They were a decent quiet, well-behaved lot of youngsters and took a great interest in the farming operations of my cousins' farm. You could never go through the yards or round the extensive out-offices of the house without encountering numbers of them hanging around, smoking and chatting to the men and maids. One of the hands on the farm was a young fellow called John. This John was a bit of a character, and, one morning, when he was digging up a small lawn in the garden, preparatory for the sowing of some crop, three or four of these young soldiers came along and watched him cutting round and lifting up the grass sods. One of the soldiers asked John to let him have a try at the spade. The young fellow dug up a sod with much difficulty, and, to John's disgust, replaced it on the ground with the

grass side uppermost. "Naw, naw", drawled John, with thinly veiled contempt, as he took the spade from him and proceeded to dig up a sod with great expedition, "that's not the way. What kin' o' Belfast fellas are ye at all, at all? Surely ye know to keep the green down", placing his sod on the ground, the grass side downward, "like that, d'ye see? Keep the green down; always keep the green down, surely ye know that".

Such was the famous Easter Week Rising of 1916, as I experienced it.

AFTER THE RISING.

With the executions of James Connolly and Sean McDermott on May 12th, the Dublin Easter Rising of 1916 can be said to have been closed. The official casualty list of the outbreak, published on May 11th, put the total casualties figure at 1306, of which 300 were fatal. Of the total deaths, 120 were those of the British army and the two police forces. When, in the tranquil background of Omagh we read that information, we were astonished, for, judging from the newspapers and other reports of the alleged savage fighting in Dublin that week, we were expecting to hear of the deaths being numbered in tens of thousands. But, although the fatalities were surprisingly small for a week's hard fighting in a very concentrated area, they certainly made Carson's constant talk of "blood" come true at last.

On July 18th, 1913, at Clough, Co. Down, for example, he declared that he "was inspired by the call of blood". And here was, not only the "call", but the thing itself. And, as in the first bloodshed in latter-day Ireland, that at Bachelor's Walk, the British army acted with an eagerness and alacrity - no resignations or suggestions of resignations from officers - that was in strong contrast with its attitude

towards Ulster. On the occasion of Bachelor's Walk and Easter Week, the British army exercised exemplary "impartiality" and completely eschewed anything in the nature of "politics". We also read that the damage done to property was estimated to amount to £3,364,100, an extremely high figure in the then currency, of which £2,614,000 was in respect of buildings and £750,000 in respect of stock - all of this was mainly the result of the bombardment.

According to the evidence of Col. Edgeworth-Johnstone, Chief Commissioner of the D.M.P., before the Royal Commission of Inquiry into the Rebellion, the Irish Volunteers in Dublin murdered 2,225 (of whom little more than half were actually in the Rising) and they had no more than 825 rifles. Against them were, at the start, 4,000 British soldiers all, of course, adequately equipped with the latest armaments. These were greatly increased ultimately by reinforcements from England so that, by the end of that week, there were up to 20,000 British soldiers in and around the city.

Two things can be justly said about that Rising. On the one hand it was a remarkably fine fight for so few untrained civilians with still fewer rifles, with no artillery, not even a machine gun, and very limited ammunition, to put up against

(ultimately) more than ten times their number of fully trained professional soldiers; and, as we shall see, Asquith paid a generous tribute to their courage and clean fighting record. On the other hand, all things to the contrary notwithstanding, it has to be admitted that, with some very nasty exceptions, the British fought equally cleanly and, on the whole, behaved themselves well. That they were neither ruthless, cruel or vindictive is amply demonstrated by the almost trivial number slain in such an extensive affair - not more than 300, of whom not more than 180 were civilians and insurgents.

The universal hostility shown to the rebels and the welcome given the military by the Dublin crowds was, in itself, a tribute to their conduct under most trying conditions. Had they acted otherwise, had they resorted to that violence and ruthlessness that recent times have accustomed us to, their reception would have been very different. I can never forget a story the late Michael Collins told me that admirably symbolises the popular reaction at the time. After the suppression of the Rising, he and his fellow prisoners were marched under strong armed guard to the docks to embark for their places of internment in England. The beautiful, cloudless weather of the week had disappeared and had been replaced by a heavy grey sky from which descended on the dispirited, defeated and unshaven rebels

a cold, constant drizzle. They were escorted on their way by a motley crowd of men and women from the back streets and rat infested tenements who kept up a continuous boohing and jeering. One dreadful old hag, in particular, remained indelibly imprinted on Michael's memory. Her nose was eaten away by some disease and, with only a black shawl over her head to protect her from the heavy drizzle, she kept pace with them the whole way, reiterating: "Ye're after ruinin' our beautiful city, ye bastards, ye".

A feeling of profound depression, chagrin and frustration fell on the country in the immediate wake of the insurrection. Home Rule, we all believed, was dead, and we saw little hope before us of any future for our country after all the years of agitation and organisation. It took the long-drawn-out lingering executions of the leaders to stir us, and stir us deeply to r esentment and anger. Had they all been slain in the hot blood of battle, or even executed in a few batches after a drumhead courtmartial immediately after the surrender, there would not have been anything like the same soul-searing effect. And, had they been pardoned or given sentences of penal servitude, not only would the rebellion have been crushed, but its message of separatism and republicanism would, I believe, have been killed as well.

This resentment was still further inflamed like a festering sore by the fact that Carson and Bonar Law, the two prime begetters of all violence and insurgency in latter-day Ireland, were members of the Cabinet that endorsed the executions and, of course, equally responsible with their fellow-Ministers for them. And, as if that were not enough, Roger casement was, at that very time, being prosecuted in London for high treason by the English Attorney-General. That guardian of the country's law and order was none other than the famous "Galloper" (F.E.) Smith, one of the most fire-eating of all the rebels in the Ulster movement. Here is a sample of his oratory in his rebel days. Speaking in Co. Antrim on 21st September, 1913, he said if war was made on Ulster, "from that moment we hold ourselves absolved from all allegiance to this Government. From that moment we, on our part, say to our fellows in England - To your tents, O Israel. From that moment we stand side by side with you, refusing to recognise any law". It was surely a scandal of the first order and wholly against the great principle of English law that not only must justice be done, but it must seem to be done, that such an individual should have been given the commission to prosecute Casement to his death.

As the weeks passed, the country began to realise that, in one way or another, it had been let down, not only on Home Rule, but as to the special status of its fighting men in the British army that Asquith had promised; whilst, on the other hand, the Ulster Unionists had had all their demands met with the utmost consideration in nearly every respect. Another rather glaring example of official consideration for the "Ulster" cause was shown in the report of Lord Hardinge, Judge Shearman and Sir Mackenzie Chalmers, the Commissioners who inquired into the origin and causes of the Rising. In that report, published on June 26th, 1916, not one mention is made of the Ulster Volunteers and their originating part in the arming of the country, although Sir James Dougherty, a former Under-Secretary for Ireland, in his evidence before them, pin-pointed that part. He said that the Irish Volunteers were the response of the Nationalists to the Volunteer movement in Unionist Ulster; and the gun-running at Howth was but a natural sequel to the gun-running at Larne. "I do not care", he continued, with curious diffidence, "to enter into details as to the rise and progress of the Ulster movement. I can only say that those who led and encouraged it shouldered a very heavy burden of responsibility. They were, indeed, the persons who played with matches in a powder magazine".

The bitterness over the executions was certainly not allayed by the mad epidemic of arrests that seized the Government, some 3,430 men and 79 women being swept up all over the country, and incarcerated in concentration camps in Britain. Many of those thus interned knew little or nothing about the rebel movement or its doctrines; but, after a few months' indoctrination in such "rebel academies" as Frongoch, Knutsford and Wakefield, they became as thoroughly Sinn Féin as even the stoutest rebel in the Post Office could have been.

The first rift in the heavy cloud of despondency that hung over the country at that time was when, to the astonishment of everyone, Mr. Asquith, the Prime Minister, paid a sudden and wholly unexpected visit to Dublin. The day before he left for Dublin, 11th May, he paid a generous tribute to the insurgents. "I agree", he said in the House of Commons, "as to the great body of the insurgents that they did not resort to outrage. They fought very bravely; they conducted themselves, as far as our knowledge goes, with humanity..... That tribute I gladly make"

Mr. Asquith spent about a week in Ireland - the longest visit in history that ever any acting English Premier paid the country - and, in addition to talking to "representative exponents of the various shades and complexions of Irish opinion", to use

his own words, he visited prisons and "talked with the utmost freedom to a large number of those who had been arrested and detained". That was a surprisingly courageous thing for a man of Asquith's cautious and, by no means, heroic character to have done; and he deserves full credit for it. Clearly his mind was far from easy about the Dublin outbreak. That wholly unexpected psycho-political earthquake shook him to the core of his inherited Liberal heart. Asquith was a man of exceptional intelligence and political acumen. He knew well the background behind the outbreak and the very material part that his Cabinet colleagues, Carson and Bonar Law, had played in making it a possibility. The Liberalism in him - deep down in him under the layers of flunkeyism and toadyism - was profoundly stirred and bruised; and he brought with him to Dublin something not unlike a guilty conscience. On his return from Ireland he informed Parliament that the dominant impression on his mind was "the breakdown of the existing machinery of Irish government" and that he had commissioned Mr. Lloyd George to negotiate with the Irish Party leaders with a view to a compromise settlement of the vexed question, a settlement that would enable the Home Rule Act to be brought into immediate operation. Professor Allison Phillips thus comments; with considerable force, on Asquith's intervention: "The Rebellion

was thus advertised to all the world as the most successful failure in history. What years of constitutional agitation had failed to secure had been secured by one short week's rebellion".

Another unexpected but gratifying ray of light in the encircling gloom, albeit of a minor sort, was the letter of that staunch if somewhat contrary Irishman, George Bernard Shaw, published in the "Daily News" on 10th May, 1916: "My own view", he wrote, with admirable courage: "Is that the men who were shot in cold blood, after their capture or surrender, were prisoners of war, and that it was, therefore, entirely incorrect to slaughter them. The relation of Ireland to Dublin Castle is, in this respect, precisely that ..... of Belgium, or the city of Lille to the Kaiser, and of the United States to Great Britain. Until Dublin Castle is superseded by a National Parliament and Ireland voluntarily incorporated with the British Empire .... an Irishman resorting to arms to achieve the independence of his country is doing only what Englishmen will do, if it be their misfortune to be invaded and conquered by the Germans in the course of the present war".

Unquestionably, Asquith's visit to Ireland in the circumstances of those times, and, to a lesser extent, Shaw's letter, acted on the country as a tonic, dispersing to some

extent its depression, and holding out to it a definite sign and promise of hope that all was by no means lost. And, incidentally, it certainly did no harm to the insurgent cause.

Lloyd George, the Government's "Welsh Wizard", set to work on his solvent with his famous "gusto". Lloyd George had numerous conferences in London with the leaders of the Irish political parties, but, unlike the Premier, he did not visit Ireland.

On June 10th, a meeting of the Irish Nationalist Party was held in the Mansion House, Dublin, when Mr. Redmond put before it the Lloyd George proposals that were, in substance, as follows:

(1) To bring the Home Rule Act into immediate operation.

(2) To introduce at once an Amending Bill as a strictly War Emergency Act to cover only the period of the War and a short interval after it.

(3) During that period Irish M.P.s to remain in Westminster in their full numbers.

(4) During that period the Six Ulster Counties to be left as at present under the Imperial Government.

(5) Immediately after the war, an Imperial Conference of representatives from all the Dominions of the Empire to be held to consider the future government of the Empire, including the question of the government of Ireland.

(6) Immediately after this Conference, and during the aforesaid particular period, the permanent settlement of all the great outstanding problems, such as the permanent position of the six exempted counties, would be proceeded with.

Redmond succeeded in getting that meeting to adopt those terms with its partition proposals thinly disguised as "temporary" therein.

A few days later, on June 12th, a full meeting of the Ulster Unionist Council was held in the Ulster Minor Hall, Belfast. At this meeting, which was private, Sir Edward Carson presided and put the aforementioned terms to it, with one important amendment, viz: that the Six Ulster Counties were to be permanently excluded from the Home Rule Act, a specific guarantee that, as subsequently transpired, Lloyd George had privately given him. Carson succeeded, after much difficulty, in getting the proposals accepted by a substantial majority of the delegates. Their reluctance to do so was very natural, seeing that it involved the reneging of their Covenant Oath; and that reluctance and guilty-conscienceness was reflected in the long-winded resolution they passed. The resolution re-affirmed their "unabated abhorrence" of Home Rule, but, as the Cabinet considered that the settlement was in the interests of the sorely-tried Empire, they would accept it as "in this crisis in the Empire's history, it is our duty to make sacrifices". And it concluded with a particularly obvious face-saving and futile clause, designed to conceal the guilt they undoubtedly felt over the matter. "And, further, we hereby pledge ourselves as follows: That, in the event of a settlement being arrived at on the basis above-mentioned, we shall use all the influence, power and resources of Ulster" - this comprehensive term they

suitably abridge - "(that is to say) of the six counties to be excluded from the purview of the Act) in the future for the protection of Unionists in the Counties of Cavan, Monaghan and Donegal against justice or oppression at the hands of the Irish Parliament or Government". This "guarantee" to their betrayed fellow-Covenanters meant just nothing as, of course, their influence, in such circumstances, in those counties would be non-existent. It was indeed a case of adding insult to injury. They were saving their own skins at the expense of the non-excluded Unionists, not only of Ulster's nine counties, but of all Ireland's thirty-two counties, whom, by the betrayal of their oath, they had thrown under the heel of the terrible papistical Dublin Government. So much for that"mystical affirmation" as the "Times" called the Covenant whereby "Ulster seemed to enter into an offensive and defensive alliance with the Diety". So much for Carson's solemn pledge on July 14th, 1914: "For my own part I know nothing of legality or illegality..... All I think of is my Covenant. My Covenant to me is the text and the foundation of what was illegality and what was legality; and everything that was necessary to carry out my Covenant, I believe, in my conscience, I am, under heaven, entitled to do".

The discarded Covenanters in the three included counties found a voice to give utterance to their grievances. That voice belonged to that redoubtable but intensely honest old war horse whom we have already encountered in these pages - the Rev. Canon T.L.F. Stack, B.D. He spoke often and much against the breach of the Covenant. His views are fully given in a sermon on 8th July, 1917, before the Orangemen in his Church of Lower Langfield, Drumquin, Co. Tyrone, when he preached on the text: "They kept not the Covenant of God" Ps. LXXV111, 10, which, anticipating somewhat, I shall now quote from. The first part of his sermon is taken up with examples from the Scriptures of the divine punishment and awful fate that befell those that repudiated their covenant. The Ten Tribes lapsed into idolatry and were lost. The Gibeonites obtained by fraud and lies a covenant with Israel. The princes swore to them by the God of Israel to let them live tho' He had commanded them to slay the Gibeonites for their abominable sins. He instanced also the cases of Zedekiah, Jephthah and Saul's rash oath. His sermon is copiously besprinkled with scriptural texts bearing on his theme. "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 thy 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 hands?" (Eccles. V.6). "Thus sayeth the Lord God: As I live, surely mine oath that he had despised, and my covenant that he hath broken, will even bring it upon his own head. And I will spread my net upon him and he shall be taken in my snare ..... And all his fugitives in all his bands shall fall by the sword, and they that remain shall be scattered towards every wind; and ye shall know that I the Lord have spoken it". (Ezek.XVll. 13-21). Referring to Jephthah's vow (Judges Xl.30-31), he declared it "shows how even a rash promise made to God must be kept even at the tremendous cost of slaying an only child as a burnt offering".

Coming to the Ulster Covenant itself, he quotes from a pamphlet published by the Ulster Unionist Council called "Ulster's Appeal", and which consisted of letters by prominent Unionists - Covenanters - to the press: In the first the covenant 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 death". Commenting on this the Canon says: "If this view needs support we have it in the Covenant itself, and in its administration. Ulster 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 such confidence that God will defend the right'. It was administered after Divine Service, ordered by the Church, with special forms provided. Indeed the Covenants 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.... 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 mistatements into momentary surrender of the Covenant, now justly reclaim its aegis". And the indignant old man goes on to tell his Orangemen that there has been a breach of faith. "Our leaders pledged themselves to the U.V.F. that whilst they served in the Ulster Division there would be no tampering with

Home Rule. That pledge was broken when last year (i.e. June 1916) the Council provisionally accepted Lloyd George's proposal to set up immediately Home Rule for four-fifths of Ireland..... the Sinn Féiners are honest; they never concealed their faith but fought and died for it. Ulster surrendered hers without a blow".

But to return to June, 1916. Though the point of view of the Rev. Canon Stack about the violation of the Covenant oath had a considerable amount of support behind it in Ulster, particularly in the three "discarded" counties of Cavan, Donegal and Monaghan, it was not strong enough to prevail against Carson and his well-organised Unionist and Orange machine. Indeed, so ineffectual and disorganised was that body of dissident opinions, considerable in size as it was, that we find the deserted Unionists of those counties expressing themselves in the following terms on June 12th, the day of the meeting in Belfast of the Unionist Council: "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. But, if the Six Counties consider the safety of the Empire depends on the basis suggested by the Government, the responsibility must be clearly understood to be theirs and the delegates of the three counties must abide by their decision". Rather a flatulent resolution in the circumstances, but it does register a certain amount of ill-concealed chagrin against their quondam brothers-in-arms. And even they limited their protest to the "Covenanters of the three counties we represent", though as sworn covenanters they should have protested on behalf of all the discarded Unionists of Ireland on whose account that covenant to the death had been sworn.

Meetings were held by the Canon Stack Unionists in various places, not alone in Ulster but in the South and Dublin, viewing with dismay the exclusion of the Six Counties and pointing out that in agreeing to special arrangements for the Six Counties the Northern Protestants had been guilty of breaking the solemn covenant to which they had subscribed three years earlier. These accusations found their targets in the sensitive, self-righteous bosoms of Carson's ex-Covenanters and they felt

bound to endeavour to answer them. This they did in a most specious and uncandid way. Their argument was that, far from breaking the Covenant they were keeping it "in the spirit if not in the letter" because a spearate Ulster Government (actually not then even contemplated!) 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. The hollowness and falsity of this argument were easily shown up by two things. In the first place the great Unionist contention on which their whole resistance to Home Rule for all or any part of Ireland was based and in respect of which they had sworn the Covenant, was that no group or body of Protestants, however small, could be thrown under the tyrannical, anti-Protestant heels of a Dublin Government. That was Carson's big Number One plank in his whole campaign of violence, and here he was deliberately abandoning the large Protestant minority in three Ulster counties as well, of course, as those in the South and West. The real reason why Carson and the Unionists of the North-East corner elected to opt for a Six Counties isolated from Home Rule was a far from altruistic one, as the late Sir James Craig,

in his blunt and honest fashion, revealed some years later. Speaking in the House of Commons in 1920. on the question of area, Craig said: "We had to take a decision some days ago as to whether we should call upon the Government to include the nine counties in the Bill, or be satisfied with the six..... We admit quite frankly that we cannot hold the nine counties. Then we decided, in the interests of the greater part of Ulster, it is better we should give up the three counties". That, then, was the true and candid reason why the Six Counties became the area of the Northern Government. They were thus selected deliberately "in the interests of the greater part of Ulster", a wholly arbitrary area, the largest possible in the country with a predominant Protestant majority that "could be held"; and the Unionists elsewhere in the country could sink or swim under horrific "Papish" control as best they were able despite the solemn farce of the Covenanting Oath.

The Irish Party Convention in Dublin on June 10th, and Carson's convention in Belfast on June 12th, had, as we have seen, accepted Lloyd-George's proposals, or rather, as subsequently transpired, their respective versions of

them. The Dublin Convention's action came as a surprise and a keen disappointment to us Mid-Ulster Nationalists. We were astonished that any body of Nationalists could be got anywhere in the country to endorse even a pseudo-temporary form of Partition. And we were all greatly irritated by the articles of an accepted Nationalist, the late Arthur Clery, that appeared in that highly respected paper, "The Leader", under the non-de-plume of "Chanel", arguing the case for Partition. However, we did not attach much account to them, dismissing them as the outpourings of an accentric intellectual. But when, however, on June 20th, only three days before the determining Convention of Nationalists of the Six Counties were to meet and vote on proposals in Belfast, Father Michael O'Flanagan's famous "Partition" letter was published in the "Freeman's Journal", we were furious. And, perhaps, what enraged us most about the letter was that it contained the best, most cogent and cleverest arguments in defence of Partition that had ever been advanced from any quarter. "If we reject Home Rule rather than agree to the exclusion of the Unionist parts of Ulster" wrote that able Sligo curate, "what case have we to put before the world? We can point out that Ireland

is an island with a definite geographical boundary. That argument might be alright if we were appealing to a number of Island Nationalities that had themselves definite geographical boundaries. Appealing as we are to continental nations with shifting boundaries, that argument will have no force whatever. National and geographical boundaries scarcely ever coincide. Geography would make one nation of Spain and Portugal; history has made two of them; geography has scarcely anything to say to the number of nations upon the North American Continent; history has done the whole thing.. Geography has worked hard to make one nation out of Ireland; history has worked hard against it. The island of Ireland and the national unit of Ireland simply do not coincide. In the last analysis the test of nationality is the wish of the people. A man who settles in America becomes an American by transferring his love and allegiance to the United States. The Unionists of Ulster have never transferred their love and allegiance to Ireland. They may be Irelanders, using Ireland as a geographical term, but they are not Irishmen in the national sense. They love the hills of Antrim in the same way as we love

the plains of Roscommon; but the centre of their patriotic enthusiasm is London, whereas the centre of ours is Dublin.

We claim the right to decide what is to be our nation. We refuse them the same right. We are putting ourselves before the world in the same light as the man in the Gospel who was forgiven the ten thousand talents and who proceeded immediately to throttle his neighbour for a hundred pence. After 300 years England has begun to despair of compelling us to love her by force. And so we are anxious to start where England left off, and we are going to compel Antrim and Down to love us by force". Thus wrote the famous Father Michael O'Flanagan in June, 1916 - the man that within the next five years was to develop into an advanced republican die-hard. As I say, we in the North were wild at his letter because of its clever pleading and because of the time when it was published. Re-reading it though to-day, I am forced to admit that, though his basis of argumentation is rather faulty, there is definitely something in what he wrote. The Convention of representatives of the people directly concerned, viz.

the Nationalists of the Six Counties, met in St. Mary's Hall, Belfast, on June 23rd. I was in Omagh at the time and vividly remember the time, feeling and strain amongst the local Nationalists. They had never reconciled themselves to Partition in any shape or form, even to temporary Partition - which they not unreasonably suspected as being but the thin end of the wedge of permanent Partition. The idea was abhorrent to them, and they felt intensely about it in a way and to an extent that it is quite impossible to convey to the present generation. And, I might say, the local Unionists were hardly less happy about it, and looked to the Belfast Convention with almost as great hope as the Nationalists that it would repudiate the proposals, but for a rather different reason - that, in that event, Home Rule for all, or any part of Ireland, would be killed. There were few telephones and, of course, no radios at that time, and the only way we Omagh folk had of obtaining news about important events was to go round to Davy Young's little tobacco and sweet shop in the High Street and read the telegrams that always seemed to make for "Davys" on such occasions, pasted up on his window. Davy Young was a

good Presbyterian and strong Unionist, although by no means a politician. He was too keen a businessman to indulge in active politics, and his "Cigar Divan" and "Sweeteries" was a kind of centre of intelligence and information that drew all and sundry thither when rumours were in the air. That evening I walked into town to learn the verdict. I found a large and mixed crowd, Nationalists and Unionists, gathered round the window, and noticed that those who had read the tidings came away with serious and far from cheerful countenances. And when I read the telegram giving the result I did likewise. To our amazement, the representatives of the Nationalists of the Six Northern Counties had accepted the plan of their temporary exclusion from all-Ireland Home Rule by the large majority of 210 in an assembly of 740, of whom some 265 voted in the minority. The result of the vote, backing as it did a highly unpopular scheme in the eyes of Ulster Nationalists, was a personal triumph for Mr. Joe Devlin, M.P., whose impassioned eloquence carried the day. A great part of the substantial minority comprised the delegates from the two counties of Tyrone and Fermanagh possessing small but conclusive Nationalist majorities.

I walked home that evening from Young's shop with a feeling of deep depression that I never experienced till then, and not often since. Looking back on it now, it does seem strange that that news should have so affected me and many thousands of others in those counties. But there it was; partition, even temporary partition was then regarded as something so fantastic and unnatural that its existence simply could not be contemplated, much less endured or tolerated. The delegates who voted against the proposal were received as heroes when they returned to their areas, bands turning out to meet them; whilst those in Tyrone and Fermanagh who voted with the majority received a very different kind of welcome. All our local leaders of official nationalists, headed by Frank O'Connor, Solicitor, and Michael Lynch, Managing Director of the "Ulster Herald", sided and voted with the minority. Indeed, the outstanding leader of that minority was Frank O'Connor. He was an excellent orator of the popular type, and could sway and hold an audience with consummate ability. For years he had been the leading personality in Mid-Ulster politics, always a steadfast supporter of the orthodox official Irish Parliamentary Party and a prominent delegate from the area in all their conventions.

He was certainly a member of the United Irish League, but I doubt very much whether he ever was a Hibernian. He was one of the main leaders in the anti-Murnaghan split that I have described, and I am not at all sure that had his personality, eloquence and popularity been with (instead of against) Murnaghan, that split would never have occurred. O'Connor was undoubtedly a politician by nature, but , as his action in Belfast showed, he was far from being a time-server or a place-hunter. It took a lot of courage on the part of men like him and Lynch to oppose the all-powerful party machine with its secret Hibernian auxiliaries , and brave wrath and vengeance, particularly having regard to the split tradition in the area. Their action was bitterly resented and repudiated by their former friends. They were all attacked as "Sore-heads", "Factionists", "Disrupters" and "Disappointed place-hunters". The last epithet was particularly unjust, as before the Convention they stood at the head of their party in the district and had immensely more to lose than to gain by their action.

O'Connor, Lynch and a very large section of their followers in the U.I.L. and the A.O.H. shortly afterwards

severed all connection with that official Nationalism that they had served so long and so well, and joining in with the old-time Murnaghanite dissidents, proceeded to organise an anti-Partition opposite to the Lloyd George plan.

The opposition to the plan spread rapidly throughout the two counties of Tyrone and Fermanagh, and to such Nationalist strongholds as Derry City, South County Derry, South Armagh and South Down. The other parts of Ulster did not, save for individuals and groups, register any particular organised opposition, certainly not any very marked collective opposition. But no district in the province was without a sediment of strong feeling and opposition to Partition, and that sediment formed in every case the nucleus of the future Sinn Féin movement therein. But not only were large sections of the Nationalists on the warpath against Partition, but, as we have seen, there was a rebellion too amongst the Northern Unionists which had quite a following in the border or "Fringe" counties and was particularly articulate in Donegal, Cavan and Monaghan. However, I have already dealt with that movement and its tough old leader, Canon Stack of Drumquin. Anti-Partition committees sprang up in many parts of the province, particularly in Tyrone and Fermanagh where the dislike of the proposal was strongest and most articulate. One of those Committees was formed

after Mass outside my local church at Killyclogher, about a mile distant from the town of Omagh. It was presided over by the local curate, Father Charles O'Callaghan. Among the speakers were my father and George Murnaghan, his partner. Suddenly, to my surprise and embarrassment, I was called on to speak, which I did. That was my first political speech.

Whilst these activities were proceeding in the North, a trial that attracted an enormous amount of interest was taking place in London; the trial of Sir Roger David Casement. And a significant circumstance in the personnel at that trial certainly did not escape notice in Ireland. The case for the Crown was led by the Attorney-General in England, who was none other than the Rt. Hon. Sir Frederick Smith, K.C., P.C., M.P. In other words, the man who was assigned the task of prosecuting Casement on his life for high treason was one of the strongest and most violent abettors of the Ulster Volunteers in their highly seditious activities, which the prisoner at the bar only endeavoured to emulate. In all the circumstances there could hardly have been a more unseemly or improper choice of a prosecutor, violating, as it undoubtedly did, that prime principle of English law that not only must justice be done, but it must be seen to be done. At all events, no one had greater practical experience of the charge he was to

prove than the famous "Galloper"; and when he opened the case for the Crown by informing the Court that "the charge against the prisoner was the gravest known in Law", no one could say that he did not know what he was talking about.

"New Ireland", at that time a supporter, though a critical one, of Redmond's Party and the Cause of the Allies in the War, made this sharp and courageous comment on Smith's position in the trial in its issue of July 29th, 1916: stating that it was shocking that Smith, "the former preacher of rebellion and sedition, should be the chief law officer of the Crown and, as such, should have prosecuted Sir Roger Casement; having done so, he might have had the decency of giving the latter the fullest chances for his life". He had refused Casement a fiat for an appeal to the House of Lords. The paper continues: "In the meantime, it would satisfy our sense of justice to see Sir F.E. Smith tried for high treason and sentenced, as he ought to be, to be hanged - if the matter were expedited the two hangings might take place on the same day". This put into succinct language the reactions of even conservative, constitutional Nationalism to Casement's trial and his prosecutor. When his execution took place after such a trial, it is not hard to understand

the much more acute reactions to it in the country. Smith, of course, succeeded in proving his charge. Roger Casement was condemned to death and hanged on the morning of August 3rd at Pentonville Prison, London. And though his hanging took place very early in the day, a considerable crowd gathered outside the gaol and when the announcement was affixed to the door that sentence of death by execution had been duly carried out on Roger David Casement, they had the execrable lack of taste and humanity to break out into cheers and song. That unsavoury incident so upset me that I sat down and wrote a bitter condemnation of it, comparing it to the ribald scenes that occurred outside Manchester Prison on the execution of Allen, Larkin and O'Brien during the Fenian times. My article was duly published in the "Ulster Herald".

The anti-Partition movement spread rapidly throughout Ulster, particularly in what were called the "Fringe Counties" - Derry, Tyrone, Fermanagh, Armagh and Down. It was greatly stimulated by the Bishop of Derry, Dr. MacHugh, who made his support of it unmistakably clear in a letter to the press of July 13th, 1916. "The tragic events" he wrote, "that are reported in the press from day to day show that the fate of Ireland a Nation is in the balance". And having criticised the Irish Party for its failure "to defend her

(Ireland's) integrity", he continued: "In all the trying vicissitudes through which our poor country has passed, she has remained one and undivided. Her liberty and her independence were bartered and betrayed in the sordid transactions of the Union, but still she was sold, not piecemeal but as one..... Surely Ireland is not yet dead. No doubt, through the apathy of the people, she is on the dissecting table"! And he added a postscript, very telling in the tense climate of the day: "The Parliamentary Report of to-day says, in the words of Sir Edward Carson in which Mr. Asquith acquiesces, that the Six Counties have been definitely struck out of the Act of 1914. The meaning of this is that the Lloyd George Home Rule Act shall be repealed and annulled for the Six Counties, and that a new Home Rule Act must be framed and passed through Parliament before these counties and the cities of Belfast and Derry can ever again be united to the rest of Ireland". This letter, with its fateful message of permanent partition, coming from so eminent and respected a prelate, gave an enormous fillip to the already fast-spreading movement and had the effect of throwing into its ranks many of the Conservative elements of weight and influence in those counties that up till then had held back. And soon the

Northern Nationalists were to see the Bishop's statement about Partition virtually confirmed by an even more eminent personage than he, none other than the Prime Minister himself. Speaking in the House of Commons on July 24th, 1916, Mr. Asquith said that "the agreement come to in regard to Ireland by the Secretary for War, subject to the approval of the Government, embodied two main points, which were accepted by both sections of the Government, Unionists and Home Rulers. The Unionists in the Cabinet agreed that the Government of Ireland Act should be put into immediate operation, and, on the other hand, the Home Rulers in the Cabinet agreed that six Ulster Counties should not be brought in, except by their own consent and on the express authority of a new Act of Parliament. In course of settling the bill to give effect to these objects, two questions arose which required consideration. The first was as to the form in which the exclusion of the Ulster Counties should be provided for. The Government believed that it was common ground to all parties to the agreement that this area should not be subjected to automatic inclusion, and they did not propose to do more than make thus sure. The other question was the retention after Home Rule of the Irish members in the Imperial Parliament....."

Concluding the debate which followed, Mr. Asquith said he had laid it down on the floor of the House that there must be no coercion of Ulster, and that the six counties which were being excluded by the arrangement should not be brought back by any automatic process but only by express Acts of Parliament.

Carson had been asserting from the moment Lloyd George had first consulted him about the proposals that the Six Counties were to be permanently excluded. The Battle of Jutland had taken place on May 31st and, ending as it did in a near British defeat, produced, in conjunction with the grave set-back of the French Army in the protracted Battle of Verdun, feelings of dismay and great uneasiness. According to biographer Colvin, Carson thought "the game was up; but he could still make terms - and his main idea was the exclusion of Ulster from a Home Rule settlement". He could still make terms, his own terms, and he did, and got from Lloyd George the famous letter confirming his contention and his claim: written from Whitehall Place, S.W., on May 29th, 1916.

"I enclose Greer's draft proposals. We must make it clear that at the end of the provisional period Ulster does not, whether she wills it or not, merge in the rest of Ireland".

Surely no words could be more crystal-clear in meaning than these; yet there are intelligent people to-day prepared to argue that they do not mean at all what they say - indeed, quite the opposite! Not even in the face of imminent disaster to the Empire, as they then thought, would Carson compromise or would Lloyd George do aught but counsel him never to compromise.

There was no doubt that once again, as in the crisis over the 1909 Budget, poor Redmond had been badly humbugged. So, when the Bill containing the vital altered provisions was introduced on July 25th, he had no alternative but to refuse to accept it. In moving the adjournment, he denounced the Government for having "disregarded every advice we tendered to them, and now in the end, having got us to induce our people to make a tremendous sacrifice and agree to the temporary exclsuion of these Ulster counties, they threw this agreement to the winds and they have taken the surest means to accentuate every possible danger and difficulty in the Irish situation".

Once more a "solution of the Irish Question" proved no solution at all, but left the position more sore and inflamed than ever.

These developments added grist at a great rate to the anti-Partition mill. Coterminous with the advance of that organisation in Ulster and other parts of Ireland, there was a formidable up-surge of anti-British feeling in America, due, in the first place, to revulsion at the executions, but in due course the Partition issue, as it has developed since the Rising, became a big issue amongst the American Irish and they were soon organising and collecting funds for its defeat.

At the end of July 1916, Duke, K.C., became Chief Secretary for Ireland, and Viscount Wimbourne, who had resigned, was re-appointed Lord Lieutenant; James H. Campbell, K.C., another of the prominent Ulster seditionists, was made Attorney-General for Ireland and thereby entrusted with the guardianship of law and order there. The anti-Partition committees, particularly in central and western Ulster, were beginning to feel that some organisation more positive and national than a mere local negative one should be created to fill the big gap left in the national life by the decay and discreditment of the old United Irish League. Accordingly, delegates from a large number of anti-Partition committees met in Derry and founded the Irish Nation League,

where it had the support of the clergy, headed by the Bishop of Derry, the late Dr. Charles McHugh. But as a provincial centre was considered to be hardly the headquarters of what aimed to be a national organisation, it was to take premises in Dublin. However, before that stage was reached a great anti-Partition demonstration, under the auspices of the Nation League, was held in the Phoenix Park on 10th September, 1916. This was presided over by the late J.J. O'Meara, Solicitor and City Councillor. It was a very large demonstration indeed, with at least half a dozen platforms.

We of the Nation League rejoiced exceedingly at the huge assembly that had come together under our auspices to hearken to and applaud our "winged words", which they certainly did with a vengeance. We were sure we had "struck oil" so to speak, and were witnessing the birth of a great new national movement, better and more virile than any that had preceded it. How mistaken we were we did not then know; it took us that winter in Dublin to realise it. Save for the Northern contingents, the driving force behind that great demonstration did not emanate from us at all but from the I.R.B. and Volunteer elements. Those made use of the big gathering as a cover to come together again,

contact their leaders and their key-men and re-knit, as far as they could, their hidden and military organisations, shattered and dislocated as they had been by the Rising and by subsequent arrests and internments.

After that meeting, the prominent Irish Nation League leaders and speakers met in Vaughan's Hotel, Parnell Square. Those made the first draft of the Constitution of the new body and prepared a manifesto to the Irish people which was issued to the press next day. A provisional Executive Committee of the new League was formed, the chairman of whom was the late J.J. O'Meara, T.C., Solicitor, and which included, as far as I can recollect, F.T. O'Connor, Solicitor, Omagh - the real leader and driving force behind the movement - Michael Lynch, Managing Director of the 'Ulster Herald', Omagh; Seán O'Hanrahan, Solicitor, Omagh; George Murnaghan, Solicitor, Omagh; Alex E. Donnelly, Solicitor, Omagh; Barney Campbell, Solicitor, Belfast; Charles McLoughlin, Solicitor, Magherafelt, Co. Derry, Paddy Little, Solicitor, Dublin - proprietor and editor of '<u>New Ireland</u>', J.J. O'Kelly("Sceilg"), Stephen M. O'Mara and Michael O'Callaghan, Limerick; Roger Sweetman, B.L., Derrybard, Glendaloch; P.W. Kenny, Kingsmeadow House,

Waterford; Archibald Savage, P.L.G., Belfast; John Cummins, Wexford; Edward Stephens, B.L., Dublin; Lawrence Casey, Dublin; John Crozier, J.P., Chairman Enniskillen Poor Law Guardians, Vice Chairman Fermanagh County Council; F.J. Little, Solicitor, Dublin; Art MacCumhail, Dublin; P.J. McCorry, B.L., Belfast, and Alderman P. Lane, Cork.

The late Archibald Nicholls, L.L.D., and I were made Secretaries, and George Murnaghan and Stephen M. O'Mara, Trustees. Premises were taken for the Nation League at the Mansion House Chambers, 27, Dawson St., Dublin. I should mention that Cahir Davitt was one of the first members of the I.N.L. At a later stage a vacancy occurred in the parliamentary representation of Donegal, and the Nation League wrote Davitt, inviting him to contest the by-election under its auspices. He wrote back declining, saying that for the present, at all events, he would remain merely an ordinary member. The Nation League set out to be an organisation of a very advanced and progressive type of nationalism, but it was pledged to strictly constitutional methods and did not believe in a policy of abstention from Westminster, at least a policy of complete and uncompromising abstention. Its compromise was occasional abstention to mark and bring into the limelight any particular grievance.

Similarly it was far from being separatist or republican in character, and in its Manifesto expressed its principal objectives to be as follows: -

"(1) To maintain the unity of Ireland; to secure complete national self-government and prevent any division or partition of the nation.

(2) To preserve and cherish national ideals and the distinctive features of Irish life: its history, tradition and language; to cultivate patriotism and good citizenship.

(3) To obtain justice for Ireland in the matter of Imperial taxation.

(4) To develop the natural resources of the country; to revive its industries and improve its agriculture.

(5) To promote friendship and cohesion between the Irish people and their exiled fellow-countrymen for the furtherance of the objects of the Irish Nation League".

Fear of the paralysing and de-nationalising influence of the House of Commons on Irish members was reflected in the provision in its constitution that placed the Nation League M.P.s very definitely under the control of its Executive, which latter body could at will, seemingly, call on them to withdraw from Westminster. And that was as far as the Nation League got to the Sinn Féin principle of complete abstention from the British Parliament. Another

check on prospective Nation League M.P.s at Westminster was that they would have to pool their State allowances of £500 (then) a year.

When I returned to Dublin that autumn I beheld a vastly changed city in more ways than one. There was the extensive area of ruins in the central parts, caused by the bombardment, and the strong military and police guards everywhere who seemingly had the right to stop and question passers-by. Some things that have now, Thank God, disappeared completely from the Dublin scene had remained in full flavour, untouched by the upheaval, for example, the numerous ragged beggars of both sexes that dogged the pedestrian's passage through the streets, often, particularly in the case of the "fair" sex, arrogant and abusive, the line of umemployed or work-shirkers that reclined against the walls of the dreary and generally forbidding taverns, the extremely miserably-garbed and hungry-looking human beings who predominated in most thoroughfares, and, of course, the wretchedly-clothed and perennially bare-footed but always heroically bright and gay newsboys. Yes, the Dublin I returned to in the latter part of 1916 was still dear, but dirtier than ever before. However, more marked and far-reaching to anyone who knew the pre-Rising Dublin was the

extraordinary change that was in process in public opinion. A few months earlier it would have been difficult, despite the city's traditionally rebel reputation, to find anyone who had a good word to say for the rebels, or the outbreak. Now there was praise of them everywhere, even from those, still the great majority, who condemned their action. And side by side with that admiration for the rejected and detested of a few months since was a profoundly felt sympathy for those who had been executed. How sound was Pearse's calculation and hope that he and his colleagues would be executed and thus the message of the Rising would be saved.

This radical change in outlook was strikingly manifested by the change in the contents of the windows of the bookshops and stationers' shops which from being filled with publications with war and the Allied cause (many giving stirring accounts of the valorous doings of the Irish regiments), with picture postcards of the Allied leaders and Generals (which, in turn, had replaced those of the reigning stage stars of pre-war days), were now wholly monopolised with the portraits of, and works on the "Men of Easter Week".

The Rising had stimulated thought, political and literary, to an extraordinary degree. Everyone you met seemed to have become, all of a sudden, vitally interested in politics and the new shapes of national thought that were cropping up in all directions. Men and women were being drawn together in groups, clubs and societies for discussion and debate all over the city. A veritable renaissance was taking place in the general mind, and the atmosphere was abuzz with thoughts and ideas of all kinds. At that time, I, like my contemporaries, was greatly moved and stirred by all those happenings and manifestations. One of the people I came in contact with and saw a good deal of, was Paddy Little, lately T.D. for County Waterford and Minister for Posts and Telegraphs. He was then the senior partner in the Solicitors' firm of Little, Woods & Proud, Eustace Street. John Kirwin Woods - the second partner in the firm, a good speaker of Irish and an enthusiastic Gaelic Leaguer - about this time changed his name to Seán Ó hUadhaigh, which led to a corresponding change in the name of the firm. Such changes were common enough at the time and quite a number of shops in Dublin had their names transported into Irish.

Paddy Little, still happily with us, owned and ran

very well indeed an excellent weekly journal called "New Ireland" which supplied to a large extent a big want in what I may call the nation's cultural and higher and more thoughtful periodical reading. Indeed, there is to-day no paper in existence quite of its type - full of well written and thoughtful articles dealing with the most controversial matters in an admirably objective and charitable manner. Paddy Little deserves the greatest credit for providing at that time, and mainly out of his own pocket, so admirable and well-conducted a forum that supplied a very necessary centre for all us young men with our legions of ideas about, and on, all questions of the day. We could well do with such a journal to-day.

"New Ireland" was a paper of, by and for the educated youth of the country - its first editor had been Denis Gwynn, son of Stephen Gwynn, one of the Irish M.P.s. Denis, sometime before Easter Week, left the editorial chair for the field of Mars, joining up in, I think, the Dublin Fusiliers.

With Paddy Little I met and came to know well his associates, the chief of whom were the late Lawrence P. Byrne ("Andrew E. Malone") and Mario Esposito, son of the famous composer. Larry Byrne, who, unfortunately, died many years

ago in his prime, was a Dubliner, born and bred, a man of much natural ability with a strongly developed journalistic flare who, at a moment's notice, could knock off a first rate and most readable article on the most difficult and abstruse questions, whether in politics or economics. He was deeply interested and well versed in economics, which he had given much study to and of which he had considerable practical experience in his capacity as an official in the Irish Co-Operative Wholesale Organisation in Lord Edward St. He was, of course, a keen co-operator and an admirer and loyal supporter through every vicissitude of Sir Horace Plunkett and Father Tom Finlay, S.J. In politics Larry was a stable middle-of-the road man, temperamentally adverse to extremes of any kind, whether they came from Right or Left. He was an avowed admirer of English Liberalism in its best manifestation and could not wish for any better Government than a Constitutional democracy such as England had evolved; and he did not care in the least whether that democracy had a monarch or a president at its head. He was also deeply interested in the problems that then agitated the resurgent Dublin labour world. Indeed, his interests covered a wide field. I think, however, that his predominant interest and love was the drama, of which he was

an excellent critic, and abouts its Irish aspect he has left us an admirable history. Larry was very far from being a Separatist, and, as a convinced Liberal, had no time for physical force or uprisings of any kind. He thought mankind should solve all its political and economical problems by the application to them of the enlightened machinery provided by democratic Liberalism. Hence he detested Carson for the fatal legacy his recklessly destructive and negative policy left Ireland and (what Larry admired nearly as much) the British Commonwealth of Nations. He was a delightful companion and a sincere and warm-hearted friend.

Paddy's other chief prop for his paper was, as I have said, Mario Esposito, also happily with us and now living in Florence. Mario, a very gifted man who left T.C.D. after a distinguished course there, soon made a name for himself in the world of classical scholarship. In appearance he looked a passionate Italian, with his large dark eyes, thick eyebrows and rather sallow complexion. But appearances, we know, are often deceptive. They certainly were so in Mario's case; his character and temperament were the exact antithesis to his looks - calm,

cold and extremely objective to a remarkable degree. Mario did little or no writing for the paper but was extremely useful, indeed essential, as a reader of Mss. and a corrector of proofs that often needed much correcting and re-writing.

His views on politics, Irish in particular, were amusedly, but by no means cruelly, cynical. He might, I suppose, be described as a nationalist, though of a very vague type; certainly he was sympathetic to Irish nationalism in a general and undefined kind of way. But I don't think he ever took, or could get himself to take it seriously. It would not, I think, be too far from the truth to say that his main reason for interesting himself in Irish nationalistic matters was because he profoundly disliked the personalities that made up Irish Unionism.

Whilst, therefore, I cannot say that he enthused for Irish nationalism, or indeed for anything at all, he was definitely with us and gave great and valuable support to the paper in very difficult times. And we shall see presently that he was prepared to go very far and take serious risks in the Cause.

Another quality he had that made him a delightful companion - a highly developed sense of humour, if of a somewhat satiric type. He and I became extremely friendly and spent many pleasant hours together in long walks, debating and discussing about the "times that were in it". Now, before I leave Mario, I must recall the incident already referred to, though it occurred at a much later stage - in the last year of the War.

Our republican authorities, it seemed, were anxious to get someone to get out, by some means or other, to Switzerland so as to be on the spot with Ireland's case when the war was over. To do this at that time was really next to impossible, as there was no ordinary passenger traffic out from the British Isles, and any attempt to get out, with the war raging at its height on land sea, would almost certainly be checked at any of the heavily-guarded ports. Mario, however, volunteered to go. He pointed out that his knowledge of languages, Italian, French, German, would be very useful, if not essential, in such a task. The point then arose, how was he to get out with the war raging on the Continent, the Germans nearly in Paris, and Haig fighting "with his back to the wall"?

He said he had, or could get, an Italian passport, as he was technically an Italian subject, and as he knew, or was friendly, with the Italian Consul-General in Dublin, he thought he wouldn't have much difficulty in getting visa'd and getting out, on the plea of bad health, to Switzerland. There were many doctors who would give him the necessary certificate. However, he soon found out from his Italian friend that there was not an earthly hope of his getting the visa. Nothing daunted, he decided to get the Italian stamp forged, and that, to my astonishment, he actually succeeded in doing. I saw it, and it certainly was an excellent piece of work - all marked up to date, with the appropriate Italian official's signature admirably counterfeited, the whole guaranteed, I should think, to deceive the most lynx-eyed of detectives or preventive officers. All this, however, took a considerable time to accomplish, and when Mario got it the War was over and the whole enterprise fell through.

An old friend of mine on the North West Circuit - he subsequently transferred to the Connacht - Charles Bewley, was also one of our group. He had a brilliant academic career at Oxford, where he won the Newdegate Prize for Englis

poetry, won, I believe, by John Milton in his day. Bewley had a biting wit and a wide and very flexible literary talent, and contributed many telling articles, sketches, short stories and verse, all with a tooth in them and none without savour and distinction. He generally wrote under the pseudonym of "Patrick J. Gibbons". He was later our Minister to Berlin and the Vatican, and now lives in retirement in Rome. The journal "New Ireland", like the nation itself, also underwent a metamorphosis in its outlook and policy. And as that metamorphosis, in its gradualness and in its ultimate extremity, was a remarkably true reflection of the wider change that was simultaneously taking place in national public opinion, I shall dwell a little on it here and, by way of illustration, give instances of it.

"New Ireland" was founded by young men who were supporters of the Irish Parliamentary Party under John Redmond. They belonged, however, to the highly critical and very outspoken "Young Ireland Branch" of the United Irish League whose chairman was, I think, Francis Sheehy Skeffington and who numbered amongst its membership the brilliant Tom Kettle, later killed in the War. The

original policy of the paper was, therefore, strictly constitutional and orthodox, even if critical. That policy was pursued pretty faithfully, even to the extent of supporting the Lloyd George proposals for the so-called temporary Partition which was endorsed by a majority of the Convention of the Nationalists of the Six Counties in Belfast on 23rd June, 1916. Its declared reason for this was "the bird in the hand" one, and, in its own words printed later - "we supported the exclusion proposals because, at the time, we believed it would lead to Home Rule for all Ireland by consent."

Since the War, and until well after Easter Week, it supported the Entente against the Central Powers , with particular emphasis on the Irish Regiments, their achievements and requirements. In so doing it pursued the exact same policy of at least 95% of all varieties of the then very representative Constitutional Nationalism press. Only the small and, at the time, insignificant Separatist press took any other line on the War, and even that dissident press never went further then than the advocacy of neutrality for Ireland. It is interesting and curious to look through the files of that Journal (preserved in the

National Library, Dublin) for those years. Turning over these pages, we find that the paper is obsessed with two main themes: Ireland, particularly Home Rule, and the conduct and progress of the War. We come across articles and verses galore about the War and the Allied Cause. There is, for example, the "Story of the Munsters" at Etreux and Festurbert by Mrs. Victor Rickard, ultimately issued in pamphlet form by the "New Ireland Printing & Publishing Co. Ltd.", post free 7d. There is also the "Story of the 10th (Irish) Division at Gallipoli" by Michael McDonagh, the biographer of William O'Brien, exclusive to New Ireland. In its issue of 9th September, 1915, we find this comment: "We want to know why Admiral de Robeck in his historic dispatch from Gallipoli omitted all mention of the Irish Regiments; or why Lord Kitchener, in his survey of the recent phases of the war, is lavish in the praises of the Colonial troops but ignores the Irish, whose achievements have been of equal importance..... We ask, along with many other Irish journals, are the Irish regiments to receive no official recognitions except in the casualty lists?" And that was about the height of it. Even when we were Britain's allies there were prejudice and dislike of the Irishmen

in her armies fighting bravely in the forefront of her battles; nay, there were worse than prejudice and dislike - emotions that cannot be helped - there was downright injustice. Was it any wonder John Bull lost us? Katherine Tynan had a moving poem in the issue of 5th May, 1915, entitled "A Prayer to Those Who Shall Return".

Even when, after a silence of nine weeks, the journal reappeared after the Rising on 24th June, 1916, the interests of the Allies were still in its mind. Explaining its pre-Rising attitude, the Editor wrote: "As to the past, we strive for a peaceful issue of the Irish Question..... Our views dwindle into insignificance before the events of Easter and before their causes..... The immediate inspiration of the Rebellion (sic) was the idea of an Irish Republic. The idea was wholly unfamiliar to the majority of Irishmen. The aim of Colonial Home Rule (sic) filled the political horizon of 9/10th of the Irish people, and the whole justification of the present Home Rule Act was that it led in the direction of that aim..... The policy of New Ireland is that the Home Rule issue be settled at once as a measure to be carried in the interests of Ireland first, and of all the Allies in the War".

And in the following month, July, in an article pleading for Casement's life - he was then under sentence of death - it writes: "One thing is certain, that if Sir Roger Casement is hanged, the effect of that terrible act will be electric throughout the world. We are not anxious to increase the difficulties of the Allies, hence we advocate humane treatment". (The parenthesis is mine).

Another note about that time tells the Irish Party not to compromise the question of Irish membership at Westminster.

By August, 1916, "New Ireland" is attacking Asquith, who compromised so heinously in the House of Commons on Partition, as we have seen. "The complete failure of the Westminster politicians", it commented in its issue of 12th August, "has aroused no feelings in the country but contempt and distrust. Again Irishmen are driven back upon themselves and upon their own resources. It is useless to attempt to return to the Partition proposals. The long delay, the shillyshallying of Mr. Asquith, gave ample opportunities to the enemies of the settlement, and to the enemies of partition to carry through their campaign and the final breach of faith with the Irish politicians, having discredited Partition for ever.

The paper's outlook was certainly becoming more uncompromising nationally. But still the Union idea, albeit in federal garb, was by no means eradicated, for we find in the next issue this comment under the letters A.M.G. (Asquith must go!): "So also from the radical standpoint, the democracy of the United Kingdom must be freed from this Old Man of the Sea, for he has brought nothing but dishonour upon the cause of small nations, and injury to the Allies' interests".

These quotations from a progressive constitutional organ of nationalist thought illustrate well the change of mind that was taking place at the time in young, educated and rather conservative Nationalists. And that change from orthodox constitutionalism towards a more revolutionary policy was going on through every level in the nation. Yet there was still no heady current. The one bishop who identified himself conspicuously with the Rising and went out of his way to condemn in strong terms the executions and General Sir John Maxwell, was Dr. O'Dwyer, Bishop of Limerick. This made him, in the eyes of many, a national hero, and ways and means were sought of showing appreciation for his acts of

defiance. In that September, Councillor Paddy Lane, a Nation Leaguer, proposed a motion in Cork Corporation that he be granted the freedom of that City, but, to the surprise of everybody, it was turned down by the very conclusive vote of 16 to 7 - more than two to one. However, an amende honorable was made a week or so later by his own City of Limerick, which, at a special meeting of its Corporation, conferred its freedom on him unanimously. In returning thanks, the Bishop remarked, significantly and aptly, that "they all knew the fickleness of the populaire's aura....."

I should say that in the following week a branch of the Irish Nation League was established in Limerick City at a largely attended meeting in St. Ita's Hall. Michael O'Callaghan (afterwards, when Mayor of the City, murdered by Black & Tans) was in the chair, and he introduced Michael Lynch, J.P., of Omagh, who, as member of the Organising Council of the League, was chief speaker. The officers elected were: Michael O'Callaghan, President; P. MacMahon, Vice President; D. O'Donovan, Treasurer; M.S. O'Mara and M. Roche, Hon. Secretary.

The big meeting in the Phoenix Park was followed by two others, the first in Banba Hall, Parnell Square, and the second in 41, York St., where a North City and a South City Branch of the Nation League were respectively established. Weekly meetings of the two branches were held which were at first very well attended. As the weeks went by, however, the numbers dropped steeply, and a small, disruptive but persistent element that succeeded in getting a footing in both branches set to work to make trouble, hinder business by marathon speeches and so smash the movement in Dublin. I could never ascertain for certain who were behind those trouble-makers. Some of us thought they were organised by the A.O.H. and the U.I.L. that could not have welcomed the arrival on the horizon of the capital of a rival constitutional movement; but others blamed the I.R.B. and the extremists. I was very doubtful about admitting some of those branch-busters, but I was over-ruled by my less suspicious colleagues. The leader was a thick-set fellow of medium height, with a head of black curling hair and a square, sallow-complexioned face. If I recollect correctly, his name was Sheehy-Walshe. He always came accompanied by his

pretty, young wife and his young brother-in-law. No one I have ever met could make better use of his moderate abilities or could better place his assets in the front window. He claimed to be a close connection of Mrs. Sheehy-Skeffington, and that his brother-in-law (another one) had been out in the Rising and was interned. No one could speak so long and so continuously as Mr. Walshe. Once he got on to his legs he was good for the rest of the evening, words in his deep voice streaming forth from his mouth continuously, without pause or breath, like a ribbon of toothpaste pressed from a tube. He had most of the equipment of a first rate meeting - obstructionist , aided by his confederates, and there was nothing we could do against him once he got to his feet, to the howls of his backers. Some of my colleagues doubted the "national record" of his brother-in-law who, they alleged, was in Frongoch, whereupon the young Mrs. Walshe, opening her bag, produced some document - I think it was a censored letter - duly authenticating the claim. The document was passed round; a shout of applause from the company greeted the near-kin of the incarcerated hero, and so great was the aura of Easter Week that it was thereupon clear to us that

thenceforward Mr. Walshe, the fortunate in-law of a Frongoch man, could practically do what he liked with our meeting.

These disruptions succeeded in due course in driving away many of our serious members and in compelling us to abandon the North City branch altogether, where Walshe (at the League's expense) reigned supreme, and confining ourselves to the York Street branch, where, by a system of guarded entrance and the non-admittance of the disrupters, we managed to hold our own and carry on.

At those meetings we emphasised that the main raison d'etre of the Nation League was to "give constitutionalism a last trial", and we proclaimed our desideratum for Ireland to be "colonial Home Rule for the whole of Ireland". The word "Commonwealth" was not then in general use as a substitute for "Colonial"or "Imperial". And "New Ireland", which had now become our chief mouthpiece, wrote: "The fact that Ireland, a unit with the same status as South Africa or Canada, will be a strong support of what Mr. Curtis, of Round Table fame, calls the Commonwealth". The official nationalist press, headed by the Freeman's Journal, had, of course, no use whatever

for us, and attacked us vigorously and at times quite unscrupulously, declaring that we were nothing more than a league of place-hunting lawyers who had failed to secure safe and remunerative jobs by other means, and reiterating that we were verily the "League of the Seven Attornies". The Freeman's Journal was not the coiner of that title; that honour belongs to the editor of an obscure Ulster weekly paper, the late Mr. MacAdam, editor of the 'Donegal Vindicator', published in Ballyshannon in that county. True enough, there was considerable colour for such a cognomen, for amongst our Organising Committee there were certainly "seven attornies", as well as a number of barristers.

Besides the official press, certain independent weekly organs of nationalist thought also attacked or criticised us. One of these was 'The Irish Nation', run by a Mr. M.T. Judge, who sprang violently and suddenly from obscurity to fame by having received a superficial bayonet wound from the Scottish Borderers on the Clontarf Road after the fracas with the Volunteers returning from the Howth gun-running in July, 1914. Judge became instantly a national hero, and from his bed in hospital received, during his convalescence, continuous streams of visitors, from the highest and the lowest in the land, bringing him gifts and comforts. This rather turned

the little man's head, and after Easter Week (which, I rather think, he had no part in), convincing himself that the mantle of Elijah had fallen on his shoulders, he started his paper. As it was then the only independent organ with a definite separatist tendency, it soon attained a huge circulation and Judge flourished for a limited interval as a kind of national oracle and mentor. He had quite a sense of humour, of a somewhat crude type, which he called on occasionally with devastating effects. This, for example: In those days that great Montyback, Horatio Bottomley, M.P. for Hackney, was at the crest of his journalistic and fraudulent career, running a weekly paper, 'John Bull', through which he exerted an enormous influence on the Britain of those days. That paper, under Bottomley, maintained a kind of independent, critical and super patriotic outlook, alighting, with equal alacrity, on those whom it considered disloyal and on those whom it charged with usury and fraud - a subject on which the editor should undoubtedly have known much. In sport it appealed to the prejudice of the English petits-bourgeoisie and working classes, which prejudices it took special care to feed. Bottomley, in his pose of England's chief patriotic

watch-dog, attacked, of course, the Dublin Rising violently, and after it was constantly calling for more coercive measures against the Irish "disloyalists" and, in particular, for the suppression of the Nationalist "rag" and "mosquito" press. He had a special "down" on Judge's paper; every week he had quotations from it, followed by demands for its suppression and Judge's trial for treason. All this, I need hardly say, did not upset Judge in the least; the notice Bottomley's celebrated and widely read paper was taking of him was right down the little man's garden path.

Having ignored Bottomley for some weeks, Judge finally replied in his comments column that he cared not a thraneen for him, but that if he met him, all he would do would be to knock the affix off his name and kick what was left of it.

Judge, in his 'Irish Nation', attacked members of the Organising Committee of the Nation League for having, as he charged, stood on recruiting platforms. Whether he was right or wrong I could not say, but he could well have been right as, at that time, many sound Nationalists had addressed recruiting meetings, urging young Irishmen, in all sincerity, to go forth and fight against Hunnish tyranny and in the cause of freedom for small nationalities.

But Judge had not only a journal at his disposal to carry out his self-appointed messianic mission; he had also a remnant of Volunteers. These he reviewed in the Phoenix Park. Their importance and size can be gathered from an account of that review in, I believe, Herbert Moore Pim's paper, the 'Irishman'. He records that there were present "General Judge, Brigadier Judge, Colonel Judge, Major Judge, Captain Judge, Lieutenant Judge, and last, but not least, Private Judge".

I am afraid poor Judge's bid to lead the "Irish race at home and abroad" was not impressive, and when a little later he abandoned republicanism and advocated an Irish Kingdom under the Queenship of King George V's daughter, Mary, in a leader headed "Bravo, Queen Mary of Ireland"!, his star set instantly and he returned to the obscurity whence he emerged with equal suddenness.

The late D.P. Moran also criticised the new League, but more temperately and thoughtfully, on the ground that it was not necessary to found a new organisation. He thought the Nation Leaguers should go in as a body to the U.I.L. and influence it in the right direction rather than make themselves responsible for yet another split. But what Moran did not perceive was that, were the I.N.L. to make such a proposal, it hadn't the faintest chance of being accepted by

the official party organisations, whose method was the instantaneous expulsion of any telling critic as a "factionist".

Though weakened by organised disrupters and beset by many difficulties, the single branch of the Nation League struggled on as best it could in Dublin that winter. But the League cut little ice in the metropolis. True, its strong anti-Partition stand got it considerable but rather isolated support throughout the country, but nowhere, save in the fringe counties of Ulster, could it be said to have drawn any popular support. Its most important influence in the country was through the columns of 'New Ireland', ably edited by P.J. Little, which had, as I have stated, adhered to its policy and had become the Leaguers' chief mouthpiece. Also, its Executive Council, which met at regular intervals in the Mansion House Chambers, Dawson St. (acquired for it by Paddy Little), was pretty well attended. From time to time, as occasion called for, it issued statements and manifestos to the nation, and there was always a certain amount of money, mainly from the North, coming in. On 4th November, for example, it published the aims and constitution of the Irish Nation League. No; the I.N.L. did not catch on in Dublin or in the country generally, despite its anti-Partition efforts and its appeal to give

constitutionalism a final chance. It did not catch on because its appeal came too late. Constitutionalism of any kind, although none of us realised it at the time, had been killed, not by the Rising but by the executions. We in the Nation League were speaking a political language that the country had grown out of, a political language that had become archaic in six months, and we were talking that archaic tongue in an atmosphere that was changing rapidly even while we spoke.

In my opinion, one thing and one thing only could have given constitutionalism another lease of life - the immediate putting into effect of the Home Rule Act for the whole thirty-two counties of Ireland. But that was out of the question; and after Asquith's volte-face on the Partition question in Parliament on 24th July, the mass of the country turned from any further trust in British politicians of all political colours.

Nor was Nationalist Ireland the only element in the country, albeit by far the largest, that lost faith in the existing political leadership - the Southern Unionists were equally disillusioned and chagrined at events, as the following quotation from the 'Church of Ireland Gazette' of 14th October, 1916, amply demonstrates:

> "Unionist Ulster compromised the whole moral strength of its conditional acceptance of Mr. Lloyd George's abortive 'settlement'. There are two courses open to it, and only two - to revert to the Covenant and strenuously oppose Home Rule, not for Ulster alone but for all Ireland, as the Bishop of Clogher proposes; or, on the other hand, to take an active share in an attempt at a real settlement. There is no middle course: the partition of Ireland has passed out of the domain of practical politics". An eminently sane outlook despite the incorrectness, alas, of the final settlement".

While these things were taking place in Ireland, John Redmond and his colleagues over in Westminster were, for the first time, growing uneasy. Some of the wash from the radical revolution in public opinion that was going on in the former country had seemingly reached them. On 18th October, Redmond moved virtually a vote of censure on the Government, charging it with maintaining in Ireland a system of administration inconsistent with the principles for which the Allies were allegedly fighting. He demanded the recall of Maxwell, the abrogation of Martial Law, the release of 500 untried prisoners, the treatment of the remaining prisoners as prisoners of war, and concluded by adjuring the Government to show its trust in the Irish people

by putting the Home Rule Act into immediate operation. Only one thing came of this rather feeble display of belated opposition Sir John Maxwell was recalled on 5th November and was succeeded by Lieut-General Sir Brian Mahon as General Officer Commanding in Chief, the British Forces in Ireland.

A few prisoners had been released since the Rising, one of them being Herbert Moore Pim. He was a curious character, originally a Protestant who, having been fired by enthusiasm for Ireland and all things Irish, at one bound became both an extreme Catholic and an extreme Nationalist of the Griffithite Sinn Féin variety. He was a conspicuous individual - tall and dark - and took care to make himself still more conspicuous by growing a vast black beard of the Anthony Trollop model. Unfortunately, his rather impressive personality had one blemish or weakness - he possessed a thin, light voice that sounded quite incongruous as it flowed forth through the mighty black beard. But that did not deter Mr. Pim, who was one of those (of whom there were not a few at that time) convinced that he was destined to lead the nation and to become the Parnell of the new renaissance. Before the Rising he was a prominent figure in the Volunteers and left-wing Nationalist circles, and a céilí or Volunteer dance in the City would not be

complete in those far-off pre-Rising days without his familiar figure predominating, generally surrounded by a group of bright and sometimes admiring young cailíní of the authentic political vintage. He wrote quite good verse and better prose, and was, indeed, a talented man with a considerable knowledge of literature. Like all poets and hankerers after "la vie bohemienne", he was addicted to the tenderer sex and wrote odes to an unknown "Dark Lady of the Sonnets" (a la Shakespeare). He liked to be thought a bit of a devil and was known to remark as he stroked his luxuriant sable whiskers: "My beard has ruined many homes". If that was the case, I am glad to report that the "homes" were like the castles in Spain - in the air. He was a Belfast man and appeared to have some private means. On his release, he started a paper called the 'Irishman', which, I think, was published in Belfast. It appeared at a lucky time for its success, hot on the discrediting and collapse of Judge's 'Irish Nation', and supplied to some extent a focus for the outlook of the men of Easter Week and the great numbers that were then coming round to that outlook. Pim had a definite literary flair and he ran his paper well, which, supplying as it did at that crucial time the want that existed amongst thousands for the "new learning" nationally, soon attained a huge circulation. In the issue of 9th December of that year,

Pim explained in the 'Irishman' the policy of Sinn Féin to be "a combination of passive resistance to foreign aggression and of a co-ordinated development of national resources, together with the fostering of national characteristics. It rejects Parliamentarianism and seeks a National Council, a lever to upset the whole foreign administration of the country". This was, of course, pure Griffith.

On 23rd December, the first large batch of prisoners were released from British internment camps. Amongst them was Arthur Griffith - the greatest national journalist since Thomas Davis.

TOWARDS REVOLUTION.

The new year, January 1st, 1917, found a new government in control of the then United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland. Asquith had been overthrown by a sort of palace revolution within the Cabinet, led by his quondam lieutenant, Lloyd George, and the two covenanting rebels, Carson and Bonar Law. At long last, Lloyd George got his life's ambition, the Premiership, and he immediately put into effect his radical changes in the Cabinet structure, viz: a small War Committee with absolute control on the war position,

consisting of himself as chairman, his two confederates, Carson and Bonar Law, and a Labour member - Henderson, I think. Duke continued as Chief Secretary for Ireland, with Sir Bryan Mahon as G.O.C. British Forces in Ireland.

In Ireland, the tide towards the teaching and policy of the Easter Week leaders was flowing surely with a gradually quickening tempo, being helped thereto by the folly of the Government and their soi-distant "loyal" supporters in the country. For example, on 23rd of that January, Patrick Houlihan, Seán Milroy, George Lyons and Andrew O'Doherty were arrested and tried by courtmartial for having permitted Irish songs and recitations at a concert. And, a few days earlier, the Royal Dublin Society committed an act of great stupidity - to call it nothing else - by expelling Count George Plunkett from their membership by 236 votes to 58, for no other reason at the time than that he happened to be the father of the three Plunkett boys, one of whom had been executed, and two given sentences of life imprisonment for their part in the Rising. Just at that time, as a sort of counterbalance to Irish events, President Woodrow Wilson had delivered himself, for the first time, of certain important principles, of which a great deal more was to be heard in the ensuing years. Wilson declared that "no nation

should seek to extend its policy over any other nation or people, but that every nation should be left free to determine its own policy". Such was the famous doctrine of self-determination as it first came to the world - in its birthday suit, so to speak. It was received delightedly by a keenly interested Ireland where it became a prime text, a veritable doctrine of faith for political speakers and writers of the advanced and progressive nationalist schools. In England, however, it was received very differently, being regarded as an unwarranted interference in the "private" or "domestic" affairs of friendly neighbouring nations by a foreign ruler, thereby causing such nations grave embarrassment, particularly where they were engaged in deadly warfare for their own survivals. Actually, Bonar Law called it a "barbarous doctrine". Herbert Moore Pim, to whom I have already referred in these pages, took up this question of self-determination and pressed it strongly in his paper, the 'Irishman'. He was the first Irish journalist, to give him his due, to advocate Ireland's representation at the Peace Conference.

On February 17th, the "Irish World" appeared to preach the policy of full independence and separation;

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No. W.S. 1,770

ORIGINAL

PART V

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

ROINN COSANTA.

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS.

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 1770.

Witness

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

Identity.

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

Commissioner, Irish Land Commission, 1923 to date.

Subject.

National Activities, and Dáil Eireann Land Courts, 1900-1921.

Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness.

Nil.

File No S. 909.

Form B.S.M. 2

ORIGINAL

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BURO STAIRE MILEATA 1913-21
No. W.S. 1770

and, on the same day, a much more significant thing happened - Arthur Griffith resumed his editorship of his weekly journal, 'Nationality', interrupted by the Easter Rising. In an article therein, he denounced John Redmond for his speech of May 3rd, 1916, in which he had spoken of the "guilt" of the promoters of the Rising. From Griffith's own standpoint - that of a separatist, albeit a monarchist - that was quite consistent, but it must not be overlooked that Redmond's views were those of at least 90% of the Irish people at the date of the Rising. Now whilst excuses can be found for Redmond's attitude on that occasion, it is hard fully to justify it. Here is what happened. When the Prime Minister announced the news of the outbreak in the House of Commons, Sir Edward Carson, who, of all men there, should have had the decency to keep quiet, rose to say: "I will gladly join with the honourable and learned member for Waterford (Redmond) in everything that can be done to denounce and put down those rebels now and forevermore". And that was the one and only occasion in his whole career that he joined "gladly" or otherwise with Redmond; he would not even appear on the same recruiting platform with him, as we have seen. Having regard to his background and to his position as being the virtual "deus ex

machina" of the Dublin Rising, his intervention, particularly in the form it took, was shameful and in the most execrable taste. And poor Redmond, at Carson's gesture, hastened to tumble head over heels into his arms. Having referred to the "detestation and horror" with which he and his colleagues regarded the Dublin outbreak, he declared he "joined most cordially with" Carson in his statement. Enough said! Let us pass on.

During this period, the submarine warfare, carried on by the Germans against allied shipping, was at the peak of its success. That February was perhaps the worst in the war in this connection, and the food position in Great Britain, serious as it was, would have been calamitous had it not been for Ireland. Side by side, therefore, with the intensified submarine warfare, there went intensified food production in Ireland, with the result that Irish farmers, for the first time almost in their history, experienced what it was to be prosperous and affluent. The rigid system of food control that the necessities of the position imposed on England were not applied to Ireland. True, they were attempted, but, led by 'Nationality' with its cry of "the clutching hand is out to capture our food", the people

were put on their guard and the attempt was defeated. Ireland was thus excluded from the more drastic conditions of the Food Control, and the free export of bacon thereout was actually prohibited. "During the critical years of the war", wrote the late Professor Allison Phillips, with much truth, "Ireland was not only more peaceful and prosperous than she had ever been, but was the only peaceful and prosperous country in Europe".

An event, almost unnoticed at the time, but of much importance in the light of future developments, occurred in that February. After the Rising, two societies sprung simultaneously into being to organise funds to allay the distress suffered by the dependants of the executed, imprisoned and deported insurgents. They were the "Irish National Aid Association" and the "Irish Volunteers' Dependants' Fund".

In August, 1916, they amalgamated and established a common fund under one control, with the title the "Irish National Aid Association", the first secretary of which was Joseph McGrath. He now resigned and his place was filled by a completely unknown young Co. Cork man, Michael Collins, who had been released from Frongoch Internment Camp in Wales

just before Christmas. His subsequent career is a substantial part of latter-day Irish history, and it is not necessary for me to expatiate on it here.

(1) NORTH ROSCOMMON ELECTION.

February, 1916, saw the first of the series of by-elections in close succession that presented the "New Evangel" with a firm, though rudimentary political basis. A vacancy occurred in the parliamentary constituency of North Roscommon and Sinn Féin, or, rather, the then extremely variegated but rapidly growing body of dissident and anti-Irish Party Nationalism, decided to contest it. The original projector and, indeed, director of that purpose was a remarkable curate, Father Michael O'Flanagan, who, at the time, was stationed at Crossna, in that county. Before that, he had been Curate at Cliffoney in the Co. Sligo, where his strong criticisms of the Irish Party and the British Government ran him into trouble with his bishop, the late Dr. Coyne, who transferred him to Crossna. But so great was the effect of his powerful personality on his quondam parishioners that they refused to accept the curate who replaced him, shut up the local church where for a whole year Mass was not celebrated, the people meeting each Sunday outside the Church and

reciting the Rosary. It was only when at Christmas Father O'Flanagan made a special journey to Cliffoney and begged of them, "as a Christmas present to himself", to open the church and accept his successor as their curate, that they relented. Curiously enough, the very same thing was re-enacted in Crossna a few years later, when again he got himself into trouble with his conservative bishop by his speeches and campaigning for Sinn Féin, and he was either transferred again or silenced, I forget which. The Crossna parishioners, as the Cliffoney parishioners, ignored the replacing curate, Father Clyne, who, although himself a Sinn Féiner, had a very unpleasant time from them. They shut up the church for a period of months and only opened it again when Father Michael visited them and begged them to do so.

That remarkable, brilliant and most eloquent man was, as I say, the originator of the idea of facing the Party candidate and contesting the by-election against him. But the climate was greatly in favour of such action, and many other groups and individuals were gravitating towards the same idea. We have seen that the R.D.S. had, by a large majority, ejected Count Plunkett from its membership for no other reason than that he happened to be the father

of three prominent insurgents. Whatever about his sons, no one had ever regarded the Count as anything other than a conservative Catholic gentleman with harmless literary and cultural tastes which his job as Director of the National Gallery (bestowed on him by the Liberal Government) gave him ample time and opportunity to indulge in. True, he had been a Parnellite and fought, as we have seen, a hopeless election in that forlorn cause in Mid-Tyrone. But that was many years ago and, at the time I write of, the Count, as a politician, was a wholly forgotten number. Fr. O'Flanagan's imagination saw, not only the need to fight the Party, but to fight it with a candidate intimately connected with the Rising that was growing in popularity every day. What better candidate could be found for such a purpose than the elderly father of an executed rebel and of two penal servitude servitors? Such a one was even more effective than any of the prisoners or internees, for his was bound to rouse the deep sympathies of the warm-hearted and emotional Westerners. Having once hit on the idea, Fr. O'Flanagan lost no time in contacting the elements that would be useful to his end - such of them, at any rate, that were free: Separatists, I.R.B. men, Volunteers, Sinn Féiners, advanced constitutionalists, critical of the

Party. Eventually, the invitation to Count Plunkett to stand was drafted, signed by hundreds of prominent people and despatched to the Count, who at once accepted.
In the light of subsequent happenings, it is interesting to recall the more vital part of that document. "We declare our adhésion to the doctrine of Ireland a Nation", it ran, "which has been handed down to us by our fathers. We believe that the Irish Nation has as much right to freedom as any other nation..... The fact that the Great Powers at present warring on the continent of Europe have again and again appealed to this principle of Nationality is clear proof of its potential moral power..... We believe that at the present moment Ireland has a magnificent chance of reaching the goal of freedom..... by merely insisting on her National claims and making them known..... throughout the world. In this way we can secure a hearing before the Nations when they assemble at the end of the war to re-build civilisation upon its new basis".

An innocuous enough if pathetically hopeful statement, and, as a declaration of policy, extremely vague and shadowy. But it was a true reflex of the cloudy and undefined condition of a great part of Irish Nationalism at the time; and the idea of Ireland being given a hearing at the Peace

Conference provided something novel and stimulating, and a break from the stale and worn-out cliche of "winning Home Rule on the floor of the House of Commons", and, for the want of anything better, it unquestionably had its appeal in the country.

Another factor, and an important one, that has to be noticed, is that it was absolutely void of any declaration on abstention from Westminster or on separation in any shape or form. It was, indeed, a true verbal photograph of the nebulous outlook of the variegated mass of opinion backing Plunkett and was not capable of any clearer simplification. But that compromise was by no means easily arrived at. The Easter Week men who, not unnaturally, felt they should have the prior say in devising any future policy for the country, considered that after raising the standard of the Republic it would be a surrender move to re-organise any British-run election. The old-school Sinn Féiners wanted a definite abstention from Westminster plank, whilst a very large body of supporters, perhaps the majority, were not at all prepared for an absolute abstentionist policy. Two men, apart from Father O'Flanagan, were mainly responsible for smoothing out such claims and

keeping the objective broad and vague (as, indeed, it had to be kept). They were Arthur Griffith and Michael Collins. Griffith, of course, never saw any objection to making use of the British-run elections; on the contrary, he was all for putting up candidates on a strict abstentionist policy. Collins, on the other hand, had a more difficult task to convince his men. Since his release from Frongoch, this remarkable young man had acquired great influence over the extreme elements in nationalism - the I.R.B (of which he was a member), the Fenian remnant, and particularly the Volunteers, the "fighting men". They were all believers in a full-blooded policy of physical force, and had such an utter distaste, not to say contempt, for constitutionalism in any shape or form, that many of them would not countenance its use even as an auxiliary to a physical force policy. But Collins, though a physical force man, and then virtually the leader of that party, was far too sagacious and far-seeing to subscribe to such a narrow, obscurantist plan of campaign. He saw clearly the urgent need to fight the election with a candidate of sympathetic colour, and deal a heavy blow to the still dominant Irish Party which had first to be got out of the way before the separatist policy could be firmly launched in the country. He had no doubt

that Plunkett should be backed; pulled his extremists round to that point of view, and threw his great energy and rare organising ability into the campaign.

Plunkett's supporters were not rich, and, whilst enthusiasm was abundant, money was scarce amongst them. There was a certain well-off if not wealthy Sinn Féiner of the Griffith school, who was prominent on the platform and in the press in airing his "Hungarian" views. To him they went, not for a gift, but for a loan of a few hundred pounds. But, alas, his enthusiasm for his Sinn Féin principles was confined to his tongue and pen - certainly not to his pocket. He said them nay. This was a big initial disappointment and, for a time, things looked gloomy, for an election cannot be fought without money. Eventually the money was advanced by the managing director of Messrs. Gill & Son, Ltd., the publishers in Upper O'Connell St., Dublin. His name has escaped me for the moment. I knew him well; he was a fine type of citizen - unassuming, quiet, and patriotic in the best sense.

The Nation Leaguers decided to support Plunkett's candidature, and numbers of them travelled to Roscommon to speak on his behalf. Those of the Nation League whom I

remember meeting there were Frank O'Connor of Omagh, Stephen O'Mara of Limerick, P.W. Kenny of Waterford, Paddy Lane of Cork, Michael O'Callaghan of Limerick and J.J. O'Kelly ("Sceilg") of Dublin.

I travelled from Omagh on 31st January. It was bitterly cold. The countryside was covered with a thick coat of snow, in many places from 4 to 8 feet deep, and, to make things worse, it was freezing hard. I reached Boyle after a cold and extremely uncomfortable journey, and was met at the railway station by Frank O'Connor. We put up at Mr. Bowle's small but very comfortable hotel. Anyhow, it was the only one open to a "Plunkettite". The big hotel, the "Royal", was owned by Jaspar Tully, a prominent local man, who also owned the local paper, the "Roscommon Herald". He himself was contesting the seat against the official Party candidate, Devine. Next day, Frank O'Connor and I motored to Carrick-on-Shannon where there was to be a great demonstration to meet the Count who was to arrive there that afternoon by train from Dublin. We had a very difficult journey through the snow-blocked roads and our driver had occasionally to cut a passage through the deep drifts with a spade he carried for that purpose. Despite the inclement weather and the bad

condition of the roads, we passed many making for the Count's meeting at Carrick, several of them sporting the new tricolour colours, green-white-orange, in their buttonholes, and a few actually carrying the tricolour flag, then generally known as the "Easter Week flag" and, later, as the "Sinn Féin flag". The Count duly arrived that evening at Carrick railway station accompanied by his daughter, the late Seamus O'Doherty and two priests. He was met by a great crowd who gave him a terrific reception, waving tricolour flags and cheering wildly. One thing that struck me as remarkable about that crowd was the big percentage of youth it compromised; large numbers of young men and, more curious still for those days, young women. In all the political meetings and demonstrations that I had witnessed previously, youth was poorly represented, and women hardly at all. They were composed almost exclusively of men, and middle-aged and elderly men at that. No doubt because of the war, the imposition of conscription in England and the stoppage of emigration to America, the country was then teeming with young men and women, and because of its great prosperity, due to the war, there was plenty of money and work for them. Nevertheless, that alone was not sufficient to account for the big turn-out

of youth at Plunkett's meetings. Seeing that not 1% of them had a vote to cast, and women of any age and condition were then wholly voteless, it was clearly the thrilling call of the new national "evangel", born, as it was, romantically in battle, that drew them and held them. What I saw was but a preview of the ensuing years. Youth was to get a great, indeed a dominant part in the Sinn Féin revolution that followed, and that led to the Truce and Treaty.

Plunkett's huge cortege halted on the bridge that crossed the broad Shannon just outside Carrick where several speeches were made, welcoming him to Roscommon and the West. And there, for the first time, I heard the famous Father Michael O'Flanagan orate; and "orate" is, indeed, the word. He possessed most of the attributes of the great orator - a fine erect presence, standing well over 6 feet, a great square head crowned by a mass of dark hair, inclined to curl, an expansive florid countenance lit by a pair of bright dark eyes. But his greatest asset was his voice. It was deep and strong and, at the same time, extraordinarily melodious and emotional and was given by his rich Connacht "blas" a strongly personal flavour. In speaking, he depended entirely on

that voice of his which, considering its unique quality and power, was probably sound, rarely, if ever, using his hands or arms. He had a vivid imagination and a mind well-stocked by much and varied reading which placed at the command of his tongue a wide range of material, which he was an adept at utilising and arranging, being helped thereat by a phenomenal memory, never having to use or refer to a note, not even for a quotation. He had never more than two main ideas in each speech that he always succeeded in getting over to his listeners, clearly and succinctly, making liberal use of parables, fables and homely symbols that enabled the dullest countryman to grasp his arguments and later to use them effectively in discussions in the market places, fair greens and pubs. Never have I heard another voice, or another orator like Father O'Flanagan, and I am convinced that he was far and away the most powerful single factor in winning North Roscommon for the Count. Indeed, he could literally do what he liked with his audiences, make them laugh, weep or rage to order.

One of the banners carried at that meeting bore the exhortation: "Vote for Count Plunkett, father of Joseph Mary

Plunkett, who gave his life for Ireland". The message of the Easter Rising was certainly coming through. A very eloquent and effective speaker was Frank O'Connor, and his sharp Ulster accent, a strong contrast to the soft Connacht brogue, interested and held his audiences in that country.

One of the three candidates was Jaspar Tully, a curious and ambitious local character, with a somewhat dubious past, the proprietor of the best hotel in Boyle, The Royal, and, more important still, of the widely read and influential only local weekly, the "Roscommon Herald". Tully was opposing both Devine, the official Irish Party candidate, and the Count, as an honest-to-God, free-from-guile and corruption standard-bearer; but, curiously enough, the weight of his propaganda fell, not on the party candidate, (Plunkett, enveloped in the Easter Week aura, he did not dare to attack) but on the Nation League. Our unfortunate body he ridiculed and lampooned in his widely read paper and in his speeches all over the constituency. He possessed a caricaturist of parts, and his paper was filled each week with caricatures and articles showing the poor "League of the Seven Attornies", as he always called it, up to scorn. But we had a shot in our

locker that he overlooked, a shot that Frank O'Connor, a formidable controversialist, let fly at him at that big Carrick meeting, and kept reminding him about all during the election. O'Connor revealed that he had been one of the first to apply for membership of the Nation League, had even asked to fight the by-election under its auspices, but the League, being by no means ignorant of his past, refused to have anything to do with him. And his attacks on it were probably due to chagrin.

One of the largest meetings during the election was held at Ballaghaderreen on the fair day. That town, though situated in the Co. Mayo, was, for some reason or other, thrown into the constituency of North Roscommon for the purpose of parliamentary elections. I travelled from Boyle to Ballaghaderreen with Fr. O'Flanagan and Frank O'Connor. We were somewhat late in arriving at the meeting as we had to address one or two meetings en route. When we reached the town we found a huge crowd of people in the big square and saw that there were two meetings actually taking place. At one end of the square was the official Party platform, replete with green flags, from which the Rev. Canon Gallagher, the administrator of the parish, was

addressing a crowd of some hundreds of elderly men. Opposite him at the other end was the Count's platform, decked out in the new national colours, green-white-orange, and with a large tricolour flag flying over it. From its side was suspended a large portrait of Parnell. The Count was addressing a crowd at least three times larger than the Party meeting and, again, with a very high percentage of young men and women in it. There was terrific enthusiasm, cheering and applause. Though there was a considerable amount of back-firing between the two platforms, there was little or no disorder. Anyhow, a large force of the R.I.C., in full war equipment - spiked helmets, carbines, handoliers, haversacks and bayonets - occupied the space between the rival crowds.

O'Connor, being an important man, was due to speak, and made his way to the Count's platform. When Fr. O'Flanagan was recognised an extraordinary scene ensued. They crowded around his car, cheering wildly and calling on him for a speech. So great a diversion did his presence cause that the Count had to stop speaking for the time being, the crowd insisting strenuously and doggedly that they must have a speech from Father Michael. Now, there was a big difficulty about this, as he himself

explained to us on the way over. It appeared that there was a rule of a Maynooth Synod that no priest could speak without first getting the permission of the parish priest of the parish in which he desired to speak. It so happened that the parish of Ballaghaderreen was a Bishop's parish, governed by an administrator, the actual parish priest of which was the Bishop of Achonry, Dr. Morrisroe. At Fr. O'Flanagan's request, I got up and explained all this to them and informed them that we were going up to the Palace to see his Lordship and get his permission. I added that when that permission was granted (about which we anticipated no difficulty, seeing that no P.P. in the constituency had refused him, even those politically against him) we would return and he would speak to them from the Count's platform. At this we made for the Palace with their cheers ringing in our ears.

The Palace was about a mile from the town and thither we drove, Fr. O'Flanagan, myself and two Volunteers. The Bishop saw us immediately, but, to our surprise and disappointment, flatly declined to give Fr. O'Flanagan the necessary permission. We argued with him, pointing out that no P.P. had, so far, refused him; but to no avail;

he was adamant. The Volunteer men were enraged at his attitude and took no pains to conceal it, pointing out to him that one of his own priests, Canon Gallagher, was "spouting below for the Party". Indeed, they were quite offensive to him and Fr. O'Flanagan had to pull them up, when they relapsed into a kind of surly silence. The Bishop's attitude was this: He began by reminding us that Roscommon was in another diocese than that of Elphin, which, doubtless, had its own customs that were different from his. In the diocese of Achonry the infrangible rule governing the attitude of the clergy to politics was that at an election such as this they came together and decided by a majority what candidate they would support. Once that was settled, they all supported the candidate of the majority. It was, he added, with a faintly sarcastic smile, majority rule, a practical example of democracy in the making "about which we hear so much in these days".

We returned to the town where both meetings were still in progress. It was the same as before. The great crowd swept round our car cheering and calling again on Fr. O'Flanagan for a speech. I rose, but could not make myself heard until Father O'Flanagan's great voice called to them to hearken to me. I explained what had happened, as

tactfully as I could. When they realised that their favourite was forbidden to address them, there was a roar of disappointment and rage, followed, to my great astonishment, by groans and boos for the bishop.

In that famous election, Fr. O'Flangan and myself, in our wanderings, spent the greater part of two bitterly cold snowy nights out on the roads endeavouring to hew our way through monstrous snowdrifts, 6 to 8 feet in height. On one such occasion the car got stuck in a drift up to the windscreen and had to be dug out by local squads of Volunteers whom the resourceful Fr. O'Flanagan had got organised for that purpose. On another, after great difficulties, we reached Strokestown at about 3.30 in the morning and knocked at the solitary hotel there. For quite a while no one answered our knock. After a bit a window shot up, a head popped out and, in the vexed voice of one disturbed in his slumbers, we were asked who we were and what did we want. The speaker was the late Paddy McKenna, a strong Party man, who, later that year, was to contest South Longford against Joe McGuinness. Hearing that it was Fr. O'Flanagan, he immediately came downstairs and let us in, getting us by some wizardry a glass of whiskey each which we badly needed, and ending by giving

Fr. O'Flanagan his room. As the hotel was packed out, he and I spent the remainder of the night in the sitting-room where we endeavoured to get some sleep on the floor.

On the day of the election I was posted to Croghan where I took my stance outside the national school where the polling was taking place. My job was to assist voters with information and distribute leaflets, pamphlets and copies of a special Plunkett issue of the "Ulster Herald" that I had brought with me. There was already a short, thick-set, bearded man there when I arrived, on the same job as myself. This turned out to be none other than Arthur Griffith, and that was the second time I met him. At first, I did not recognise him with his "gaol" beard, but, seeing I was on his side, he came up to me and made himself known to me.

The day passed without any serious fracas, but there might well have been such. In the morning there was little trouble other than cat-calls by the Hibernian element at our voters, from time to time. But, after lunch, things were different. It was clear that a number of that element had been well primed with "refreshment" for they soon manifested a singularly bellicose attitude towards voters coming along under the Plunkett colours. It was also clear that the

rowdyism that they engendered and that increased as the evening wore away was organised. The police were pretty well represented - three armed constables and a sergeant - but they made not the slightest effort to prevent the deliberate organised interference by the inebriated Hibernians with our voters, though we appealed to them on several occasions to do so. On the other hand, they were keenly on the alert to interfere promptly and effectively against any of our people should they attempt to retaliate. The sergeant was one Costello, a stoutish florid man, who could be arrogant or accommodating, as the position demanded. He was a curious case, by no means rare at the time, of a policeman who changed his religion from Catholic to Protestant, on his marrying a girl of the latter faith, for reasons, it was alleged, of advancement in the force. Such a change over, at the time, often opened the way for a ranker to attain the dizzy level of a District Inspector. Up to a certain occurrence, presently to be related, his attitude to Plunkett's men and voters had been supercilious and almost offensive, and he was clearly much amused at the harassing our people were getting by the Party drunks. Eventually things came to a head when a Hibernian, who had been particularly aggressive during the day, returned from one of his periodical

visits to the pub, made for one of our voters on his way to the polling booth and struck him a pretty severe blow on the jaw, staggering him badly and nearly felling him. Even that blatant assault failed to attract the attention of the sergeant and his police. This enraged Griffith so much that he went up to the sergeant and gave him a stinging tongue-thrashing, saying that if he and his police continued to neglect their duty, he would call for Volunteers who would protect our voters. I was surprised at the force of Griffith's anger and at the strength and depth of his voice. It had a remarkable effect on the sergeant. He took the name and address of the man who committed the assault and that of the assaulted, and ordered his men to control the rowdy element, which they promptly did, after which we had no more trouble of that kind.

But we had trouble of another kind, to Griffith, of a highly unwelcome kind. The sergeant proceeded to woo us. Thenceforward he simply danced attention on Griffith, coming to him every now and then to ask were things now all right, or was there anything else he could do for him. Seeing that Griffith had made a pledge to boycott the R.I.C. and members of the Crown forces, whom he regarded as part of

the army of occupation, it can be appreciated how very embarrassing those unsought attentions were to him. But there was worse to come. When the polling booth closed down at 8 o'clock in the evening, Griffith and I repaired to a pub kept by one of Griffith's oldest and staunchest supporters. Whilest there who should come in but the bold Sergeant Costello himself. He had obviously been refreshing himself after the rigours of the day and was in good chatty mood. And what should he do, of all things, but invite Griffith and myself to have a drink with him! Griffith was clearly distressed. His face stiffened and he said nothing for a moment. Then, to my surprise, he said: "Thank you, a stout". We, of course, had to stand the sergeant back, after which, having waited for a car in vain, we left and footed the 7 or 8 miles to Boyle.

On the way Griffith explained his action. He accepted the sergeant's drink because he realised, if he refused, the police had it in their power to make the life of his friend, the proprietor, unbearable. They could, if they set themselves to do so, break him and put him out of business altogether. Griffith knew that, and, at

all costs, wanted to avoid any such calamity for his faithful supporter. Hence his "deviation" from principle.

It was a cold, still night, with the moon well up in a sky studded with stars, lighting up clearly the white snowy world around us. There was one other person with us whose name I forget; and Griffith, who was in good talking form, held the two of us spellbound with his conversation. His knowledge of Irish history, particularly the darker side of the Parnell and Invincible period, was extremely wide; and, as he possessed a remarkable memory and a fine command of clear terse English, listening to him was a sheer delight.

At that election I made contact, for the first time, with men who led, or were prominent in the extremer national movements - such as the two famous Dublin men, Dan McCarthy and Joe McGrath. Dan was then the more dominant and more conspicuous of the two, and displayed, for the first time, his unrivalled qualities as a director of elections. It was there I think that I also met Michael Collins, George Lyons and other Easter Week men.

That election was fought on a wave of national emotionalism, and on no particular policy - republicans,

separatists, abstentionists, advanced constitutionalists - all came together to put Count Plunkett in, mainly because he was the father of a young man who had given his life for Ireland.

Pierce Beasley, in his Life of Michael Collins, gives the background of the loose national confederation supporting Plunkett, and I must quote him to complete my picture. When Plunkett announced his intention of going against the official Party candidate, Beasley writes: "A very interesting problem arose from the separatist point of view. The opponents of the Parliamentary Party had, at the time, no definite national policy to place before the country. They were composed of various elements, united only in dissatisfaction with the Party, and desire for a more forward movement. There were the survivors of Easter Week and their sympathisers in the country, who believed in upholding the ideal of independence, and had not abandoned all hope of a physical force policy; there were the adherents of Arthur Griffith's old Sinn Féin organisation; there were those opposed to Griffith's policy of abstention from attendance at the British Parliament, who believed what was wanted was to replace the

Parliamentary Party by more virile and aggressive representatives. The first group, among whom Collins was a leader, was confronted with a difficult problem. There were those who felt that, after the standard of an Irish Republic had been raised during Easter Week, it would be a retrograde step for any of them to take part in British Parliamentary elections, even in support of candidates pledged not to attend the English Parliament. Count Plunkett gave no pledge not to attend that parliament. He put no programme of national policy before the country. He appealed altogether to popular sympathy.

It would be natural for a young man who was regarded as a leader of the physical force party to prefer to adopt an intransigent attitude; but Collins had too much political sagacity not to realise the immense value, at that period, of an election result which would be at the same time a heavy blow to the still predominant Parliamentary Party and a demonstration of popular sympathy with the Easter Week insurrection. He threw all his energies into the support of Count Plunkett's candidature.

Arthur Griffith, for his part, made his attitude clear by the message - "If Plunkett goes for Roscommon, all

nationalists should support him". At the same time, Griffith was not enthusiastic over the candidate who had no declared national policy, even on the matter of abstention, and whose past political record was, to say the least, ambiguous - a fact which the supporters of the Parliamentary Party did not fail to emphasise.

The poll was declared on the morning of 5th February, 1917, from the steps of the Courthouse at Boyle. It was: Plunkett, 3,022; Devine, 1,708; and Tully, 687. The result came as a surprise to everybody, but particularly to the Parliamentary Party. The surprise to us was, not that we won; we were sure we would; it was at the size of our victory, a total majority over the other two candidates of 627, and a majority of 1,314 over the Party man. Jaspar Tully, in his speech after the declaration, magnanimously presented the Count with his 687 votes! The Count's victory encouraged and stimulated all in the vague movement that had spontaneously come into being to support him against a Party that, in the opinion of many, had failed in the discharge of its national trust. But no one was more stimulated and revitalised than the Count himself. When he arrived in the constituency

he presented the appearance of an old man, bowed down and rendered feeble by sorrow and misfortune. And well, indeed, he might be, for he was no longer a young man and the grievous blows he had suffered could not fail to have left their mark on him. For a time he seemed to be almost in a daze, but, as the campaign developed, that abstracted mood wore off and he entered into the spirit of the contest, spoke well, and, as far as there was any point at all in the nebulous programme put forward for him, to that point. Nevertheless, he seemed a sad and rather lonely figure and everywhere there was great sympathy for him.

After the declaration of the poll, however, a change, almost miraculous, came over him. From being a bent old man, he straightened up into a tall, vigorous one. The lines of sorrow and care vanished from his countenance and were replaced by those of purpose and resolve. He no longer supplicated; he commanded; and it seemed to all that he had made up his mind that he was going to rule whatever organisation was to take shape from his triumph. Indeed, there were those who saw in his transformation - his handsome, erect appearance, his flowing beard and proud eye, a remarkable similarity to an older Parnell.

We had not long to wait to see this "new look" of his in action. Immediately after the election a meeting was held in Bowles's Hotel, Boyle, to consider the inauguration of a new movement. It was attended by representatives of all the allied though disparate national groups that had supported the Count. He took the chair and opened proceedings by a short statement inviting proposals and suggestions, after which he lapsed into almost complete silence and aloofness - another change, as he had been most approachable and communicative before - until the conclusion of the proceedings.

I am to-day, 40 years after those events, somewhat hazy about those who were present on that occasion. I remember our Nation Leaguers - Stephen O'Mara and Michael O'Callaghan of Limerick, J.J. Kelly ("Sceilg") of Dublin, and F.J. O'Connor and myself of Omagh. Rory O'Connor was there. He was engaged to the Count's daughter; also Dan McCarthy and Joe McGrath. I think Seán Milroy, a strong Griffithite Sinn Féiner, was there also, and Michael Collins. Nor should I overlook Larry Ginnell, M.P., who, at that time, was by no means enamoured of an abstentionist policy. It is strange how one forgets. That's all I seem to be able to

remember out of a roomful of people, perhaps 30 or 40. Of course, many were local, and most of the Dublin men I was meeting for the first time. Despite the Count's new hardening, the great personality of Fr. Ml. O'Flanagan really dominated the meeting.

In due course, the discussion revealed that the majority favoured the abstention policy. Our Nation Leaguers did not; they thought such a policy was, to say the least of it, premature, and they feared that any inflexible adherence to it would damage the prospects of any new party in the north. The Griffithite elements, though pledged to abstention, considered that it would be better to postpone a decision on it to a more representative meeting in Dublin.

Finally, the Count, who, as I have said had been more or less silent during the discussion, got up and announced that he did not propose to attend the British Parliament. That announcement was not well received by us and F.J. O'Connor, Stephen O'Mara and "Sceilg" strongly criticised it and, like the Griffithites, asked that a decision on it be adjourned to Dublin. But the Count was adamant and made it clear not only that he would never go to Westminster, but that he would set about immediately to establish a new organisation of his own based on his "Liberty Clubs".

Soon there was another unmistakable manifestation of the Count's "new look". On St. Patrick's Day he dispatched a letter to all County Councils, Borough Councils, Urban and Rural District Councils and prominent nationalists throughout Ireland, in which he stated that he had been "elected to recognise no authority over Ireland; to maintain the rights of Ireland to independence; and to initiate Ireland's work of taking control of her own affairs", and that the task had fallen upon him "of inaugurating a new policy for Ireland". A long indictment of the Irish Party followed, and the statement concluded: -

> "I have therefore decided to convene an assembly of the representatives of the Administrative Bodies and National Organisations and other public men of Ireland. The first of its duties will be to address itself to the Peace Conference with a view to obtaining the support of nations which will be represented at the Conference. With its representative authority, this assembly will claim the recognition of the sovereign status of Ireland; that status to be guaranteed by the continental Powers of Europe and by the U.S.A. I ask your Council to give their adhesion to the principles and methods enunciated in this letter, and so, having expressed their approval, to appoint two of their members to take part as delegates in the Assembly to be held in the Mansion House, Dublin, at 11.30 a.m. on the 19th April".

Though the public bodies at that time were largely composed of strong Irish Party supporters, and though many of them ignored the Count's circular, a considerable number accepted the invitation and those with delegates from Sinn Féin, the Irish Volunteers etc. attended on the day appointed what turned out to be a large and representative convention.

Plunkett soon made it clear that he was out to scrap Sinn Féin and all other bodies and start a new organisation with himself as President. This did not find favour with many there, including Griffith, who proposed a simple, straightforward alternative, viz: that all existing organisations and bodies should unite on the basis of abstention from the English Parliament, and an appeal to the Peace Conference after the war. And, to give effect to this plan, Griffith further proposed that they should form a joint executive representing Sinn Féin, Irish Volunteers, the Plunkettites, Labour, the Nation League and other interests. This was defeated, whereupon Griffith announced that the Sinn Féin organisation would continue as theretofore, independent of the rest. Thus, the new national resurgence was threatened with a

deadly split almost before its birth. Wiser counsels, fortunately, eventually prevailed and largely through the efforts of Fr. Michael O'Flanagan, to whom Plunkett owed so much, the old man came to heel and accepted a solution on the terms of Griffith's motion. The Convention showed that there were still a great deal of people, like the Nation League, that were not yet ready for an absolute abstentionist policy. They, like the Nation League, were not popular with Plunkett and the Plunkettites who wanted to have nothing to do with them, and treat them, more or less, like the Partyites - national pariahs.

The new policy of going forward to the Peace Conference that would follow on the termination of the war with Ireland's case for soveriegn independence was founded largely on the goodwill and sympathy of the U.S. for Ireland, which, at that time, was particularly conspicuous, manifesting itself in the passing of motions to that end by the States' congress and even by the National Congress. Not much dependance was put on the support of other countries. The belligerent countries had their own grave matters to attend to thereat; and, anyhow, the Entente Allies - England, France, Italy, etc. - were more likely to be anti-

Irish if, for no other reason, because of the 1916 Rising and the avowed alliance of the insurgents with Germany in the Proclamation of the Republic. True, the United States was then neutral, but it was clear to all that so great, rich and powerful a country would and must have a say, and a big say, at such a conference. Part of the active pro-Irish feeling that was then so conspicuous in America was, no doubt, due to the deterioration in Anglo-American relations that had been growing for some time past. This was due largely to the traditional English attitude towards neutrals when she is not neutral. John Bull, as most of his histories will show you, never fights a war; it is always a crusade. He draws the sword, never primarily for himself but to save some other people, or to civilise and christianise them, or to destroy a dictator or a tyrant. And if at the end of a successful war (as it nearly always was) he collars the defeated enemies' colonies and possessions, he knows that that is the outward and visible sign of the Lord's approval of his battle for Righteousness against the cohorts of Iniquity, and but carrying out the declaration of the Psalmist: "Never have I known the righteous man to fail nor his need to want for bread".

John Bull was angry with Uncle Sam for not seeing the obvious righteousness of his cause, and for refraining from coming in and giving his warriors of St. George a helping hand against the forces of Satan. Some call this traditional attitude of John hypocrisy, and some his power of self-deception; but whatever it is called, there is no doubt of its existence, as we ourselves experienced when John was fighting his last crusade. An event, however, presently occurred which speedily changed all this.

On April 7th, the Germans, with that bone-headed stupidity they so often display in their relationship with other peoples, sank the great White Star liner, the "Lusitania" drowning thereby many American civilians. This wanton act caused such a violent outburst of indignation and rage against Germany in America that President Woodrow Wilson, who dearly wanted peace, had to declare war forthwith against the Central Powers. And, from the standpoint of the new movement in Ireland, that was a definite setback to its aims and hopes, as the country's greatest external friend was now the ally of "th' auld enemy".

THE FATEFUL BY-ELECTIONS.

After the rousing victory of North Roscommon, the confederated or allied groups that were opposing the official Party were presently presented with two more opportunities of putting their strength to the test and advancing their united objective. Vacancies in two more parliamentary constituencies fell due, and the by-elections that they necessitated came in close sequence. The first arose in South Longford, and, after much misgiving and, indeed, opposition from certain elements, it was decided not only to contest it but - greatly daring - with one of the men who were serving sentences of penal servitude in English jails. Eventually, Joe McGuinness, a Co. Longford man, then in Lewes Gaol, was selected, though, as I have said, not without much hesitation, as the organisations of the Irish Party were exceptionally strong in the area, backed by a widely read local paper, the "Longford Leader", belonging to the influential Farrell family. This trepidation was increased by the fact that the Redmondite candidate was a very popular man, none other than Paddy McKenna, the same who had been so kind to Father O'Flanagan and myself in Strokestown during the Roscommon election.

Actually, great difficulty was experienced by the promoters in Ireland in getting McGuinness and the Volunteers in gaol, or in internment camps, to consent to his candidature. Their outlook was that a Volunteer of the Easter Week tradition should not identify himself with a British-run election in any way. To do so appeared to them to be letting down the principles of republicanism that he had proclaimed in arms but the previous year. In his book, Pierce Beasley tells us that all the men in Lewes Gaol, including de Valera, their camp commandant, where the invitation to McGuinness to contest the election had been smuggled in, were, for those reasons, dead against McGuinness, or any of their company, going forward - all, that is to say, but Thomas Ashe and Harry Boland. Others doubted the wisdom of running the risk of defeat in the case of a sentenced Irish "felon". Would that not be regarded as a condemnation, not alone of the "felon", but of all he stood for, including the Rising? The leaders in Dublin, however, ignored McGuinness's refusal, and duly nominated him as a candidate. The Lewes men were very angry at this and considered repudiating that action. Wiser views, however, eventually prevailed and they decided to take no action and let things be.

I was all through that election, speaking on behalf of McGuinness at various meetings throughout the constituency. In going round South County Longford, it was obvious to us all that the position was very different from that of Roscommon. The opposition to us, especially in the towns, was extremely strong and articulate, indeed, arrogant and angry; an entirely different climate altogether to the other where our side had things very much their own way. No doubt, the heavy defeat of the party in the adjoining county contributed a good deal to the bitterness in the second election. Redmond's people were alarmed and, realising the danger they were in, fought the election with all the strength and determination that they were capable of.

The opposition was particularly strong in Longford town. Indeed, it was quite dangerous for any of us to go through the streets sporting our colours; the town was not only a stronghold of Redmondism, but of the British army, where there was a garrison of, I think, the Leinster Regiment. Large numbers had joined up in the British army and it was full of soldiers' wives and womenfolk drawing the separation allowance.

Unlike Roscommon, the Party sent their big guns to speak for McKenna, and their meetings in Longford and the towns, at all events, were larger and more enthusiastic than ours, all colourful with Union Jacks and green flags. I remember a very large meeting held in the main street at which Joe Devlin, the Hibernian President, was the chief speaker. Joe was an extremely eloquent speaker with an extraordinarily emotional ring in his penetrating tenor voice which his sharp Belfast accent accentuated, particularly to southern ears. In the course of his speech, he produced a large green flag with the golden harp and, waving it over their heads, he exclaimed: "Here is the good old green flag of Ireland, the flag that many a heroic Irishman died under; the flag of Wolfe Tone, of Robert Emmet, of Thomas Davis; aye, and the flag of the great Charles Stewart Parnell" (huge applause). "Look at it, men and women, it has no yellow streak in it, nor no white streak. What was good enough for Emmet, Davis and Parnell is good enough for us. Long may it fly over Ireland"!

Another speaker - was it Tommy Lundon, M.P.? - had gone to the trouble of getting the material in a Sinn Féin tricolour analysed and made the great discovery that it was cotton manufactured in Manchester. "There's Sinn Féin

principles for you"! he exclaimed triumphantly.

The "Longford Independent" called on the local Unionists to vote against MacGuinness. It referred to the Easter Week men as "the greatest scoundrels Ireland has ever had the misfortune to suffer from", and pointed out that if the Unionists did not vote for the Irish Party candidate they might have "Joe MacGuinness's heel on their necks".

The South Longford, as the North Roscommon, election was fought on no definite national policy by the varied amalgam that was supporting McKenna, nothing higher than anti-Irish Partyism, and an appeal to sympathy for "the men in gaol for Ireland". As the slogan on the walls and the banners ran - "Vote for McGuinness, the man in gaol for Ireland". Put him in to get him out"!

The result was declared on 9th May, 1917, in Longford town. On the first count, McKenna was declared elected by a small majority. We were dumbfounded, our misery being aggravated by the wild roars of the triumphant Partyites and their wilder "Separation Allowance" women who danced with joy as they waved Union Jacks and green flags. My dejection was particularly severe as, just

before the declaration, I met Jim Campbell (brother of Joe Campbell, M.P. for East Tyrone to-day) and he bet me a tenner that McKenna would win, a challenge that I rashly accepted. But, whilst I was gloomily meditating on my lost tenner - a considerable sum in those far-off days - the late Charlie Wyse-Power came to the window of the Courthouse (where he was assisting at the count) and, calling for silence, informed us that there was to be a recount, as a package of votes had been overlooked. A drowning man hangs on to a straw, they say, and we certainly (myself in particular) held with desperation on to the straw Charlie had flung us.

In what seemed an incredibly long time, the Sheriff came to the open window of the Courthouse and announced that our man, Joe McGuinness, was in by 37 votes; a narrow shave, indeed, but it was enough. He polled 1,498 against McKenna's 1,461.

It is not necessary for me to describe our rejoicings, particularly my own as the decent Jim Campbell at once wrote me out his cheque for £10.

I don't think that McGuinness would ever have won that election had it not been for the letter of Archbishop Walsh of Dublin to the press a few days before the poll, in which he stated that "from information that has just reached me I am fairly satisfied that the mischief has already been done and that the country is practically sold". He was referring to Lloyd George's Partition proposals.

Towards Revolution (contd.).

The two victorious elections of North Roscommon and South Longford, tho' not fought on any declared separatist policy, had succeeded in turning the mind of the country to the "men in prison for Ireland" to such an extent that demands for their treatment as prisoners of war, if not their release, arose throughout the country. Rumours, some of them very exaggerated, that the sentenced men were being ill-treated by their gaolers, made those demands more insistent and more frequent. Accordingly, on 21st May, a big meeting was held in the Mansion House under Sinn Féin auspices, the biggest since the Rising, to demand that the Easter Week prisoners be given prisoner of war treatment. At that great meeting it was not forgotten that that strange but true and courageous Irishman, George Bernard Shaw, had been the first to make such a demand. And he made it in an open letter to the "Daily Mail" immediately after the Easter Week executions at a time when England was burning with resentment against the Irish "stab in the back" - an extremely courageous act for an Irishman, especially one of his distinction and prominence, living in that country at the time.

Tho' somewhat out of place, let me record here what that fearless man wrote. "... The men shot in cold blood, after their capture or surrender, were prisoners of war." He wrote, "I remain an Irishman and am bound to contradict any implication that I can regard as a traitor any Irishman taken

in a fight for Irish Independence against the British Government, which was a fair fight in everything except the enormous odds my countrymen had to face". Only one like myself, who lived through those tense days, can appreciate the audacious and defiant courage of the man who penned those brave words.

Yet, despite the turning away from Westminsterism and the growth of Sinn Féinism, the latter movement, even then, was far indeed from dominating the Nation's political field. It was, of course, still, in a very nebulous and indefinite condition. That fact was demonstrated by the resolution of Redmond's National Volunteers at their annual convention in Dublin but a week later. The Irish National Volunteers, despite defections after the Easter Week executions, were still strong in the country, and, even then, greatly outnumbered their Easter Week rivals. At that Convention, its delegates unanimously expressed their "sympathy with their fellow-countrymen and ancient comrades who had lost their lives in the cause of freedom" - referring, of course, to those who had joined up in the British Army and died on the battlefields of Flanders and Gallipoli. There was no turning to the new national evangel with them. And, in truth, judging from the recruiting figures, it was clear that, even then, Ireland did not know her own mind. The official figures, published at the end of that year, showed that the enlistments from 1914 to 1917 in Ireland totalled some 123,584 men, of whom 58,438 were from Ulster's

Nine Counties where the Catholic population was just short of 50%, and 65,147 from the remaining twenty-three counties, where the Catholic population was just on 90%. Of that number, at least 80,000, probably more, were Catholic Nationalists.

The United States had been in the war since that April; and that great event had, of course, its effect on the Americans' traditionally benevolent and sympathetic attitude towards Irish autonomy. No nation, when at war, is more fiercely nationalistic than America; and amongst her heterogeneous but extraordinarily united populace, no element is more madly pro-American than the Irish - yet, on this occasion, seeing that American's ally or "associate", as she preferred to call her, was the "auld enemy" England, Irish-American feeling was somewhat tempered. The President had proclaimed that America had entered the war to abolish imperialistic aggression everywhere and to secure everywhere the establishment of the doctrine of self-determination. And Ireland's claim for such treatment had been before the American people for years, indeed, for generations. Accordingly, the U.S. had two strong reasons to desire a settlement of the Irish Question, viz. that the fact that one of the most famous or notorious of small nations was held down by one of the "liberating" Powers constituted a serious flaw on their "self-determination" war objective, and that such a settlement, by assuaging the susceptibilities of the large and politically powerful Irish-American element, as well as the Irish in Ireland, would be of great help in the furtherance of the war efforts of the

war efforts of the associated powers. Towards that end, the Americans exerted constant pressure on the British Government since they became that Government's "associate" in battle.

Hence it was that Lloyd George, the British Prime Minister, yielding (in externals, at all events) to that pressure, announced on 10th June, 1917, the composition of his "Irish Convention" to frame an autonomy for Ireland "within the Empire". This Convention, presided over by Sir Horace Plunkett, was, indeed, a strange omnium-gatherum of different faiths, politics and interests, of County Council and Urban Council Chairmen, Lord Mayors and Mayors, of Orangemen and Redmondite Nationalists. Sinn Féin and O'Brien's All-For-Ireland League were invited to send each a small delegation, but both declined. Sinn Féin's reason for declining the invitation was because the Convention's scope was confined to drafting a measure of autonomy for Ireland within the British Empire. That body wanted no such limitation; and furthermore, wanted the majority decision that might be reached, guaranteed by the great powers. I do not propose to give any consideration to that Convention which, of course, came to nothing, its raison d'etre being primarily to satisfy the Americans that England, at long last, meant business on the Irish Question, and thereby to smooth the way for their full and keen participation and aid in the War. Anyhow, the great majority of the Irish people were not deceived by it, and took little interest in its doings. Of much more importance was one of its early consequences.

In June Bonar Law, then a prominent member of Lloyd George's Cabinet, announced in the House of Commons that in order that the Irish Convention might "meet in a spirit of goodwill and harmony", the Irish prisoners and internees in England were to be immediately released. "An act of political generosity", declared Allison Phillips, with much exaggeration, "without parallel in history".

On 17th June, some 4,,000 prisoners and detainees in various prisons and camps in England and Wales were, accordingly, set free, and made straight for Dublin, where they got a tremendous reception. I witnessed that reception, and never saw anything to equal it, save, perhaps, the reception of Fitzmaurice and the German fliers in Dublin after the East-West crossing of the Atlantic. The prisoners were paraded thro' the thronged streets of the city in brakes and lorries, many of the sentenced men proudly sporting their convict caps. The cheers and noise were deafening. All Dublin went wild with delight and was left to herself to do so, the forces of "Law and Order" being conspicuous by their absence. It was, in truth, an Irish version of "Mafekinging". The hero of the day was undoubtedly de Valera. His exploits during Easter Week as Commandant of the Volunteer force in occupation of Boland's Mills and Mount Street Bridge, the fact that he was the last insurgent commander to surrender, and his subsequent activities in Lewes Gaol, as leader of the men's revolt against convict treatment, all united to make this hitherto unknown man, the most famous and most sought after individual in Dublin on

that historic occasion, and in thus forcing him and his unquestionable qualities forward into the full public view, paved the way for his ultimate selection by the Nation as its accepted Leader. That same day the leaders of the released prisoners met and drew up a statement of Ireland's right to complete self-determination as advocated by President Woodrow-Wilson; and that statement was brought to America by Dr. Patrick MacCartan. Dr. MacCartan was (and is) a County Tyrone man, coming from the Carrickmore area where his people were farmers. He was, long before Easter Week, an avowed separatist, despising all manner of Constitutional Nationalism and relying purely on the sword for the liberation of Ireland. He was considered by the Tyrone people, Orange and Green alike, an odd fish, and a bit of a fanatic, but Orange and Green alike never questioned his sincerity; and, indeed, as a doctor and a personality he was very popular and held in high repute in the county. Before Easter Week I saw little of him though he was a connection of my father's. That he was that most dreaded of all species in the body politic, a "physical force man" was then enough to cause our elders to fight shy of him and his ilk. I have told how I met him and others in the office of Frank O'Connor just before the Rising. After that event I corresponded with him thro' the good Sammy Carson's special "postal service", but did not see him again until one day he met me in Dublin by arrangement about the time I have now arrived at. From that time until he went to U.S.A., a period of about six weeks, I saw the doctor nearly every day, and was much in his company and confidence. Indeed he stayed an odd

night in the "digs" I then occupied - that of Mrs. Casey, Cabra Park, under an assumed name of course, as he was, very definitely, "on his keeping" since the Rising. I used to take long walks thro' the streets of the city and suburbs with him, his only disguise being a pair of heavy-rimmed spectacles which he commissioned me to buy for him. He used to entertain me spotting for me the various detectives and "G" men, all of whom he knew and who, no doubt, were on the look out for him, and other wanted men.

The doctor was a member of the Supreme Council of the I.R.B. and thro' him I met a number of prominent members of the Brotherhood - the late Seamus O'Doherty, the late Michael Staines, the late Padraig O'Maille, the late Sean O'Muirthuille, Sean Nunan, Fintan Murphy and others. The venue for their meetings was the home of Seamus O'Doherty, Connacht Street, Phibsborough. On one of our walks together the doctor told me that they had been discussing the sending of someone to America to represent the new national cause and explain it to our friends there, as well as to prepare the ground for Ireland's representation at the Peace Conference. It appeared they wanted him as their delegate for these purposes, but he was most anxious for me to accompany him, the point being that as I happened to be a grand nephew of General Shields, the American statesman, I might be found to be of use there. He explained that if selected to accompany him we would have to travel thither surreptitiously as Able Seamen, in an outgoing steamer from Liverpool and under forged papers as a regularised passport and British visa would, of course, be wholly out of the

question. He said, however, that there would be no difficulty whatever in getting me adequately fixed up and properly certificated in the name of some sea-going A.B. as "the Boys" were strong and well organised in Liverpool Dockland. I, of course, jumped at the idea and eagerly welcomed the unique adventure that it would undoubtedly have been. I was not, however, selected, mainly, I think, because I was not a member of the I.R.B. and could not be one as I had promised my father, who had a horror of Hibernianism, that I would never join an oath-bound society of any description, whether political or religious. Eventually the doctor set out alone, and in due course made his way safely to the U.S. by the underground or rather "under-sea" route.

I should have mentioned that before he set out for America he was sent on a mission to London to deliver a message to the Ambassador there of Kerinsky's new democratic Russian Republic, congratulating them on having achieved democratic freedom and requesting their support of Ireland's cause. The doctor, if I remember correctly, was to endeavour to get to Russia, if at all possible. He saw Kerinsky's people alright in London and had a long and sympathetic chat with one of them who, like himself, had been a doctor "on the run", but he told him there was no hope of his getting to Russia.

After that the doctor made all his preparations to go to America. A few of his friends, including myself, some young lads, and the late Miss Owens of Beragh, saw him off at Dún Laoghaire pier. As a

gesture towards disguise he wore an overcoat of mine (returned to me by the mysterious "underground" within a week), and, of course, the horn-rimmed spectacles. How he was not recognised and captured beats me, as detectives and "G" men were as "thick as leaves in Vallambrosa". They lined the gangway and scrutinised every male passenger as he passed up on to the deck. Judging from their numbers, the Government must have had an inkling that there was something in the offing.

Sometime later the papers announced the arrival in New York of the doctor, bearing with him a message to the President and Congress of the U.S., signed by Eamonn de Valera, Eoin MacNeill, and twenty-four others. From my introduction there by Dr. MacCartan, the home of Joseph and Kitty O'Doherty in Connacht Street, became a frequent visiting centre for me. Mrs. O'Doherty, as I have said, was a truly wonderful woman, combining great intellectual power with great determination and fearlessness of character and wholly inspired by a remarkable faith in the country and enthusiasm for the Cause. Her enthusiasm was catching and she inspired several young men and women by her ardour and her ballads. She was, of course, raided several times and her husband had to spend a great deal of that period on the run. It was at Mrs. O'Doherty's that I met members of the prominent men of the "Extreme" movement such as Dan Breen, Seán Hegarty, Seamus Robinson; and it was there, too, that I had my first meeting with my old friend, Diarmid O'Hegarty (R.I.P.). I also met there

other interesting people, survivals of past national movements, old Fenians and old Land Leaguers - amongst the latter a very interesting old priest who, because of his strong advocacy of the "Land for the People", had been banished for years from Ireland to America, and was there living in retirement. An old retired member of the R.I.C. used also, occasionally, to drop in, and I remember being present at a violent argument between him and the aforesaid priest on the morality of some aspects of the Volunteer movement. Through Arthur Griffith, who had resumed his editorship of the "United Irishman", I contacted a curious and rather mysterious individual. The name of this individual has escaped me; was it Blake or Fitzgerald? I may get it from Mrs. O'Doherty. He had held high office in the R.I.C. and had played a somewhat sinister part under the Balfour Coercion regime in the 'nineties. He was now ready and indeed eager to tell us all he knew and give us the low-down on his part and Balfour's at that period. His motive in doing so was twofold; which predominated was his own secret. He had fallen out with his old masters, and, indeed, had turned completely against them for having, as he alleged, grossly let him down and reneged all their promises to him regarding compensation and reward for his exceptional and dangerous services. Again, he declared he had an uneasy conscience in respect of some of his activities at the time and suffered remorse on account of them and wished, before he died, to make some amends for them by giving into the hands of his victims' friends a full and true statement of the

position in Balfour's days. However that may be, he was clearly in wretched health with a wife also in bad health. I have forgotten much of his story as it was about a period in Irish history that I was very ignorant of at the time; but he appeared to have been in the dangerous midst of things when the late A.J. Balfour was Chief Secretary in Ireland. I remember his telling me that in the Irish Office in London he occupied a room immediately over Balfour's office, and was at Balfour's constant beck and call during all that stormy period, influencing Governmental and Castle tendencies, policies and action, by his advice. Amongst the hectic events he played a big part in were the sinister Maamtrasna murder trials; and he held that the Joyces, sentenced and executed for those murders, were wholly innocent, but the Crown wanted victims, and victims had to be found for it.

After a few contacts with this person I reported the gist of what he had told me to Griffith who decided to meet him and do business with him. Griffith was extremely well up on that period and at once saw the great value of the information being offered. The meeting between him and Griffith took place at my then diggings, Muckross House, Whitworth Road, Drumcondra. My landlady was Mrs. Dagge, the wife of the retired Superintendent of the G.P.O. The family, consisting of the parents and grown boys and girls, were, of course, Protestant and Unionist; but they were very kind to me, as these pages will reveal in due course.

The upshot of that meeting was that the ex R.I.C. officer was commissioned to write a full account of his doings for which he would be paid, and, in the meantime, whilst he was employed on the work he would be maintained by the movement. Accordingly, he took up modest lodgings in Killeen Road, under an assumed name, as his work, which Griffith considered to be of a highly important character, reflecting as it did generally on Castle and police methods, would, of course, constitute a violation of the Official Secrets Act for which he would undoubtedly suffer. His work, accordingly, proceeded under very stealthy and secretive conditions. Once a week I would visit his quiet and unobtrusive digs, collect the MS and convey it to Griffith, who had it typed.

Its author, I must say, worked hard and continuously at his task, for he declared he wanted it completed and in safe hands before his feeble health gave out. In due course, it was finished and ready for publication, which event Griffith was satisfied would create something of a bombshell. But how or where was it to be published? Ireland, or indeed the British Isles, were out of the question. America was the obvious, indeed the only place. But how was it to get safely out there without detection, for it was a rather bulky document? The answer to this question evaded us; the regular "underground" and "undersea" channels would not serve on this occasion for obvious reasons. But just as we were about to admit defeat, a "Deus ex machine" turned up, to our

great relief. Rather I should say a "Dea" - in the person of a charming young lady, the late Leonora Burke of Rockforest, Roscrea. She was the sister of Seamus Burke, B.L., who later became T.D. for North Tipperary and was Minister of Local Government in the first Cosgrove Administration. Miss Burke owned property in New York, where she also had relatives, and was in the habit of making frequent visits across the Atlantic. As she was eminently respectable and not known to have any contacts with subversive movements (Seamus himself was not prominent at the time), she had no trouble in getting all the passports and visas she wanted. Of course, there was the risk of her ship being torpedoed, but she never seemed to think about that. I knew her fairly well at the time and asked her would she bring the document across for us. She agreed at once saying that she was only too happy to do anything for the "Cause", however small.

Meanwhile in the country at large the new movement, inaccurately, and, at the time certainly prematurely styled "Sinn Féin", was continuing to make progress and grow, tho' not without considerable opposition. The electoral reverses had alarmed and incensed the Irish Party people, and their orators and press were now in full cry against the new evangel and its leaders. Nor did they stop at words. Reports came in of attacks on the meetings and parades of the latter in different parts of the country. And the "Party" were not the only critics. The Church, too, was getting apprehensive,

particularly at the number of young clergy that were coming out openly on the side of the "Shinners". On 19th June, an "Instruction", signed by Cardinal Logue, Primate of All Ireland, and the Bishops of Cloyne and Ross, for and on behalf of the whole Hierarchy, was issued to all priests warning them against "dangerous associations and organisations that plot against the Church or lawfully constituted authority", and remainding them that it was strictly forbidden by a statute of the National Synod of Maynooth "to speak of politics or kindred subjects in Church".

On 7th June, the death of the popular Major Willie Redmond, M.P., of wounds in France, created a vacancy in the constituency of East Clare. The election for the filling of the vacancy was fixed for July and Eamonn de Valera, who was only out of gaol, was chosen to contest it on behalf of the movement, against the late Paddy Lynch, K.C., the nominee of the Irish Party. The fact that the late Willie Redmond had been one of the most popular members of the Party and that the candidate, Lynch, belonged to a powerful local family, possessing an intricate network of cousins throughout the constituency, gave our people great concern as to de Valera's chances. It would be, obviously, a very serious reverse for the triumphing cause if a convicted Easter Week man, and one so prominent as he, were defeated. So the call went forth to all supporters and sympathisers with the new movement to rally to its support and give all the help they could.

This call was responded to with remarkable enthusiasm and effect. Presently people from all over the country and in various walks of life headed for the constituency like a veritable pilgrimage and, in most cases, at their own expense. I, too, responded to that call although it was not very convenient for me, as the election campaign clashed with the summer assizes that I should be attending. The outgoing Judges of Assize on the North-West Circuit were actually sitting in Cavan Town which was where I generally joined the Circuit. But, like thousands of my contemporaries, I could not resist the powerful draw of that appeal. So, instead of entraining for Cavan at Amiens Street, I entrained at Kingsbridge for Ennis. At Limerick I had a wait of an hour or so before the train for Ennis, on the celebrated West Clare Railway, departed. To pass the time I took a walk round the vicinity of Limerick Station and was soon made aware that the election fever in East Clare had spread into Limerick, and that it certainly did not indicate that things were going to be too easy for us.

The area around the Station in those days consisted of numerous poor streets and drab, narrow lanes lined with broken-down houses and tenements whence issued hundreds of men into the ranks of the British Army. As in the case of Longford, their wives and female cronies were ardent and extremely noisy supporters of that Army and its cause, and trenchant denouncers of the "Shinners" and all that they stood for. In the wide, cleared space outside

the main entrance of the station a great mob of those warlike Amazons had gathered, equipped with flags, Union Jacks as well as green ones, to cheer the Party politicals and boo and groan the Dev. ones, as they entered the station to entrain for the seat of war. They sang many ballads of a loyalist trend such as "Tipperary", "Keep the Home Fires Burning", "We'll Hang de Valera on the Sour Apple Tree", and occasionally "God Save the King"; but they never got beyond the chorus of the latter as they clearly did not know the words of it. When some of Dev's supporters, passing into the station, would fire an "Up de Valera" at them, they would respond heartily, "Aye! Up with him on the gallows tree!" I thanked my lucky stars that I was not bedecked in the hated tricolour ribbon or badge; had I been, it would unquestionaly have lead to a much closer intimacy between me and those fair ladies than I would have cared for.

At Ennis I put up at the famous Old Ground Hotel which I discovered as a Dev. stronghold. There I met for the first time that famous man himself and many other notables in the new movement, including Countess Markievicz, Darrell Figgis and Harry Boland; and, of course, Joe McGrath and Dan McCarthy.

The hotel was packed to its fullest capacity - indeed beyond it, for they were sleeping two's, three's and four's in the bedrooms, many on the bedroom floors and on the chairs and sofas in the lounges. There was, of course, much discomfort

under such conditions; but nothing could damp down the atmosphere of enthusiasm that prevailed, everybody seeming to be animated by a terrific and wholly altruistic purpose. The wonderful organisation that those two Dublin wizards, Dan McCarthy and Joe McGrath, had fashioned out of nothing in the two precious elections was established over the whole constituency with remarkable speed, and was functioning beautifully under their magic hands. The biggest shock of all the Party people got at that time was that that empirically wrought machine of mushroom growth that they at first so naturally despised, had, in two elections proved immensely superior to their much-vaunted and long established United Irish League under the highly experienced direction of Hughie Martin, its Belfast born Chief Organiser.

Those elections, on the organisation side, resolved themselves into contests between the electoral methods of two cities, Belfast and Dublin, from which the latter emerged victorious, but not without some heavy reverses. Of course, while that was the case it is but fair to say that the old Party machine, which had proved itself in so many battles, was severely handicapped by the big turn in the tide of public opinion against them. And that is a tide that not the most brilliant politician can swim against.

But whilst all was enthusiam for the Cause within the narrow confines of the Old Ground Hotel, the position was very different without its walls. The town of Ennis, the capital of the County Clare, was definitely hostile to us - actively and bitterly hostile.

One evening as we were all gathered together in the hotel lounge, or sitting room (there were no lounges in those days in country hotels), word came in that there was to be a big rally of our opponents up in O'Connell Square which was to be addressed by V.I.P's from Dublin. Madame Markievicz was quite excited by the news, and thought it would be a splendid idea for some of us to sally forth and hear what they had to say. Madame believed intensely in the fundamental goodness of human nature - that is to say, in the best human nature, which, as everybody knows, is Irish human nature! Those decent Claremen on the other side were Irishmen, the same as ourselves, and Madame was convinced that they had only to receive that message of the new evangel when the scales of darkness would fall from their eyes and they would behold the light and turn from their schism. Accordingly, she forthwith invited me and another follow to accompany her thither. So, joined by her small and somewhat obese dog, gaily decked out, like his mistress, in conspicuous green, white and orange we rashly set forth to the Philistime camp. There was a huge crowd of Party supporters in the square, listening to the spate of oratory that poured down on them from the platform erected against the tall O'Connell column, its balustrades festooned with green flags. Despite our odious tricolour ribbon decor, no one said or did anything to us, though we were glowered at by many pairs of eyes, for, if you were in Madame's company you could not avoid notice. For a time things went along peacefully enough; everybody

appeared to be giving full attention to the orators. Presently, an orator arose with a deep, loud voice, who proceeded to abuse and ridicule our people as "Factionists", "German Agents" and "Betrayers of Ireland's Cause", to the immense satisfaction of his audience which satisfaction was registered by much cheering and resounding handclapping. Madame could not stay quiet for long under such a diatribe and was soon making sharp comments to us on his statements, showing how wrong or inaccurate they were. She possessed a clear, penetrating voice that carried quite a bit around her, so that the people in her vicinity simply had to take notice of her and listen to her rapid criticisms of the distinguished speaker's utterances. This, of course, caused considerable distration in the meeting and was certainly not "in ease" of the speaker. Soon we were the centre of an angry mob calling us every imaginable name - "gaol-birds", "killers", "cut-throats" - and commanding us to "go back to Dublin out of that!" I can still see the ring of angry eyes around us and still remember the odour of the national brew from their hot breath. First they shook their fists in our faces, then they began shoving us about and some of them had the heartlessness to visit their wrath on the Countess's poor dog, sending him off, howling with pain from their kicks, his tail between his legs. When she scolded them for their cowardly action, they pulled off her green felt hat, at the same time delivering a few punches on us men. The loss of her hat agitated the Countess as much as the ill-treatment of her dog. "Oh, men!" she cried, "do give me back my

old hat! That's the old hat I wore in the fight at Easter Week. And it's the old hat that went to gaol with me. Do give it back to me!" Not exactly the sort of appeal that would pay dividends in that company!

Eventually a strong detachment of armed R.I.C. men came along and ringed us in from the furious mob, now highly incensed and shouting for our blood. The R.I.C. were under the command of a young District Inspector. He was most courteous, particularly to Madame; but she wouldn't answer or speak to him at all, even when he retrieved her hat and returned it to her. She resented their presence, and more so, their protection, a resentment which, I can truly say, I certainly did not share! The police faced our antagonists with drawn batons and, bit by bit, drew us back within their defensive lines to a cul de sac lane at the end of which was a convent. In that position, it was much easier to protect us as the constables, drawn across the lane's narrow entry, sealed it off from our pursuers. We were then quite a while behind the lines of our guardians, listening in safety, to the raging mob that they were holding back. Eventually we were brought back to our hotel through the convent grounds under police escort, much to Madame's disgust which was not lessened by my thanking the young D.I.

Violence, particularly in the towns, was a feature of that election. For example, on the day of the poll I was present at another wild scene.

I was posted, again with Arthur Griffith, to the town hall as outside agents to distribute propaganda pamphlets and leaflets and to give what assistance to voters that we could. Everything went well till just on the close of the poll when a fierce row flamed up, the actual cause of which I forget. Soon a wild, milling mob swelled into the narrow hall of the town hall, and I was sure we were going to be "done for". However, with the help of other supporters, we managed to slam the large door against them, until the streets were cleared and we were rescued - this time, not by the R.I.C., but by a detachment of Irish Volunteers. And that was another outstanding feature of that election: the reorganisation and reforming of the Volunteers that, since the Rising, had been suppressed. The violence on the part of our opponents made that essential if our people were to have adequate protection, for, unfortunately, the adequate R.I.C. protection we got on the night of the meeting in Ennis was by no means general on the part of that force. As the election proceeded, it became a common sight to see, at our meetings, well-drilled and disciplined companies and squads of Volunteers, armed with hurleys, maintaining order and protecting our speakers and supporters. De Valera went about openly in the uniform of a Commandant, complete with Sam Brown belt and swordstrap, but, of course, minus the sword; and everywhere he went, he had a bodyguard of Volunteers, many of them also uniformed. So conspicuous were the resurrected Volunteers at that election that the English press called special attention to them, one

paper calling them "de Valera's Dalcassion warriors".

At the victory meeting in Ennis on the declaration of the poll, de Valera reviewed a great turn-out of them, said to be between five and six hundred. It may well be queried why did not the British Government suppress them, or take some sort of action to prevent their mobilisations and paradings. I think the reason why they did not do so, why they suffered them, was that they wanted no untoward scenes that would offend American opinion, in view of the sessions of Lloyd George's "Irish Convention" that were taking place. Thenceforward, until they were finally suppressed, or rather driven underground, the Volunteers were conspicuous at most of the ensuing elections where, indeed, their services were needed, often badly needed as in the case of South Armagh. On 11th July, the result of the election was declared by the Sheriff of County Clare from the steps of Ennis courthouse; it was, de Valera, 5,010, Lynch, 2,035. De Valera had won by nearly 3,000 votes.

To say that Dev's more than two to one majority came to the country as a great surprise is putting it very mildly indeed. True, as the campaign got into its stride, it became pretty clear that he would carry the day, but no one expected such a landslide in his favour. The Party people were dumbfounded, and we, their opponents, were almost swept off our feet with astonishment and delight. Across the water, the news was received with even greater surprise, and with consternation as an

onimous omen. It was clear that Dev's victory had spelt out the writing on the wall for the Irish Party, and for the future of the whole Irish national constitutional movement. One English paper equated it to a major defeat on the field of war, and another to a "tidal wave".

That evening, I left Ennis and caught the night mail at Limerick for Dublin, as, next day, I had to make for Omagh where the summer assizes were proceeding. The night mail was a slow old train, which carried the mail to Dublin, as the name implied, and took the whole night to do so. But, slow as it was, I shall not soon forget that journey. For the first few hours, I had plenty of company, and the stations, as we lumbered through them, were pretty crowded with people, all apparently overjoyed at the East Clare result, and all eager to pick up what they could from those, like myself, returning from the "battle-front". As daylight faded and the shadows of night came on, an extraordinary sight met our eyes. Every hill and mountain, as far as the eye could carry, was ablaze with bonfires, in many cases, with people cheering, singing and dancing round them. The whole nation appeared to be en fete as though it had won a great victory in war.

East Clare was truly a resounding victory for the new Cause. But, here again, as in the case of North Roscommon and South Longford, no definite policy or aim appears to have been put before the electorate, as Piaras Beaslai points out in his aforementioned work. "The Clare people", he writes,

"were asked to vote for the man who had fought for Irish Independence and suffered in British prisons, and thereby show the nations of the world, and the coming Peace Conference, that they endorsed Ireland's claim for independence. It was made clear that Mr. de Valera would not attend the English Parliament if elected; but he issued no election address".

True, de Valera did state during the election that "we want an Irish Republic because, if Ireland had her freedom, it is, I believe, the most likely form of government. But, if the Irish people wanted to have another form of government, so long as it was an Irish government, I would not put a word against it". (Dorothy Macardle, p. 233.)

And that was as precise as the republican objective was put in that election. He referred to the Ulster question. For example, at Killaloe he said, "Let the Ulster Unionists recognise the Sinn Féin position which has behind it justice and right. It is supported by nine-tenth of the Irish people, and, if those Unionists do not come in on their side, they will have to go under. Ulster is entitled to justice and she will have it, but she should not be petted and the interests of the majority sacrificed to her. Give Unionists a just and full share of representation, but no more than their just share".

A logical statement, indeed, which no logician could take exception to; unfortunately, the Ulster question was and is not capable of being

solved by logic, because, in its very essence, it is a wholly illogical concept, the more's the pity!

Whilst it is quite true that Dev., in a more concrete way than at any of the prior elections, represented in his person the fighting men of Easter Week and the Volunteers, and whilst the latter, unquestionably, provided the driving force in the campaign, there was as much vagueness as to national policy than as there was lack of unity between the various elements that had supported his candidature. Nevertheless the East Clare election of 1917 was a red-letter day, a turning point in the new national movement that was rapidly coming into being.

There was no question, of course, of Dev. attending Westminster in any circumstances, as he, himself, made clear both during and after the election. In this he followed the line adoped by Count Plunkett and McKenna; and, a few days after the declarations of the poll, they were to be followed by another: Larry Ginnell, M.P. for South Westmeath. Larry had always been very independent, and for years had been excommunicated by the Party from their midst for his aforesaid independence. This did not bother Larry much. He forthwith formed his own "Independent United Irish League" and got himself returned at each election as an Independent Nationalist against all Party opposition. In the big 1912 Home Rule Demonstration in Dublin, I remember seeing, in that parade of the orthodox, a big turn-out of his Westmeath men, headed by a

band and a great green banner bearing the words, "Westmeath Independent U.I.L. - No Dictation!"

Larry was, indeed, a formidable figure and, since the North Roscommon election, had been actively assisting the new movement. And so he became the first of the old parliamentarians to renounce Westminster and subscribe to the Sinn Féin doctrine of abstention from the English Parliament. A little later, another famous parliamentarian was breathing forth his inmost yearnings in Belfast. On 23rd July, Sir Edward Carson went to that city and unbared his heart to his worshippers there, thus: "I'd rather be a private fighting in the trenches and risking my life than any honours in the whole of my career that I have every received or would receive."

Were it not that the speaker of those words appears to have been accepted by friends and foes alike as the acme of sincerity, one would be tempted to consider him as something of a humbug, particularly seeing that there was no reason at all why he could not have given effect to so passionate a longing. True, he was well past military age. But a parliamentary colleague of his, Major Willie Redmond, though of the "rebelly" Home Rule variety, also well over military age and not so very much younger than himself, gave practical effect to a similar wish which led him to his death in action at Messines but a month previously.

On 25th July, the much publicised Irish or,

as it was generally known as, Lloyd George Convention, opened its deliberation in the Provost's House, T.C.D. And there we will leave it, for, save amongst a small section of the people, it was not taken seriously by the country and cut no ice at all.

Another by-election (which I did not attend) took place on 5th August when William T. Cosgrove, a Dublin City Alderman, was returned for Kilkenny City by a majority of 380 votes over his Party opponent, Maginnis, the actual voting being 772 against 392; in other words, nearly a two to one victory. The "tidal wave" was still in its full and heady course, showing no abatement at all. At that election, as at the East Clare election, Volunteers paraded in full force, armed with hurleys and, in some cases, arms. All over the country since Dev's return, Volunteer Companies were forming or reorganising, being drilled and instructed, despite a Military Order under D.O.R.A., issued by Sir Bryan Mahon, C.I.C. the British Forces in Ireland, prohibiting the use or wearing of uniforms in public places by unauthorised persons.

The new M.P. for East Clare, in his capacity as head of the Volunteers, was constantly going around the county, addressing his men and taking the salute from companies passing before him at Volunteer reviews. His speeches, too, became bolder and bolder. At Hospital, County Limerick, for example, he told them that "Sinn Féiners have a definite policy, and the people of Ireland are determined to make it a

success; that is to make English rule absolutely impossible in Ireland". History was, indeed, repeating itself with a vengeance. The birds that, five years back had been chanting a similar message from the Orange grove were settled now on the green bay tree, delivering therefrom an analogous message albeit from a different angle. Still, it was the message of revolt. Hearken back to Carson performing at the Criterion Restaurant in June, 1912, when he told his audience that "when he went over there (Ulster), he intended to break every law that was possible".

But, if the music was the same, the reaction thereto from Authority on its highest level was not the same. Dev's orations were disturbing the British Government very much indeed; and, despite the tacit stay in coercion on account of the Irish Convention sittings, the British Prime Minister was forced into speech. "I have read the speeches of the Honourable Member for East Clare", Lloyd George said in the House of Commons on 23rd October. "They are not excited and, so far as the language is concerned, they are not violent. They are plain, deliberate, and, I might almost say, cold-blooded incitements to rebellion. He has repeated them at meeting after meeting almost in the same studied terms ... urging the people to train, to master their rifles, to study their mechanism in order that whenever they are supplied with rifles they should be able to use them efficiently." And he asked, "How could the Government treat speeches of that

kind as if they were the sort of excitable speeches delivered by people of no consequence which would end in nothing?" And he added that "there is a great deal of talk among the Sinn Féiners which does not mean Home Rule. It does not mean self-government. It means complete separation ... it means secession. The words which are used are 'sovereign independence'". Lloyd George was certainly beginning to learn and perhaps to grasp, tho' in a vague way, the huge change that was in process in Ireland's political outlook. He added a stern warning that "this country could not possibly accept that (i.e. Irish Independence) under any conditions".

Yet another of the many "nevers" in history that became possible!

By that September, a considerable number of the more prominent Volunteers had been rounded up and interned in Mountjoy Prison for drilling, or the making of speeches against the regime. On 18th September, they demanded to be treated as prisoners of war and, when that was refused, they commenced a hunger-strike; and some of them had to suffer the barbarity of forcible feeding at the hands of the prison doctor, a certain Dr. Lowe. As a result, Thomas Ashe, a young man of fine physique and good health, collapsed and died. His treatment by his gaolers is succinctly and effectively put in the verdict of the Jury:

"We find that Thomas Ashe", it read, according to the medical evidence of Professor McWeeney, Sir Arthur Chance and

"Sir Thomas Myles, died by heart failure, and congestion of the lungs, on 25th September, caused by the punishment of taking away from his cell the bed, bedding and boots, and his being left to lie on the cold floor for fifty hours, and then subjected to forcible feeding in his weak condition after a hunger strike of five or six days. We censure the Castle authorities for not acting more promptly, especially when the grave conditions of the deceased and other prisoners was brought under their notice on the previous Saturday by the Lord Mayor and Sir T. Irwin."

That brutal deed stirred the country profoundly and greatly intensified the tide of feeling that was growing against the notoriously unpopular Castle. Ashe was a high-minded idealist who had written several patriotic poems, of which the best known was the sincere and appealing "Let Me Carry Your Cross For Ireland, Lord!" He lay in state in the Mater Hospital, clad in Volunteer uniform and surrounded by a guard of honour of armed Volunteers. It is said that between twenty-five and thirty thousand people passed through the hospital while his body lay there. The funeral was enormous, the first of the enormous patriotic funerals that became such a feature of those stormy times. The Castle, stunned perhaps for the nonce by the inhumanity of its actions, discreetly stood aside and permitted the vast

procession to proceed unmolested through the thronged and reverently silent streets, despite the fact that the coffin was escorted by armed and uniformed Volunteers. At the graveside, a squad of Volunteers fired three volleys, and the "Last Post" was sounded. Michael Collins gave the oration, surely the briefest and most pointed of all such orations. "That volley which we have just heard", he declared, "is the only speech which it is proper to make above the grave of a dead Fenian."

Ashe's death gave the incipient movement the first direct victory against its foes. Within the ensuing week, the Castle authorities gave in and accepted the demands of the prisoners that they be treated as political prisoners and not as criminals. The movement was definitely on the march.

The release of the prisoners from the various gaols and internment camps, in June, gave a huge fillip to the movement. The dispersion to all parts of the country of such large numbers of ardent disciples of the Cause, fully indoctrinated in its tenets during their period of incarceration, soon produced results. Everywhere Volunteer companies were springing into being; everywhere meetings were being held and addressed by those fiery missionaries; everywhere young men were enlisting in that illegal and outlawed body. The ex-prisoners concentrated almost wholly on the military, or Volunteer side. That was natural enough in their case, seeing that they were fighting men, soldiers, or had been in close and daily touch

with revolutionary soldiers for many months, and had thus acquired a strong military outlook that deeply coloured all their political thinking. Apart from that, an even stronger reason for their concentration on the military side was the fact that there was not in existence at the time a political movement that they could join. They would not, of course, touch the discredited U.I.L. which, anyhow, had lost much of its quondam prestige and was, in many areas, extinct or moribund. Griffith's old Sinn Féin organisation never expanded much outside Dublin, and was more attractive to intellectuals and national economists than to politicals; anyhow, its partiality for a monarchical solution of our sovereignty question did not appeal to those perfervid new republicans. And the same applied a fortiori to the Nation League which did not contemplate at all a full-blooded separatist solution, whether republican or monarchical. Such being the state of affairs in the country, it was clear that what was needed, and needed soon, was a sound political organisation that could contain and direct the great tidal wave of national resurgence before it got beyond control, binding together within its confines all men of good will and patriotic instinct, who were either attached to one or other of the several splinter groups, or not attached to anything. And already there was a strong, natural centripetal pull at work in the country, quite unorganised, of course, created by the very force of the mighty tidal wave then running fastly on his heady current. The splinter parties were petering out. We in the Nation League, sometime about then, came together and wound

ourselves as Nation Leaguers, and transferred ourselves and our clubs to the new Sinn Féin organisation that had just been created. Similarly, Plunkett's 'Liberty Clubs' that, like ourselves, never developed a nation-wide momentum, faded out too and joined in with the new Sinn Féin, as well as other smaller and isolated bodies throughout the country. The ground was clearing for the new structure.

I come to yet another significant date in the history of latter-day Ireland, the date of the first Convention, or "Ard Fheis" of the re-moddelled and revivified Sinn Féin organisation. That date was 25th October, 1917.

But before dealing with that famous Convention and in order to give an idea of the atmosphere then prevailing, I feel I must quote at some length from Pierce Beasley's book on Michael Collins, already referred to. That book is a well-written and valuable record of those times and, in my opinion, has never got the credit that it deserved. Unfortunately, it is now out of print; in itself, a sad reflection on our countrymen's interest in past history. Beasley, of course, was a pro-Treaty man as I was myself. That, no doubt, may be the reason why his estimates and summings-up of conditions and political thought during the various crises of the period under review appears to me to be in general accurate, fair and sound. The excerpt that I am about to give certainly reflects my own views thereon, even to-day, after the passage of more than forty years:

"The National movement", says Beaslaí, "which had arisen out of the ashes of Easter Week, had now begun to take definite shape ... The one tangible result that had emerged so far was that the majority of the Irish people, moved by the heroism and sacrifices of the Easter Week insurgents, moved also by dissatisfaction with the Irish Party, by resentment of the English Government's betrayal of Home Rule and the coercion of Ireland, and by fear of military conscription, had rallied to the support of those who stood for independence. The only practical policy put forward so far was non-recognition of a passive resistance to English rule in Ireland, and an appeal to the Peace Conference which was anticipated at the end of the war.

The basis of the new movement was, then, the assertion of Ireland's separate nationality and of her right to independence. Its programme was a refusal to recognise the English Government or its agents in Ireland, the abstention of the elected representatives of the people from attendance at the English Parliament, the establishment of a National Assembly of elected representatives, passive resistance to British powers and institutions, the revival and use of the Irish language, the encouragement of Irish industries, the maintenance of the Irish Volunteers, and an appeal by Ireland's National Assembly to the Peace Conference. It will be

"seen that, except for the last two items, this was simply Arthur Griffith's old Sinn Féin policy. It was, in fact, a continuation of the old Irish Ireland movement of which Sinn Féin, the Irish Volunteers, and the Gaelic League were different facets. The methods proposed were perfectly peaceful. Nobody at the time contemplated another insurrection. Even the Irish Volunteers only considered physical force as a last resort, in case the English Government introduced Conscription in Ireland. Passive resistance only was advocated, and for a a long time afterwards was alone resorted to. It was the continued violence of the English Government that ultimately forced a peaceful and constructive movement into a bloody revolutionary war."

THE TIDAL WAVE.

(I)

The great Convention of the new model Sinn Féin that assembled in the round room of the Mansion House at ten o'clock on that October morning, forty-one years ago, would actually have been the tenth meeting of the National Council of Griffith's original Sinn Féin which, like the other bodies, it had absorbed. Nevertheless, seeing that the new body had retained all the salient features of Griffith's self-reliant and positive national creed, and, as a tribute to that unique and constructive patriot whose almost single-handed labours over twelve weary years, prepared the way and sowed the seed for the national resurgence, the Convention was called, not the first, but the tenth Árd Fheis of Sinn Féin.

I was present at that Árd Fheis as a delegate from the Owen Roe O'Neill Club of Omagh, and still have a pretty vivid recollection of its proceedings. There were about 1,800 delegates from clubs in many city boroughs, townships, counties, but by no means all, and

in numerous parishes in the country. To those who had seen the old national conventions of the U.I.L. foregathering, two things were very noticeable in that one. These were the almost complete absence of clergymen and of greyheads. In the old organisation, clergymen of all religions were automatically granted membership, with full voting powers and eligibility for all offices without having to be elected members; and their black garb and clerical collars were conspicuous features at them - nearly all Catholic priests, of course, as none of the others, save a rare Presbyterian minister, took advantage of that privilege. True, there were some priests present apart from such prominent national figures as Father O'Flanagan, Father Mat Ryan and Father Wall; but they were there in their official capacity as delegates from clubs or office-holders in the organisation. True, also, there were a number of elderly men there, like Count Plunkett and Larry Ginnell; but they constituted a small minority in that great gathering of youth. I should say that the average age of the delegates could not have exceeded twenty-eight or twenty-nine years, and that

might well be putting it high.

The first thing the Árd Fheis had to do was to acclaim the new constitution of the new Sinn Féin. This had been laboriously hammered out beforehand by a specially appointed committee that contained advocates of the moderate, or monarchical right, like Griffith, and those of the radical and republican left, like Brugha. At first, there was quite a sharp cleavage of opinion between those two sections who, by the way, were strongly represented in the assembly. Griffith was not a republican and never was; he believed Ireland's finest and traditional sovereign development lay under a monarchy, and, as a compromise with England and as a gesture to the pro-English Irish, he saw no objection to the sovereign Irish monarchy accepting the British sovereign as its head. In other words, a dual monarchy after the very successful Austro-Hungarian model. Brugha, as I have said, was an adamant, fanatical if you wish, republican after the Fenian tradition. No other form of government for Ireland would do him. There was a third attitude that was best represented by de Valera. He was one of the fighting men and came into the national picture by his

exploits in the Rising, being actually the last commandant to surrender. Naturally, he shared much of the outlook of his comrades in arms. On the republican issue, he had said in Ennis after his election, "This victory is one which will be celebrated all over the world - a victory for Ireland. This victory will show the world that Irishmen, if they had a ghost of a chance, would fight for the independence of Ireland and for an Irish republic". And Beasley reminds us in his book on Collins that "it was in his presidential address that Mr. de Valera first used the significant and oft-quoted phrase: "We are not doctrinaire republicans"."

I understand that the pull between the monarchists and the republicans was very strong, and, for a time, showed no sign of solution. Griffith had no great gradh for a republic, and believed that in this the people were fundamentally behind him. Eventually, it was put to him that, unless we went out for a republic, our demand for sovereign independence would be misrepresented by England. She would say, "They are shouting for independence, and we are prepared to concede them a liberal measure of

Home Rule". And were we to say, "We are out for an independent kingdom", she would reply, "What are you shouting for? Haven't you got a king, and same as we have, and a kingdom? Is not the kingdom that of Great Britain and Ireland?" In this way, she would be given a handle with which to confuse the world on our sovereignty issue. Griffith, I understand, most reluctantly agreed to the movement's being pledged to secure the international recognition of Ireland as an independent republic; though convinced that that particular pattern of sovereign autonomy would be neither suitable for the Irish, or what the Irish, if free to do so, would choose. It was de Valera, I understand, who enabled him to agree by penning the important addendum to the clause, which was: "Having achieved that status, the Irish people may, by referendum, freely choose their own form of government". That, therefore, is the ultimate end of latter-day Sinn Féin; and that end has not yet been achieved. If and when it is ever invoked, in the future, it may well hold the solution of the partition problem.

One of the first tasks of the Árd Fheis was the election of a President. And it soon became known that, on this issue, there was every prospect of there being an acute division of opinion, perhaps resulting in another big "split", that almost traditional bane of Irish national politics. There were three candidates in the field, Arthur Griffith, Count Plunkett and Eamonn de Valera. Griffith, the father of Sinn Féin, the existing head of the parent body, and, to a large extent, the father and creator of the new nationalism, was, all things being equal, the obvious choice. But there were powerful elements opposed to him for various reasons. The Volunteers were against him because he was known to have opposed the Rising; the Republicans were against him because he was known to be a monarchist of a most conservative type actually, seeing no serious objection to the acceptance of the British king as a dual monarch; and the Labour and Socialistic elements were against him because of his inherent conservatism and of his strong opposition to the famous Larkin strike of 1913. Count Plunkett was distinguished more on account of his patriotic sons than on his own. Since his big victory in South Roscommon,

he and his supporters had come to regard him as the predestined leader of the Irish people on whom "the mantle of Elijah" had fallen, charged with the definite leadership of the country in the new struggle, and what influence and following he had was very definitely republican. De Valera was, to a large extent, the new man, the dark horse. His predilection, because of his associations and exploits, were certainly republican rather than monarchical, but, according to Beasley, he would appear to have arrived at that conclusion not so very long beforehand; actually during his sojourn in prison. He was not a doctrinaire republican; but, whilst that was the case, his conviction as to what form of sovereignty the Irish people wanted differed from that of Griffith. The latter, as we have seen, felt they wanted a monarchy whereas de Valera believed they wanted a republic. That being the case, and mainly for that reason, he backed the republican ideal.

When the item on the agenda, "Election of President", was called by the Chairman, a sudden hush fell on the assembly; everyone waited to see what would happen,

with suppressed excitement and anxiety. After a minute elapsed, which seemed an hour, Griffith rose and, to the astonishment of all, including his closest friends, announced that he was not going forward for the post and thereupon withdrew his nomination. He declared he wished to retire in favour of de Valera, adding that, "in Eamon de Valera we have a soldier and a statesman". The applause that broke out and lasted for some minutes at this wholly unexpected announcement reflected the assembly's relief at the solution and the removal of the severe tension. Most people that were present and heard it, whatever was or is their political outlook, will, I think, endorse Beasley's comments on it.

> "Griffith's unselfish patriotism on this occasion", he wrote, "has never received proper acknowledgement. For many years he had toiled in poverty and obscurity, giving the best work of his brain to the cause of Ireland. His ideas had prevailed, and, at the very time when he saw the country converted to the Sinn Féin policy, of which he was the pioneer, he surrendered the leadership to a new, almost unknown man, in order to avoid any cleavage in the national ranks. His self-abnegation will be the more appreciated when it is pointed out that, in the case of a contest, he would certainly have defeated de Valera, as was proved by the election of an

"Executive Council, where Griffith's supporters headed the poll and the I.R.B. candidates were either defeated, or came in at the foot of the list."

That certainly goes for me. In my view, and I came to know him very well and enjoyed his personal friendship, Griffith was one of the greatest altruists I have ever met, pledged to an ideal, in the furtherance of which he was prepared to and would readily make any personal sacrifice he might be called upon to, or considered he should make. He was wholly free from personal ambition of any sort.

Count Plunkett also withdrew his name; and de Valera, a young man, Griffith's junior by twelve years, was unanimously elected President of the great remodelled Sinn Féin organisation. In his speech, on accepting that office, de Valera referred to the republic-monarchy issue as follows:-

"This Constitution we are setting up says we are striving to get international recognition for our Irish Republic, and there is an added clause to it which I should like to explain, that, having achieved that status, the Irish

> "people may, by referendum, freely choose their own form of government. This is not the time for this, for this reason, that the only banner under which our freedom can be won at the present time is the Republican banner. It is as an Irish Republic that we have a chance of getting international recognition, to have a republican form of government. Some might have fault to find with that, and prefer other forms of government. This is not the time for that; this is the time to get freedom. Then we can settle by the most democratic means what particular form of government we may have."

Those words of Dev's constitute a sound summing-up of the state of opinion in the Árd Fheis on the issue of the particular form with which our sovereign independence was to be finally clothed; it presents a true picture of the assembly's uncertainty and lack of unanimity on that important issue. As P.S. O'Hegarty reminds us in his book, "the clinching argument in favour of the Republic was the notion that only as such could Ireland get international recognition ..." It also emphasises and stresses what was the big issue, the cardinal target that was the <u>raison d'etre</u> of the organisation on which they were all united, namely, "complete and absolute independence". On the point of monarchy, he added a

phrase that would appear to exclude a future Irish monarch being selected or accepted from a certain specific royal house. "I only wish to say in reference to that last clause", he added, "that there is no contemplation in it of having a monarchy in which the monarch would be of the House of Windsor". That, certainly, did not correspond with the outlook of Griffith and the old Sinn Féiners, an important part of whose national philosophy was built on the dual monarchy concept of the Austro-Hungarian precedent; and had it been put forward as a definite resolution and accepted by the Árd Fheis, it would, of course, have limited the ultimate choice of the people in that connection and to that extent. But it was not put to the vote; had it been, whilst a substantial element would undoubtedly have been found sharing the President's view, it might well not have got a majority, as the Griffith influence in the Árd Fheis (unlike the Volunteers) was extremely strong, if not predominant, and, apart from that, republicanism at that particular stage had not grown to the popularity that it subsequently did. Accordingly, that phrase goes on record as but the <u>obiter dictum</u> of the President, entitled, of course, to respect, having regard to its source, but not in that form, at all events, binding on the Convention.

Griffith was elected one of the two Vice-Presidents by a vote of 1,197, which was well night unanimous. The other Vice-President was Father Michael O'Flanagan who received 780 votes, the runner-up being Count Plunkett. Austin Stack and Darrell Figgis were elected joint Honorary Secretaries, and W.T. Cosgrave and Larry Ginnell joint Honorary Treasurers. Twenty-four persons were elected to the Executive Council; and, in view of the subsequent momentous happenings, it is curious to recall now that the last man elected was Michael Collins. He and Ernest Blythe got 340 votes each. I must not omit to refer specially here to the case of Eoin MacNeill who, since his action in calling off the nation-wide Rising at Easter, 1916, drew on himself the hostility of the fighting men and their supporters. When his name was proposed for the Executive Council, Countess Markievicz rose and objected strongly to it because of his aforesaid action, quoting Connolly as saying that, by that action, MacNeill had "cut the ground from under the feet" of the insurgents. She was answered with great spirit by Dev. who, to his credit, had already insisted on bringing MacNeill with him to Clare, thereby ignoring the violent and ill-conceived clamour against him. "I am

convinced", Dev. told his audience, "that John MacNeill did not act otherwise than as a good Irishman", adding that, "had I the slightest doubt of that, he would not have been on my platform in Ennis". This was undoubtedly very courageous of Dev. and, in his defence of MacNeill, he was, of course, strongly supported by Griffith. As a result, Eoin MacNeill was elected by 888 votes to 688 for the next candidate, Cathal Brugha.

"There were other interesting things at this Convention", wrote P.S. O'Hegarty "(History of Ireland Under The Union"). "Mention of another insurrection was greeted with laughter. A proposal by a clerical delegate to make it clear that a phrase about 'using any and every means' against foreign government did not cover 'anything from pitch-and-toss to manslaughter' was opposed by Cathal Brugha by an assurance that they did not propose to fight English rule by assassination, and by de Valera by a heated repudiation of the possibility of Ireland ever doing anything that was not moral or just".

As Beasley truly writes in his Collins book: "The methods proposed (by the Árd Fheis) were perfectly peaceful. Nobody at the time contemplated another

insurrection. Even the Irish only considered physical force as a last resort, in case the English Government introduced Conscription in Ireland. Passive resistance only was advocated, and for a long time afterwards was alone resorted to. It was the continued violence of the English Government that ultimately forced a peaceful and constructive movement into a bloody revolutionary war".

And Miss Dorothy Macardle in her "Irish Republic":

"Although at the beginning of 1918 the Volunteers were reorganised and although a determination to resist Conscription, if necessary, by force of arms, existed throughout the country, there was no intention among Republicans to attempt a second insurrection during the year. The Volunteers and the new Sinn Féin, united under de Valera's leadership, concentrated on strengthening the movement on its political side. It was foreseen that, when the European War ended and a Peace Conference came into session, the claims of nations long denied their freedom would be heard. Ireland was to be prepared to send representatives to that Peace Conference - representatives, not of a small party, but of a majority of the nation, who would be in a position to base Ireland's claims on an irrefutable declaration of the will of the people and on the

basic principle of government by consent".

Such was the famous Tenth Árd Fheis of the Sinn Féin movement, begetting as it did a reformed and remodelled organisation where room was found for every party and group and every shade and tone of advanced and progressive nationalist thought, provided only that it subscribed to the Griffithite doctrine of permanent abstention of Irish M.P.s from the English Parliament at Westminster. It was that great historic organisation, thus founded, that was the origin and prime artificer of the momentous achievements of the ensuring four years.

The day after the two-day Convention of Sinn Féin, a secret, nation-wide Convention of the Irish Volunteers took place in the G.A.A. buildings at Jones' Road. De Valera was elected President of the Volunteers - still a body wholly independent from the political Sinn Féin organisation. Unlike Sinn Féin, the I.R.B. men were predominant and powerful in the Councils of the Volunteers, and had no difficulty in dominating the Executive with sworn men like Michael Collins, Diarmuid Lynch, Seán McGarry, etc. De Valera, I should mention, was not then an I.R.B. man, having resigned from it because of religious

scruples as to the nature of its oath. Neither was Brugha; on the contrary, he, also an ex-I.R.B. man, had become its bitterest critic. As I have said, I was never a member of the Irish Volunteers and, of course, was not, as I could not be, present at the secret Convention. One of the most important results of the two Conventions was to put Dev. into the position of head or chief of the two national organisations, both the political and the military.

(11)

The months that followed the Sinn Féin Árd Fheis, certainly to the end of January, were peculiarly peaceful, or rather uneventful, politically. The "Lloyd-George Convention", as it came to be generally termed in Ireland, was holding its sessions in Dublin, Cork or Belfast, and what spece from the war news was given over to the proceedings, outings and feasting of that unreal consortium. But if matters were outwardly quiet, that did not mean that they were static. On the contrary, just below the surface there was terrific activity going on throughout the country, albeit in an inconspicuous and unobtrusive way. Sparked off by the tremendous momentum of the September Árd Fheis, the country was organising herself on her political and her military sides. Work had to be done,

clubs and Volunteer companies had to be founded; so the word went forth that the limelight, as far as possible, was to be shunned. Zealous and mainly honorary organisers went forth to the towns and parishes to aid an enthusiastic people in the construction of their political and military machines. The Government, because of the need for an atmosphere of peace and harmony with which to envelop its Convention, turned a more or less blind eye on the wide-spread and ceaseless activities that were quietly going on.

About September, if I recollect correctly, I was in Sligo at the civic reception given to Countess Markievicz when she was made a Freeman of that city, she being a native of that county. From what I saw, Sligo appeared to be a stronghold of the cause. The Mayor, the late Dudley M. Hanley, the Aldermen and the City Councillors went forth in their robes to receive her at the city boundary, and escorted her, through cheering crowds, to the Town Hall where she was duly elected a Freeman of Sligo Borough and her name enrolled on the city's records. In connection with that event, a series of propaganda meetings was arranged through the county, at which I spoke. During my visit to Sligo, I stayed with D.A. Mulcahy and his good wife in their

pleasant residence in one of the suburbs. "Mul", as he was known to his numerous friends, was Chief Executive Officer of the local Vocational School. He was, I believe, the son of the Fenian, Dr. Mulcahy of Limerick, who had served a prison sentence for his share in that movement. He and his wife were sincere and convinced republicans, and were, of course, in the local movement up to their eyes, so to speak. Indeed, "Mul" could be justly described as the "fons et origo" of the cause in Sligo, giving to it every spare minute of his time. That couple were two of the most genuine people in any cause that ever I met, and completely devoid of personal ambition or self-interest; all that they thought of and worked for, was the "Cause". And that was one of the reasons why Sinn Féin triumphed - because of the number of zealous, personally disinterested people like the Mulcahys of Sligo and the O'Dohertys of Connaught Street, Dublin, who were in its ranks.

During that winter, I was mostly in Dublin attending at the Law Library in the Four Courts, in pursuance of my calling as a barrister. But, I confess, my interests were much more in the great movement that was surging up allaround us and that it was impossible to ignore, than in my law work.

I had made many friends and connections through my political activities, and found myself being drawn more and more to their sympathetic company to discuss the multitudinous and all-absorbing affairs of that exacting lady, Cathleen Ní Houlihan. Though Sinn Féin was united in its ultimate aim - complete sovereign independence - there were many sets and groups within its comprehensive corpus that held varied and individualistic views on several matters that, to Sinn Féin, were subordinate to the main aim, and, therefore, in the new freedom, not only tolerated but encouraged. Birds of a feather, we know, tend to flock together; and, in accordance with that law of nature, those sets and groups, attracted by the centripetal force of their particular addiction, foregathered at certain times, each in its particular café, hostelry or tavern. It was a wonderful, unforgettable, exciting time, the dawn of a new Irish world, the "primavera", the "earrach" of a great Irish renaissance; and, as in the case of all great renaissances, men's minds were stimulated and quickened, and a powerful impetus was given to thought in all fields - politics, economics, labour, literature and art. It was, indeed, good to be in Dublin in these days.

At that time, Dublin was a city of cafés, of which there were at least half-a-dozen in Grafton Street alone. One of those was the Café Cairo. There, at a corner table in the long room on the second floor, a literary group would gather at certain hours of the day and, over their cups of coffee, discuss the Olympians of Irish and contemporary literature. The acknowledged leader of that group was Ernest A. Boyd, a tall, handsome man, with regular classical features, furnished with a regular, dark-brown, spade-cut beard, always elegantly attired, and probably the finest literary critic that Ireland produced in modern times. In his company would generally be found the late Larry Byrne ("Andrew E. Malone"), Paddy Little, Mario Esposito, Frank Gallagher, Liam Slattery, Fred Higgins, sometimes Desmond Ryan, James Stephens, Charles Bewley, the late Ferdinand Tuohy & Leo Whelan, the artists, and, very rarely, Darrell Figgis. Figgis was, of course, much more a literary man than a politician and that corner table in the Cairo should have been his particular Mecca. Yet he seldom went there. The truth was, he and Boyd did not hit it off. They were both egotistical and avid for the limelight. Also, they both "kept" beards; and in those universally clean-shaven times one rarely saw two bearded men as friends,

although Figgis used to boast of his strong friendship and psychological kinship with Roger Casement. Figgis, I fear, was jealous of Boyd. I remember meeting him one day in the Bailey, and he was in a state of exasperated and frustrated amusement. He told me that the nuns of a convent in North Great George's Street, I think, had engaged Tuohy to paint a picture for them of Our Lord; and what had Tuohy gone and done? He had selected Boyd - of all men - to sit for it. "Just fancy", commented Figgis, with an explosive, mirthless laugh, "just fancy, the holy nuns will henceforth be praying to that atheist, Boyd"! He went on to point out that, of course, Tuohy should have selected him, Figgis, as he had the authentic features and colouring of the traditional and historic Christ.

And here, perhaps, is as good a place as any to record my impressions of that very controversial figure, Darrell Figgis. I knew him well, and, despite his failings and oddities, almost because of them perhaps, I liked him and enjoyed very much his intellectual company. Figgis was somewhat above the average height, slim in build and of a quick and active temperament. He was pale in complexion, with light amber eyes and an abundant crop of dark red hair

which he wore brushed back from his forehead, and a bright red beard which concealed a none too prominent chin. Unlike his rival, Boyd, who was quite a fashion connoisseur in his elegant sartorial arrangements, Figgis affected a much less conventional, less starchy, a more bohemian ensemble. He always appeared in a thick tweed lounge suit, of a strikingly, gingerly hue, his head always crowned with a noticeable odd moss green velour hat. Indeed, it seems to me, in looking back, that I never recollect to have seen Figgis in any other garb all the years I knew him, save at national funerals when he exchanged the ginger tweed for a frock coat and striped trousers; but even then, the moss green velour was never discarded!

My poor friend, Darrell, certainly thought no small beer of himself, and, if his faith in a hereafter was weak, that certainly could not be said of his faith in Darrell. I have known many egotists in my time, but never a man with such an immense, overwhelming, unshakeable belief in himself and in his intellectual and physical prowess. In this particular connection he surely had the faith that moves mountains; and that applied to all his activities, in the past as in the present. He began life as a tea-taster in

in Mincing Lane, London; and I remember his telling me quite seriously that he was the acknowledged king of all tea-tasters, being gifted with a palate of such exquisite refinement and unerring accuracy that his judgements on the tea samples submitted to the tasters became celebrated. Indeed, so celebrated did they become that the whole tea world of London waited, spell-bound, until the master entered to do his sampling and record his verdict. And he used to tell me, with amused satisfaction, that he used, cruelly, to prolong the agony and tension of the tea world, keeping them on tenter-hooks, by turning up very late, maintaining, before the expectant crowd, a "poker" face, and then, even after completing his sampling rounds, not giving his verdict to the last minute of the session. When that weighty judgment had been cast, there was an immediate rushing forth of the swarms of agents to the various blending firms, to bring the news of Figgis's choice which, of course, instantly made the price of that particular brand soar up and up!

Once, in the Bailey whilst we were waiting for A.G., Figgis was holding forth on the sonnet as a literary form when, quite seriously (he was always serious when referring to himself), he informed the company that, in the whole history of that extremely difficult poetic form, there

were only two perfect sonnet writers, Shakespeare and himself! This drew on him the wrath of "N.W." (Nolan-Whelan), who told him his averment was the most preposterous and ridiculous claim he ever heard seriously made by any man. But did that disturb Darrell? Not a bit of it! He looked at N.W. with a pitying smile and, collecting his books (and any other books that might be lying around!) lordly took his departure from that soilful collection of philistines.

Figgis's egocentric nature was strongly supported by the most adorable, loving and sincere wife that ever man was gifted with. Millie was a most lovable little character, and I greatly fear me that her lord and spouse never really appreciated what a treasure Providence had bestowed on him in giving him such a wife. For it is very doubtful whether any other kind of woman could have tolerated Figgis and his incredible vanity, not to say, selfishness. Milly worshipped him. To her, his fantastic, vainglorious claims were real and true, and the only reason why they were not universally accepted was because of the jealous envy, almost hatred, of her god of a husband by crowds of envious people. Milly certainly had no doubts at all about his godlike qualities. Stella Solomons, now Mrs. Seamus O'Sullivan, one of the leading artists

and etchers of that time, used to give a salon of her pictures every year. I remember on one occasion when I entered the salon, which was full of people viewing the pictures, the first person I ran into was Milly, talking to Jimmy Montgomery. I remarked on the great numbers present and enquired what they thought were Stella's best works that year. "Monty" was beginning to give me his opinion thereon, when Milly, interrupting, said, "Look at the crowd following the magnet! Follow with them and you'll see her best work!" It took a minute or so for it to sink into my head; but presently I saw what Milly meant. The unerring, the godlike one was on his round, commenting and giving his verdict, and what better opinion could a mere mortal hope for than his!

I first met Figgis in the East Clare election, and, over a drink, told him I had been reading his latest "opus" which was entitled "A Chronicle of Gaols", telling of his recent imprisonment. He said to me gravely, but emphatically, "That book is literature"!

Two years later, in the spring of 1920, when I was going around the country as a Dáil Land Judge, holding surreptitious courts here and there, I got the tip from Michael Collins to lie low and make myself scarce. It appeared that

the Tans and the Auxies had formed the opinion that I was the Sinn Féin Judge that condemned them all to death in secret, the sentence being carried out later by I.R.A. executioners. I think their assumption as to my death-dealing functions came from the fact that I was the first person to go out, in a judicial capacity, under the sanction of Dáil Éireann. They were, of course, wholly wrong in their assumption, for I was not connected with the military side in any way, but, if I valued my health, it was not possible for me to go to them and explain their mistake! Accordingly, I lay low, and betook myself to my old friend, Mrs. Fox's house, the Hell Fire Club Tea Rooms, situated up near the Pine Forest at Glencree. I had often stayed there before. Mrs. Fox and her children knew pretty well who I was, but I was quite safe in their hands as they all sympathised strongly with the movement. From Mrs. Fox's safe retreat, I would sally forth to Dublin, where I would descend to Dublin every now and again and entrain for my several court venues down the country.

As it approached Easter or Whitsuntide, I don't quite remember which, who should arrive up but Darrell and Milly Figgis, with Dr. and Mrs. Frank Kennedy-Cahill, their daughters and friend - also mympathisers. The Cahills had a cottage there which they and their party occupied, but the Figgis put up with

Mrs. Fox. During the week, news came up of several arrests of the leaders and searches of their homes in Dublin. Every day the dutiful Milly went down to Dublin, and every day returned with the same story: More leaders' homes raided, and books and documents seized. To Darrell's recurring question, "What about our flat, Milly"?, Milly would have to return the same sadly disappointing answer, "Our flat, Darrell, is still untouched". Then Darrell would throw a fit of impatient chagrin, "The fools, the fools"!, he would exclaim, "The Castle idiots have mostly raided the houses of nondescripts, the playboys and the ostentatious would-be leaders, and left ME - the real brains behind the scene, the organising and driving force in the movement - untouched"!

The week of raids and arrests had nearly elapsed, with the flat of Figgis in Kildare Street untouched and unharmed, when Milly arrived one evening, her face glowing with pride and excitement, "Darrell, we've been raided! They've pulled your books about and made an awful mess. Something dreadful"!

Darrell said nothing, but his bearded countenance registered a smile of intense satisfaction and pleasure. At last, at long last, the idiots had accorded him the recognition he knew was due to his importance and power.

Having consulted with me as to an appropriate nom-de-guerre, I suggested he shouldn't make too wide a change from the original, that he should, at least, keep the "F". I also advised him, for obvious reasons, not to take unto himself a Milesian name. He decided on "Foster". Havong done so, he summoned Mrs. Fox, her sons and daughters to his presence, and, in a most dramatic way, informed her what had happened: that there was no one there of the name of Figgis who, patriot that he was, was now "on his keeping from the enemy". The person who was addressing her was Mr. Foster. Immediately, Mrs. Fox fell in with his humour and started calling him "Mr. Foster". She left the room but returned in a few minutes with a tray on which were two bottles of stout and two tumblers - "With our compliments, Mr. Foster! And may God protect you, sir"! She then hastily left the room. Darrell was profoundly touched by this gesture. "Ha, Kevin!", he exclaimed, pouring out his stout, "Yesterday I was but the paying client; now I am the honoured guest. Good luck"!, as he quaffed his stout.

I could write much about poor Figgis and his poor wife - a sweet, lovable little person with a heart of gold. Figgis had, unquestionably, his faults and failings, but I am not

going to record them here; and, anyhow, who hasn't? He was, in my opinion, a sincere and wholly convinced Irish Separatist albeit of the Griffith rather than the I.R.B. variety.

His contributions to the cause, though far from being as great as he imagined, were far from being small or insignificant. He had a good prose style, if, at times, a bit involved, and his booklets, "The Economic Case for Irish Independence" and "The Historic Case for Irish Independence", were better written and better thought out than much of the stuff that was being poured out then. He had plenty of physical courage, though some of his critics and enemies, and he had his full share of both, doubted that; but no one could deny him a large measure of intellectual courage and intellectual honesty. Collins, who, although not quite in love with him, never underestimated him, often praised him to me for one act of his alone, viz., his splendid letter published in the "Independent", under his own name, counteracting the letter of Father O'Flanagan and others calling for peace in 1921. It was Collins's opinion that Figgis's letter on that occasion did much to steady a nation that three years of an exceptionally sinsister and demoralising form of warfare had shaken to some extent.

On the literary side, he was well worth listening to as he was

extremely well read in English and French literature, and had a way of giving you the gist of his readings and studies in pleasant, palatable form. One of the accusations of his critics was that he was mean; personally, I never saw any meanness in him, and I knew him very well indeed. Another accusation was much more true: that he had no humour. Though I would not deny him a modicum of the "saving grace", I would have to confess that it was certainly not amongst his cardinal attributes; but what egotist really has humour? Humour is a sense of balance and proportion. Those who have it are amused when they behold the incongruous and things out of focus or balance.

And here I shall take my leave of the memory of my poor friend, Figgis.

... ...

The talk at the Cairo table was excellent and, at times, devastating and cruelly brilliant. It was a delight to listen to that group discussing our great ones in the republic of letters and art - Synge, Joyce, Yeats, Lady Gregory, Stephens, Seamus O'Kelly, Seamus O'Sullivan, Shaw, T.C. Murray, George Shiels, Patrick Column, Thomas MacDonagh, Joe Plunkett, Pearse,

as a writer, and younger men like Brinsley MacNamara, Austin Clarke and Fred Higgins - and a great host of others.

Across the Cairo in Duke Street was the famous Bailey Tavern. This had been the favourite resort of the great Chief, Charles Stewart Parnell himself; and whether it was because of that, or not, for his devotion to Parnell was great, Griffith made the Bailey his own particular haunt, all the more so since his other rendez-vous, Davin's pub, the "Ship", in Fleet St., had been destroyed in the Rising. There, in the evenings, after his indefatigable and poorly remunerated journalistic labours on behalf of his country, he would repair for his modest and sole relaxation, for he never took a vacation, having neither the money nor the time for such. He generally arrived some time after seven o'clock and made for the smoke room upstairs on the second floor. This was a small room, with two windows looking out on Duke St. It was simply but comfortably furnished with leather upholstered armchairs and couches and, of course, tables - very much a masculine retreat. Griffith had his own special seat that was, seemingly, respected by all frequenters, whether or not they were his friends. It was the corner seat on the leather couch that ran along the inner wall that divided that room from the dining-room between the fire-place and the window.

Should you enter the smoke room early in the evening, you would be sure to see "A.G.", as he was always referred to, esconced in his corner, a cigarette in his mouth, a silver tankard of stout on the table before him, going through a great pile of newspapers and journals. As he scrutinised the printed matter, he would now and again mark, with a blue or red pencil, passages that struck him for reference in his articles. There would invariably be some of his friends sitting around him, carrying on a whispering conversation as they smoked and sipped their drinks. Yes, one could not fail to note the curious quietness in the room, no matter how many might be present, as A.G. was engaged in scanning through the current news and periodical issues. When you opened the door and entered the smoke room, Griffith would look up and, were you a friend or one of his intimate group, he would tell you to press the bell. When one or other of the two well-known waiters, Louis or James, would appear, he would order you a drink and return to his scanning work. When the last paper was duly scanned, A.G. would put them aside with a sigh of relief and join in the talk and discussions with his friends. But I must qualify this statement. Griffith's part in those discussions was mainly that of a listener. By nature,

Griffith was an extremely silent, taciturn man, due more to his sensitivity and shyness than to his dourness, though he could be dour enough when he liked, for his was a strong, resolute, self-reliant character. Loquacity, however, was wholly alien to him, and speech he only resorted to when he felt he had something to say that was worth saying, and then he said it in the fewest possible words and with a most un-Irish lack of adjectives. It was this taciturnity, this quiet self-command and economy in speech and words that, allied to the intense sincerity and burning belief in his ideal for the nation, made Griffith the master of a superb and enviable prose style - simple, concise and as clear and fresh as a spring well. Griffith possessed a character extremely simple and direct, though thoroughly mature, quite incapable of subterfuge or pose, capable of deep though firmly controlled feelings and ardent but undemonstrative affection for his friends. He was, in short, that rare type of being, a natural aristocrat. And of friends he had many and diverse, attracting them from every class and level, high and low, Protestant, Catholic, Jew atheists. Indeed, their social, religious and political variety was as astonishing as their personal and temperamental differences not to say clashes and contests.

Griffith had two marked habits that one could not fail to notice. One was a habit of blinking his eyes. He was short-sighted and always wore pince-nez; but I think the blinking was not due to his sight but to his innate shyness and sensitiveness. The other habit was that of every now and again pulling up his neck-tie. He could never make the usual tie knot, and so had to confine his tie through a gold ring which required constant adjusting.

The conversations and discussions amongst the group of friends and acquaintances would proceed through the evening on a great variety of subjects, Griffith sitting in his corner, taking a draw from his cigarette or a pull from his tankard, or pulling up his tie, quietly listening, but putting in a word now and again, and always an arresting and very relevant word.

Many and many's the evening I sat with the others round Griffith in that Bailey smoke room, listening, sometimes with amusement but always with interest, and often with profit, to their famous discussions, making occasionally my own callow contribution. Let me now record the names of those who belonged to Griffith's circle of friends. Yes; they were all his friends but that does not mean that they were all friends of each other! Amongst the "steadies" that you found there

most evenings over the year were Seán Milroy and his friend, Seán Browne, George Redding, James Montgomery, Seamus O'Sullivan, Darrell Figgis, James Valentine Nolan-Whelan, B.L., Dr. Joseph Boyd-Barrett, Pierce Beasley, Philip Sergeant and Dr. Lyons. Others that would be frequent, though not "every-nighters", were Dr. Oliver Gogarty, Rev. Dr. Paddy Browne, then Professor of Mathematics at Maynooth, Liam Ó Briain, James Stephens, Dan MacCarthy, Michael Noyk and (whenever he happened to be across from London) Dr. Eddie Lipman. Occasional visitors were Pádraig Ó Conaire and Denis McCullough.

There were many others, not perhaps so prominent, whom I don't remember, and now and then people from England, America and other parts of the world would turn up to see the "Master". I remember a tall, distinguished Indian, a Sikh, if my memory does not fail me, coming in one evening with Michael Noyk. The size of the circle differed, of course, sometimes being as small as two or three, and sometimes up to twenty; but the average number present on an evening would be about half-a-dozen. When the hands of the clock were moving towards the eleventh hour, the closing time, Griffith would rise, don his hat and coat (if it was winter time), take his stick and leave for his home in St. Lawrence Road, Clontarf. Some of us - nearly

always Seumas O'Sullivan, George Redding and Jimmy Montgomery - would walk with him to the Pillar where he got the Howth tram. At times, he would be followed by a few G-men, i.e., plain clothed D.M.P. men of the G. or Detective Division. Why they followed him, I can't say, for there was nothing secret about A.G. Everything he did, or said, or printed was open and above board; and anyhow, a disguise would be useless in his case as his sturdy, deliberate and remarkably individual walk would always give him away. He used to tell us that, when in South Africa, he was known by the Kaffir name for pigeon or dove, and, on an admirer saying that that was because of the gentleness of his character, he laughingly denied it, saying that the nickname was given him because of his swaying style of walking which, to the Kaffir, resumbled that of a pigeon.

Occasionally, A.G.'s circle in the Bailey smoke room might be disturbed by the entry of an alien element, for, of course, the room was not private. When this happened, A.G. would pull his tie, indicative of his annoyance, rise from his seat, take his hat and stick, saying, "We'll move elsewhere".

The first place that would be tried would be Davie Byrne's just across the road. A.G. was always extremely forbearing

and tolerant, particularly with his friends, some of whom were apt, at times, to become long-winded and prolix. This must, I have often thought, have put a severe strain on the self-control and patience of a man whose whole nature rebelled against prolixity and hollow verbiage. But Griffith was a very loyal man where his friends and supporters were concerned. There were, however, three or four intolerable bores that used to haunt the bars and smoke rooms of the mid-town hostelries in those days that were proof against even Griffith's long-suffering. When one of that species appeared - they never hunted in pairs for they could not suffer their kind - he would inevitable make for A.G. to buttonhole him, and pour out on him a Kolynos-like tube of unbroken verbosity, intended to contain the bore's panaceae for all the nation's ills. The good Griffith, when thus transfixed, was far too sensitive and polite to break off abruptly and depart, as Mick Collins and, indeed, most men would undoubtedly have done. Instead, he would stay static, suffering in silent agony the ordeal, mildly blinking his intelligent, blue eyes behind his pince-nez, and pulling up his tie. Griffith was just incapable of escaping from such pests, and so his friends decided to take precautions in order to save him from the like. Accordingly,

when our little band of "refugees", driven from its wonted haunt, would arrive at Davy Byrne's, one of us would make a swift and cautious trip through the premises, and report back whether they were "safe" or not. That was a rather risky proceeding,sometimes resulting in the scout being collared and entrapped by the bore whose basilisk eye it was not easy to elude.

However, to our relief, we were presently saved from having to undertake such risks through a most unlikely medium. One of Griffith's intimates, the quiet Quaker, Philip Sergeant, possed a small nondescript, but highly intelligent female mongrel, called some short name like "Kattie". She worshipped her master as her master worshipped Griffith; adapting the words of the nursery rhyme, "everywhere that Philip went, the dog was sure to go". It goes without saying that Griffith's friends were Philip's, and Philip's Kattie's, and this, of course, applied a fortiori to Griffith's betes noires". Accordingly, little Kattie became scout to our party, and a highly useful and reliable little scout she was too. We would never enter Davie Byrne's (or any other hostelry) without first "drawing its coverts" by sending Kattie through to explore the position and report. If the coast was clear,

little Kattie would return silently to her master, jumping gleefully around him and wagging her pathetic knob of a tail for all she was worth. If she spied danger, she returned yapping her warning, her tail motionless. Yes., Philip's little Kattie served us well and truly, and never let us down, and, believe it or not, Kattie was always unerring in her judgment.

Another very interesting and now historic haunt was Vaughan's Hotel on the quiet side of Parnell Square. In a back room of that hotel on the hall floor, Michael Collins was wont to foregather with his chief men and friends, and combine business with pleasure; for, where Collins was, business, national business, was never wholly absent. Collins's men were, of course, the fighting men, and his intimates were chosen from the Volunteers, the I.R.A. and the Active Service Units. They were all men full of the Wolfe Tone and Fenian traditions, firm believers in the doctrine of physical force and, in the earlier days of the new movement, at all events, inclined to be severely critical, not to say contemptuous of leaders like Griffith and Eoin MacNeill, though Michael, personally, had far too much judgment and balance to encourage that spirit in his men to any extreme lengths.

However, at that particular stage, there was not much camaraderie between the Collins group and the Griffith group. The great friendship and affection that both those great men had for each other was to grow and develop later. Hence it was that, with rare exceptions like Pierce Beasley and a few others, a typical Collins man was never found at the Bailey evenings, or a typical Griffith man at the Vaughan Hotel evenings. My political outlook lent naturally more to the Griffith than to the Collins school as befitted one who had graduated in politics through the conservative and very moderate Nation League. I had, however, the good-luck to get Collins's goodwill early in our acquaintance, and so enjoyed the company and, in time, the friendship of both leaders.

Those Collins meetings in Vaughan's took place also in the evening, but were apt, at times, to last somewhat longer than the Bailey ones, generally breaking up at midnight or, in the event of an emergency, such as a raid warning, peremptorily. The post eleven o'clock sitting was possible because of the hotel character of the premises and of its unobtrusive and quiet setting. When you opened the door of the Collins room, you would make out, through the fog of cigarette smoke, a considerable number of vigorous young men,

sometimes as many as twenty, standing around; few seemed to sit in Vaughan's. On a large table in the centre of the room were tumblers and glasses containing the beverages of the company. You were not many minutes there before a certain thing became obvious to you - that one young man amongst them completely dominated the scene. That young man was Michael Collins. He was of good height and physique, sturdily rather than slenderly built, with a clear, pale, marble-like skin and hazel eyes. I have heard people describe his eyes as blue, but I saw them often and took note of them - they were hazel, very much the same colour as the eyes of his friend, Kevin O'Higgins. He had a head of thick, dark, lustrous hair which was always neatly brushed, with a parting on the right side. When he got excited in conversation, he would nod and shake his head vigorously, causing a great plume of hair to fall over his left eye that he would shake back to its place by a toss of the head. He turned out in a well-cut lounge suit of dark, clerical grey, a white shirt, soft collar, and grey tie, kept in place by a gold safety pin as was the mode of the time. This statement of mine is, of course, written for posterity, fifty years hence, with the object of giving all the assistance I can to the future historian of that thrilling period;

therefore I am deliberately putting down all the minutiae in respect of the famous that I can think of. One thing about "Mick", as we called him, I would particularly like to emphasise was the remarkable neatness and orderliness of his attire and general appearance. You never saw him turn out untidily or slovenly in any respect; always spick-and-span; and, on the other hand, never ostentatious or exhibitionist. Mick was far, far removed from the modern "Teddy boy" with his effeminate beard and outlandish garb.

Mick's neatness in his apparel was quite outstanding as, at that time, it was by no means the rule for the ordinary man to so turn out. The average young man then was curiously careless and neglectful in his garb, many of them wearing their hair long and unkempt, as though to register their revolt against formality and convention in any shape, thereby giving some cause to their enemies to sneer at them as "wild" and "uncouth". In hardly anything has there been, over the past forty years, so vast an improvement as in the dress and appearance of the average young Irishman. A priest of my acquaintance puts that improvement down to the subtle propaganda power of the cinema - one of its more useful effects. He says that, even in wild westerns, the cowboy turns out with

a well-groomed head of hair which, seemingly, no wind or rough riding is able to unsettle! My own view is that a higher all-round standard of living and better economic conditions had a good deal to say to it, by elevating the self-respect of the individual.

Yes: Mick certainly dominated, quite naturally and unconsciously, all present in that room. As I have said, he successfully combined business with pleasure in a most remarkable way. Only a man of genius could have done that, particularly in his difficult conditions; and that, of course, was what he was. One moment you would see him talking rapidly and seriously to one of his men, or with bent head, listening intently to what he was saying, or, perhaps, skimming through a document or letter, handed to him. Having finished what he was talking about, or reading, he would abruptly dismiss his man, and call over to him someone else from the company that he wanted to talk to. Sometimes you would see him shaking his head energetically and arguing with a fellow, when suddenly the firm mouth would snap down and the man would move off - he had made his decision on the point. I have seen him occasionally in one of his tremendous rages, and tremendous and mighty they were, but they never lasted long.

Mick held highly responsible, top-level posts in both the Volunteers and in the political movement, being Director of Intelligence in the former and ultimately Minister for Finance in the Dáil in which capacity he was responsible for the financing of the whole invisible Government, both on its military and civil sides. The amount of highly important business he transacted in that smoky room must have been fabulous. Every now and again he would relax for a bit, joke, laugh and exchange stories with the fellows and you would think he had given over the business side of things; but presently he would be back in his job again, as some newcomer came along, perhaps a Volunteer or I.R.A. leader up from some field of war in the country.

Yes, the amount of business Mick succeeded in transacting in those by no means conducive-to-work surroundings in Vaughan's Hotel must have been prodigious. It was work, too, of the highest importance both in regard to the movement's finances and to the Volunteers. The wonder was, not alone that it was accomplished so expeditiously and efficiently, but that it was accomplished so secretly. As I have said, I was never in the Sinn Féin Volunteers or the I.R.A., and, though I was trusted by all Collins's men, I never shared

their confidences regarding their Volunteer activities. None of them at any time ever breathed a word to me of the matters they were planning, or discussing with Mick, and, of course, I never put any questions therein to them. Probably ambushes and actions by the Active Service Units (A.S.U.) of the I.R.A. were arranged and decided on at that rendez-vous, but, if they were, the first thing I knew about them was when, like most citizens, I saw them in the news reports of the morning papers. And the well-kept secrecy was all the more extraordinary when it is realised that the men were all young, inexperienced and few of them teetotallers.

Mick himself, of course, had the remarkable capacity of himself holding many secrets that were far from being the common property of his friends and associates, even those closest to him. He was, in every sense, a revolutionary leader of genius.

He had a highly developed sense of humour, not a usual gift in the case of a leader of men; and, at times, to break through the tension that must have been constantly pressing on him, he would "play the goat" and become quite impish for a bit.

I remember one evening coming into the hotel drawing-room

with the late Des. Dowling. Mick was there all on his own. He was pacing up and down the room in a curious mood, humming to himself, tumbling over chairs and small tables, and shifting (not kicking) vases and ornamental knick-knacks about the floor with his foot. Beyond a short nod of recognition, he took no notice of us. After watching this performance for some time, I took off an undisturbed table a large, round, earthenware ash-tray, about the size and shape of a cricket-ball, and as he paced down the room again, I placed it at his feet, saying, "Mick, you missed this one"! Immediately, he burst out laughing, rang the bell and ordered drinks.

When the Dáil loan of £250,000 was floated, those of us who were parliamentary candidates, or actual M.P.s, were commissioned to go each to his respective constituency and induce the people to invest in that loan. In that regard, I made several visits to North Fermanagh, bringing down, every now and again, the money collected and in hands. The loan had been proclaimed by the British and persons collecting it could be arrested and the money forfeited. Hence great care had to be taken in securing that it found its way safely to headquarters in Dublin. The post could not be used, of course, and the only method of transmission was the personal one

through trustworthy individuals. Of the North Fermanagh total collection of £1,700, I must have personally brought to Dublin at one time or another anything between five and six hundred pounds. Much of the remainder was transmitted through sympathetic priests as they were not so liable to be searched or arrested as laymen.

One evening I arrived at Amiens Street from Enniskillen with something like £170 on me, and made for Vaughan's. Mick was there in the midst of his men, apparently in one of his happy, frivolous humours. I took out my biggish wad of notes (the lists of subscribers were, for safety's sake, retained in secure keeping in the County) and gave them to him, and stood by him, awaiting my receipt. But divil a receipt I got. With exaggerated carelessness, he stuffed some of the notes in his trousers pockets, some in his side pocket. That was bad enough but, to my horror, he began distributing fivers and tenners to the fellows around! Finally, selecting a twenty-pound note, he called in the indefatigible Christie, the waiter, and stood a round of drinks to the whole company, including, of course, myself. I must say that that was not the most enjoyable bumper I quaffed in my life! Anxiously I asked him for a receipt. "Arrah, what do you want with a receipt? Haven't I stood you a drink? Isn't that enough

for you? I went home to my digs in Whitworth Road, Drumcondra, that night in a doleful and apprehensive frame of mind, not at all happy about the way the Minister of Finance had dealt with the loan money I gave him. But my fears were of short duration. Two mornings later, I got a formal typed letter, headed, "Dáil Éireann, Department of Finance", beginning, "A Chara", and signed by Mick Collins, not only acknowledging the money but setting out the various categories which comprised it - so many bank notes and treasury notes, from £20 to £1, all duly specified, so many money-orders, etc. I was intensely relieved and quite staggered at that unusual demonstration of the man's amazing efficiency.

Before I take my leave of Mick and his friends, I had better give, as far as I can remember them, the names of those who were wont to frequent that famous back-room in Vaughan's. First there were Mick's close intimates and fellow workers in the cause: Gearóid O'Sullivan, Diarmuid O'Hegarty, Seán Ó Muirthuile, Harry Boland, Fin Lynch, Pierce Beasley, Frank Thornton, Emmet and Charlie Dalton, Liam Tobin, Tom Cullen, Joe O'Reilly. All these were, of course, not merely in the Volunteers but high up in them.

Other prominent fighting men that turned up there, some more regularly than others, were the Fleming brothers, Seán Hales, Pádraig Ó Máille, Ernie O'Malley, Liam Lynch, Jerry Ryan, Seán Moylan, Oscar Traynor, Seán MacMahon, Dick MacKee, Frank Aiken, J.J. O'Connell, Tommy Gay, etc., etc. Sometimes Joe MacGrath, Dan MacCarthy and Seán MacGarry, but they constituted more or less a set of their own, though they were all, like most of the Collins men, sworn members of the I.R.B. All those were, of course, fully fledged fighting men, the nerves and sinews of the war that was going on against British forces. Outside the fighting men were those like myself who were either connected with the political movement or just friends and supporters of the cause. Amongst those were Des Dowling, Dan O'Brien, Dan MacLaughlin, Michael Noyk, Louie O'Doherty, Tim Plant, Jim Smith. For all I knew, some of those might have been in the secret movement or Volunteers. Indeed, I think the first two were. They were both graduates of the Royal College of Science and I have an idea that they had something to do with the engineering and bomb-making side of the military movement. Dan MacLaughlin, a final year medico, was, I know, actually in the G.P.O. during the Rising, but I don't know what part, if any, he had in the movement subsequent to that event. I do know that he was wholly

sympathetic to it and in the full confidence of Collins and his men. Louis Casimir O'Doherty - to give him his entire name - was a barrister on my own circuit, the North-West; he was the son of Hugh Camillus O'Doherty, solicitor - the only Catholic to have been elected Mayor of the historic and controversial City of Derry.

It is more than probable that I have omitted more than one prominent name from the above list; if so, the omissions are duly wholly to a fickle memory.

The reader of these pages, fifty years hence, may ask, how did Collins and his men, meeting so regularly in the evenings in the same trysting place, escape arrest, or worse? Reader of the twenty-first century, well may you ask that question! It was, indeed, remarkable how that highly important and much wanted company escaped so often, unscathed, comprising, as it did, most of the G.H.Q. top-level officers in the I.R.A. Furthermore, Collins and many of his associates had big prices on their heads, which made their capture very much worth while, from a monetary point of view; I think in Collins's case, the figure was £10,000. Again, it was common knowledge in Dublin that these meetings were taking place regularly. Vaughan's was widely recognised as

the "Gunmen's Den", as loyalists were wont to refer to it. Of course, it was raided time and time again; but the birds had all flown. Poor Christy, the hotel boots, had the life worried out of him by constant visits from detectives and secret service agents and, later, Black and Tans and Auxiliaries, who would put him through a strenuous cross-examination as to who were there the night before, or on such and such an occasion; and now and again he was badly beaten up by them so as to make his answers to their questions "less unsatisfactory".

One of the chief reasons why Collins's men were seldom caught on that premises was undoubtedly because Collins had organised an admirable system of counter-espionage, linked up with high police officials in the Castle and the D.M.P. Detective Branch. Again, the I.R.A. soon showed that it was in a position to hit back with deadly effect on any of their detectives, spies or intelligence men who made themselves too efficient or too curious. But, apart from that, there was the fact that the D.M.P. were, and had always been, a rather popular police force with the people - much more so than the militant R.I.C.

I have been in Vaughan's on a number of occasions when

the mysterious warning came through, and in a few minutes the company had dispersed and cleared, several, including Mick, Gearóid O'Sullivan and Diarmuid O'Hegarty, making off on their bikes. Gearóid O'Sullivan, or "George Caruth", to give him his nom-de-guerre, told me that, after one of these scatterings, he and Mick were cycling up the Rathmines Road, making for their dug-out. It was during curfew, and, of course, there wasn't a soul abroad. But just as they were passing a block of shops, a great voice boomed after them, "More power to ye, me bould Corkmen". It came from two D.M.P. men on night patrol who were standing back in the shadow of a doorway. That incident typifies the general D.M.P. outlook at the time.

Gearóid O'Sullivan told me also a thrilling story of their adventurous life. One night at Vaughan's, he, Mick and Diarmuid O'Hegarty just managed to escape from the hotel by the skin of their teeth. Coming out of Dominick Street into Dorset Street, they found the latter in the occupation of the British military. A double line of soldiers sealed off the eastern end, and sentinels were patrolling the streets as searches were being made of the houses. As they rounded the corner, the sentinel nearest to them had just turned his back on them on his return walk. Taking advantage of this, the three at once got behind the buttresses of the Dominican Church

beside them. It was a clear, frosty night in winter with a bright luminous moon hanging high up in the heavens and flooding the streets with her light; and, fortunately for them, also creating dark shadows against that light, which concealed the fugitives, and all night long those unfortunate men crouched behind those buttresses in the deep shadows of the moonlight, fearing detection every minute, as the armed sentry paced up and down on the footpath within a few yards of them. What made it worse, vastly increasing their peril, was that Diarmuid O'Hegarty had a bad, hacking cough, and nearly burst a blood-vessel in his efforts to suppress it, which, luckily for the trio, were successful. Had they not been successful, had but one cough escaped, their numbers would, unquestionably, have been up.

Those nights that I stayed with Mick were certainly an unforgettable experience. Immediately the warning came, we would dart out from the hotel, as quickly and quietly as we could through the dark and curfew-emptied streets. On all the occasions that I stayed at 44, Mountjoy Street, there were with Mick also Gearóid O'Sullivan, his constant companion, indeed his "fides Achates", and Seán Ó Murthuile, another fellow-Corkman. Mountjoy Street consisted of a row of small, two-storied red-brick houses. The bedrooms were, consequently, not very large.

Our room had two single beds, but six men slept therein on each of the occasions that I was there, two in each bed and two on the floor. I was given the privilege of sharing a bed with Mick. After some chatter, Mick would suddenly give the signal for sleep in a very typical way: "Good night, you so-and-sos", he'd shout, turn on his side and drop, almost immediately, into a deep slumber. Mick could do with extraordinarily little sleep, only a few hours, but it had to be deep and concentrated. When I awoke, about eight o'clock in the morning, his place in the bed was empty. He was gone hours before that. I could never make out how he never wakened me getting out of bed, all the more surprising seeing that he occupied the inner section against the wall. The landlady of 44, Mountjoy Street was a fine Cork woman, the late Miss MacCarthy, a very valiant lady.

One final word on the subject of drink and drinking in Griffith's and Collins's circles: undoubtedly there was a considerable quantity of drink taken in both cirlces, for the times were disturbing and strained. Men, particularly Collins's fighting men, were reckless and ran, every day of their lives, tremendous risks, and no one could blame them for taking some kind of dope to ease the often intense

pressure and strain. I remember Mick Brennan, the County Clare Commandant (and, by the way, one of the comparatively few teetotallers) telling me when he was on the run in Clare that he suffered agony from a tooth-ache, but never bothered going to a dentist because he felt he might be a dead man any moment and "What use would a dentist's work have been?". That was the attitude to life of most of the foremost fighting men.

The favourite drink in both circles was stout, in bottle or tankard. It was certainly Griffith's favourite, particularly in draft form; and at that time the only other thing I saw him drink was wine. For a period Griffith drank only wine, generally claret or burgundy but sometimes a hock, on the basis of his Sinn Féin principles, as, according to him, wines then either paid no revenue or excise tax, or very little, to the British Government, such as whiskey, stout and beer did. Collins for quite a while drank nothing but sherry. I can truly say that all during those stirring pre-Truce years I never saw either Griffith or Collins "the worse of drink". In those days, they both had a firm self-control in that regard.

Another haunt of mine was Oliver Gogarty's house in Ely Place. Oliver and his wife had a few friends in every

Friday evening, mainly folk in the literary and artistic world - poets, dramatists, artists. Those evening were very interesting and though Oliver was a Sinn Féiner of the Griffith school, the emphasis of his parties was mainly literary and artistic. He had renounced alcohol many years before I met him, and no stimulant stronger than tea or coffee was served at his evenings. And, in truth, no stimulant was required, the talk and repartee were so excellent under the brilliant guidance and direction of the doctor himself.

George W. Russell ("AE"), the able editor of the "Irish Homestead", the organ of Plunkett House and the Irish Co-operative Movement, was nearly always there, often accompanied by his great friend and secretary, Susan Mitchell, herself a fine literary woman in her own right. W.B. Yeats also was always to be found there. Other regulars were George Redding, James Montgomery and Dr. Joe Boyd-Barrett. The Gogarty evenings were never large - generally not more than those I have mentioned, plus an odd "lion", or VIP from across the water, or abroad. I met from time to time, amongst many others, in that famous drawing-room Augustus John, the painter, Patel, Chairman of the Indian Congress, H.W. Nevinson, Hugh Martin, Guy Moysten, Clemence J. France (Chairman of the

American Quaker Relief to Ireland), Jeffries of the "Daily Mail", and Bretterton, the notorious but bitingly clever "Morning Post" reporter. I often heard Gogarty in the Bailey pressing A.G. to come to his Friday evening, but he never could be persuaded to do so. Somehow, I could never see Griffith blend in with a sage like "AE", or a romantic poet like Yeats. Their outlooks on most things would hardly harmonise with his concise, concrete and eminently complete mind. Moreover, he was in no sense a socialite, or lover of salons. Much of a Gogarty evening would be taken up with the obiter dicta of "AE" and Yeats.

"AE" had a quiet, sonorous voice, rather light for so big and bulky a man, with more than a touch of his native Ulster Doric in it. Sitting back in an armchair, he would survey the company through steel-rimmed spectacles, puffing away at a vast pipe and pulling at an enormous flowing brown beard that almost hid his wide, pink "poet's bow", and hold forth on one or other of his numerous "ISMS". When he could get himself away from the vague world of his more esoteric thoughts and imaginings, or was diverted therefrom by the subtle Oliver, he could speak well and interestingly on current matters, revealing, in his approach to their problems, especially on his

own subject, agricultural co-operation, a sound, practical vein and well-informed background that his appearance certainly would hardly suggest.

Yeats would occasionally break into verse, quoting from his own work or that of some other poet in what I thought, a curious, monotonous and rather stilted sing-song, marking the metrical emphasis by the rise and fall of his hand. Gogarty told me that Yeats had convinced himself that that was the way that poetry should be recited.

I was present in Gogarty's drawing-room on the famous occasion when Mick Collins asked "AE" for his "point". Gogarty induced Mick one winter's evening after the Treaty to come along as "AE" would be there, and he was most anxious to meet Mick. If I recollect correctly, Yeats, James Montgomery, Joe Boyd-Barrett and George Redding were the others present. The "Mahatma" was in excellent form that evening. Reclining in the armchair in his comfortable loose-fitting suit of rough Irish tweed, he pontificated with great verve, realising that he had a most important and attentive listener in Collins. He was not, however, in one of his sound, practical moods; far from it indeed. He appeared to be propounding some of his more mystical theories - the tranquil

might of moral and spirit power as against the angry forces of evil in the contemporary "cosmos". Mick, with head bent towards him, listened intently and eagerly to "AE" for quite a while; then, pulling out his famous note-book that he was never without, and his fountain-pen, he asked, "But what is the point, Mr. Russell?". "AE" was wholly nonplussed, almost staggered at the question, and an uncomfortable feeling of embarrassment fell on the company at the enormity of putting such a query, of all queries, to the prophet. Everyone knew, or should have known, that there was not, nor never could be a point in the great man's philosophy which was composed of rotundities as smooth as the clouds and as endless and undefined.

There were other houses I was wont to frequent in those thrilling times where the talk and company were much different but, in their various ways, equally interesting. There were my friends, the Stephens, Ned and his wife, Lillo, first at 48, Upper Leeson Street, and later at 2, Harcourt Terrace. They were both strongly national, liberal, not to say radical and advancedly progressive in outlook. Ned had been turned from a rigid, narrow, ascendancy type of Irish Unionism to an advanced form of nationalism in his boyhood by his famous uncle, John Millington Synge. He told me when

he and his elder brother, Frank, were boys, Synge marched them out of the Mariner's Church, Dún Laoghaire, because, on the birthday of the Queen, the choir sang "God Save The Queen". And he said he could still remember how loudly Synge's footsteps sounded as he tramped indignantly down the aisle to the door, to the horror of the congregation and their own great alarm. As I have stated, I met Ned as a fellow bar student at the King's Inns dinners, and soon discovered that he was a much more advanced nationalist than I was at the time, and extremely well up in Irish history, archaeology, folklore and language.

Incidentally, his brother, Frank, was a fluent speaker and writer of Irish, and in his later years taught it at the Training College for Protestant Teachers. On Irish folklore Ned was exceptionally well informed, and used to write and lecture on the subject.

Now, whilst Ned was a good nationalist of the separatist type and put many a hunted man up in his Harcourt Terrace residence, his tendency and particular bent of mind favoured passivism and non-violence rather than physical force as a means for securing Irish freedom. He would, I think, have been more in sympathy with Griffith's original edition of Sinn Féin,

with its emphasis on passive resistance and moral force, though I don't think he would have subscribed wholly to its economic policy.

Such being Ned's fundamental views and leanings, I met in his house, from time to time, a type of people of kindred outlook - English pacifists and conscientious objectors as well as many kinds of moral and social reformers, including an English ex-Major who used to command the military depot in Omagh and who had abandoned his military career to devote his life to prison reform. Most of those were good, well-meaning people who had made sacrifices, in some cases, like the ex-Major's, heavy sacrifices for the reforming vocations they had chosen. But they were not all on that level; some, in my judgment, were sheer chancers and charlatans. I remember one such, a burly, half-educated Liverpudlian, with a deep raucous voice, which he loved exercising, and which he always used in a pseudo-dramatic, declamatory fashion when pontificating on his creed of absolute liberty, not to say, licence, in every field of human activity, involving the abolition of all armies and police forces, leaving everything to, and relying absolutely on the "liberated soul of man". This individual was holding forth one evening when I was present,

when someone praised P.H. Pearse. Immediately J.T. got up and, standing with his back to the fire, roared in his North English accent, "I'm greater than Pearse; Pearse only shatta'd buildings but I shatta h'idears"! Needless to say, the company was duly impressed at that wonderful axiom. Yes, Dublin was a vital, exciting centre in those days, humming with life, all manner of intellectual activities and new thought as all manner of things, forces released by the great volcanic eruption of the 1916 insurrection and its aftermath.

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As I have stated, the winter of 1917-1918 passed fairly tranquilly in the sense that there was little open disturbance or unrest, due largely to the comparative inactivity and quiescence of the police which in turn was due to the Government's desire to create a good atmosphere for the functioning of the Convention, thereby enabling it to present a good face to the Americans. Nevertheless the movement was being efficiently organised throughout the country and, at such a rate that Count Plunkett was able to announce, early in the New Year, 1918, that there were then in existence upwards of 1,250 Sinn Féin Clubs. Another very significant

proof of the growth of the movement was the sensational rise in the circulation of the Sinn Féin weekly periodicals, or "mosquito press" as its enemies called it; for example, the "Irishman", Herbert Moore Pim's paper, which had a circulation of but 1,692 in February, 1916, rose to over 15,000 by November, 1918.

The first ripple on the calm surface of the sea of politics was the South Armagh by-election that occurred in January. South Armagh was the predominantly Catholic part of that county, and always returned a Nationalist member to Parliament. Dr. Patrick McCartan, who had managed to reach America by the underground or, rather, "undersea" route, organised very effectively by the Liverpool I.R.B., had been recently nominated our representative to that country; and it was thought it would be a good idea to have him elected as an Irish M.P. as that could be pointed to as showing that the people had confirmed him in his post.

I took part in that election, and a very rowdy one it was. The Hibernian element was extremely strong in the constituency and bitterly resented their encroachment on what they regarded as their exclusive preserve. On my way to the constituency I called in for a night at Armagh City, and put up

at the Charlemont Arms Hotel. Armagh City was outside the constituency, being within that of Mid-Armagh. However, it was only three or four miles distant from the northern extremity of the constituency, and, being the capital of the county and an important railway junction, it became kind of headquarters for its northern half, Dundalk in Co. Louth serving the same purpose for its southern half, there being no sizeable town with urban powers within the constituency itself.

It was evening when I arrived at the hotel where I found Darrell Figgis well established, in full command of affairs of Sinn Féin. I found him sitting at the head of a long table in a sitting-room, holding forth to a large number of farmers and countrymen, all rather elderly and appearing to be in process of conversion from Redmond's brand of constitutional nationalism to that of Griffith. They were plying Figgis with questions, and from those questions it did not take me long to ascertain their drift and what was behind the questions, in the minds of the questioners.

It was clear that they feared and distrusted the Volunteers and the fighting men, and abhorred the prospect of another rising. If they voted for Dr. MacCartan, a well-known Ulster figure whose name, for a generation, had been synonymous

with extreme nationalism of the Fenian and physical force type (-he had actually edited their paper, "Irish Freedom"-), did that mean that they would be voting for another Easter Week? Figgis answered them admirably, I thought, assuring them that the fighting and blood-shed stage was over, having accomplished its object of stirring up the nation, and that henceforth the policy was to be Arthur Griffith's policy - an organised, self-reliant nation, building up its case for independence to go before the Peace Conference after the war, and, for that purpose, utilising the British devised electoral machinery. In other words, it was to be a policy of advanced, virile, true constitutionalism as preached by Griffith in his papers for years. As for the Volunteers, their main, if not their sole raison d'etre from that on, was to defend the country in the event of conscription being forced on it - a threat then ever hovering behind the scenes. And that presentment of the case for the new Sinn Féin was no deception on Figgis's part - it was the belief held by us all, including the Volunteer chiefs themselves.

Figgis was excellent at a didactic task of that character dealing with their queries with patience and sympathy, and with a dispassionate, level-headed, sensible,

man-of-the world tone, far away from the hectic emotionalism of the "Wild Men", that, I could see, profoundly impressed them and gained their confidence. He was favourably known to them to be a Griffith man and Griffith was the leader in the new movement nearest in outlook to them. I remember they were extremely dubious about the advisability or practicability of the policy of abstention from Westminster, but, though not convinced, were prepared to swallow it if satisfied that there would definitely be "an end of the shootin'", as one old greybeard put it. That was the big point for them: no more "shootin'", no more futile blood spilling.

Things were going well with Figgis until, in an unhappy moment, Parnell's case was mentioned as, indeed, it inevitably is in any prolonged discussion amongst Irishmen. Figgis, of course, had a concrete, unmistakable answer here also. It was one that was typical, but also one that was wholly alien from, indeed abhorrent to the outlook of those good but austere and rather Jansenistic Northern Catholics. Putting it in a general and far from as definite way as he did, Figgis defended Parnell's conduct, declaring a man's private life had nothing, or should have nothing whatever to say to his public life. This declaration did Figgis little good amongst them,

and numbers of them, taking their hats, shuffled uneasily out of the room.

Most of my time in that election was spent at a backward place, six or seven miles south-east of Armagh City. I've a vague recollection that it was called Milltown. It was a poor, wild, hungry looking countryside, with ne'er a town or village, made more desolate by the cold, sleety rain that was continuous, the only centre being an extremely primitive publichouse kept by a husband and wife who were blest with a large family of small children. Our good host and hostess were kindness itself. Unfortunately, I forget their name. They were strong supporters of the movement which was the reason why they took us in, and for which they deserve much credit, for we were by no means popular with Authority which, through its police, could easily have brokem them as publicans and destroyed their livelihood. They certainly took on a big risk in befriending us. Of course, we did not let them do it gratuitously, though I have no doubt that, were that necessary, they would have done so; fortunately, it wasn't.

Four of us Sinn Féiners stayed at that poor, shabby pub for three or four days. Accommodation was, naturally, very

restricted, being hardly sufficient for the pair and their numerous children in normal circumstances, so that we four were constrained to sleep in one tiny room, with only a small two-feet by two-feet window in the roof, nailed down so that we could not open it and were well nigh suffocated in the mornings, with the stale oft-breathed air mixed with tobacco smoke as stale. There were two small single beds in that little cell of a room. Jim Dalton and myself slept in one, and Seán Nunan and another, whose name has escaped me, in the other. Dalton, a former pugilist, physically a splendid specimen of a man, was later shot dead in the street in Limerick, supposedly as an informer. That deed, as I have learned from Pierce Beasley, was a tragic mistake, indeed a crime. Poor Jim was no informer. He was an I.R.B. man who used to go, an odd time, to the Limerick R.I.C. barracks for an after-hours drink in their canteen, as he was rather a thirsty soul. That, undoubtedly, was rash of him, and naturally made him suspect. Some of his comrades in the Brotherhood accused him of being an informer. This charge he indignantly denied, and demanded an inquiry. Such an inquiry at top level was held, Pierce Beasley being a member of the court which resulted in his complete vindication. Nevertheless despite

that, an indisciplined group took it on themselves to go forth and shoot the poor fellow. Collins, I heard, was mad at what they had done; for, not only was an innocent man deprived of his life but the decree of the Supreme Executive of the I.R.B. was blantly disregarded. Seán Nunan, in due course, became the Irish Ambassador to the U.S.A. and ultimately Secretary of the Department of External Affairs.

Our only meeting place, outside the kitchen where we ate our meals, was the actual pub itself. That was a most primeval affair, with the earth itself as its floor through which seeped the rain, creating on its surface a thick scum of mud, beaten up by the heavy boots of the rural customers and the bare feet of the house's children. I need hardly add that there were no such luxuries as running water or lavatory. As the bitter, sleety rain, turning occasionally to snow, was non-stop, we were confined for hours to that depressing place during the long, dark, wet winter evenings, our only light a dim paraffin-oil lamp suspended from the low ceiling.

Great was our joy when, after three or four days in this habitation, Harry Boland turned up in a car, and took Seán Nunan and me with him to speak at a big rally at

Newtownhamilton on behalf of the Sinn Féin candidate.

As I have said, the Hibernians resented what they called "the invasion from the south", but, in reality, the challenge to their long-established hegemony. Being very strongly entrenched in the constituency, they embarked on a plan of organised disturbance of our meetings and molestations of our speakers and supporters. As the election proceeded, it became more and more difficult for our speakers to get a hearing with the racket the Hibernian mobs stirred up, and things looked blue, indeed, for our prospects. The R.I.C. made little or no attempt to restrain the Hibernian rowdies and seemed to adopt the role of spectators, considerably amused at the discomfiture of the "Shinners". It was clear that, in those circumstances, something had to be done to secure for our people a hearing if the prestige of the new movement was not to suffer a mortal blow in Ulster where, as it was, its progress had been slow. And something very effective was done.

Newtownhamilton consists mainly of one vast octagonal open space, or square if you will, on the confines of which stand in line the unexciting two-storied shops and business premises of this typical Ulster town. When Harry Boland,

Seán Nunan and I arrived, the meeting, a very large one, was in full swing in the aforesaid great space, which was crowded with farmers and countrymen. Harry and I pushed through the thick mass of people and got to the platform. There, we were stopped by a Volunteer officer and questioned as to our credentials for getting on to the platform. It was a surprise to be so addressed in that far-distant Northern town in a Southern accent. He commanded a protective guard of Volunteers posted round the platform.

We had no sooner mounted the platform than a terrific melée occurred. We saw the wide area being cleared by what, I thought, was a strong force of police but what turned out to be a section of some four hundred Volunteers under Michael Brennan, ordered from Clare by the Volunteer Executive to secure us the rights of free speech which the Governmental police couldn't or wouldn't. After two or three charges by the Volunteers, armed with hurleys, the organised hooligan mob that, up to then, had had it all its own way, swayed, broke and scattered, and gave up any further serious obstruction. Thenceforward the Claremen kept order at our meetings, rendering the services of the R.I.C. redundant, though in our case the said services were conspicuous by their absence and though that constabulary was there in considerable force in full battle equipment.

Anyhow, the R.I.C. made no attempt to interfere with, much less try conclusions with the big Volunteer draft from Clare; and those Claremen were certainly a surprise and an eye-opener to us all, and showed what a disciplined force, even a Volunteer one, was capable of achieving. We were astonished at their discipline and soldierly appearance and were full of admiration for the masterly way they handled difficult and dangerous situations, such as the melée in Newtownhamilton. They even had succeeded in attaining a certain uniformity in their dress - slouched, wide-brimmed hats, haversacks, belts and putees, their only arms being the hurley, a weapon by no means to be despised.

I have often wondered why the police tolerated those Claremen to the extent they did, virtually allowing them to usurp their functions. It might have been because they did not expect to meet anything like a disciplined force, hostile propaganda always representing the "Shinners" and their "gunmen" as a wild disorderly gang. They, doubtless, realised from what they had seen of them, that the Claremen would fight and that, if they had to disperse them, it would certainly have been a bloody business that would not have helped either the Lloyd George Convention or the Anti-Sinn Féin

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21
BURO STAIRE MILEATA 1913-21
No. W.S. 1770

ORIGINAL

PART VI

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

ROINN COSANTA.

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS.

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 1770.

Witness

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

Identity.

Judicial Commissioner, Dáil Éireann Land Courts, 1920-1922;
Commissioner, Irish Land Commission, 1923 to date.

Subject.

National Activities, and Dáil Éireann Land Courts, 1900-1921.

Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness.

Nil.

File No S. 909.

Form B.S.M. 2

ORIGINAL

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

cause at that by-election. Undoubtedly, the Government and their police were very much on the horns of a dilemma. But, be that as it may, the fact that Sinn Féin was able to draft such numbers of disciplined men from such a distance, and the efficiency and good conduct of those men, made a great impression on the people in that area, and did much to raise the prestige of the Volunteers in the North, acting as a strong and effective propaganda for recruitment there.

The result of the election was declared on 1st February. Donnelly, the Newry solicitor and Irish Party candidate, was the victor, with 2,324 votes against MacCartan's 1,305 - not so very far off a two to one triumph over Sinn Féin. We were dumb-founded at the news, as most of us, with the tradition of so many electoral victories behind us, were so certain of another that we were concerned merely with what the majority would be and were betting on the size of MacCartan's majority. Of course, we began looking for excuses, the most facile and obvious one being that Donnelly won by the aid of Unionist votes. That was quite untrue. The Unionists did not, it is true, put up a candidate; or, rather, they put up one to take him down again. His name, Richardson, I think, was printed on the balance sheet, but, so effective was the Unionist Party's solidarity and discipline, that not more than

two or three hundred votes were cast for him, all Unionist of course. The vast majority of Unionists in the North, then as now, would as soon vote for a Nationalist candidate as they would for the Devil himself. No: Donnelly's 2,300 odd votes were at least 95% Catholic.

Sinn Féin was beaten for a variety of reasons. The conservative and practical Northern nationalist could see no future for an out and out "sovereign independence" policy, and he was sanguine of some definite and final solution emerging from the Convention. But, above all, he was intensely suspicious and distrustful of the physical force element in the new movement. He considered the Easter Rising an act of supreme folly and dreaded the country getting into the hands of the "wild men", as he was wont to refer to the Volunteers, tempting their sons over to the insane Fenian policy of the gun. It must be remembered that the Parliamentary voter of that day was no young man of twenty-one and upwards, much less young woman (women had not yet the vote but were to get it within a year). They were all mature elderly men with property qualifications; and to these men the parades of the Clare Volunteers and their charges only confirmed and materialise their worst fears. Their sons, of course, were affected

otherwise, and there was a big increase in the ranks of what had remained of the local Volunteers during and after that election.

In the succeeding two months, March and April, two further by-elections followed in Waterford City and East Tyrone, both equally disastrous for Sinn Féin, though for somewhat different reasons. The vacancy in the former was caused by the death of the leader of the Irish Parliamentary Party, John Edward Redmond, which occurred on March 6th, 1918 Redmond had been in declining health for some time, brought on and intensified, not alone by the big Sinn Féin threat to his dominance but almost more acutely by the grave divisions amongst his own supporters in the Convention on the shape the settlement of the Irish question should take. Some of his most prominent lieutenants, such as Dr. O'Donnell, the Bishop of Raphoe, and Joe Devlin, the A.O.H. chief, opposed him and voted against him on vital issues therein.

Redmond was a decent, honourable Irishman whose personal integrity was unassailable and unquestionable, but he made calamitous mistakes, graver than almost any other national leader ever made, and undoubtedly in the last decade of his life, a most vital one in the history of this country, he failed to

perceive the huge changes that had occurred in Ireland, blinded largely by his long, continuous residence in London, a notoriously seductive and absorbent capital. One thing must be recorded to his everlasting credit: he made nothing whatever out of politics, dying a poor man, indeed, I understand, deeply in debt.

Though Redmond was dead, his name had still a powerful appeal, especially to his loyal supporters in his great stronghold, Waterford City; and that appeal was certainly not weakened by the choice of his son to replace him, William Archer Redmond, a Captain in the Royal Munster Fusiliers, who had got leave of absence from the front to fight the election. He fought it, garbed in his British Captain's uniform and won it by the conclusive majority of 478 in a total poll of 2,006. His Sinn Féin opponent was Dr. Vincent White, a very popular local medical practitioner who, despite the work of those ingenious electioneers, Dan MacCarthy and Joe McGrath, polled but 746 votes against Redmond's 1,242. It certainly was another crushing defeat for Sinn Féin; but, unlike South Armagh, no one had any doubts as to its cause - the Redmond name in the Redmond stronghold.

The third of the three great, successive defeats of Sinn Féin took place, as did the first, in an Ulster constituency - East Tyrone. That constituency, like South Armagh, was predominantly Catholic and Nationalist, though with a substantial Protestant and Unionist minority. Nevertheless the Unionists, as in the case of South Armagh, did not fight it because, doubtless, of a kind of tacit and unofficial truce between them and the Nationalists whilst the Convention was in existence. The Sinn Féin candidate was Seán Milroy, an original Sinn Féiner and close personal friend of Arthur Griffith, who, though he had fought with his company in the Rising, was far from being a "wild man" or advocate of physical force. He was deliberately chosen for that Conservative Catholic Ulster constituency because of his known moderate views. His opponent was the late T.J.S. Harbison, Solicitor, a member of an old Cookstown Catholic family, who was a popular public man in that neighbourhood. I took part in that election and was appointed Sinn Féin election supervisor at Coalisland, a strong, Nationalist centre, and also, strangely enough, a Sinn Féin stronghold, most unusual at that time in the Six-County part of Ulster.

At Coalisland we had things very much our own way, nearly everybody in the little town - save, of course, the Unionists - being of our way of thinking. Apart from the usual routine work of checking voters' lists, canvassing and distributing propaganda leaflets, my most important job was to see that meetings on behalf of the Party candidate were not disturbed. I regret to say one meeting of their's was badly interfered with by the deliberate planning of local young Sinn Féiners. When the brake containing Party speakers, important personages such as Joe Devlin, M.P., Tommy Lundon, M.P., Richard Hazelton, M.P., and Harbison, the candidate, arrived they were pelted with rotten eggs. At the time I was in our local Committee rooms when two young lads popped their heads into the door, their faces flushed and shining with excitement and delight, "O, Muster Shiel, Muster Shiel, hurry down quick till Harbison's meetin' and watch the Hibs. gettin' pelted wi' eggs"! I immediately left what I was doing and ran down to the meeting. Devlin was standing up in the brake, endeavouring to make his voice heard above the din, appearing to be quite indifferent to the fierce volleys of rotten eggs - their stench was dreadful - that matted his hair and clothes, and also that of his colleagues in the brake. I did what I could to stop the disgraceful and senseless attack, so opposed to the liberty

principles of the new movement, but with little result other than incurring the disfavour of our supporters for my pains. In the North at that time it was an understood and tacitly accepted axiom of politics to break up your opponents' meetings if you were able to do so.

But if we had it all our own way in the town and precincts of Coalisland, we had certainly not to travel far outside those confines to experience a very different state of affairs. For example, Dan Donnelly, a chemist in Dungannon and a prominent local leader of Sinn Féin, and myself went forth, one Sunday morning, to address a meeting after Mass at the Church of Clonoe, a little place but three or four miles distant from Coalisland. As the people were leaving the Church, after Mass, we hoisted our tricolour on our car and proceeded to address them. Immediately there were cat-calls and opposition, but a considerable section of the crowd stood quietly listening. Presently, an enraged cleric darted out of the Church and proceeded to hurl a torrent of abuse at us, calling us "factionists", "players of the Orange game" and, much worse, whilst he ordered the people to go home and not be wasting their time listening to such blackguards as us, I asked Dan who the Reverend Gentleman was, and was much surprised when he told me he was the local P.P. He succeeded in depriving us

of an audience of any size, and there was nothing for Dan and me to do but to take our departure as gracefully as we could.

This election, too, resulted in a decisive reverse for Sinn Féin, Harbison receiving 1,802 votes against Milroy's 1,222. Things were not going too well for the new evangel and it began to be thought that there might be something after all in what the Nationalist and English press were telling their readers, that the tide was definitely turning against the new movement and the new men with an ever increasing momentum, that the danger of rule by the "wild men" and the "gunmen" was passing away; the people were returning to political sanity, the hectic emotional fever, engendered by the post-Easter Rising executions, having spent itself.

And Lloyd-George and his Cabinet thought so, too. On the day after the declaration of the East Tyrone poll, April 5th, the Government had received the final report of the Irish Convention. This precious document was signed by only 44 members of the Convention, less than half of the entire body. There were some Minority reports; but one thing disclosed was that there was little agreement on any of the essentials of settlement. The Ulster Unionists on the Convention, from the very beginning had not the slightest intention of endorsing any

plausible agreement. They were there as "Loyalists" to help the war cause by allaying American uneasiness about Ireland, and so smoothing the way for a full and enthusiastic participation of American man-power, behind the much-harassed Allies on the battle-fields of Europe.

And here, at this stage, once again the British Government committed yet another of her many big blunders in her handling of Ireland, showing a crass lack of comprehension of the country's outlook and reactions. So sure were Lloyd George and his advisers that the temporary whim of the unstable Irish for the Sinn Féin insanity was spent and that Redmond's British and pro-war brand of Nationalism had, boomerang-like, come back, that they decided on conscription for Ireland. That decision immediately created the great conscription crisis. But before I deal with that big crisis of the late spring and summer, I must refer to an event that occupied the public mind in the earlier part of that year. That was the shortage of food that was becoming more and more acute in Ireland; not because of any bad harvests in a country that produced abundant food but because of excessive export to England. As the war progressed and the U-boat campaign became more and more deadly, the overseas supplies of food on which the thickly populated island of

Britain so largely depended, became gravely reduced. This, of course, vastly increased Ireland's importance as a producer and provider for Great Britain. The Government had placed the food resources and distribution of the entire United Kingdom under a Food Controller with very sweeping powers, which he certainly did not hesitate to use in England's favour so drastically and to such an extent that Ireland, a great food producing country, began to feel the pinch. Every day, all manner of agricultural produce was, under the decree of the Food Controller, diverted from the national markets and fairs to the Irish ports and thence shipped across the Irish Sea. True, there was a Food Council set up in Ireland but it was completely subordinate to the chief Food Controller in London; it was nothing more than an advisory body, and what advice it gave could be, and constantly was overridden by him. Protests came pouring in from all over the country - from Labour organisations, from all national parties and groups and even from Unionist centres, but they went unheeded.

The position was going from bad to worse when we opened our morning paper on February 22nd, and read with astonishment that Sinn Féin had intervened in the issue and had taken dramatic and effective action. Sinn Féin, sometime earlier,

had appointed a Food Controller of its own, the late Diarmuid Lynch; and he had, on the previous day, intercepted a herd of thirty-four pigs on their way to the North Wall for transport to England, had them slaughtered and distributed to Irish centres towards the easement of the food scarcity amongst those in the community whom it had hit mostly. This act, needless to say, drew forth strong and indignant protests from the Unionist press and the Castle people, who designated it "an unparalleled outrage", but it certainly greatly enhanced the prestige of Sinn Féin, demonstrating to the country that it was what it claimed to be, the party of action and not of talk, prepared to act drastically when the national need demanded it.

Two things resulted from that bold enterprise; Diarmuid Lynch was ejected from the country and banished to the U.S.A., of which country he was a citizen, whence he never returned permanently to Ireland, and the British Food Controller, seeing the favour from all sides with which that act of Sinn Féin was received, actually had the gumption to pipe down very much on his ruthless grasping of Ireland's food stocks.

(IV) The Conscription Menace.

On April 4, 1918, Harbinson, the Irish Party man, defeated Milroy, the Sinn Féiner, in East Tyrone, thereby registering the third successive defeat of Sinn Féin in three months. Four days later the Report of the Irish Convention reached the Government, registering only one specific thing - no possibility of an agreement on any kind of all-Ireland Home Rule, largely because of the intractability of the Ulster Unionists. The Report also disclosed a substantial degree of disharmony amongst the Nationalists on the Convention as to the precise form Irish autonomy should take - a disharmony in sharp contrast to the stone-wall unanimity of the Ulstermen.

The British reaction to those events was typical in its stupidity and in its superficial adjudgement when dealing with Irish questions. On April 9th, Lloyd George announced the Government's decision to extend Conscription to Ireland, by which his adviser, the notorious Sir Henry Wilson, estimated that they would secure between 100,000 and 150,000 conscripts for the battlefields, which the aforesaid Wilson declared he could easily, safely and profitably manipulate within the vast British Armies of nearly 3,000,000 men.

The Conscription pill was, of course, to be gilded with the usual sugar-coating - yet another "Bill for the Better Government of Ireland"; which no one took very seriously. But whilst the first bill took very concrete shape and passed the House of Commons by 323 votes to 100, the latter was not even thought worth drafting, a mere reference to it being, seemingly, considered sufficient to mollify American opinion - the main reason why it was contemplated at all.

The passage of the Bill worked a veritable miracle in Nationalist Ireland, pulling together at one stroke all its discordant elements and binding them in one strong, and what proved, irrestible union against the grave threat. Sir James O'Connor, no Sinn Féiner, termed the Bill in his history "a crucial blunder", and thus graphically and truly describes the effect of the measure on the country: "Since the days of O'Connell, no such intense and widespread movement had taken place as that which this mistaken policy produced. The injustice of it, which was almost universally assumed, lashed the country to a fury. The feeling was not confined to Republicans; it was shared equally by the Constitutional Nationalists, many of whom were at all times frankly Anglophile, and especially so during the war, wherein they deemed England to be on the side of right and justice. Moderate opinion could

make some allowances for England's difficulties in relation to the Irish problem; it was thought that a claim for a Republic went too far, and the special position of Ulster was, at all events, within the region of argument. That a country which purported to fight for small nationalities and to endorse the policy of self-determination should keep a small country in subjection, and yet should force the manhood of that country to become cannon fodder in England's extremity, was felt to be inexcusable. Catholic Ireland rose as one man to meet the emergency". Thus very Conservative "Loyalist" Catholic opinion: on that issue it went dangerously close to the "rebelly" brand.

The Lord Mayor, Laurence O'Neill, convened a conference of Nationalist and Labour Leaders and on April 18th that conference met under his aegis at the Mansion House. It consisted of John Dillon, M.P., Joseph Devlin, M.P., representing the Irish Party, Arthur Griffith and Eamon de Valera, representing Sinn Féin, William O'Brien (Dublin), Michael Egan and Thomas Johnson representing Labour, William O'Brien (Cork) and Tim Healy representing the All For Ireland League. The Conscription Bill had worked a miracle; getting round the Lord Mayor's table in the Mansion House, bitter political enemies of yesterday. The Mansion House

Committee became a sort of "National Cabinet" with which to face a grave crisis. It drew up an anti-Conscription pledge which, it suggested, should be taken in every parish in the country. It was Dev. who found the formula for the pledge, acceptable by all the interests represented in the Conference; it ran as follows: "Denying the right of the British Government to enforce compulsory service in this country, we pledge ourselves solemnly to one another to resist Conscription by the most effective means at our disposal".

That evening, a deputation from the conference consisting of the Lord Mayor, Dev., Dillon, Healy & O'Brien (Dublin) went out to Maynooth where the Bishops happened to be in session. They, or rather the Sinn Féin element, were anxious to get the Bishops to issue a public statement on Conscription that would be helpful to them, and that would not condemn active resistance should events call for it. They found them sympathetic and well aware of the menace, and that night they issued their Manifesto: "We consider that Conscription, forced in this way upon Ireland, is an oppressive and inhuman law which the Irish people have a right to resist by every means that are consonant with the law of God".

On Sunday, April 21, the anti-Conscription Pledge was signed at specially convened meetings in all the towns, villages and parishes in the country by virtually all Catholic and, indeed, considerable numbers of Protestant Ireland. It was a wonderful demonstration of national solidarity and resolution in the face of grave danger that, as O'Connor truly says, had not been witnessed since O'Connell's days. The great upsurge of resistance in Ireland to the measure had reactions in America amongst the wide-spread pro-Irish element there that greatly embarrassed President Woodrow Wilson, who was moved to warn the British Government that the imposition of Conscription on Ireland might cause serious trouble to his Administration. This was an awkward and unforseen denouément for the British Government, but the wilely Lloyd George found, or thought he found, a means of counteracting that. America was, at the time, up to her neck in the war, and to her people, despite the large German element in her population, Germany and all things German were completely anathema. A bright thought came into Lloyd George's bright mind: "Why not concoct a German Plot?" Obviously the very thing to silence pro-Irish American feeling and so free his hands for enforcing Conscription on the country.

And it so happened that in giving effect to that venture his proverbial luck in his intrigues was once again behind him; he was enormously aided by the timely intervention of a fine deus ex machina. On April 12, the R.I.C. captured on an island off the West Coast a man called Joseph Dowling, a former Irish prisoner-of-war in Germany who had joined Casement's Irish Brigade there. He had come from Germany in a submarine and brought a message in code from the German Government to the I.R.B. regretting that they had not taken the 1916 Rising more seriously and offering substantial military aid for a new Rising. Although arrested and sentenced to penal servitude for life - he was released after 6 years - Dowling had managed to have his message transmitted to Collins.

True, the message from the German Government was authentic but Sinn Féin (to use the term in its comprehensive sense) had neither expected it nor was prepared for it as, at that time, a second Rising was the last thing in its mind. Dowling's appearance on the Irish scene at that particular juncture was most unfortunate, as it gave Lloyd George the colour he wanted for his "German Plot"; and, for a time it was feared that he might succeed in prejudicing the war-roused Americans against us. When presently the American and the

Liberal British Press began calling on him for evidence of the "Plot", he was silent for the simple reason that he had no evidence. How fortunate it was that Dowling was able to dispose of his message (in code on 2 silk handkerchiefs) before his arrest.

The lack of tangible evidence of the "Plot" very much handicapped Lloyd George in putting it across; and he was still further handicapped by his inability, because of that lack, to bring any of the Sinn Féin leaders he had arrested to trial. In fact, Bonar Law, in answer to a Parliamentary Question, declared that it was not the Government's intention to put any of those prisoners on trial; they would just be interned without trial under the wide and elastic provisions of D.O.R.A.

When Lloyd George announced the extension of the Man Power Bill to Ireland I was at home in Omagh attending Quarter Sessions. We were, of course, as excited and concerned by the news as was the rest of the country, and we of Sinn Féin had many meetings and discussions to devise plans to meet the menace. It happened that the Nationalists of the town and district of Omagh were, even at that time, so overwhelmingly Sinn Féin that there were no Party leaders

thereabouts to call into conference, albeit that was not the case in other areas of the wide constituency of Mid Tyrone, such as Beragh and Sixmilecross in the East and Fintona and Trillick in the West where the Hibernians were still strong despite everything. This unanimity in the Omagh area was a curious contrast to the conditions there but a few years earlier where it was one of the worst divided places politically in Ireland.

In the case of our local Sinn Féin, as in the case of Sinn Féin everywhere during that crisis, the military wing was, naturally, in the ascendant; but the political wing was far from being insignificant. We local Sinn Féiners were called upon to address many anti-Conscription meetings throughout Mid Tyrone. I was, accordingly, constantly on the move, speaking from platforms with such local leaders as George Murnaghan, Solr., Seán O'Hanrahan, Solr., Alec Donnelly, Solr., Michael Lynch, Chairman of the North West of Ireland Printing & Publishing Co. Ltd. (who had recently renounced his Justiceship of the Peace), Michael Mulvey, Editor of the "Ulster Herald", and others. Below the open political surface the I.R.B. men - Dan McAuley, Peter Haughey and others - were working silently and efficiently in perfecting plans for local resistance should the attempt be made to enforce the

measure. In our speeches we particularly warned that, unlike the case of Home Rule, the Government was in deadly earnest about enforcing Conscription on the country, and that there was nothing for it but to prepare ourselves for as effective resistance as we could command. We became recruiters for the Volunteers and urged the young men to join up in them; and to this particular appeal there was a remarkable response; our helpers were for hours at night taking down the names and addresses of hundreds and hundreds of new Volunteers. These were, of course, mostly anti-Conscription Volunteers, and when the menace vanished in six months' time with the termination of the war, they vanished too! The premises of the Omagh Sinn Féin Club was located next door to the big R.I.C. barracks of all places. It occupied a prominent position in George's Street on the brow of the Courthouse Hill. The windows of its neighbour, the R.I.C. barracks, were plastered over with recruiting posters calling upon young Irishmen to drop in and sign on for the British Army and revenge the ravishment of Catholic Belgium, a sister small nation. It occurred to me that we, too, might put our own prominent window to good use. Accordingly, we posted up every day on our Club window a single sheet of foolscap containing quotations from British Ministers, prominent individuals and newspapers and journals

indicating and stressing the determination of the Government to carry out in due course its intention to enforce Conscription on Ireland. Our aim was to keep the public interest up to scratch and not let it flag or fade. Fortunately we were well supplied with the appropriate material, for never a day passed without some prominent Briton, politician or Army man giving forth on the crying need for men to make good the gaps in the badly depleted ranks of their armies. It should be borne in mind that those were the highly critical days when Britain and her allies had sustained a grievous and bloody reverse, their forces having been hurled back on a front of 50 miles almost to the Channel Ports. Field Marshal Haig was fighting with his back to the wall. On April 13, 1918, he had issued his famous order: "There is no other course open to us but to fight it out. Every position must be held to the last man; there must be no retirement. With our backs to the wall, and believing in the justice of our cause, each of us must fight on to the end". We called our little daily sheet "The Conscription News"; and underneath that title ran the legend, "The paper with the smallest circulation but the greatest influence in Co. Tyrone".

And certainly, for divers reasons, there was not a little colour to that large claim. The Conscription issue

had stirred the populace to the depth; it was so much in the minds of all - Protestant and Unionist no less than Catholic and Nationalist - for it was certainly not anybody's favourite - that our readers were suprisingly numerous and still more surprisingly heterogeneous. Every hour of the day there would be anxious groups round our window reading the news in our "paper". The sheet always ended by advising the young men to go either next door to the police barracks, join up in the British Army and help Haig who was in sore need of aid, or come in to our club and help Ireland to defend herself against Conscription.

It so happened that Ulster Unionism was then in a particularly sullen and resentful humour with the British Government and, indeed, with their great idol, Carson himself. Apart altogether from the fact that they had nearly as little enthusiasm for a system of compulsory military service as the Nationalists, they were suffering from a severe shock. Their Ulster Division had been cut to pieces in the terrible battles of the past few months, and every day, long and mournful lists of their dead and wounded relatives and friends filled the columns of the Ulster papers. Now, it might be asked - Why should they be resentful at such happenings, sad indeed as they were? Were they not proclaimed "Loyalists"

and should they not glory at the opportunity given them of shedding their blood copiously for King and Country, particularly in a cause they believed to be just? We must go some way back to get the correct answer to that one.

When the war broke out in 1914, Carson succeeded, through his friend, Kitchener, then War Minister, in getting a large number of his U.V.F., some 25,000 or so, taken over into the British Army as a separate Ulster Division, under its own officers. In so doing, Carson succeeded where Redmond failed, because of Kitchener's implacable dislike and distrust of Irish Nationalists. Now, rightly or wrongly, the Ulster Unionists believed that their Division would never be sent to the Front. They understood that they were to be retained at home as an impeccably loyal force to protect the country against any further rebellion or insurrection that might be attempted. And that certainly appeared to be Kitchener's intention. Colour was given to this view by the lengthy period of immunity from combat that the Division enjoyed, sojourning for months at Finner Camp, Bundoran, and later in Co. Down, whilst the Southern Irish Regiments were receiving their heavy baptism of fire.

I remember that period well and the growing criticism of the Nationalists at the long immunity from battle of the Ulster Division as contrasted with the heavy casualties suffered by their friends and connections. It is hard to say but it is possible that, had Kitchener lived, the Ulster Division might never have experienced the devastating conflicts which it certainly did experience. Rightly or wrongly, many Ulster Volunteers and their friends were convinced that they would never be sent to the Front but would be reserved for home service in Ireland. They said so openly, and they considered the transfer of the Division to France and the heavy casualties suffered there a betrayal of that guarantee. They were certainly in a very angry mood and were particularly bitter towards Carson, whom they blamed for having induced them to enlist on the said alleged guarantee.

That was all common talk in Ulster at the time; and we heard that Carson's portrait had been removed from the walls of several Orange lodges and that the Orangemen were smouldering with resentment and chagrin at the way their leaders had let them down. And presently we were to have tangible proof of this resentment amongst them.

It was arranged that our Omagh Sinn Féin Club - the Owen Roe O'Neill Club, by the way, would hold a public meeting on a certain Sunday afternoon in Omagh. This meeting only took place outside the Club premises on the broad space at the top of the Courthouse Hill. It was a very large meeting and, in the course of the proceedings, was joined by many Protestants coming from the services in their respective churches. Many of them, passing down the street to their homes, stopped and listened very attentively to our speeches - in itself something of a phenomenon, for your good "Loyalist" would never be seen listening to a "rebelly Papist meeting"- certainly not on "the Lord's Day".

We, on our part, did not neglect to point the moral - how they had been deceived and betrayed and how "the flower of Protestant Ulster, in breach of a solemn guarantee, was lying prone and stiff on the bloody fields of Flanders". Flowery language, and it worked. To our amazement, considerable numbers of them gave us a cheer and a clap, and we received many "hear, hears" from the loyalist lips.

I had further and more concrete evidence of their discontent a few days later when I went one evening to address an anti-Conscription meeting in a hall at Clanabogan, a

country place a few miles from Omagh. When Mulvey, O'Hanrahan and I arrived we were told, to our great surprise, that there were three local young Orangemen in the hall who wanted to join the Volunteers, and thus mark, in a tangible way, their resentment at their betrayal. I was introduced to those men - typical young Protestant Ulster farmers. They made it clear that whilst they were quite prepared to resist conscription after their unpleasant experience, they did not want to fight for an Irish Republic or for any of the other objects of Sinn Féin. We assured them that that was all we'd ask them to do, and that actually there was no question, or intention, of a second Easter Week. That satisfied them, and they remained with us for some while, ultimately, when the Conscription danger vanished with the end of the war, withdrawing once again into their own Orange background. I heard of numbers of similar happenings in other parts of Ulster at the time.

About the time the Government announced its decision to conscript Ireland, old Sam Young, the M.P. for East Cavan, died, thereby leaving a parliamentary vacancy to be filled. Sam Young had been, of course, a loyal member of the Irish Party and one of the few Protestant Nationalist M.P.s, and the Redmondites were, naturally, most anxious to replace him by

one of its own supporters. However, because of the big risk of defeat and ensuing loss of prestige, they were not at all anxious for a contested election. They had chosen M. O'Hanlon, a popular local man, proprietor of the influential local paper "The Anglo-Celt", and wished and hoped, on account of the Conscription menace, that Sinn Féin would agree to have him returned without opposition, seeing that they had, shortly before that, withdrawn in favour of Dr. MacCartan, thus enabling him to be elected unopposed for the Tullamore Division of the King's County. But, for some reason or other, there was no compromise or agreement on this occasion. Sinn Féin had decided to fight it; and soon after Sam Young's death and long before the writ was moved, Arthur Griffith was put forward as its candidate.

Figgis, in his book the "Irish War", claims the credit or responsibility of having Griffith nominated, and says that the latter, when he first heard of it in the press, was angry at Figgis's action, considered that his going forward at that particular time was not in the national interest and wanted to withdraw. They had quite a job in dissuading him from that course.

The Irish Party, hoping against hope that the Bishops, then so prominently forward in the anti-Conscription Cause,

would, sooner or later, insist on no contest, kept putting off the moving of the writ, which, in fact, was not moved till many weeks after the vacancy occurred. This made the by-election an extremely long drawn-out and protracted one.

Sinn Féin, as I have said, was very early in the field, and the constituency, for weeks and weeks before the polling day, was swarming with its numerous and ardent voluntary workers. I was sent to Ballyjamesduff in the S.W. of the constituency, as Sinn Féin election Supervisor for that area. In that capacity I remained there for the greater part of six weeks, with, of course, occasional visits to other centres for the purpose of addressing meetings. My duties were, as the title of my post indicated, of a general supervisory character, co-ordinating and directing the work of the voluntary helpers in the area. It covered the purely political work and organisation of the movement but had nothing to say to the Volunteers or to the women's Cumann na mBan. Both these organisations, then under their own independent governance, were very touchy and resentful of any suggestion of control by the despised "politicians" over them - particularly so the ladies' body. For the sake of the records, I should mention that the O/C of the Volunteers in the area was the late Capt. Brian Houlihan, subsequently killed in his native Co. Kerry

fighting on the National Army side in the Civil War. The Commandant of the local Cumann na mBan was the late Miss Alice Cashel. The enthusiasm for the cause was terrific and I had no difficulty in getting abundance of help, not only in the Ballyjamesduff area, which happened to be strongly behind us, but from Dublin and elsewhere. In particular, I had a very active and well-informed group of canvassers, headed by Joseph Campbell, the poet, who, during the long waiting period, made an exhaustive house to house canvass of the area. The checking and examination of the voters' list for our electoral divisions were undertaken by Christy Byrne of Wicklow, who had recently come over to Sinn Féin from a strong Party background in his native county. In the interests of the Party, their long delay in moving the writ was a big mistake; for it played right into our hands, giving us plenty of time to found new clubs, perfect our machinery and spread the new gospel by personal contact, meetings and the circulation of leaflets and pamphlets.

An interesting and curious circumstance about that and every other election I was in at that time I must refer to in passing. In every district in Ireland there were always one or two "extreme Nationalists" of the uncompromising Fenian school, generally elderly men who had lived all their lives

enshadowed in the prevailing constitutional climate, regarded as dangerous "cranks" and leaders-astray of youth, cold shouldered and avoided for most part of their lives. These men were, needless to say, foremost in the ranks of the new movement. From being, at best, suspects in the community to be avoided, they became with the new resurgence highly respected patriots, looked up to and sought after by the community that but yesterday spurned them. That type of man, wherever I cam across him, had the same extraordinary characteristics - a burning, fervent nationalism, an extreme capacity of self-sacrifice, and an utter contempt for material gain or ambition. They were out-and-out whole-hoggers for the cause of Caithlín Ní Houlihan, and did not stop to estimate anything that they could command, money (the little they had), time and health in the cause. They were the salt and savour in the movement's local units.

Every Sunday during the long "Interregnum", huge demonstrations were organised at various centres in the constituency which were addressed by prominent leaders who came down from Dublin for that purpose. We had a few such in the big square in Ballyjamesduff at which Dev., Griffith, Father O'Flanagan, Rev. Dr. Paddy Browne, Seán MacCoilte, Walter

Cole, Seán Milroy, John O'Mahony, Joe Murray and others spoke.

It is hard now to give an impression in words of those monster demonstrations that were such a feature of Sinn Féin in those early days of its career. They were enormous. It looked as though the entire population of neighbouring counties, men, women and children, had poured into the town for the day, headed by bands, and escorted by long lines of marching Volunteers and Cumann na mBan girls, innumerable tricolour flags fluttering and flashing above their heads. The enthusiasm and fervour were intense, the very atmosphere appeared to be charged with exhileration and high emotion. I have never experienced anything like it since, nor never shall. The R.I.C. would be present in considerable strength at those demonstrations but, whatever the reason, did not interfere with the speakers, nor, still more strange, with the marching companies of Volunteers. We had some strange incidents, too, at that election. The British circulated a number of spies, disguised as Commercials, through the hotels in the constituency where prominent Sinn Féiners stayed and used as local headquarters, mainly to discover what secrets they could about the military side of the movement. And that might well have been the reason why the Volunteers, on the

whole, were not interfered with. Some of their spies were women, and attractive women at that. One of these women put up at the Royal Hotel, Ballyjamesduff, where we stayed during the election and where we had our local headquarters, the proprietors, Mr. & Mrs. Goldrick being very well disposed to us. This particular lady was by way of being a traveller for "Spirella" - then a very popular brand of corsets, of which commodity she carried samples and literature and made calls on the various drapers in the town though none had ever seen or heard of her before. In those days women Commercials were almost unknown, especially in small Irish country places. She was a Mrs. Something or other, was it Woods?, a very pleasant and friendly Englishwoman of about 35 or 36, with undoubted feminine attractions which she knew well how to deploy and use with effect. She made herself most entertaining to our fellows, seemed to have plenty of money, was always buying drinks and knocking them back herself, and ensured, in the last analysis, that none of them would suffer from loneliness or ennui if she could help it. The lads fell for her, of course, and even some of our maturer personalities, for she clearly had a definite enticement for men. At first I thought little about her, putting her down as one of those man-mad women who was always looking for male company and

unable to get on without it. Then, as the days passed by and she was still sojourning in the hotel, it began to strike me and some others of us that it was definitely curious. Surely, we reflected, she must have booked all the corset orders possible in that little district; and why was she not moving on to "pastures new"? Another more matter-of-fact reason for her betaking herself elsewhere was in my mind. She had got quite a coterie of young Volunteer officers and some of our younger canvassers round her, was constantly standing them drinks and preventing them from doing their work. I dearly wished she would betake herself and her charms thence, and was wondering how to effect that, when, suddenly, of her own accord and without notice or a single good-bye to her gallants, she disappeared. It appears she went to Cootehill, as we subsequently discovered. We all then felt that there was something very phoney about her ladyship and sent a full description of her to Cootehill. We heard later that the Volunteers thereupon raided her room and that of another younger and even more attractive lady "Commercial" and captured their note-books which, I understand, proved amply that they were on espionage work and that they were no amateurs at that work either. They were given a day to clear out of the constituency, which order they obeyed with alacrity and were heard of no more.

Shortly before the East Cavan vacancy, the Government replaced Lord Wimborne, the Viceroy, by Field Marshal Lord French. To those who could read the signs of the times that was a significant and sinister change. It meant one thing clearly - that the Government had decided, on the failure of the Convention and because of the disaster in France, to take the advice of the Henry Wilsons and impose Conscription on Ireland. And in order to prepare the way and blunt American opposition, the "German Plot", as we have seen, was invented. Despite the colour given to the "Plot" by the unfortunate landing of Dowling and his apprehension, nobody believed in its genuineness, least of all the superseded Viceroy, Wimborne, who shortly after its announcement declared in a letter to the press that he "considered the German Plot, and the recent activity connected with it, as coming more from the zeal of the new broom than from any fundamental changes in the condition of Ireland". The "German Plot", in conjunction with the Conscription issue, dominated that election; and the zenith of the official plan of campaign was reached on the night of May 17th when widespread and sweeping arrests of Sinn Féin and Volunteer leaders were made all over the county. I was in the hotel in Ballyjamesduff on that night. Sometime very early in the morning I was awakened by Brian Houlihan,

who told me the place was surrounded by military and that military and police were in the hall parleying with the proprietor. I dressed hurriedly and went downstairs. There I saw the local Sergeant of the R.I.C., whom I knew, with police and military officers. They were looking for John O'Mahony. They went to his rooms and woke him up with difficulty from a deep sleep, telling him to dress and come away with them. John was something of a play-boy and could act a part well. He was a big burly man, round about 18 stone, with a deep voice. As he dressed he called for a drink, and the Sergeant obligingly went down stairs and got him a tot of whiskey. John, then fully dressed and prepared to go, turned dramatically on his guard, saying "So you thought you'd take John O'Mahony alive, did you? Never", he roared, as producing from his waistcoat pocket 2 white pills, he shot them down his throat with the glass of whiskey. A few seconds after this his eyes rolled, he clapped his hands to his side and fell heavily like a log on to the floor. The consternation of his guards was something worth seeing. The poor Sergeant - a decent, harmless fellow - knelt down beside him: "Oh Mr. O'Mahony, Mr. O'Mahony, surely you wouldn't go and do the like of that, and you a Catholic". So realistic was big John's acting, for acting it was (the pills were

aspirins) that I confess I had some qualms myself, especially after his heavy and most realistic fall. John O'Mahony was the only one they arrested in Ballyjamesduff; but in other centres of the constituency they made many arrests. Indeed, in that one night, all over the county, they bereft us of our leaders, hoping that by so doing they would secure the disruption and downfall of the whole movement, thereby clearing the way for the enforcement of Conscription.

How foolish and myopic they were! Far from doing us harm, the arrests increased the ardour of our workers and brought us many more converts. They foolishly arrested our candidate, Arthur Griffith, and interned him, which, seeing that his rival was scot free, addressing meetings on his own behalf all over the constituency, caused a terrific wave of sympathy to surge up for the absent candidate. For the first two weeks of the campaign there was great doubt as to the result of the election. In my view, had the election occurred within that period, Griffith might well have been beaten. And, most certainly, had there been no threat of Conscription and no arrests, he would have been beaten. Cavan was a Northern, Conservative County. It was extremely well organised for the Irish Party with A.O.H. halls in every

half parish. And, finally, they had an excellent local candidate in O'Hanlon.

The election took place on June 21st, on the old register, of course. Griffith received 3,785 votes, and O'Hanlon 2,581; a conclusive majority of 1,200. The by-election had been fought mainly on the Conscription issue, with Ireland's representation at the Peace Conference as a secondary one. Sinn Féiners told the East Cavan electors that a vote for Griffith "was a nail in the coffin of Conscription". They argued that if the man who stood for Ireland's independence and for Ireland's representation at the Peace Conference was victorious, the enforcement of Conscription would be impossible; whereas, if the man who stood for some kind of union with England, and for England's war, was returned, Conscription would be inevitable.

But, despite Griffith's great triumph, the Government's resolve to extend the Military Service Act to Ireland certainly showed no signs of slacking. On the contrary, Castle activities against Sinn Féin became more general, more sweeping and more coercive after Griffith's return. Many cities, towns and districts were proclaimed, and money awards were offered for information as to the whereabouts of arms and ammunition.

On July 4th, 1918, American Independence Day, Sinn Féin, the Irish Volunteers, Cumann na mBan, the Gaelic League, and the Gaelic Athletic Association were proclaimed as dangerous and illegal bodies. The next day, General Sir Frederick Shaw, French's new commander-in-chief, issued an order prohibiting meetings and assemblies without prior sanction from the police or military. Sinn Féin countered by decreeing that no body under its authority was to apply for such permits; meetings under Sinn Féin auspices were to be held without British sanction.

Presently Sinn Féin's answer was translated into much more concrete and impressive terms. On August 4th, no less than 1,500 hurley matches of the condemned G.A.A. were held successfully all over the country; and on August 15th hundreds of public meetings without British permits were held, equally successfully, throughout the country.

Conscription was definitely "in the air"; it was the dominant theme, and there was every intention of enforcing it at the psychological moment. Sir Henry Wilson, its ruthless and persistent advocate, records in his diary a dinner party he attended earlier in the year with Lloyd George and Lord French There was complete agreement amongst the company that Ireland must be conscripted. "Lloyd George", writes Wilson, "impressed

on Johnny (French) the necessity of putting the onus for first shooting on the rebels. The Prime Minister, moreover, declared that he was going to table the Order in Council for Conscription in Ireland at the same time as he tabled the Home Rule Bill". Beasley writes in his "Michael Collins" book: "On the night of October 15th, large bodies of military, fully armed and equipped for active service, occupied many public buildings and various points of importance in Dublin City. At 11.30 p.m. on the night in question, the staff of most of the principle telegraph offices throughout Ireland were ordered to go on duty in their offices and hold themselves in readiness for any contingency. Next day the military abandoned their various positions without anything having happened". The view of the Volunteer G.H.Q. on these mysterious operations was given in "An tóglach" at the time: "These military activities" it said, "were in pursuance of orders previously given, as it had been arranged by the English Government and the military authorities that the Order to enforce Conscription in Ireland should be laid on the table of the House of Commons on that day - the day of the reassembling of the British Parliament. It was felt, and rightly felt, that the Irish Volunteers would accept the publication of this order as a formal declaration of war, and

act accordingly, and the military arrangements were taken with a view to this. The plot to initiate a long and ruthless warfare in Ireland in the hope of exterminating the most vigorous elements of the population and rendering Ireland impotent, was deliberately planned, and there was no change in the English Government's intentions up to the Cabinet meeting on Monday. However, the unexpected arrival of the German Peace Note, and President Wilson's reply to it, creating an entirely new situation, distrubed the plotters; and Mr. Shortt, when questioned about Conscription on the Tuesday, had 'nothing to say'".

World War 1 ended at 11 a.m. on November 11th, 1918. I was in Dublin on that day and remember it well. The City was teeming with British and imperial military and in the evening, in conjunction with the Rathmines Jingoes and "Loyalists", they paraded aggressively through the streets, waving Union Jacks and singing the British National Anthem and British war-time songs, "Tipperary" and the like.

That same day Sinn Féin opened its election campaign for the forthcoming General Election by a big meeting in the Mansion House. When that meeting concluded, the Sinn Féin crowds clashed with the rejoicing pro-British crowds, and there

were several melées and clashes between the contending parties. Those fights and skirmishings continued in the City for the following few days, culminating in a deliberately organised and very violent attack on the Sinn Féin headquarters, No. 6 Harcourt St., by British soldiers and their friends, which was beaten off by a carefully picked garrison of Volunteers, the soldiers suffering considerable casualties.

The Armistice and the surrender of the Germans put an end, of course, to the Conscription danger; and Sinn Féin proceeded to fight the election on Ireland's right to representation at the Peace Conference to have her case for independence put forward there.

Sinn Féin decided to contest every constituency in the country, thereby giving the entire country a chance to vote for its policy. However, it didn't wholly succeed in doing that. The Ulster Catholic Bishops feared that a split in the Catholic and Nationalist vote in their constituencies in the North, where they had a majority, would result in letting in a Unionist, and called upon Sinn Féin and the Irish Party to put forward an agreed candidate in those constituencies so as to maintain their representation in Catholic hands. Sinn Féin's solution was that each of these constituencies should decide by plebiscite which party they would back. That was as far

as Sinn Féin was prepared to go as, being a definite lay, republican movement with many Protestant and non-Catholic supporters, the one thing it desired to avoid was any colour that the Catholic Hierarchy, as such, dominated it. The movement appointed Eoin MacNeill to discuss the matter with Dillon and Cardinal Logue; but, to the great annoyance of the Sinn Féin Executive, MacNeill yielded to the demand of the prelates for an equal division of the seats, whereby Derry City, East Down, North-West Tyrone and South Fermanagh were assigned to Sinn Féin, and South Down, North-East Tyrone, East Donegal and South Armagh to the Irish Party. It was, indeed, a retrograde step, seeming to indicate that the great new independence movement, despite its proud claims, was controlled by the Catholic Hierarchy, and it did us considerable harm in Protestant Liberal circles that were tending towards us.

On November 25th, 1918, the British Parliament was dissolved, thereby giving the signal for one of the fiercest and most epoch-making general elections ever fought in Ireland. With the exceptions already stated, Sinn Féin nominated candidates for most of the Irish constituencies. An election Manifesto was drafted and published wherein it was set out that "Sinn Féin gives Ireland the opportunity of vindicating her

honour and pursuing with renewed confidence the path of national salvation by rallying to the flag of the Irish Republic". It declared that "Sinn Féin aims at securing the establishment of that Republic by withdrawing the Irish Representation from the British Parliament and by denying the right and opposing the will of the British Government.... to legislate for Ireland. By making use of any and every means available to render impotent the power of England to hold Ireland in subjection....."

Such was the material clauses in the Sinn Féin election Manifesto. The Republic was there certainly, but, as P.S. O'Hegarty writes, with, I think, much force, "in fact what was sold to the electorate, what they voted on, was not Sinn Féin, not the Republic, but Easter Week. The swing over to Sinn Féin, after Easter Week, was only to a limited extent due to conviction about the policy, or about the Republic. There had been in operation, since 1914, a disillusionment about England's good faith, about Home Rule, about the Parliamentary Party in general, a hardening of opinion towards a policy of doing things ourselves, of operating in Ireland and ignoring what went on in Westminster. But the executions changed that. If there had been no executions there yet would have been some response to the Insurrection itself.....

but it would have taken years to have made any impression on the Parliamentary Party. But the executions roused Ireland out of apathy and patience and hope long deferred into grief and wrath and determination, grief for the men who had died, wrath at the way they had died, and determination that the people for whom they had died would not let them down".

Sinn Féin fought the General Election of 1918 under very grave handicaps. Most of its leaders and, indeed, its candidates, were imprisoned or interned, most of its newspapers and journals were suppressed and what was permitted of them so severely censored that they were of little propaganda value. But, of course, these grave handicaps were largely compensated for by the terrific enthusiasm and labour, willingly given free, of the thousands of young and fervent workers for "the Cause".

Bob Brennan, the Sinn Féin Director of Elections, was arrested, but his place was at once filled by James O'Mara, and filled in a most capable manner.

I had sent in my name to headquarters offering to help in any capacity anywhere I was wanted in the country. One evening when I got home to my digs in Whitworth Road, Drumcondra, I found a letter awaiting me. It was from James

O'Mara asking me to call to see him without fail next morning at 6, Harcourt St. I did so, and found James up to his eyes in election work, interviewing innumerable emissaries from the country and giving out orders and commands all around him, the while he smoked innumerable cigarettes. A cigarette was never out of James's mouth, even when he was talking, with the result that the edge of his rather thick moustache was always singed. "Hello, O'Shiel"! he called to me when his eye caught me. "Congratulations! Take the 3 o'clock train from Amiens St. this afternoon for Lurgan. Donnelly 'll meet you there. Good luck", and he turned to attend to someone else.

I was completely non-plussed by this most curious greeting - half-welcome, half command; but I soon found out what it meant. It appeared that the South Antrim Comhairle Ceanntair of Sinn Féin had "unanimously" selected me as their candidate for that constituency. When I realised my fate my heart dropped, and a feeling of something far from elation at the signal honour done me, took hold of me. When James asked me was there anything further he could do for me, I replied with a sickly grin that all I would look for, or expect, would be a republican funeral! South Antrim that returned the prominent Orange leader, Captain Charles Craig,

second only to his brother, the famous James, was a great Orange stronghold where no candidate of any other colour would have a ghost of a chance. I didn't mind at all the prospect of being devastatingly defeated, which was inevitable, but I confess I feared for my skin in that area, so traditionally turbulent during an election contest. I had lively memories of past riots in the area and of the awful mauling meted out in the past to a Liberal candidate who dared to challenge the Orange hegemony there; it did not take much mental effort to imagine that if that was how a constitutional Liberal was treated, what kind of treatment could a "non-constitutional" Separatist expect?

However, there was no time to "chew the cud of sweet and bitter fancy" on such indelectable prospects. That night saw me the guest of Fr. McKillop, the P.P. of the Parish of Aghagallon, a rural district about 5 miles north of the Co. Armagh town of Lurgan. The Parish of Aghagallon, lying on the extreme S.W. of the Co. Antrim, up against the Co. Armagh border and not far from the shore of Lough Neagh, was (and, I suppose, still is) a Catholic oasis in that overwhelmingly Protestant region. Its P.P., Fr. McKillop, and his curate, Fr. McSparran (brother of James McSparran, the well-known

Northern Q.C. and Nationalist M.P.) were ardent Sinn Féiners, a remarkable singularity in itself seeing that the vast mass of the Catholic clergy in the Diocese of Down and Connor were, at the time, strong Irish Party supporters and backers of Joe Devlin, the popular M.P. for the Falls Division of Belfast, in so far as they were political at all.

That evening I opened my very forlorn campaign by addressing a small but very enthusiastic meeting in the Parish Hall, presided over by the P.P. At this meeting, the curate, Fr. McSparran, and Eamon Donnelly, the chief Sinn Féin organiser for Ulster, also spoke. If I remember aright, there was another speaker, a Canon McMeel of the Archdiocese of Armagh.

After that meeting I discussed my plan of campaign with the two priests and Eamon Donnelly. One thing, at the outset, was only too clear - that in the whole constituency they were the only two priests that Sinn Féin could rely on. The others not only would not help, but would be nearly certain to react hostilely to what they resented as an unwarranted intrusion into their good neighbourly and peaceful community by a wild harum-scarum movement from Dublin. However, despite that very inauspicious factor, all agreed that I would have to

make a serious attempt to fight the election; and Fr. McKillop, a little man with a big and very stout heart, decided that next day he'd drive me round my constituency, and would look up supporters here and there, and even call on some of the hostile priests and, to use his words, "put it up to them, whether they liked it or not". Hence it was that next morning, after breakfast, Fr. McKillop and I started forth in his modest little two-seater car. At Antrim Town we called on the P.P., the famous Fr. McCotter, a very prominent supporter of the Irish Party and a close personal friend of Joe Devlin, the influential A.O.H. President.

When Fr. McCotter came into us in the sitting-room of his home, it was clear that he did not know who I was or what our business could be, for, after a short word of welcome with Fr. McKillop he asked, coming towards me smilingly, his hand extended for a handshake, "And who is your friend?" When Fr. McKillop answered that question in his blunt, decisive way, explaining that I was the Sinn Féin candidate, Fr. McCotter stopped dead, the hand fell to his side, the smile vanished from his face, a cloud descended on his brow as he said: "Oh, I'm very sorry, very sorry indeed, Sir, but I cannot welcome you. You and your friends are trouble-makers.

You've already caused far too much trouble in the country. I cannot help or countenance you or your campaign in any way. I beg of you to leave us here in the peace and good will of all our neighbours that we enjoy, and go back to Dublin".

That unfriendly outburst caused my fiery little clerical friend to boil over with wrath and indignation. He attacked his clerical colleague bluntly and boldly, and in very unclerical language, for his attitude, and seizing his hat and taking me by the arm he hurried me out. It was quite some time before he recovered his equanimity.

The next stop was Randalstown. There happened to be a large fair in progress there as we arrived in the town, and the wide square was full of big flourishing farmers from the good farming lands in the neighbourhood. Those farmers were, of course, all, or nearly all, good Protestants, mainly Presbyterians. Fr. McKillop brought me into a small hotel where he introduced me to some young men who were our local supporters. They suggested that I take advantage of the fair-day crowds and address a meeting in the square. They thought it would be better for Fr. McKillop to make himself scarce as they were anxious to stress the non-demominational character of the new republican movement. Fr. McKillop saw their point,

quickly appreciated it and betook himself off to read his office.

The young men and myself went out into the square and mounted some vehicle or other, I forget what, where we unfurled a tricolour and proceeded to address them. One of the young men presided; I regret that his name, and the names of the others, have eluded me. A crowd of farmers gathered round us and, with hands in their trouser pockets, sticks under their arms, listened stolidly to our oratory as they puffed their pipes. When my turn came to speak I decided to build my speech on the doings of their rebel forebears that the Rising and Sinn Féin had so suddenly resurrected and popularised. So I began by asking: "Men of Randalstown, supposing someone stood up here and said that your great-great-grandfathers were the greatest rogues and traitors that ever breathed, what would you do?" One amongst them shouted, to the acclamation and "hear, hears" of the others: "Be kripes he wouldn't say it twice"! Of course that provided me with the very clue I wanted, enabling me to point out that we in Sinn Féin were all for their gallant forebears who fought and bled in that town and elsewhere in the country, over 100 years back, for an Irish Republic. It was because of those forebears of theirs, I pointed out, that we were in Randalstown that day.

And we were there to stand up for, to support and to spread their doctrines". At this a man interrupted: "They fought for the Presbyterian religion", to which I replied, "If they did, why had they so many Papists amongst them"?

We were getting on quite nicely and were appearing to interest our audience when a group ran across the square towards us from the Unionist Committee Rooms opposite, bearing Union Jacks which they waved as they sang "God Save the King". The stoical farmers grinned, but as the singing and shouting effectively put an end to the meeting there was nothing for it but to abandon it.

In the hotel bar where we proceeded to refresh ourselves after our labours, we met several of those big Co. Antrim farmers. Fine, decent men they were, and friendly too, standing us drinks whilst they counselled me "to go back to Dublin fer y'are only losin' yer time and money here fer nothin'".

I would like to stress here that neither on that occasion nor any other whilst I was endeavouring to carry on my campaign in that constituency was any violence shown to me or my supporters. The Unionist crowds contented themselves with verbal interruptions, songs and odd cat-calls. At that time

they gave us credit for being superior to our Irish Party rivals in honesty, but decidedly below them in practicality. Sinn Féin declared openly that they were out for separation from England in the form of a sovereign Irish Republic; whilst, according to the Orangemen, that was also the objective of the Redmondites but they hypocritically disguised it in the form of Home Rule. We were honest, they said, but impracticable rainbow chasers, and not worth the serious attention of responsible men.

Whilst on this aspect of things this is, perhaps, the best place to record a truly phenomenal happening, an extraordinary break with the long-established Orange tradition governing contested elections. As I have said, in former contests in an Orange stronghold like South Antrim, the Liberal opponent and his aiders and abettors went, literally, in fear of their lives. And amongst the bravest were their impersonation agents, those heroes and essential adjuncts to the electoral machinery who attended in the polling booths and, on behalf of their party, challenged prospective voters as to their voting bona fides on one or other statutory grounds. In the days of the Liberal contests, their unfortunate impersonation agents had always to get police protection on their way to and from their respective polling booths.

With the memory of many such a tempestuous "temps perdu" vividly imprinted on their minds, my impersonation agents were certainly not looking forward with much comfort to their polling-day jobs, though valiantly determined to go through with them whatever the consequences. But what was their surprise when the actual day arrived and they took up their posts in fear and trembling, to receive a cordial invitation from the ladies of the Commissariat for the Orange election helpers to share their food with them. This invitation our fellows were only too glad to accept, as the resources of their poor local organisation could not rise to such equipment. That particular election turned out to be one of, perhaps, the most peaceful, friendly and orderly in that notoriously turbulent district's electoral history. There were, of course, other areas in Ulster (and, indeed, elsewhere) where electoral contests did not come off so happily, but, in general, the Orangemen and Ulster Unionists behaved themselves well during that General Election. Curiously enough, one of the most violent and riotous elections that ever I witnessed occurred at that very time in a neighbouring constituency, but the tumult could not be blamed on Orangemen. It was the work of Catholic Nationalists. I refer to the Falls Division of Belfast where de Valera contested the

the election against Devlin, the sitting members. I spoke at a few meetings on behalf of Dev. in that election, and how I wasn't hit I can't understand, as most of the other speakers on the brake were cut and bleeding, whilst some of them, like the late Archie Savage, a Belfast publican and recent convert from Hibernianism, was knocked senseless. I shall never forget that wild, yelling, maddened Hibernian mob that pelted us for two hours with sticks, stones, rivets, rotten eggs, dead cats and rats. Only for a strong draft of Volunteers and, later, some belated help from reinforced R.I.C., I doubt if any of us would have survived intact. One of the bravest persons on our platform was Miss Eileen Davitt, Michael Davitt's daughter. She, like myself, was not hurt but she might have been, as she stood up for a full 15 or 20 minutes endeavouring to make herself heard. As a matter of fact, those of us who were called upon to undertake electioneering and

and organisation work in Ulster at that time could not but be conscious of the unhostile, if not quite friendly attitude of Orangemen to the Nationalist "new look" that we represented. If not entirely friendly, they were certainly interested, and numbers of them attended our public meetings, listening seriously to what we had to say. Sinn Féin, in its new republican garb, constantly pin-pointed and stressed the non-sectarian and secular character of its political doctrines and programme, recalling and reiterating the broad principles of toleration from the philosophy of the 1798 founders of the democratic ideal in Irish national politics. But events, as so often happens, to some extent and in certain areas, got the better of that fine pristine idealism; the new philosophy, in practice, as time went on, was not able wholly to eradicate, from certain elements within the movement, a certain core of narrow religiosity, as distinct from religion, which, when given tongue to, got more publicity and attention than it deserved or was worth. That factor played into the hands of the professional Orange bigots, ever on the look-out for reasons to maintain their vested interests, with

disastrous results - the more's the pity.

Such things, in conjunction with the shooting of Swanzy, D.I., R.I.C., (leader of Lord Mayor MacCurtain's assassins) in Lisburn on a Sunday morning, after Church service, gave the aforesaid professional Orange bigots the needful opportunity and excuse to work up and rouse the inherent and traditional fear of "popery" in the heart of Ulster Protestantism.

Well, to return to South Antrim. I traversed the whole constituency, from Toomebridge to Lisburn, and from Dunmurry to Chapeltown, holding what meetings I could, here and there, though never very large ones, for a substantial section of the Catholic and Nationalist population were irritated with us and against us, and, ultimately, if they did not vote against me, they did not vote for me. But, if my meetings were small, they made up for their size by their enthusiasm. I not only held public meetings, such as they were, but I called on as many of our supporters that I was able to contact. One of the strongest and most active of these was young Gilmore of Lisburn. His uncle had a flourishing spirit grocery in

the main street of Lisburn, and he worked with him in the business. They were well off, and both were ardent Sinn Feiners. They suffered severely in the riots after the shooting of Swanzy, their premises being burned out, compelling them to leave Lisburn. I went round a good deal in the company of Gilmore who, of course, knew the terrain well; and it was mainly through him that I made my contacts. One day, he took me by car to attend a meeting of the South Antrim Comhairle Ceanntair of Sinn Fein. It was to meet in the house of its President, who was a large farmer, and a Presbyterian in religion. The farm was situated in that progressive agricultural country between Antrim Town and Randalstown. We drove up a pleasant avenue, lined with trees, coming to a large, handsome dwelling-house. Our host, the President, whose name I am sorry to say I have forgotten, was a tall, spare, young man, in the early thirties, I should say, with a neatly cut brown beard. He was a cultured, quiet-spoken man, with a remarkable knowledge of Irish history and traditions, a very sincere, fervent and convinced Nationalist of the strongly separatist and republican type. He gave me a meal, after which the Comhairle

Ceanntair met. I was, of course, not a member; neither was Eamon Donnelly who was also present, nor, I imagine, old Dobbyn from Belfast. The President was a good chairman, and was re-elected to that post, despite the fact that some ignorant bigot raised the question of his religion - the one jarring note; but he was promptly and effectively sat on by the others, and reminded that that was not a meeting of the A.O.H. We Catholic Irish cannot afford to ignore the fact that the Orangemen have, unfortunately, no monopoly in bigotry in this little country.

Save for the names and personalities I have mentioned, I cannot remember another one of that goodly group of fifteen or twenty people. Such are the vagaries of memory.

Whilst my campaign in South Antrim was thus proceeding, Eamonn Donnelly turned up a Father McKillop's one morning, bringing with him a letter for me. To my huge surprise, it turned out to be a letter from an electoral committee of prominent Nationalists in Enniskillen, inviting me to stand for North Fermanagh as

their candidate. The letter was clearly genuine and could not be ignored, for the names were those of leading local personages, headed by the parish priest, the Ven. Archdeacon Patrick Keown, and including that of Cahir Healy - a well-known advanced Nationalist and Gaelic Leaguer.

I was exceedingly puzzled and did not know what I should do about it, particularly as I had but recently read in the press that the Comhairle Ceanntair of Sinn Fein for North Fermanagh had selected George Irvine to go forward as its candidate. George Irvine was that extremely rare thing - a Northern, Protestant, Separatist Republican, who had fought through the Easter Week Rising in 1916, had been arrested thereafter and interned, but recently liberated with other Sinn Fein prisoners. Irvine, having been duly selected by the organisation in North Fermanagh, I could not see, for the life of me, why I was now invited to stand for the same constituency and in what looked like the same interest. True, my inviters did not specifically invoke Sinn Fein, and some amongst them, like Dean Keown, were not Sinn Feiners (he was non

political); but, against that, there were a number of prominent Sinn Fein names to the invitation - that of Cahir Healy, for example, that could not be discounted.

In my bewilderment, I consulted Eamonn Donnelly, the Chief Organiser of Sinn Fein for Ulster. He, too, couldn't make out what had happened there so suddenly, and could only conjecture that, perhaps, Irvine, for some reason or other, had decided to withdraw. However, he advised me to go to Enniskillen forthwith and see my inviters, and, if the coast was clear, not to refuse to let them nominate me for that constituency, in addition, of course, to the South Antrim one.

Donnelly and I discussed that North Fermanagh situation, upside down and inside out, in all its aspects and possibilities in so far as we could gauge them. One possibility that occurred to us was that there might have been some hugger-mugger, some chicanery, as the result of which George was being ousted, perhaps by Hibernian influence which was exceedingly strong and well-organised in that area. I told Eamonn that, if I found that that was the case, I certainly would decline the invitation to stand; and that, anyhow, I would only stand with

Irvine's consent. Eamonn endorsed that decision, said it was the right and proper course in such circumstances.

On arriving at Enniskillen, I was met at the station by Cahir Healy, George Irvine, Sean B. MacManus, Frank Carney, Sean Nethercote and others of the advanced and anti-Party blend of Nationalism.

In Enniskillen, I soon discovered the solution of the mystery. It must be remembered that North Fermanagh, unlike South Fermanagh, possessed a Unionist majority on the voters' register, and was held by a Unionist, albeit by a small margin, not more than six or seven hundred votes in a total electorate of over fourteen thousand. Nevertheless, it was conclusive, and was so recognised by the Nationalists, who never contested it. True, a Liberal used to fight it, and, I think, on one occasion was actually returned; but a Nationalist, never. In pursuance of the order of Sinn Fein to contest all seats in the county, whether Unionist or Nationalist, the North Fermanagh Comhairle Ceanntair was one of the first to carry that into effect. So, shortly after the dissolution of Parliament, the Comhairle Ceanntair met

and selected George Irvine as the Sinn Féin standard-bearer for the area. Thereupon, the official Nationalists and Hibernians then began to consider putting up a candidate. It should be mentioned that, because of the recent electoral Act, conceding manhood suffrage and permitting women of thirty and over to vote, Nationalists were expected to stand a good chance of winning, provided, of course, that there was no split amongst them. Eventually, it appeared that the man the official Nationalists were contemplating putting up was Joe Gillen, a publican in the town, the local Hibernians' chief, and personally a very popular man with everybody. But it was clear to all that, if Irvine and Gillen went up, the Catholic and Nationalist vote would be fatally split, giving the Unionists an easy walk-over. Hence, overtures were made to both sides to come together and arrange some via media that would obviate all possibility of a split.

It was eventually decided to hold a plebiscite. So, on a certain Sunday after Mass, Nationalists, who were on the register of voters, voted outside their churches for the Party of their choice. I cannot now recollect the figures, but the result of that plebiscite was that Sinn

Féin won by a clear, but by no means overwhelming majority. The result came as a profound disappointment to the official Nationalists and the Hibernians, who were deadly certain that they would win, for they had a splendid local organisation, with Hibernian halls scattered all over the area. Some thought that it was doubtful whether they would ever have consented to a plebiscite, had they had any doubts as to the result. At all events, the Hibernians were exceedingly irate and bitter at their defeat, and, despite their pledge, by no means inclined to submit to a verdict so distasteful to them. They proceeded to bring forth all kinds of excuses and reasons for declining to carry out their pledge to vote. They declared that the plebiscite had not been free and impartial, that gross duress had been brought to bear on large numbers of voters by Volunteers and young Sinn Féiners, to compel them to vote against their Redmondite and Dillonite allegiance, that the voting papers had been tampered with, and that several, who were not on the register, were allowed to vote, etc., etc. Finally, they declared that nothing would induce them to go out and vote for George Irvine whose parents, they declared, sold bibles and tracts in

the town of Enniskillen and proselytized. The fact that poor George was a distinct human being, in his own right, and clearly by deliberate choice and his rebel actions, poles apart from the politics and outlook of his parents, made no appeal to them, and caused no change in their narrow and bigotted outlook. Had he been a Party supporter, it is just possible that they might have overlooked the sins of his parents; but he was on the revolutionary side of Irish nationalism, then nearly more unpopular with official Nationalism than Unionism.

As a result of this unexpected development, George Irvine generously withdrew his name, though against the wishes of many of the young Sinn Féiners and Volunteers who thought he should go forth and fight the election, even if he lost badly. Accordingly, when Irvine withdrew, I was written to and invited to stand in his stead.

Having had the position explained to me, I sought a private tete-a-tete with George Irvine, when I put my position clearly before him. I told him I was wholly ignorant of all that background until that day, and that, unless I had his willing consent to do so, I would not permit them to put me forward for the constituency, but

would go straight back next morning to South Antrim, where I was in the middle of my campaign and where, as their candidate, I was badly wanted. George, without hesitation, said I had to go forward. As far as he was concerned, having regard to the hostile attitude of the Hibernians to him personally, which he appeared to resent keenly, he said it would be useless his going forward, as, despite their undertaking, they would not vote for him; and he declared that, save for the bad taste in raising the personal element, he did not mind so much about whether he or somebody else stood for the constituency; the only thing he did mind very much about was that, whoever stood, he should be a man who stood for the principles of 1916 and Sinn Féin. He expressed himself as being satisfied in that regard about myself, and declared that, to show his endorsement of my candidature, he would stay in the constituency and help me. I thanked him for his generous reaction to an unfortunate situation, and one that must have been very painful for him.

My troubles, however, were not at an end. When I returned to my hotel, the Royal, I found my old friend and adviser, Cahir Healy, waiting for me. The Hibernians, it

appeared, were still smouldering. They were complaining that they were being ignored, and that their chief men had not met me, or heard what I had to say, or what exactly was my programme. They were saying that they knew nothing about me beyond the fact that I was a young barrister who occasionally visited their town on the hunt for briefs. Cahir said I would have to meet them; and that I should do so by myself, as any local person connected with Sinn Féin would be anathema to them. I, although a Sinn Féiner, had the advantage of being a stranger. Accordingly, it was settled that their "County Grand Lodge", or whatever it was called, would summon itself in solemn conclave for the next evening in their hall in the town, so that I could appear before it, explain myself, and let them vet me.

Next night, a cold, bleak, damp winter's night, I climbed the dark stairs of a house in Townhall Street to the room where the Grand Council of Hibernians for the County was in session. I was met on the landing, outside the closed door of the sessions room, by a man in full regalia who was clearly expecting me. He explained to me

that he was the "tiler", "porter", or guardian of the door, and bade me remain there on the landing until such time as he may have to summon me before the presence of the Grand Council.

I must have spent an hour, at least, on that draughty, dark landing, with nothing to do, or see, but to listen to the clamour of talk that was going on inside the "lodge". I could not make out a word they were saying but, judging from the din and terrific crescendos of verbiage that arose every now and again, I appeared to be the subject of a very definite controversy, and my "Cause" was having a pretty stormy passage before them. At length, the great murmuration of talk ceased abruptly, and gave place to a sudden silence, the door opened, and "Brother Tiler" brought me to the threshold, but stopped me crossing it. Then I heard a voice, in good Ulster accent, to this effect: "Brother Tiler" (or was it, "Brother Porter"?), admit the stranger!"

With a final injunction, sotto voce, from "Brother Tiler" not to say a word unless and until Brother President called upon me to do so, I was conducted up the long, narrow room to a long table, and told to stand there till

further notice. Opposite me, sitting at the table, were the chief rulers and local dignatories of the Order, resplendent, or comparatively resplendent in their trappings of office - collarettes, aprons, sashes like their Orange rivals, but, unlike the brilliant colours of those rivals, confined to two colours only, green and gold, which were not very exciting.

The silence was impressive after the terrific babble of voices I had heard, shortly before, on the landing. Presently, the President spoke, as far as I can remember, something to this effect: "Brothers of the Grand Council of the A.O.H. for the County Fermanagh, is it your wish that the stranger shall be heard?"

"Aye, aye!", came the responses from the roomful of brethren.

The President, having ascertained from "Brother Tiler" or "Brother Porter" that the door was well and truly sealed, then called upon me to address the assembled brethren, which I proceeded to do. I need not record my speech here; it resembled thousands of speakers of the patriotic type, then much in vogue. I remember referring

to the heroic Maguires of Fermanagh and their exploits, and a good cheer followed, as half of them were Maguires. I was particularly careful not to go too deeply into the controversial side of Sinn Féin philosophy, and, of course, I refrained from saying anything critical, much more offensive, about the constitutional movement. On the contrary, I gave that movement a few pats on the back for its past achievements, which, I have no doubt, did not do me any harm with the worthy brethren.

When I had finished, the President shortly and gravely thanked me, in the name of the brethren, and I was conducted forth from the conclave by "Brother Porter", and told to wait once more on the landing. In about fifteen minutes, Brother "Porter" reappeared and ushered me in before the President again, who informed me that the brethren found they could support my candidature, and would do so throughout the constituency. I duly thanked them, and took my departure.

The A.O.H. kept its promise to vote for me, by doing so, if not wholeheartedly, at least in substantial numbers. Their leaders, however, were shy about appearing and

speaking on our platforms.

As I have said, there was little or no excitement and few scenes in the course of that election. As, unlike South Antrim, there was a good fighting chance of winning the seat, I spent most of my time, during the election, in North Fermanagh, with occasional trips to my other constituency.

Dublin headquarters had instructed candidates to visit and speak at every town, village and centre in a constituency, and particularly, on no account, to ignore the Protestant and Unionist districts in the North, for we were fundamentally a propagandist movement, bringing the new evangel to all and sundry in the country. Now, there was one particular town in the constituency of North Fermanagh that proudly boasted that it was a hundred per cent. Protestant, loyal and Unionist, and that it possessed neither a Catholic church nor a Catholic family. That was the little town of Ballinamallard in the north-east of the constituency, not far from the Tyrone border. When I told my agent, Dick Herbert, of my intention to hold a meeting there, he thought I had taken leave of my senses, and proceeded to retail for me terrific stories

of anti-Catholic fury of the Ballinamallardians, which, certainly, didn't make me more enamoured of speaking there. Finally, it was arranged that I would visit the place one afternoon, as Dick had little difficulty in convincing me that a night-time meeting there would not be good for our respective healths.

Accordingly, one afternoon, Dick and I drove into Ballinamallard. The car pulled up in the main street, and, in no time, we had a crowd of about two hundred round us - mainly women and children. The men, I was relieved to see, were conspicuous by their absence - away at work. At first, they gave us little trouble, their curiosity being aroused to see what sort was the "Dublin man", as I was invariably called, though I was as Ulster as they were. Having discovered that I was just an ordinary fellow like their own fellows, without horns or a tail, they soon began to interrupt, shouting, "To hell wi' the Pope's man!" Again and again, I explained that I had nothing to say politically with His Holiness in Rome, who wasn't even aware of my existence; but it was all of no avail. And it was just surprising the din those women and children could create. Soon, they got stronger help. Three

drummers appeared on the scene, lashing their drums with canes, and this nearly turned those good women into harpies. They took the long hat-pins from their hair, and made wicked stabs with them at us. I can say I was mighty glad when our driver started his engine, and we sped out of Ballinamallard amidst a shower of stones and clods and a salvo of curses.

The polling day for most constituencies in that general election was December 13th. When the poll closed that evening, all the boxes were duly sealed and conveyed, under police guard, to Enniskillen where they were deposited in the town hall, to await the count which was postponed over Christmas, to December 31st. This was a complete departure from the usual custom which was to start the count as soon as the boxes had been collected and conveyed to the constituency centre; the reason for it was to give time for the postal votes of the soldiers and sailors, and others in the fighting services, to come in. Enniskillen was an important garrison town, and the families in the back streets there had a long, traditional connection with the local regiments, the Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers and the Inniskilling Dragoons. Those back-

street people were all Catholics, who originally came from Connaught and who formed a sort of distinctive but highly respectable community within the larger one of the township, keeping, more or less, to themselves, and living a kind of communal life of their own. Indeed, even their speech was different, with more of a Connaught than an Ulster flavour in it. As I have said, those "back-streeters" automatically joined the British Army, on reaching man's estate, and made their career and livelihood in that army, often spending years abroad, guarding the far-flung bastions of empire. With the opening of the army to women in the 1914-1918 war, their daughters and sisters also joined up, largely in the W.A.A.Cs, the W.R.Ns, the W.R.A.Fs and so forth. This enthusiasm for the British Army amongst those worthy folk was not due to any particular loyalty to it and to all it stood for, but merely because they happened to like the soldier's life, and soldiering provided them with a means of livelihood and a way of life that suited them.

December 31st, 1918, found me back at Enniskillen for the count. The town was full of soldiers and W.A.A.Cs, home on furlough for the Christmas holidays, parading in

groups up and down the streets. I spent most of that day in the town hall, in the company of my rival, Edward Mervyn Archdale, the Unionist candidate, watching the progress of the count. Archdale was a man of about sixty-five years of age, with bushy, gray side-whiskers, and a very bald pate. He looked what he was, a typical Irish small country squire of the Victorian era, more learned in hunting, shooting, fishing and rural affairs than in politics, certainly politics on anything like high horizons. He had, it seemed, served for some years in the Navy, but one would never have deduced from his appearance that he had ever been a sea-faring man.

During the count, Archdale and I were thrown much together, as everybody else in the great room was busily engaged, he and I alone being idle but highly interested spectators. He struck me as a mildly spoken, gentle old chap, quite prepared to discuss with me any topic provided that it was not controversial and that he knew something about it. He was acutely, indeed, nervously anxious about the result of the count, far more so than I was, as I could not see much real hope of my winning the seat, despite the optimism of my supporters - the small but

substantial Unionist margin in the register of voters would, I felt, from the start, provide adequately against that.

Another circumstance that was of enormous help to the Unionists was that the terrible and deadly post-war "black flu" was raging furiously throughout the constituency at the time, and falling with incredible partiality on the Catholic element, the Protestant element being uncannily immune. The explanation I got for that phenomenal state of affairs was that the Catholics were, as they were bound to be, far better church-goers than their religious and political antagonists, and hence the dire disease spread much more rapidly and more easily through their ranks.

Archdale, as I have said, was extremely anxious about the outcome of that election. And he had every reason for his anxiety at mid-day, for when the proceedings in the town hall were stayed for lunch, I was discovered, to the surprise of everyone, to be leading by several hundreds. The poor old chap was very downcast, for more reasons and less altruistic ones than the "loyalist"

cause. The old man was extremely hard-up, his farm and his naval half-pay not nearly sufficing for his needs and those of his family. It was understood that, if he were successful in retaining the seat, he would get the job of Vice President of the Department of Agriculture for Ireland, the ample salary for which would put him on his legs again. He was so miserable and anxious that I could not help feeling sorry for him, and, when he declared to me, in melancholy tones, that it looked as though I had won, I comforted him by telling him that the solid, decisive votes were always at the bottom, and reminded him that the boxes from the Unionist strongholds of Kesh, Edernay, Irvinestown, Tempo, Lisbellew, and, of course, Ballinamallard had yet to be counted.

How right I was! The count had not been long resumed after the luncheon interval when my quite substantial morning majority proceeded rapidly to diminish and presently to evaporate altogether, leaving Archdale finally the victor, with a majority of five hundred odd in a total poll of about twelve thousand. We both polled six thousand odd, he getting the majority on the odds.

Archdale and myself, with our respective election agents, Jimmy Cooper and Dick Herbert, accompanied the Sheriff on the town hall balcony. When the Sheriff announced the news to the sea of upturned faces below, the air of strain and hush that permeated the atmosphere gave way to terrific excitement, the Unionist crowds - few, significantly, in uniform - cheering madly again and again. Presently peal after peal of joyous chimes issued from the belfry of the Church of Ireland; but, suddenly, in the midst of one long peal, stopped abruptly. After about twenty minutes or so, the chimes were resumed, and rang for at least half-an-hour, more and more thunderously and joyously than ever. We learnt later the story of the sudden stopping of the chimes and their resumption. It appeared that, whilst the enthusiastic loyalists were ringing the bells, the Rector - was he Canon Walker or MacManaway? - entered his church and, in great anger, stopped the operators and ejected them from the sacred precincts.He told them that his church was a House of God for worship and prayer, and not for politics or for partisan demonstrations which, he declared, were irreverent and wholly out of place in the House of God.

When the ejected bell-ringers told their "loyal" friends what had happened, those friends were very wrath, indeed, with the Canon. So wrath were they at his interference with their "loyal" rejoicings, that a gang of them broke into the church, took possession of the belfry and, in blatant conflict with the Rector's wishes, restarted the thunderous ringing referred to. The sequel to all this bell-ringing was amusing, leaving, as I think, the final honours with the Rector. The next issue of the two local Unionist weekly papers, the "Fermanagh Times" and the "Impartial Reporter", carried numerous indignant letters, attacking, indeed, abusing the Rector for stopping the bell-ringing. However, in the next succeeding issue of these papers, there appeared a dignified letter from the Rector, putting forth his views about the impropriety of using "bells dedicated to the service of God" for a purely political purpose. But his piece de resistance was his concluding paragraph, wherein he revealed that the gang that had broken into the church after he had stopped the original ringing were all Presbyterians, not one of them being a parishioner or even a co-religionist of his! I should mention that, far from being a Nationalist or even a Liberal, the good Rector was

a strong Unionist and active supporter of Archdale; but he had a sound conception of the fundamental proprieties that large numbers of his fellow-Unionists lacked.

When the Orange cheers died off, the victor advanced to address his exultant supporters. As his words fell on my ears, I could hardly credit that I was not dreaming. Were that voice and those words, the voice and words of the nervous, mild little man in whose mellow company I had spent the day? It was a violent, rabble-rousing, bitter speech, such as would be made by the average semi-educated Orange mob orator. I have, of course, long forgotten the verbiage, but its gist I could not forget. He congratulated his "fellow Orangemen and fellow Loyalists" (I think that was the sequence) for clearing the "rebels, traitors and pro-Germans out of loyal North Fermanagh", which ever would remain under the Union Jack and the King's Crown. And so on and so on, in those stereotyped Orange lines.

When he had finished, I stepped forward to speak, seconding the vote of thanks to the Sheriff and his officers as was my right, indeed, duty, by electoral tradition and custom. But not a word of mine could be heard.

Archdale's violent speech had so inflamed his crowd that it became a yelling, raging mob. I stood there on that balcony, looking down on a sea of roaring mouths and fluttering Union Jacks - helpless - shouting myself hoarse, but not being able to hear a word I uttered in the terrific din. Beside me was Archdale, grinning appreciatively at his supporters and waving to them, obviously pleased at their prompt reaction to his provocative harangue, and not making the slightest effort to stop them.

Suddenly, in the midst of all this racket, a great yell came from further up Townhall Street, and, the next instant, I saw a huge mob of soldiers and sailors, with a goodly sprinkling of W.A.A.Cs, all, of course, in uniform, come charging down the street. "Army backers for Archdale's crowd", thought I to myself, apprehensively; and I began to wonder how on earth I'd manage to get back to my hotel with a sound skin. But - <u>mirabile dictu!</u> - almost as such anxious thoughts were passing through my mind, the khaki crowd, instead of joining in with the brawling "loyalists", milled into them. Yes, incredible to relate, His Majesty's soldiers and soldieresses were

actually attacking their, presumably, fellow-loyalists! Five or ten minutes of a terrific melée ensued, in which several "loyalists" were stretched out on the street, resulting in the wholesale rout of Archdale's men. On looking down again, I beheld a great swarm of khaki-clad soldiers and W.A.A.Cs, now in complete occupation of the town hall frontage, waving innumerable Sinn Féin flags, cheering and giving tongue to such slogans as "Up Sinn Féin!, "Up the Republic!", "Up the Rebels!" To my utter astonishment, it dawned upon me that His Majesty's soldiers were not loyal Archdale's supporters but mine. They escorted me back to my hotel in great force, chanting lustily, as they marched, the "Soldier's Song". Only for that latter episode and the tricolour they carried, a stranger, coming suddenly on those scenes, would undoubtedly have taken me, surrounded as I was by enthusiastic supporters, seventy per cent. in uniform, as the "loyalist" candidate, and that Archdale, with his almost entirely civilian supporters, was the rebel candidate

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Next day, I had to travel by a morning train to Lisburn to see my South Antrim supporters there, either

to commiserate with them on my defeat by a majority of of over twelve thousand, or to rejoice that, despite all the difficulties, the preponderating Unionist vote in the constituency, the small help from the clergy and the local Nationalist leaders, that we managed to save our deposit of £150, and to get it returned.

When I arrived at Enniskillen station for my train, with my friends, Cahir Healy, Frank Carty, Sean Nethercote and Sean Carty of Belleek, who were seeing me off, I was surprised to find the platform crowded with soldiers and W.A.A.Cs on their way back to rejoin their various units after the Christmas recess. When they saw me, they swarmed round me, cheering and shouting rebel slogans and waving tricolours, to the embarrassment and obvious vexation of their officers who stood by, with frowning visages, but powerless to interfere. I had the company of those enthusiastic backers of mine to the parting of our ways at Dundalk, I changing there for Lisburn and they going on to Dublin. All of them, who had votes, seemingly voted for me as they informed me more than once during that journey, for it was the aftermath of the Christmas holidays,

and the spirit of festivity was still within them.

Well, so much for that particular North Fermanagh election. Archdale's bitter and provocative speech does not seem so incredible to me today as it did forty years ago. In the perspective of forty years, I can more objectively measure up the position as it then was, and see its crucial possibilities much clearer than I could then. The great fear of the Unionists and their great relief when their victory, albeit by a narrow majority, removed, or greatly weakened that fear, are very understandable today; for, had I won, it would have meant that the entire parliamentary representation of the County Fermanagh would have been held by Sinn Féin - in other words, by anti-partitionists of the most uncompromising type. It should be borne in mind that, at that time, partition talk in connection with Lloyd George's latest Home Rule Bill, was rife, and hovered as ever over what the precise area was to be. Had I won, that must have meant that it would have been extremely difficult, not to say impossible, for the British Government to have placed the County Fermanagh under a Belfast Partitionist Parliament. In that event - and it very nearly came

off - the "Six Counties" would have been only the "Five Counties"; and we would have been the "Twenty-Seven Counties" instead of the "Twenty-Six Counties". It had, indeed, been a narrow shave, and their explosive relief, in the shape of turbulent conduct and violent language, was, doubtless, understandable, if not excusable, in the circumstances. Archdale had, of course, a further and most material reason for elation at the result, particularly salient in the case of an old man - his contingent job. And the double reasons, his future well-being and the fate of the County in the coming order of things, no doubt accounted for his tirade, and made it less inexcusable.

There was one quite unexpected happening after the election that affected the local Sinn Féin organisation in a quite unexpected way. I have told how George Irvine, a Protestant Republican who had fought in the G.P.O., had, prior to the church-door plebiscite to secure unanimity amongst anti-partitionists, been selected by the local Comhairle Ceanntair of Sinn Féin to stand as its candidate at the election. His selection had also been duly ratified by the Sinn Féin Headquarters in Dublin.

Owing to subsequent events that I have already gone into, I was brought on to the Fermanagh scene in great haste (as it was then close to nomination day), and knew little then about all these happenings and the background that gave rise to them. As I have said, I accepted the invitation of the local Sinn Féiners to stand, having first got the approval of Eamonn Donnelly, the Chief Sinn Féin Organiser for Ulster, and the consent of George Irvine. I told the latter that, if I did not get his assent to my nomination as candidate, I would absolutely refuse to go forward. As I have recorded, I not only got his assent but his support, which facts he has magnanimously acknowledged in letters to the press then, and on numbers of occasions since.

Now, it appeared that a number of his friends and supporters in the local organisation were, not unnaturally, greatly annoyed at the way he was treated - rejected because of the antagonism of sectarian elements amongst the Nationalists, not because of anything he did himself, but because of what his parents had done. Well, to make a long story short, the whole matter was brought up before

the Standing Committee of Sinn Féin in Dublin, which found against the rejection of Irvine and the subsequent approval of me by the local Comhairle Ceanntair.

I confess I am very hazy as to whether the local Comhairle Ceanntair was suspended by Headquarters or suspended itself; but there was no doubt as to the result of those proceedings, which were that the entire Sinn Féin organisation of North Fermanagh remained outside the official national Sinn Féin movement for over the year; and carried on, during that term, quite satisfactorily as a kind of "independent Sinn Féin" body. It was, of course, ultimately readmitted to the fold. In this respect, the North Fermanagh Comhairle Ceanntair of Sinn Féin can be said to have made history, as I do not think that there was another case like it, certainly on so large a scale, involving so many clubs.

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I have little more to record about South Antrim. I was, of course, thoroughly trounced by my formidable Orange opponent, Captain Charles Craig, brother of Sir James Craig, the Ulster Unionist leader. It remained only for

me to go there and thank my good friends and supporters for the splendid help and backing they gave me in an utterly forlorn cause.

On the day I arrived in Lisburn, there was a great Orange demonstration in the town to celebrate the victory over the "rebelly Shinners". I happened to be in the shop of my good friends, the Gilmore's, which was situated in one of the central streets of the town, talking to Mr. Gilmore, his nephew and a few others, who were telling me all about how very peaceful the election had been, and how kind the Unionist Commissariat and its ladies had been to our election agent and helpers. Outside, there was a rising crescendo of that "musical noise" which is ever the characteristic of Orange processions, an extraordinary melange of divers sounds - brass instruments, fifes, melodeons, bag-pipes, crowned and nearly drowned by the thunder of the numerous big drums and the continuous rattle of the kettle-drums.

As the procession was passing the shop, two little Unionist lassies whom I had met and chaffed about the "awful Sinn Féiners", gay with Orange and "loyal" bunting

and ribbons, ran into the shop to me, crying, "Come'n out, Muster Shiel! Come'n out'n watch yerself bein' burnt wi' Kaiser Boll!" So, each seizing an arm, they pulled me out into the street,, where presently I found myself walking alongside the big procession not far from a great lorry that was, clearly, the central feature of the procession. On a platform erected on that lorry were two dummy figures, fondly embracing each other. The girls explained those figures to me. "Ye see th'auld fellow wi' the big whoskers, carryin' the German flag?" - pointing to a dummy with a huge, upturned handle-bar moustache - "Well, thon's the Kaiser! An' ye see the fellow wi' the Sinn Féin flag in Kaiser Boll's arms? Well, thon's yerself!"

The procession and bands paraded through the town, myself, festooned by my fair escort, along with them. Everybody knew who I was, the worsted Sinn Féin candidate, and I got much chiding and back-cracks - but all the best of good humour. It was a "fiesta"; and Lisburn was out to enjoy itself. Finally, the procession halted at the bridge, and "Kaiser Bill" and "myself" were duly set on fire, and hurled in flames down into the Lagan, where I

watched my "corpse" and that of my "ally" firely dissolving in the dark waters, to the hilarious but extremely good-humoured cheers of the crowd. Later, I repaired, with some your Orange friends of my fair escort, to a tavern, "till we wake ye!", which, with much affability and hospitality, they did. Next day, I took leave of my good friends, Orange and Green, of Lisburn and returned to Dublin.

THE FOUNDING OF DÁIL ÉIREANN.

The final results of the historic general election of 1918, published on December 30th, disclosed that out of Ireland's 105 elected M.P.s, 73 were Sinn Féiners, 26 Unionists, and 6 were all that remained of the once powerful Irish party that had dominated the Irish scene for nearly half a century. It even lost its new leader, John Dillon, who, in his Mayo constituency which he had held for the greater part of a lifetime, had been replaced by de Valera who received 8,843 votes to his 4,451 - almost a two to one majority which Devlin's sweeping victory in the Falls Division of Belfast of 8,488 votes to de Valera's 3,245 did not compensate for. Even so recently as the beginning of that year, the Irish Party and O'Brienites had held 80 seats. The people had voted against the Irish Party and for the new Sinn Féin policy, particularly that part of it which dealt with the bringing of Ireland's case for independence before the forthcoming Peace Conference, by 70% of the valid votes cast. In all Ireland, out of a total of 1,526,910 recorded votes, the Unionists received 315,394, or about 20%.

(I have taken these figures from Dorothy Macardle's "The Irish Republic". They seem to me to represent the position

as it emerged from that election. But, for purposes of comparison, I give those from a singularly hostile and biassed source, Serjeant A.M. Sullivan, in his book - "Old Ireland" (P.237) gives this version and analysis of the voting at that General Election: - "Total on Register - 1,926,274. In contested seats, 1,451,496. In non-contested seats, 474,778. Total who voted in contested seats, 1,008,551 = 69.3% of votes on the Register; 443,000 voters abstained from voting in contested seats. Analysis of the Voting - Sinn Féin - 474,540 or 32.2%; Nationalists - 225,188 or 15.5%; Unionists - 308,823 or 21.2%. Sullivan's analysis strikes me as completely phoney as even English papers conceded that the country had gone solidly Sinn Féin, but I have not the time to check it.

The fundamental principle of Sinn Féin was not to ask others, particularly not the Conquerors, to concede us our freedom, but, if and when backed substantially by the people, to go forth boldly and proclaim it, and set about creating the necessary machinery to maintain and operate it. In the face of that undoubted mandate from the people, it was now up to Sinn Féin to carry out its promises as far as it was able to do so. Accordingly, 3.30 p.m. on January 21st was the hour and

date appointed for the assembly of the elected M.P.s, all of whom had been duly notified accordingly. Only Sinn Féin M.P.s, however, accepted the invitation, and of these only 36 were free to, and actually did turn up, no less than 37 of their colleagues being "Fé ghlas ag Gallaibh" and so unable to do so. The proceedings of that assembly opened with a prayer in Irish by Father Michael O'Flanagan, the Chaplain, after which a document called "The Provisional Constitution of Dáil Éireann" was read by the Chairman - Cathal Brugha - and passed unanimously. That extremely brief document consisted of six short sections, in none of which is there any reference to much less a definition of, the Irish Republic or what area it covers. The first of these declared that "Dáil Éireann shall possess full powers to legislate and shall be composed of Delegates (Teachtaí) chosen by the people of Ireland from the present constituencies of the country". It provided for a Cabinet or Ministry of five - a President elected by the Dáil and four Ministers chosen by the President so elected and endorsed by vote of the Dáil. The Ministers so created were those of Finance, Home Affairs, Foreign Affairs and Defence, filled respectively by Eoin MacNeill, Michael Collins, Count Plunkett and Dick Mulcahy.

The name of the State was declared to be, in English, "The Irish Republic" (not, be it noted, "The Republic of Ireland), and in Irish "Saorstát Éireann". A Declaration of Independence was then read in Irish and English and duly passed. The essence of that document, also praiseworthily brief, was that having recalled that the Irish Republic was proclaimed in Dublin on Easter Monday, 1916, it went on to say that "Now therefore we, the elected Representatives of the ancient Irish people in National Parliament, do, in the name of the Irish nation, ratify the establishment of the Irish Republic and pledge ourselves and our people to make this declaration effective by every means at our command". The acceptance of that Declaration was proposed by the Chairman, Cathal Brugha, and seconded by Pierce Beasley, when all Deputies rose to their feet and, raising their right hands, pledged themselves in Irish to endeavour to make it an effective reality by every means in their power.

At this first meeting of the Dáil there was also passed a "Message to the Free Nations of the World", and a very radical and highly dubious "Democratic Programme" that, in the course of time was discreetly dropped and forgotten about. That historic session, the first of the First Dáil, lasted

but two hours. The proceedings were watched by numerous interested spectators, including many foreign visitors and journalists. Everything went off most successfully. The new Irish State, by the will of the people, had been well and truly founded. But it might not have been; at least on that occasion and in that wise; for it was only long, long afterwards that it was known that the Irish Privy Council held a meeting and decided by a majority of one vote not to suppress the Mansion House assembly. By such slender margins is history made.

The dignified and efficient character of that first meeting of Dáil Éireann attracted the British and foreign press, and drew from them, even the inimical ones, encomiums of praise and appreciation. Curiously enough, it was a traditionally friendly paper that lost its sense of proportion and turned somewhat "catty" in its observations on the event. In its issue of January 22nd, the "Manchester Guardian" thus commented: "The Republican theatricalism, which had its absurd climax in the gathering of the Irish 'Constituent Assembly' will not be taken seriously in this country". Strange language, and sadly unprophetic at that, to come from the great organ of enlightened Liberalism; but, as we know, even Homer nods.

January 21st, 1919, can now be recognised in perspective as one of the significant, indeed, crucial dates in latter-day Irish history. On that day a sovereign democracy had been decreed to exist in Ireland, and though the number of elected M.P.s so decreeing it amounted only to about a third of the entire Irish Parliamentary representation and to only half of the Sinn Féin members, it was, nevertheless, effective and had certainly behind it, in principle, at all events, the will and good wishes of at least 70% of the populace though it did not claim to do more than establish a Provisional Constitution. Many and great changes in the country flowed from that happening. From that time onward interest in the doings of the British Parliament and its personnel, for so long prime items of news in Ireland and the national press, decreased strikingly and, in a remarkably short time, faded away altogether. The men of the new movement, by their imaginative action, had thereby succeeded in carrying out that first maxim of Sinn Féin as advocated for so long by Griffith, viz. to concentrate national attention on the national parliament, Dáil Éireann, and not on that of Westminster; in other words, on Ireland and not on England. In the new House of Commons

that assembled early in the year, nearly 70% of the Irish representation was missing and their seats vacant. That Parliament, won on the despicable and wholly dishonest slogan "Hang the Kaiser", returned an overwhelmingly Conservative representation, practically annihilating the Liberal Party and seriously attenuating the Labour. Lloyd George, the ex-Liberal and quondam Radical, became Prime Minister again, this time of a Government euphuistically styled a "National Coalition" but, in fact, a virulently Tory one.

Apart from its imaginative and symbolistic significance to the country, the newly created Dáil was soon to discover that an assumption of governmental functions and authority involved, in due course, the taking on of grave responsibilities, to say nothing of the risks. My chronicle, as it proceeds, will record some of those responsibilities and the steps taken to discharge them. Now, whilst I am on the subject of Dáil Éireann I might as well trace out here its evolution and its constitutional development within that year of 1919.

On March 9th, the British Government, in one of its queer see-saw and vacilating reactions that so characterised

its Irish policy, suddenly released, unconditionally, all the Sinn Féin members it had interned without trial and held in England for months past. Because of those compulsory absentees from the inaugural meeting of the Dáil in January, the Ministry then elected was, avowedly, but a temporary stop-gap one. Accordingly, on April 1st Dáil Éireann was recalled and met in open session in the Mansion House for two days. Brugha's Ministry resigned and de Valera was, thereupon, elected "Priomh-Aire", or First, or Prime Minister of Dáil Éireann. And here is, perhaps, as good a place as any to draw attention to the fact that neither then, nor at any time prior to the Treaty of 1922, was there express and specific provision made in the Constitution for the office of "President of the Irish Republic" let alone of the "Republic of Ireland". Beasley, in his book on Collins, thus explains the reason for that rather fundamental lacuna in the Constitutional instrument; on P. 295 he writes:

> "It was manifest that Dáil Éireann could not arrogate to itself the right of electing a 'President of the Irish Republic'. The constitution made the position of the Priomh Aire quite clear. Dáil Éireann was defined as the supreme Legislative power, and the Aireacht or Ministry as the supreme executive

power; the Aireacht consisted of the Priomh-Aire, or Prime Minister, elected by the Dáil, and other Ministers nominated by the Priomh-Aire and ratified by vote of the Dáil. In accordance with this Constitution, de Valera was unanimously elected Priomh-Aire, and nominated eight other Ministers to constitute the Executive, his nominations being unanimously approved by the Dáil. The most noteworthy change was the appointment of Michael Collins as Minister of Finance. The other Ministers were: - Arthur Griffith, Home Affairs; Cathal Brugha, Defence; Count Plunkett, Foreign Affairs; W.T. Cosgrave, Local Government; Eoin MacNeill, Industries; Countess Markievicz, Labour; and Robert Barton, Agriculture..... The most essential departments were Home Affairs, Finance, Defence and Local Government, and, to a lesser extent, Agriculture".

Dev. was undoubtedly known in English as President de Valera, but, in view of Beasley's explanation and the absence of any more specific qualification, he would appear to have been President of the Ministry, just as he was President of Sinn Féin and President of the Irish Volunteer organisation. Although the Irish Republic had been re-proclaimed and set up, its specific headship had, seemingly, not been definitely created or filled for the reasons given by Beasley, P.S. O'Hegarty and other writers on the period who had the great advantage of participating in those events. To a certain extent, the position was not unlike that of Switzerland, where the First, or Prime Minister

in the Government is also the actual head of the Swiss State, save that in this case, he is so by a direct provision in the Swiss Constitution. But whatever about that, Dev., as I have said, held these three presidencies of Dáil Éireann, Sinn Féin and the Volunteers simultaneously, which, to a considerable extent, were co-ordinated in his person. But whilst I am on this subject I should record that, at a session of the Dáil held on August 26th, 1921, during the Truce and the Treaty negotiations, for the purpose of electing its officers, Dev. was proposed for the position of "President of the Irish Republic" by Gen. Seán McKeon, T.D., and seconded by Gen. Mulcahy, T.D. There was, however, no attempt to define that expression and, in fact, in the absence of definition its functions appeared to equate to those of Priomh Aire, which, as we have seen, was provided for in the Constitution. Otherwise he was being elected to an office that was not to be found in the Constitution. Whatever about the political body of Sinn Féin itself, it was obviously important for the Dáil, under its appropriate organ, to get and maintain control of the Volunteers on which the new government had to rely for its defence and its striking power. The need for that control was, apparently, recognised at a very early

stage in the life of the Dáil. On this point of the relationship of the Volunteers with the Dáil, Beasley writes in the aforesaid book on Collins: -

"As to the attitude of Dáil Éireann and its Ministry, it need only be pointed out that Cathal Brugha, first as the Acting President of Dáil Éireann, and later as Minister of Defence, was responsible to the Ministry and the Dáil, and accepted entire responsibility for all the acts of warfare of the Irish Volunteers; that sums of money were voted to the Ministry of Defence regularly by the unanimous vote of the Dáil; that verbal reports of the activities of the Volunteers were submitted by the Minister at every meeting of the Dáil; that it was open to any Deputy on any of these occasions to ask any question or raise any objection he wished to the war policy of the Volunteers; and that on no occasion did any Minister or Deputy express dissent from that policy except at a meeting held in January, 1921. On that occasion..... two members, and two only, Roger Sweetman and Liam de Róiste, objected to the war policy of the Volunteers, but every other member was emphatically in favour of it, and the decision of the Dáil was virtually to give the Volunteers a free hand".

It would appear that there was considerable hesitation amongst some of the Volunteer leaders in desiring to be taken over by, and put under the control of the Dáil. Figgis in his "Irish War" (P.260), referring to the Volunteers, writes: -

"Since that body had been founded in the autumn of 1913, it had been responsible to no authority other than its own elected Executive. Now (January, 1919), however, the Irish Volunteers as such ceased to exist, and the organisation became instead the Irish Republican Army. It is significant of the independence that the Volunteers had always asserted that in the late spring, or early summer of the year 1919, they held a special Convention to consider whether they should accept the change, and submit to the authority of Dáil Éireann..... I have sometimes wondered, indeed, whether that submission would have been gained but for the high authority of Eamon de Valera. In the end, however, as the result of the firm stand he took on that question, the Volunteers..... became the Irish Republican Army, directly responsible to Dáil Éireann, through the Minister for Defence appointed with the consent of that Assembly".

When we remember that Figgis was one of Dev's most constant and articulate critics, that is, indeed, a high tribute to him.

As I have already pointed out, the attitude of the new Sinn Féin, as remodelled and refloated after 1916, and later, the earlier attitude of Dáil Éireann, was far from being belligerently offensive. Indeed, until events made that impossible, the policy was to play down the military end of things as much as possible, and to emphasise more the constructive and pacific side of policy. It is true that the Volunteers had been remodelled and expanded at the time of the Conscription threat, for it was obvious

that, if the Sir Henry Wilsons and the Castle had their way, and Conscription was enforced on the country, the Volunteers would have been the nation's sole means of meeting it in any effective way. The President, de Valera, put the position thus before the Dáil in its session of April 10, 1919:

> "Towards the persons of those who hold dominion amongst us by military force we shall conduct ourselves with all needful forbearance. We shall observe the rules they have laid upon us so long as those rules do not violate our personal liberty, nor our consciences, nor our duty to our country".

Once again to quote Beasley:

> "Dáil Éireann attempted to function peaceably, with the approval of the majority of the people, and there was a disinclination for some time to resort to drastic measures; but the attempted suppression of the National Government, the raids, arrests, and outrages forced the Volunteers, more and more, to extreme measures".

To follow the changes and growth, such as they were, in the very rudimentary Constitution of the new state, we come next to August, 1919. On the 20th of that month a secret session of the Dáil was held in the Mansion House, and at that session Cathal Brugha proposed a motion that every deputy, officer and clerk of the Dáil and every member of the Irish Volunteers "must swear allegiance to the Irish Republic

and to the Dáil". He thereupon put forward the following form of oath, adapted from the American form: -

> "I, A.B., do solemnly swear (affirm) that I do not, nor shall not, yield a voluntary support to any pretended Government, authority or power within Ireland hostile and inimical thereto, and I do further swear (or affirm) that to the best of my knowledge and ability I will support and defend the Irish Republic and the Government of the Irish Republic which is Dáil Éireann, against all enemies, foreign and domestic, and I will swear true faith and allegiance to the same, and that I take this obligation freely without any mental reservation or purpose of evasion, so help me God".

Nevertheless, despite the appointment from the start of a Minister of Defence, and despite that oath that all Volunteers had to swear, there would appear to have been always a considerable element of doubt as to what control the Dáil actually had over the I.R.A. and its activities. So late as March 11th, 1921, we find Dev., as President, speaking thus to the Dáil: -

> "He felt in America and since he came home that the Dáil was hardly acting fairly by the Army in not publicly taking full responsibility for all its acts. He mentioned this view to the Minister of Defence, and his criticism was that to accept war now in any more formal way than they had done, could be misrepresented as an admission that they were not

carrying it on in a regular manner heretofore.....
He discussed the arguments for and against formal acceptance, and said it was a very serious decision to take, and he would like the meeting to consider it carefully. If the acceptance were agreed to they could instruct their consuls abroad to look for belligerent rights. His opinion was they should agree to the acceptance of a state of war. It meant every member would take an equal responsibility".

In speaking on the motion re the preparation of a statement on the matter - which was passed - Deputy MacEntee said he thought the Dáil should accept the army as being the army of the Republic, which came under their control in January, 1919.

If that was the case, there did not seem to be any call for the President's apprehension on the matter.

(Extract from Sir James O'Connor's History, P.310).

That oath was the third document that together can be said to constitute the fundamental or foundation instruments of the newly erected sovereignty. The other two were (a) the "Declaration of Independence" and (b) the "Provisional Constitution of Dáil Éireann", both enacted by the Dáil at its inaugural meeting on January 21st, 1919.

As regards the first, we have seen that a polity called the "Irish Republic" was therein proclaimed, but no

attempt was made in that instrument to define what that expression meant, or what it referred to or included. As regards the second document, the provisional constitution, there is no mention of a republic, or, indeed, title of any government. As regards the third document, the oath of allegiance, the pledge swears to "support and defend the Irish Republic and the Government of the Irish Republic". Again, whilst there is no definition of the expression "Irish Republic", or no indication as to what it is intended to comprise - one county, ten or thirty-two , for example - there is a clear definition of the term "Government of the Irish Republic" which is declared to be Dáil Éireann. All those instruments, from the Easter Week Proclamation onwards, would have been much clearer and much less confused and uncertain on the cardinal point of the entity they referred to and were meant to apply to, had the expression, so current to-day, been used, viz. the "Republic of Ireland". One thing, however, emerges with certainty from these fundamental documents, viz. the supreme sovereign power of the undefined state referred to in the body known as "Dáil Éireann". But all this is, of course, pure legalistic pin-pointing, for, though those documents were vague on the

important point of the actual description of the new State, there was no doubt at all in the minds of the public as to what it was, and what it was intended to be. But, as we know, the rigid letter of the law in matters at issue, more often than not, prevails. Hence the importance of having written Constitutions made as water-tight as possible. That, however, was hardly possible of achievement in the highly disturbed times and violent conditions which then obtained. All that could be arrived at was what actually was arrived at, an ad hoc provisional constitution carrying the barest working essentials.

The much-vexed question as to what the precise character of the polity decreed by the First Dáil - for example, its Juridic in contra-distinction from its popular concept, was one that thirty years ago, intrigued men's minds vastly and led to an enormous amount of intense, and, indeed, bitter controversy. The differences of view on what exactly was intended were extreme, for the men leading the two irreconcileably disparate and sharply clashing schools of opinion were men of absolute integrity and honesty. However, as I have, as I had to, touched on the matter, albeit but lightly, I had better give yet another view from a prominent

polemic of the Griffith school, so as the better to round off what I have written about it. I shall let Darrell Figgis speak for himself: -

"For this was the meaning of the news borne to us (in Durham Gaol) by the papers that came from Ireland. They announced that all the national representatives available had met in solemn assembly as Dáil Éireann in the Mansion House, Dublin, on the 21st January, 1919..... One of the few remaining copies of the original published proceedings (entitled in Irish, Dáil Éireann) lies before me as I write; and there it appears that a brief temporary Constitution in five articles was moved and adopted in Irish. The first article declared that of the deputies elected by the Irish people from the constituencies that then existed, Dáil Éireann should be constituted, with full powers to make laws. The second created a Premier-Minister (not, be it noted, a President, for the word is Priomh-Aire, of which the interpretation is Premier-Minister, and four other Ministries..... The third created a Chairman of Dáil Éireann, under the name of Ceann Comhairle..... The fourth made the Minister for Finance strictly accountable..... to Dáil Éireann. And the fifth declared this Constitution to be of a temporary nature, stating the procedure by which it might be changed..... But now followed the famous Declaration of Independence - a right and proper prelude to war, but not right (as I thought) or proper, as a prelude to an appeal to a World's Congress. This declaration is usually referred to as the declaration of the Republic; but the wording adopted in Irish, French and English, speaks deliberately of the ratification of the declaration of the Republic

already made as the prelude to the Easter Rising.

Let me, in candour, repeat that the misgiving in my mind existed purely in regard to procedure, not in regard to the end to be sought. In the mind of none of us at that time (except, perhaps, Arthur Griffith) was there question of the intention to establish a Republic. But the next act of the Assembly was to appoint three Envoys to lay the case of Ireland before the Peace Conference..... and I asked myself, would Envoys petition a Congress to investigate the case made by their nation for independence, when their mere reception would imply that the Congress had already received them in the name of an independent State, proclaimed and established? Obviously, those who had decided on this procedure had perceived this difficulty..... For the next act of the Assembly was to adopt a 'Message to the Free Nations of the World', and the first paragraph of this 'message' read: - 'The Nation of Ireland having proclaimed her national independence, calls through her elected representatives in Parliament, assembled in the Irish Capital on the 21st January, 1919, upon every free nation to support the Irish Republic by recognising Ireland's national status and her right to its vindication at the Peace Congress'. The 'message' then proceeded to recite the arguments in favour of that recognition..... And, so framed, it was clearly an attempt to avert the difficulty that had already been created; but..... it could hardly hope to do that. For hardly would the free nations of the world be expected to give their official recognition to an act so hostile to a great Power like Great Britain, though they might have been asked, reasonably and without prejudice, to

investigate a national claim - and that of itself would have been a notable advance".

If I have understood it aright, Figgis's contention would appear to have been that what the Assembly of 21st January, 1919, did was to create and proclaim a provisional constituent assembly, vesting it, in the name of the Irish People, with full powers, primarily for the express purpose of presenting a national case before the forthcoming Peace Conference.

And here I will leave that vexed subject, which I confess I do not fully grasp, to the historical lawyers of the twenty-first century should they think it worth their while to disentangle it.

THE DÁIL LOAN.

Dáil Éireann, being the very tangible symbol of the national sovereignty that it was, certainly had no love thrown away on it by the British Government. That Government was not slow to see in it, powerless and pretentious as it appeared to be, a serious menace to its authority. Hence its members were constantly harried and pursued, gaoled, interned, released, re-arrested, re-gaoled etc., and there were warrants out for the arrest of those of

its Ministers that were still at large. In its early life it was allowed to hold its sessions in the open without any interference, for, I think, two reasons: firstly, because it consisted of duly elected representatives of the people, and it hardly looked well, in the eyes of the world, for a country that proclaimed it had been fighting a purely altruistic war for the preservation of democratic institutions, to come along and suppress convocations of its elected representatives; secondly, there was always that consummation devoutly to be hoped for in matters Hibernian - another thundering good "split" after the Parnell model. At all events, despite the enormous difficulties created for it by its powerful foe, the Dáil Government took itself very seriously indeed, and was taken very seriously by the people from whom it had sprung, and for whom it acted. It met at intervals, openly in the Mansion House when possible, or secretly where and when it could, and passed its Acts, or "Decrees" as they were called.

A very important, audacious, and, in the circumstances of the times, highly optimistic decree was "Decree No. 3" passed on the third day of the second (private) session. That Decree authorised the Ministry to issue 5% Republican

Bonds in respect of a National Loan to the value of £250,000 in Ireland and (subsequently) 5,000,000 dollars in the U.S.A. Michael Collins, as the Minister for Finance, was the driving force, indeed, the genius behind the loan, and the man principally responsible for its phenomenal success. He advertised its issue in all newspapers as follows: -

> "The proceeds of the Loan will be used for propagating the Irish case all over the world; for establishing in foreign countries Consular Services to promote Irish Trade and Commerce; for developing and encouraging the re-afforestation of the country; for developing and encouraging Irish industrial effort; for establishing a National Civil Service; for establishing Arbitration Courts; for the establishment of a Land Mortgage Bank, with a view to the re-occupancy of untenanted lands, and generally for national purposes".

These objectives in that statement might have been taken holus-bolus from the original aims and objects of Sinn Féin as drafted by Arthur Griffith. It was cleverly worded, and not one of the objects set forth in it were, or could possibly be construed as being in any way illegal from the British angle. Even the establishment of Arbitration Courts; for there was nothing in English law to prevent parties, by agreement, bringing their disputes before arbitrators to

arbitrate thereon. Nevertheless, all the papers that published that advertisement were at once suppressed by an Order of the British Military Authorities. Amongst the papers that succumbed under that order was Griffith's "Nationality", but his other paper, "Young Ireland", escaped, curiously enough, and he carried on with it. It is of interest to record here that most of the work outlined in that statement was duly carried out by the invisible Dáil Government and its departments, driven underground as they were.

As I have said, the Dáil was very much in earnest, and, in particular, its very able and active Finance Minister, whose motto, off reiterated in those days, was, "Get on with the work". Inefficiency always roused Collins's wrath, and failure due to ineptitude threw him into a thundering passion. Once a course of action was decided on, Michael had but one idée fixe in his head, to get it done as thoroughly and as speedily as possible. The people were, unquestionably, four-square behind the new national government in a way that they had never been behind anything since the days of O'Connell. But Collins knew that though that was an exceedingly favourable background to work on, it was not enough. If the loan was to be successful, hard work and organisation

were essential.

So, he set himself out to build up, all over the country, a network of machinery for its propaganda and collection; and, having collected it, to see to it that the money was safely lodged under the control of his department. He was a superb organiser, neglecting no detail that could be of the smallest assistance. He issued an instruction to every M.P., or T.D. as they now came to be called, and to every Sinn Féin candidate in constituencies where Sinn Féin had been defeated, to go down, each to his respective area, stay there, and give all the help he could in collecting the loan. This instruction sent me back again to North Fermanagh, where I spent ten days going round from parish to parish, and village to village, interviewing people of every politics and faith, endeavouring to get them to buy Republican Bonds. This work was, of course, wholly illegal under the British law that then prevailed, to collect for the loan or get people to buy it; therefore it was necessary to proceed very stealthily and cautiously. I was lucky in my meanderings on behalf of the National Loan, for though I was searched by the R.I.C. on a number of occasions, they could find nothing "incriminating" on me, such as Dáil Loan papers, (I took good care that they

wouldn't) and had to release me. I stayed overnight in various places - curates' houses, farmers' houses, hotels etc., wherever I could. I was on Boa Island, the biggest island in Lough Erne, collecting the loan when word came that a police boat was sighted, making for it. That useful piece of intelligence, I was told, came from Protestant and Unionist sources, for the population of the island was half Catholic and half Protestant. I was thus able to slip out of the island and get away to the mainland, which I reached just about the same time as the police boat docked at the island to pursue its useless search.

Altogether, the amount of Dáil Loan bought in North Fermanagh amounted to something over £1,700, small in comparison with the huge sums collected in the southern and western constituencies, often amounting to £6,000 or £7,000 for a constituency. But then North Fermanagh was not a typical constituency. It was a doubly divided constituency, divided almost 50-50 between Catholics and Protestants, with the Catholics again divided sharply between the Hibernian and Sinn Féiners. Considering everything, it was not a bad total, and it was contributed to by many Hibernians, as well, of course, as nearly all Sinn Féiners and even a few Unionists.

Some of the latter, I understand, were chaffed by their fellow Unionists, saying that they'd never see their money again; but what a laugh our Unionists investors must have had when the first Cosgrave Government repaid the loan extremely generously, giving, I think, 8/- back with every £1 invested. Few good Ulster businessmen could boast of a better return on their money than that.

I should say that I did little in the actual collecting of the loan. I carried no script appertaining to the outlawed Republican Bonds, but went around in the company of local leaders and junior clergy (the senior clergy were very cagey about us and not at all sure of us), calling on people and requesting them to buy the bonds. Sometimes I entered their names in a small note-book, but never entered money opposite them. If caught, I could always say that the names were those of people whom I was canvassing in pursuance of my position as parliamentary candidate; but it might not have been so easy to explain away sums of money, especially as the Government knew well the Loan was being collected, and had ordered their forces to do all they could to stop or check it.

The main brunt of the actual collection of the loan in North Fermanagh fell on the shoulders of that splendid, selfless patriot, Cahir Healy; who did Trojan work and succeeded, with his faithful and ardent team of helpers, not only in gathering in the money but getting it all transmitted to headquarters without mishap. Many of the younger priests gave excellent and most valuable assistance, and were particularly useful in transmitting the money to Dublin as the authorities hesitated to search them. I am convinced that the North Fermanagh loan would have fallen far short of the figure it reached had the younger clergy not taken the active part they did in collecting it. In particular, I would like to mention one fine, young priest, Father Peter Connolly, C.C., then of Garrison, I think. I know he was afterwards curate at Bundoran (was he, later still, P.P. there?). With Father Connolly, I travelled through most of the North Fermanagh parishes, from Garrison and Belleek to Ederney, seeing priests and people, with most satisfactory results. Another good, active man was Seán Carty of Devenish West (Garrison); and there were many more, priests and laity, whose names I, unfortunately, forget.

The Dáil Loan was a huge success, being over subscribed in both Ireland and the U.S.A. The total Irish figure came to £378,858, bought by 135,000 persons, or £138,855 more than the figure asked for. The total American figure came to $5,123,640, bought by 275,988 people, or $123,640 oversubscribed.

THE ROYAL IRISH CONSTABULARY.

It was indeed a doctrine of perfection, or, rather, of extreme simplicity that few indulged in, to expect that Dáil Éireann would be permitted for long to "usurp the functions of His Majesty's Government in that part of the United Kingdom called Ireland". During the two preceding years, and particularly since the Conscription threat and the "German Plot", conflict between the two disparate and contrasting concepts of Separatism and Unionism, heightened and intensified with an ever-increasing crescendo as the months sped by. At first, beyond some isolated raiding for arms and gelignite, the Volunteers, under orders from their own Executive, refrained from violence, even in self-defence and in face of great provocation; but, as time went on, particularly after they had been taken over by the Dáil

and made definitely the military defenders of the Dáil Government and, apparently, the executant of its decrees, retaliation on their determined enemy and his forces became more and more general until, presently, the nation perceived that it was in the midst of a widespread guerilla war. That, of course, was inevitable. If the Dáil intended to be taken seriously, if all the promises and undertakings of its members were not just so much meaningless eye-wash, it could not permit its foes to harass, impede and subvert it with impunity. Clearly they had to be resisted and, if and where possible, eliminated, or, at least, rendered harmless.

Now, the gravest and most formidable obstacle to the rule of the Dáil was not the British regular amy which, at its height, had nearly 60,000 officers and men in the country, but the Royal Irish Constabulary - that extremely efficient quasi-military gendarmerie numbering about 11,000 men and officers. I cannot do better here than allow some of the contemporary writers to tell you readers of the twenty-first century about that truly unique asset of the conquerors. Pierce Beasley wrote:

"A great deal of misunderstanding was caused abroad by the English device of referring to these men (R.I.C.) as 'policemen'. When a foreigner read of 'policemen' being shot in Ireland, he naturally pictured to himself those civic custodians of law and order who function in normal countries. It should be made clear that the R.I.C. were never policemen in the sense in which the word is understood in free countries. The R.I.C. were a military force, armed with rifles and living in barracks. Their primary, essential purpose was to hold the country in subjection to England. In furtherance of this aim, the force was kept at a strength out of all proportion to the requirements of a normal police force. In districts where crime was practically unknown..... barracks full of strapping young men, armed with rifles, were maintained at the expense of the people of Ireland. Every village had its barracks, with its garrison holding the post for England and dominating the countryside. The R.I.C. were recruited from the ranks of the people for the purpose of spying on the people. To ensure that no personal sympathies or friendly ties would influence them, it was a regulation of the force that no constable could be stationed in the county of which he was a native. The R.I.C. had established an elaborate system of espionage which was carried to a wonderful pitch of perfection. In every town or village, all the movements of persons were watched and reported upon. All popular organisations were kept under observation, and all persons who expressed patriotic opinions

were the object of surveillance. Even their activities in such matters as teaching Irish, or acting in Irish plays, were duly reported; and Dublin Castle, as the result of these reports, had the most exact information as to the personnel, strength and methods of all national movements in the country. So perfectly was this done that the people concerned had not the slightest idea of the extent to which they were being spied upon. When I read the evidence given before the Royal Commission on the Insurrection of 1916, I was amazed at the exact information possessed by the R.I.C. as to the strength of the Volunteers in the various districts, and the number of rifles possessed by them..... The Royal Irish Constabulary were not only the right arm of the English administration in Ireland, they were also its eyes and ears, and without them it could not function effectively. As long as they were allowed to continue on their old lines we were not likely to get much further. It was obvious that the first steps towards breaking down the English administration in Ireland must be taken against this force. If they collapsed, the whole machinery of English administration in Ireland would come down with them".

("Michael Collins", p.p. 319-21).

(2) P.S. O'Hegarty wrote: -

"The minds of the men (R.I.C.) were moulded as cleverly as were the minds of Janissaries. The first duty inculcated on them was loyalty, not to Ireland, but to England, and they were loyal to England. By virtue of this loyalty they bullied, terrorized, and, when ordered, murdered their own

people without compunction for nearly a hundred years. Their influence was very much greater than their actual members. They were a source of corruption to all their relatives and friends, to the shopkeepers in the vicinity of their barracks to whom they gave their custom and for whom they could say a word to the Big Houses, and when they retired from police work they were given 'confidential' employment as door-keepers, caretakers, rate-collectors, wherever the long arm of Government could reach to plant them. They were an 'Irish' force sitting on the necks of their own people, maintaining on them a minority Ascendancy and a Foreign Oppression".

("A History of Ireland under the Union", p.p.402).

(3) Paul Dubois, the French observer, wrote in 1907: -

"England meantime retains a firm hold of one instrument of Government, which is, perhaps, the most necessary to her of all - the police. It is very doubtful whether the Constabulary in question ought to be called a police force at all. It consists of 12,000 men, or, rather, 12,000 soldiers, armed with carbines and bayonets and disposed through the country in a thousand or fifteen hundred fortified forts. These 'police stations' are regular block-houses, situate in strong, strategic positions and defended by iron doors and shutters. The picture contrasts strangely with that popular institution in Great Britain, the corpulent and legendary "bobby", with his paternal aim and readiness to oblige, and a truncheon for sole symbol of authority. The Constabulary in Ireland is a military force, an army

of occupation encamped in a conquered country. It is a supplementary corps of the regular army which is stationed in Ireland as a main guarantee of the security of British rule..... The police in Scotland cost £400,000, in Ireland £1,300,000. Does this mean that there is a greater degree of criminality in Ireland? The case is quite the contrary, and nothing could be falser than the prejudice which paints Ireland as a pandemonium of brigands and assassins. There is no professional criminal class in Ireland....."

(L'Irlande Contemporaire - Paris - 1907 - trans. by T.M. Kettle, p.p.196).

(4) Moritz Bonn, the German Economist, wrote: -

"The cost for the administration of justice, for police, and for internal administration was found in 1895 to amount to: -

(a) In England & Wales, with 30,000,000 inhabitants - £1,400,000;

(b) In Scotland " 4,100,000 - £219,000;

(c) In Ireland " 4,600,000 - £2,025,000.

(The police, of course, were an Imperial charge in Ireland, not in Great Britain where they were controlled by the democratically elected local bodies).

The administration of Ireland lies, to a large extent, in the hands of the R.I.C., an excellently organised little army, subject to the central Government. The number of the R.I.C. from 1876 to 1895 averaged about 12,000 men; the yearly expenses were £1,400,000. The strength and organisation of this constabulary, and also the costliness of the Irish Government, prove that to English administration in Ireland the feeling of perfect security is unknown.

It rules through its police, and, in point of fact, only makes itself noticeable in other respects by travelling inspectors from the different departments".

('Modern Ireland & Her Agrarian Problems", p.p.10-1906).

(5) Erskine Childers wrote: -

"No village or hamlet was too insignificant to be accommodated with a barracks and a garrison of a sergeant and a few constables. The force was the most potent of all weapons used by the British Government in subduing the Irish people, because it was recruited from the people themselves, and in the work of political oppression was able to draw upon intimate local knowledge and strong local influence, as well as upon intelligence and courage which are the common attributes of the Irish race..... Stripped of all disguise, the R.I.C. stood forth as the Irish portion of the military garrison".

("Constructive Work of Dáil Éireann").

Such being the structure and nature of that most formidable organisation, composed largely of Catholic Irishmen, there was obviously no alternative for the Dáil Government but to strike at it in the first place and render it innocuous before the R.I.C. had time to destroy that Government as, otherwise, it certainly would and could have done. As a first step towards that end, the Dáil in its second session on April 8th, 1919, on the motion of de Valera, seconded by MacNeill, unanimously decreed that "members of the police forces acting

in this country as part of the forces of the British occupation and as agents of the British Government be ostracised socially by the people of Ireland". Dev. made a very strong speech in introducing the motion, and concluded by saying that the "Irish people, as an organised society, have a right to defend themselves. The social ostracism which I propose, and which I ask you to sanction, is a first step in exercising that right. These men must not be tolerated socially, as if they were clean, healthy members of our organised life. They must be shown and made feel how base are the functions they perform, and how vile is the position they occupy. To shun them, to refuse to talk or have any social intercourse with them, or to treat them as equals, will give them vividly to understand how utterly the people of Ireland loathe both themselves and their calling, and may prevent young Irishmen from dishonouring both themselves and their country by entering that calling". Thus was the first national sanction taken against the R.I.C. And it will be noted that albeit a severe sanction, was, like most of the sanctions that preceded the period of actual warfare, non-violent in the sense at any rate of being non-physical force. The people, in their representation, were

not prepared, at that stage, at all events, to sanction anything involving bloodshed on a wide scale. True, there had been shootings and blood sheddings by the Volunteers, or those purporting to act in their name, before the Dáil took over control of their organisation, but they were not numerous and were generally the work of isolated groups. True also, the first attack on an R.I.C. unit ending fatally for some of those men, was that of Soloheadbeg which occurred on January 21st, 1919, the very day the first meeting of the Dáil took place, but this synthesis of events on that particular date was a mere coincidence, for the Dáil had nothing whatever to say in that affair. As I have said, the whole tendency of the movement and, later, of the Dáil Government, was one of hesitancy, indeed reluctance, in resorting to the gun, trying every other method first and only falling back on the gun when there was no alternative to it but defeat and destruction; and, even then, not until several warnings, some very forceful ones such as tying up particularly bad offenders, had been issued.

Well, the ostracisation decree of the Dáil was obeyed by the people over the greater part of the country with

remarkable unanimity, and in a remarkably short space of time. No doubt that was partly due to the vigilance and activities of local branches of Sinn Féin and local units of the Volunteers, or I.R.A. as they came to be known after the Dáil had taken them over and, apparently, assumed responsibility for their actions. Those bodies saw to it that there was no weakness or laxity in giving full effect to the decree. In those comparatively few cases where it was ignored, warnings were issued, and where, for example, girls continued to be friendly with young R.I.C. men, they occasionally suffered the loss of their tresses. That method of dealing with obdurate maidens whose passion for the male encased in uniform, became far more common when, at a somewhat later stage, the Black and Tans and Auxiliaries took over. But it had a boomerang effect, for, when and where it was carried out, the Black and Tans and Auxies retaliated similarly on patriotic maidens.

As I have said, the social boycott of the R.I.C. proved surprisingly successful, having regard to the conditions prevailing in the country. One of its first effects was to discourage drastically recruitment to the Force, so that,

what had been but a short time previously a very popular, legitimate and honourable career for any young Irishman to embark on, with long waiting lists of splendid types of manhood to ensure its existence and replacement, became overnight, so to speak, a thing so discredited and shameful that few could not touch it without a sense of dishonour and, indeed, defilement.

And so by the winter of 1919 those long waiting-lists had evaporated, and the numerous vacancies in the Force's ranks stood gaping there, with hardly a young Irishman to fill them. The Force was still further weakened by continuous resignations, increasing with every passing month. In many places, too, the boycott was extended far beyond the Dáil's decree, to, for example, the supplying of food and goods, local merchants and tradespeople being forbidden to deal with the R.I.C. or supply essential commodities to their barracks. This, however, was not quite so successful as the social boycott, and was soon broken by armed R.I.C. and military detachments making descents on the shops and seizing what goods they required to replenish their scanty larders. In most cases, the R.I.C., still a fairly disciplined body, paid the shopkeepers for the goods thus taken;

but things were different with the Black and Tans and Auxiliaries, who, more often than not, just brazenly looted the shops and stores that they honoured with their attention.

Despite the killing of recruitment and numerous resignations, there nevertheless remained a very substantial corps of several thousand R.I.C. men who were prepared to carry on in face of everything, and that corps still supplied the Castle with eyes and ears, albeit with much dimishing vision and audition. As the months passed by, the strain between the R.I.C. - still numerous and more full of fight than ever - and Dáil Éireann increased and intensified, as was inevitable. Clearly what remained of the Constabulary were not going to submit meekly to the Dáil's sanctions, still but moral sanctions (for the use of a better adjective in English). After all, they had the power, the organisation and the full support and backing of Britain and her vast empire, victorious after a deadly war and more powerful than ever before in her history. Furthermore, they had their careers to pursue and look after; and constabulary work in Ireland had always been pleasant, non-arduous and prestigeful. They consoled themselves, that very substantial number that stayed on despite the boycott and the gun, that Sinn Féinism

and I.R.A.-ism belonged to those eruptions like Young Irelandism and Fenianism that periodically broke out in the Irish body politic. They had little doubt that it would be suppressed and stamped out, like its predecessors, and then, when peace was restored and the tranquility of the British Raj had once more descended on Ireland, they would certainly not be forgotten by that same Raj whom they had served so well and at such grave risk, whilst the people would, in due course, renew their old and friendly association with them. Accordingly, that very substantial corps of the R.I.C. that remained, despite everything, "loyal", dug its heels into the ground and determined that it would let the "Shinners" know that the R.I.C. that had for so long dominated the towns, villages, parishes and countrysides of Ireland, were by no means finished; on the contrary, they were, as they had always been, a body to be reckoned with, and reckoned with seriously. These R.I.C. men were no cowards. They were brave men though, as I believe, in a wrong cause. After all, they were every bit as Irish as their I.R.A. antagonists. The same blood exactly flowed through their respective veins; and, in general, they fought as well as their attackers, and that is, indeed, high praise, though as the struggle went on

their morale deteriorated, for, unlike the I.R.A., they had no ideal sufficiently racy of the soil to stimulate and stay them. Physical courage, as we know, is a very common or garden commodity in our martial nation. Would to God that we had an equally high level of moral courage! But that is another story. At all events, arrests, suppressions of meetings and papers, shootings, baton charges etc. became more and more the order of the day. Eventually things came to such a pass that the Dáil and its I.R.A. had, willy-nilly, to abandon its predeliction for a purely constructive and non-violent policy, and resort to the gun.

Accordingly, that very eventufl and crucial year was, in due course, characterised by a new and quite unprecedented development in Irish history - organised wholesale attacks on R.I.C. barracks and R.I.C. escorts and patrols. The barracks were very stubbornly defended by their garrisons, and it was not until April 20, 1919, that the I.R.A. succeeded in capturing one. That was Araglen Barracks in Co. Cork. As the winter of 1919 progressed, those attacks on the R.I.C. became more and more intense and widespread, so that before the Spring of 1920 they were general all over the country; sometimes several in the one night. When a barracks was

captured, the police were disarmed and released, and, where possible, the barracks was set on fire; but that was not generally possible as the Verey lights let off from the roofs of the building in those radioless days were always likely to bring reinforcements speedily down on them, so the I.R.A. men had, perforce, to make themselves scarce, with their precious booty, as speedily as possible.

Whilst, undoubtedly, the big concentration at that time was directed against the R.I.C., there were also plenty of attacks on, and disarmings of units of the British military, and even raids on their barracks. By such means did the I.R.A. arm itself. Furthermore, there were raids on post offices and mails which delivered into the hands of the I.R.A. much valuable information about espionage against them, leading to the shooting of spies and informers. In those days, the papers were full of such happenings. Side by side with the account of an attack on a barracks or military or police post, one would read of an ambush of British Forces in this county or that, or of the shooting of Detective This or That. For example, Detective Sergeant Smith of the D.M.P. was shot dead in Dublin on July 30th, 1919. Pierce Beasley tells us in his Collins book that that was the first execution

carried out under sanction of Dáil Éireann, which by then had assumed responsibility, under its Ministry of Defence, for the activities of the I.R.A., if it did not definitely and directly control them. And here, perhaps, I should record that I understand none of those people were drastically dealt with without ample, often numerous warnings, some of a very vigorous and pointed character, the reality of which they could not mistake. Spies thus slain were usually found with labels attached to them bearing the inscription: "Tried and executed by the I.R.A. Spies and informers beware"! But those killings were by no means all official executions of spies by the I.R.A. I have been told by those who should know that quite a number of them were committed by the R.I.C. and the Black and Tans on sound Republicans, with the object of inculcating an atmosphere of suspicion, distrust and fear.

THE COURTS OF DÁIL ÉIREANN.

During the winter of 1919, the struggle against British power, particularly its efficient and highly dangerous Irish auxiliary, the R.I.C., was relentlessly sustained and pursued by the I.R.A., and as relentlessly met and countered by their powerful foe. The numerous and constant captures and burnings of R.I.C. barracks and the ambushing of their patrols, together with their complete social boycott, throwing them into the position of harassed, isolated and, indeed, besieged units living in the midst of an intensely hostile populace, not only rendered them useless to their employers but made life a hell for them. The strain was more than even that peculiarly but mistakenly loyal Force could stand; and so to retrieve what was left of it through resignations, the Castle was compelled to withdraw the R.I.C. units from wide country districts and concentrate them in substantial numbers in the sizeable country towns. When these withdrawals had taken place, the I.R.A. immediately moved in and destroyed the abandoned barracks, so as to prevent their re-occupation. In one night alone, 183 deserted R.I.C. barracks throughout the country went up in flames. In all, between 500 and 600 barracks, in addition

to workhouses, courthouses and other buildings capable of being so utilised, were destroyed by I.R.A. action during the conflict. The "Irish Times", in a memorable leader, referred to those blackened ruins dotted over the country as "the sepulchres of British prestige in Ireland".

The result of all this was to leave vast areas in the country entirely free of any resident British Forces. True, constant forays and raids were made into those areas from the towns to which those forces had been withdrawn, some, indeed, of a very murderous character; but they were purely fugitive and passing mobile efforts, the raiders, or invaders, withdrawing to their bases after their activities in the cleared areas. The army paper, "An tóglach", very ably edited by Pierce Beasley, was able to make the following claim, with a great deal of truth, in its issue of February 15, 1920: "Eighteen months ago it seemed as if the initiative lay with the enemy - to-day the enemy is on the defensive, and the initiative lies with us". In an article which I wrote for the special "Ireland" supplement of the "Manchester Guardian Commercial" in May, 1923, I thus described the position: -

> "With the year 1920 a new political situation arose in Ireland. All moral power, and, in the remoter country districts, a considerable degree of actual power too, had passed from the hands of

the British authorities at Dublin Castle into the hands of Sinn Féin with its interdicted Government and Dáil. The R.I.C. had lost all prestige as a police force, and had been withdrawing from most rural areas to the towns. The Law Courts were vigorously boycotted, and in many districts no bench of magistrates or county court had held session for several months. Judges of Assize, heavily guarded, still went on circuit, but their work was more formal than real, and over the greater part of the country their writs did not run. The effect was that the Castle Government exercised authority in the towns as in the days of the Plantagenets, but left the people supreme in the country districts".

Indeed the position that emerged at the end of that winter of 1919-20 was an extraordinary one, and one that neither the British nor the Dáil Government had anticipated. Here were whole vast areas of the country, cleared of any resident Crown forces or functioning officials of any kind, handed over on a plate, as one might say, to Dáil Éireann, which, although created by more than a million Irish votes, had been proclaimed on September 10, 1919, as an "illegal association" and "seditious body". But the Dáil Government was as surprised and shocked at its staggering success as was Hitler at Dunkirk; and, of course, had made absolutely no arrangements to supply the vacuum of police and courts, essential for all organised, civilised societies. Country

districts in Ireland, though remarkably free from serious crime, have all, of course, their quota of wrong-doers only looking for a safe opportunity for their malfeasance. Here, indeed, was their chance; and they were not slow to seize it, and to make, or to attempt to "make hay" while their particular sun shone. As the account in the "Constructive Work of Dáil Éireann" (1921) puts it: -

> "The neglect by the R.I.C. of ordinary police work had given to the criminal elements which exist in all societies a large measure of immunity. Petty crime, mainly larceny, was on the increase, and a number of large robberies indicated the presence of professional English criminals. The I.R.A., with the people on their side, addressed themselves whole-heartedly to their task. Malefactors were tracked down, arrested, convicted and punished; and stolen property was recovered and restored, often within twenty-four hours of the theft".

Nature, as we know, abhors a vacuum; and this is particularly true of civilised human nature. The aforesaid vacuum left in rural society by the phenomenal success of the I.R.A.'s winter campaign, had to be filled at once if society was to be protected. Accordingly, in the beginning the I.R.A. took over and dealt with serious crimes by means of courtsmartial, before which the apprehended criminals were

brought and sentenced. There was no express law of Dáil Éireann for this save the supreme law, "Salus populi". The old legal maxim was at work in its most fundamental form: - "There can be no wrong without a remedy". At this early stage there were, as I say, no civil courts, only those I.R.A. courtsmartial; and no Dáil police had, as yet, been created. Law and order and the punishment of crime depended on the I.R.A. in the cleared regions of the country. And very good work, indeed, they did in that interregnum before the establishment of the Dáil Courts, especially when it is remembered that their main purpose, their raison d'etre, was to carry on warfare against the British Forces which were constantly harrying them, that they were nearly all "on the run" and "on their keeping", liable to be arrested and imprisoned, or shot dead, at any moment. As an example of the importance of the work they undertook and successfully dealt with, let me recall the famous Millstreet Bank Robbery. To quote again from the aforementioned Dáil publication:

> "Two bank officials travelling in cars to a local fair on November 17th, 1919, one carrying £10,000 and the other £6,700, were held up by armed and disguised men, and robbed of the whole sum of £16,700. The British police were informed, but did not even visit the scene of the robbery, or take any serious

steps subsequently to trace the criminals. Meanwhile, it was freely stated in the British Press, without a particle of evidence, that the robbery was committed by Sinn Féin. The Republican police took up the case, but at first made slow progress. Eventually, however, a clue was discovered and skilfully followed until April 24th, 1920, when warrants were issued against the ten men who composed the gang. On the same night, eight were arrested in their homes in Millstreet and the neighbouring villages, and on the following days were brought before preliminary courts of inquiry. On the second occasion, the ring-leader, Buckley, broke down, confessed, and disclosed the hiding-place of his share of the money. Four of his confederates did the same, and a total of £9,208 was at once recovered. On the 28th, the eight prisoners were courtmartialled, and the whole story of the conspiracy - a highly dramatic one - was established by witnesses. Seven of the eight prisoners were found guilty. Five were sentenced to transportation from Ireland for various terms of years from fifteen downwards, and two to deportation from the district. The sentences were carried out under armed escorts. Buckley returned, but was again arrested and transported. The money was returned to the bank".

I greatly wonder whether the reference in this statement to "republican police" is correct, for I much doubt whether such were in existence then, or, indeed, for a long time subsequently, according to my experience, at all events. The I.R.A. and their courtsmartial for criminals did good work and supplied a dire want at a most critical time, but they could not continue running

our judiciary as well as fighting for the Dáil. Soldiers are soldiers, and not judges. For a crucial interval the I.R.A. came to the rescue with practical ad hoc temporary military courts. That was not their job, but they did it well. However, even were it possible, it would not be desirable for them to function as courts of law. The Dáil that insisted on ruling was bound to supply a proper judiciary to replace the alien one it had overthrown, or was in process of overthrowing. And that it proceeded to do, so soon as it had got its "second wind", so to speak, from the shock of its remarkable and wholly unexpected successes.

Accordingly, at its 4th session, held on June 18th, it passed "Decree No. 8, Session 4, 1919", which ordained the establishment, forthwith, in every Irish county, of "National Arbitration Courts". But, beyond just passing that decree, which was but a mere outline without any attempt to detail a judicial structure, nothing more was then done to establish a regular and properly prescribed judicial hierarchy. The Ministry of Justice was, at the time, seriously handicapped by the fact that its Minister, Austin Stack, was confined in prison without charge or trial on suspicion of implication in that figment of Lloyd George's brain,

the "German Plot", and, although a Committee had been actually appointed by the Minister to draft a suitable scheme of Courts, with appropriate rules, its progress was slow, which it could not avoid being, engaged as it was in such work in those disturbed and hazardous times. However, pending the sanctioning of any such regular system of courts, every constituency was left to its own resources and predelictions in giving effect to the Decree. And here I should point out that the Courts to be established under that decree were arbitration courts. That was deliberately designed to cope with enemy interference. Under English law, there was nothing illegal in parties to a dispute agreeing to submit it to the determination of some person or persons whom the disputants select. All that is necessary is some evidence that they have so agreed; and that was generally provided by a form of agreement that the parties duly signed before going into the arbitration court. The idea of circumventing British judicial tribunals by means of arbitration courts, perfectly legal in the eyes of English law, was no new one. In the rousing days of O'Connell, when the great Dan was himself fired with the idea of repeal of the Union, the establishment of a system of Arbitration Courts was one of

his ideas; but, long before he thought of putting it into practice the leaven of nationalism within him had spun itself out, and the idea came to nought. It was also one of the big, constructive ideas that the very constructive mind of Arthur Griffith had seized on and placed foremost among the immediate objectives in his original Sinn Féin programme.

It would appear that West Clare was the first to take action under the Decree of the Dáil. Nowhere had the fight against the R.I.C. and other British forces been waged with greater determination than in that constituency, and as, save for Kilrush, it possessed no sizeable town, that wide region, stretching from Loop Head to Burrin, and from Kildysart to Miltown Malbay and Ennistymon, was practically cleared of Crown forces. At that time in West Clare the Dáil was not alone the de jure, but also the de facto government. That achievement was mainly due to the courage and high qualities of leadership of the Brothers Brennan, the local I.R.A. Commandants.

Accordingly, when Brian O'Higgins, the M.P. for West Clare, got back to his constituency after the Dáil Session, he lost no time in calling a conference of representative Republicans to discuss the matter. That conference set up

a District Arbitration Court with jurisdiction throughout the whole constituency, and Parish Arbitration Courts for each parish within it. A constitution was drawn up with the aid of local lawyers, together with rules of court; judge-arbitrators and registrars were appointed, and a scale of court fees, costs and fines was settled. Presently the first District Arbitration Court in Ireland was functioning in that area, dealing with all manner of causes and disputes that, shortly before, had gone to the British Courts. The personnel of that historic tribunal was the local M.P., the President of the local Comhairle Ceanntair of Sinn Féin, and three other Parish Courts, consisting, I think, of three justices, were also set up and soon busily functioning. The result of that Court activity in West Clare was that, by the end of the year 1919, the withdrawal of litigation from British Courts was far advanced there; for it was a part, an essential complementary part of the Dáil Court plan of campaign that, where its courts had been set up, litigants were expected to patronise them and to boycott their British counterparts.

West Clare led the way in establishing Courts of Dáil Éireann, and its example was followed in due course by other

constituencies, albeit very tardily at first. I should, however, except from any taint of tardiness the Co. Mayo and the Co. Galway constituencies, which were, I understand, very close in time behind West Clare. In Mayo in particular, a most active man in promoting Courts was Conor Maguire, then a local Solicitor, to-day Chief Justice of Ireland.

At all events, the great bulk of constituencies preferred to await the national scheme of Courts that the Dáil was to draw up and put into commission.

When the Minister of Justice, Austin Stack, was able to return to his official duties, after his sensational escape from Strangeways Prison, Manchester, he at once set up a committee of lawyers to draft the Constitution and Rules of a national judiciary. That committee consisted of James Creed Meredith, K.C., Arthur Cleary, B.L., Cahir Davitt, B.L., Diarmuid Crowley, B.L., Conor Maguire, Solicitor, and myself. The judicial system that emerged after a little time from the deliberations of that committee was a simple and effective one, and one well fitted for the times and conditions it had been called into being to serve. It consisted of three levels of Courts - Supreme (& High) Court, District Courts and Parish Courts.

The Supreme Court was to sit in Dublin and to comprise not less than three persons of proper legal qualifications and of at least 12 years' legal standing. We do not appear to have provided for a Chief Justice, but James Creed Meredith was, I think, generally regarded as President, and always presided when the Supreme Court sat. If it was nothing else, his much longer period at the bar than any of the rest of us would have entitled him to do so.

Arthur Cleary, Diarmuid Crowley and Cahir Davitt were High Court Judges who, when necessary, made up the Supreme Court. Conor Maguire and I were Judicial Commissioners of the Land Settlement Commission but, as High Court Judges, were available to hear High Court cases, and also to sit in the Supreme Court. I sat in the Supreme Court during its "sub rosa" period with Creed Meredith, Arthur Cleary and/or Cahir Davitt on a number of occasions; but, as the reader shall see, my Dáil Court work was mainly confined to matters agrarian. The District Court comprised five members and its sittings fell into two divisions - circuit sittings and ordinary sittings. Those courts were composed of local lawyers (when they could be got), prominent republicans and, occasionally, priests. A

circuit sitting was presided over by a Circuit Judge, and that tribunal had appelate as well as original jurisdiction. Such a Court sat three times a year, whilst the ordinary District Court sat once a month. The code of laws to be administered was declared to be "the law as recognised on January 21st, 1919, until amended..... except such portions thereof as are clearly motivated by religious or political animosity". There was, also, a dangerous provision inserted, no doubt, to meet the prevailing perfervid conditions of national sentiment, permitting reference to "the early Irish Law Codes, or any commentary on them, in so far as they may be applicable to modern conditions". The Parish Court consisted of three members and could hear civil claims not exceeding £10 and petty criminal cases. It could not deal with cases affecting titles to land.

Those Dáil Courts, whether they sprang up out of the soil, as it were, like the West Clare ones, or whether they were formed pursuant to the Dáil Decree, were, from their beginnings, phenomenally successful. They relied for their maintenance and for the success of their functioning, not so much on force but principally on the united support

of the people whose collective will had summoned them into being. Without that background they would have been hopeless failures, for they had little of the apparatuses deemed essential for the full exercise of judicial power. They could not imprison anyone as they possessed no prisons, and that proved a serious handicap when, later on, the big enemy assault was made against the courts. The nearest thing in that direction was the practice, in the Land Courts, of bringing offenders to an "unknown destination" which I shall deal with further on in these pages. Not being able to imprison the convicted and the guilty, other punishments had to be resorted to, such as fines, banishment from the district or county, and, in grave cases, deportation from the country, with the warning that if the deportee returned before his term of banishment had expired, he was liable to lose his life.

Those Dáil Courts won golden opinions from the press, foreign and home, and even from the inimical press.

"These Courts", wrote the Manchester Guardian on May 10, 1920, "are the natural result of the strong, common will for national responsibility. Their object is simply the promotion of peace and of economic justice through an authority that derives its sovereignty from the general will".

And the English Daily News about the same time: -

> "Sinn Féin has accomplished an amazing work in producing law and order in those parts of Ireland in which it is in power. Sinn Féin has a sanction behind it such as no other law in Ireland has had for generations".

Wrote the Daily Mail's special correspondent, also about the same time: -

> "In scores of miles I never saw a policeman, a row or a drunken man".

On June 1st, 1920, the Irish Independent reported: -

> "Sinn Féin Courts are in widespread operation in the South and West. They command confidence and their decisions are respected and obeyed".

Lawyers - particularly barristers - were, in the beginning, very timorous and chary about appearing in the new Courts and pleading before them for fear of compromising themselves with their professional authorities. The control of the two legal professions, the Barristers and the Solicitors, were in the hands of those who were hostile to the Dáil and Sinn Féin. That was so in regard to both professions, but the Bar Council, which controlled the professional conduct of barristers, was much the more vilulent, so that nobody was very much surprised when that

august body met on June 23rd, 1920, and ruled that barristers practising at Sinn Féin Courts were guilty of professional misconduct. The ruling (by a majority) was, however, hotly disputed by the Nationalist minority on that Council, and, in practice, proved wholly ineffectual as not a single barrister who ignored it and pleaded in the Dáil Courts was ever summoned before it, or punished by it for so doing. That curious inaction with regard to the violations of their ruling, which, as time went by and the Courts got more firmly established and flourishing, became increasingly numerous, may have been influenced by the more tolerant attitude of the sister-society. That body, the "Incorporated Law Society of Ireland", met some weeks later on July 25th, 1920, and ruled that "under existing circumstances the Council saw no objection to solicitors appearing to protect their clients' interests in the Arbitration Courts referred to".

Side by side with the incredible success of the Dáil Courts there was, as there had to be, a correspondingly steep decline in the business and prestige of the British Courts. The lowest level of those Courts, the Courts of Petty Sessions, were the first to succumb in any area where the

Dáil judiciary was established. They vanished overnight, as it were, for their personnel, lay Justices of the Peace, surrendered their commissions and, in many cases, went over to officiate on the benches of the Dáil Courts, leaving only their stipendary Chairman, the Resident Magistrate and his clerk to occupy a lonely Court, deserted save for the attendance of Royal Irish Constables, heavily armed. The County Courts soon also became deserted, as well as the Assize Courts, run by the judges of the "High Court of Judiciature in Ireland". Those once busy and highly respected Courts formerly filled with litigants, witnesses, counsel and solicitors, presided over by dignified judges in wig and gown, or, if Crown Judges on Assize, resplendent in scarlet robes trimmed with ermine, radiating enormous prestige and attended by formidable guards of police and military, were now deserted, save only for their official attendants who were bound to be there, which made their magnificent isolation appear all the more striking and incongruous. Across the road from the stately edifice of official justice, or in a nearby street, there would probably be a small, insignificant and rather shoddy hall where the Sinn Féin Court was conducting its proceedings.

Unlike the deserted British Court, it would be packed out to the doors by an intensely interested audience. At a rough table drawn up at the end of the hall would sit the justices - three or five men, as the case might be, in ordinary tweeds or lounge suits, with another, acting as registrar, sitting before them, or at the end of the table. It would not take a spectator long to see that their job was no sinecure. They had, clearly, abundance of work; and, as a matter of fact, they often would have to sit on till midnight to clear their lists. The issues they would be adjudicating were largely, but not entirely, made up of causes withdrawn from the purview of the Crown Courts, probably that very day. When the cases would be called in the Court of the County Court Judge, or the Judge of Assize, whatever it might chance to be, the reply was ever the same, "Withdrawn, My Lord". And none to witness it but the much humiliated Lord Justice, the Clerk of the Crown and Peace, the Judge's registrar and the magnificent and very substantial bodyguard of stalworth constables. No wonder the ire of those abandoned judges rose up within them at the sorry state of affairs, accustomed as they had been for so long to profound respect and deference and to the sense of being very much the centre of the picture; and, can they

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ORIGINAL

PART VII

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No. W.S. 1,770

ROINN COSANTA.

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913–21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS.

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 1770.

Witness

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

Identity.

Judicial Commissioner, Dáil Éireann Land Courts, 1920-1922;
Commissioner, Irish Land Commission, 1923 to date.

Subject.

National Activities, and Dáil Éireann Land Courts, 1900-1921.

Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness.

Nil.

File No S. 909.

Form B.S.M. 2

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be blamed if they burst out into heated and indignant words to their police audience, scolding much about "sedition and its horrid growth in their midst, and the scandalous state of lawlessness that prevailed in this part of His Majesty's realm".

Such were the people's Courts that operated in many areas for the better part of a year, openly at first for several months, until driven underground by the renewed terror that broke out in the autumn of 1920 when the enemy's new reinforcements, the Black and Tans and the Auxiliaries, had been duly recruited, organised and concentrated on the country. Those Courts, as I have said, did great work, and were a success because the people backed them. Even criminals and malefactors convicted by them, and sometimes drastically dealt with, accepted their punishment with as good grace as they could, for they perceived that the punishments inflicted on them had behind them the solid buttress of public opinion. Later, however, when the Tans and Auxies got going against the Courts, things were not so good. As the Dáil pamphlet on the subject tells us:

"Some of the criminals - dealt with by fine or deportation, turned informers, and most of the captures and convictions of republican police which subsequently occurred were due to the information and evidence of thieves and drunkards who themselves secured immunity and lucrative rewards".

In their hey-day, in the late spring and summer of 1920, the Courts, civil and criminal, were operating in 27 counties, including five Ulster counties, though not so universally in most of these latter. In August, 1920, the month in which the great attack on them was opened, the Press reported the holding of no less than 80 Dáil Courts all over the country. Five of them were broken up by enemy action, of which one was a Land Court of mine that I shall presently be writing about. That was the first indication after many long months of tranquil functioning that showed us that the days of open, peaceful justice, as administered by the Dáil, were over. There are many exciting and delightful stories of those times when the popular Courts were going strong, as, for example, the case of the two criminals interned on an island in a western lough, shouting at the R.I.C. who came over in a boat to rescue and release them, to go home, that they were sound republicans and were quite prepared to carry out the sentence imposed on

them by a republican court. Then there was that other case in a Co. Westmeath town where the local D.I. of the R.I.C. and some of his constables actually watched a possé of republican police escorting two prisoners through the streets of the town, either to a Dáil Court or to some place of detention. The prisoners made not the slightest effort to appeal to the R.I.C. onlookers for help or protection from their captors.

Yes, those famous Courts were, indeed, a success. They were a success mainly for two reasons: because they had public opinion solidly behind them, and because they were pre-eminently just and impartial. The latter qualities, for which they earned, and rightly earned, a high reputation, were won despite strong pressure of all kinds which those amateur judges successfully withstood. In considering them, their judicial work and the times that they lived and functioned in, the following points must be always borne in mond: that they were local men living in and earning their bread within the area of their jurisdiction, that they were elected to their judicial posts, that they were unremunerated, that they knew well, often intimately, the parties appearing before them, that they ran the risk

by their judgements of mortally offending their neighbours, possibly large numbers of them, with dire consequences on their means of livelihood in their small and constricted world. Yet, despite all these things, they carried out to the last wherever they were established the supreme legal maxim, "Fiat Justitia"!

The Supreme and High Court of the Dáil, which was set up pursuant to the decree of June 29th, 1920, in the following August, accomplished much useful work on, of course, a higher plane than the local Courts. I don't think they were called upon to adjudicate in any serious criminal matters, such as murder, but they had their share of rapes and seductions (as indeed had the local Courts), and there was at least one case of matrimonial suit where the partner, seeking the remedy, got a decree of nullity against the other partner.

THE LAND WAR AND THE LAND COURTS.

I have endeavoured to describe in general terms the circumstances that led to the launching of the Dáil Éireann Courts. It is now necessary for me to particularise on that subject if the conditions then obtaining, and their consequences, are to be correctly understood.

The I.R.A., engaged in mortal conflict with its powerful and ubiquitous foes, having to face an ever intensifying pressure from them and to face it with wholly inadequate man power and equipment, was far from anxious to waste or weaken its strength and striking power by taking over responsibility for additional onerous work outside its own particular field. Some of its more influential leaders, Cathal Brugha, for example, the Minister for Defence, had no use whatever for Courts of any description. His simple credo was that the nation was engaged in a deadly war with England, and, accordingly, that every fibre of energy, every atom of strength, every pound collected should be concentrated exclusively and solely on that war, and on nothing else. Anything else, such as the setting up of Courts, the taking over of the machinery of local government, was a distraction,

nay, a serious impediment in Cathal's opinion, that took from and debilitated the driving power that should be behind the prime purpose of "driving the English out of Ireland". In particular, he resolutely opposed the creation of a separate Republican police force, especially as it was, as it had to be, recruited from the ranks of his own I.R.A. men. In view of that attitude, which, at one time, was nearly universal among the soldiers, it was not with any particular enthusiasm that, as we have seen, the I.R.A. functioned here and there throughout the country in the earlier stages of the Dáil Government, as a kind of emergency, ad hoc, criminal judiciary and police force. Sheer necessity and nothing else, compelled them to do so.

Now, in considering this development in the Dáil's career, it is very important to bear in mind that there were two kinds of court systems involved, or, to put first causes first, two distinct categories of disputes and issues. Firstly, there were those hundred and one matters that fell, in the ordinary way, to be dealt with by courts of first instance at the petty or quarter sessions of each county, embracing such common offences against the criminal law as burglary, larceny, assault, battery, arson, poteen-making,

etc., etc.,; and, on the civil side, ordinary cases of contract and tort under a certain valuation. Secondly, there were the land disputes, which were entirely different. Now, with regard to the former there was no dire necessity at any time during the years of contention, save from a purely patriotic and, of course, propaganda standpoint, to substitute Dáil equivalents in place of the British petty sessions and county courts. Those courts were amongst the few organisms of the British Raj that, on the whole, and excepting political cases, enjoyed the confidence of the public, particularly in latter years when Catholics and Nationalists came in for a larger share of the appointments thereto. They were speedy, efficient and inexpensive in their administration, and impartial and just in their judgments. Always, of course, saving and excepting political offences; then their impartiality was impaired, to put it no further. But, as against that, even at the worst of times they dealt with few real political cases. That was particularly true of the petty sessions, save where the Resident (or "Removable") Magistrate sat alone, as, in latter years, he always did, in hearing political cases.
However, what eventually killed the petty sessions courts was the nearly wholesale resignation of their personnel,

the Justices of the Peace, pursuant to the Decree of Dáil Éireann to that effect.

The County Courts, even in the days of the Dáil's greatest territorial advance, continued to function, albeit very modestly, in considerable areas of the Twenty-Six Counties, particularly in the Province of Leinster. Of course, within the Six Counties they were largely undisturbed, save to a small and very local extent in the Nationalist strongholds there.

The point I am making here is that, save for breaches of the criminal law (which had to be faced, war or no war) it was really not incumbent on the Dáil for its prestige to force an issue against the County Courts, at all events. With all the heavy responsibilities that the Dáil had been compelled to take on, and that in its early days it certainly had not fully envisioned, and with the pressure against it every day increasing, it would have suited it admirably to have turned a Nelsonian blind eye on that side of things and leave well alone. But time and events took a hand in it, and, willy-nilly the position so created had to be faced and met by the Dáil.

The disputes and issues in the first category that I have just referred to involved persons in the same stratum - mainly Catholic, mainly Nationalist - businessmen, tradesmen, artisans in the towns and villages, and farmers and labourers in the country districts, all within the same field of humanity, conforming to the same faith and, more or less, to the same social and political standards. On such a level, there could be no deep divides of unblendable types affecting religious and historical backgrounds and no very strongly marked class distinctions; the pattern of life was remarkably simple and homogeneous, and its problems all of an uncomplicated sui generis character.

Now, almost the identically opposite to all that was the position, in great measure (but, again, bu no means wholly) with regard to the land disputes. Those disputes at their most grevious level, to a greater or lesser extent, involved history, religion, politics, and, if you will, race. It must be borne in mind that in the year 1920, despite forty years remedial work of the Irish Land Commission and the Congested Districts Board, there were still in existence a substantial remnant of landlords possessing estates covering

large areas of land on which there were tenants from whom they derived incomes in the form of annual rents. In other words, landlordism, though badly broken, still survived - mainly in the west and in parts of the south and midlands of Ireland. For it must be remembered that, prior to the first Land Act passed by a native Government, the Hogan Act of 1923, all Land Purchase Acts were based on a voluntary basis, on agreement between landlord and tenant, with the Land Commission filling the part of honest broker. (I must except from this the proceedings in the Encumbered Estates Courts which were largely compulsory; but that was an emergency tribunal to meet an emergent state of affairs. Its operations, however, at that time were practically finished, and, anyhow, its particular legislation formed no part of the Irish Land Code).

There remained then, at that time, not a few landlords of the traditional type, living in large, out-of-date mansions (becoming progressively burdensome as to upkeep), with agents, stewards, bailiffs, etcetera. Those, as I have said, were the remnant of that once powerful and dominant organism, Irish landlordism, the proprietors of tenanted land that, for one reason or another,

had failed to sell out to their tenantry. It is surprising to-day to realise that very considerable numbers of that class of landlord existed in Ireland in the year 1920, having no less than 170,000 tenants under them paying them rents and nearly all of whom have since been transformed into proprietors. In this connection it is interesting to refer to Schedule 1 of the Report of the Proceedings of the Irish Convention which stated that on March 31st, 1917, land unsold at that date represented 5,768,751 acres, with a Poor Law Valuation of £3,645,278. The area unsold then represented 30% of the entire agricultural area of Ireland, and 36% of the total value of agricultural land in Ireland.

Those surviving landlords were mainly, but not entirely, Protestant and Unionist. There were Catholics amongst them who were generally as Unionist and, in not a few cases, very much more anti-Irish than they were. Those latter-day county magnates clung to a kind of faded feudalism, a shabby grandeeism with little of the essentials, such as power, prestige and, above all, capital, to buttress such a position. They were, in truth, anachronisms without knowing it, living in a world where the social, political and, still more so, the economic pattern, staggering and shaken from

from the after-effects of a vast war, was in process of rapid and, indeed, revolutionary transformation. They failed to see themselves as they really were and hung on, pathetically, to a world that was in its death throes, optimistically hoping for a future on something like the old grand scale. They were not at all bad fellows, those latter-day landlords - more victims of a system that had long since seen its hey-day and that they felt destined to maintain. Had they been wiser men, they would, of course, all have sold out under the singularly advantageous terms of the Wyndham Act of 1903, which would have left them in excellent heart and without even the pretence of proprietorial responsibility. The conditions of their tenantry, though miserable enough, in all conscience,(most of them being sadly below the economic Plimsoll line) were a little better than of old, because of the operations of the Fair Rent Courts and the protective provisions in the Irish Land Law and Land Purchase Acts. For example, these Acts saw to it that, unlike the position forty years earlier, landlords could not exact rack-rents from their tenants, nor could they evict them at will, nor could they prevent them selling their "tenants' interest" in their holdings to their

successors. But, whatever beneficial or remedial changes came to the tenantry, came to them through legislative action, and that alone. As for their landlords, they were semper idem. True to the tradition of their order in Ireland, they shouldered none of the legitimate duties and burdens of normal landlordism. As A.M. Sullivan wrote, "Property in Ireland had always repudiated the idea that it had any duty beyond the extortion of rent".

I became well acquainted with the conditions of these unbought-out tenants in the west of Ireland, both when going my rounds as a Dáil Judge in the years 1920 and 1921; and later, and in much closer and more intimate detail, as a Land Commissioner. These conditions, despite the aforesaid ameliorations provided by the statutes, would certainly be stigmatised as appalling to-day. To begin with, the tenants were always settled on the poorest and least productive parts of the estate, where often the land could hardly be called arable at all. And even of that type of land, the area that comprised their holdings was small, carrying an extremely low rateable valuation and wholly inadequate from any economic criterion. That tenant was, indeed, a "strong man" who could boast of thirty acres of

that lean soil, with a rateable valuation say, of £7 or £8, when, on the lowest calculation, it took at least a rateable valuation of £10 to constitute an economic holding. Nevertheless, great numbers lived somehow, or rather, with their wives and large families, on very much less - truly a miracle of endurance. Holdings of that sort of land of, from £5 to £2, or even less rateable valuation, were numerous, far too numerous.

Dr. Moritz Bonn's verdict on those holdings was as true of the great majority of those subsisting in 1920 as it was in the year 1906, when he gave it: -

> "The power of existing under miserable conditions of life, of eking out an existence and propagating his species on soil where a Central European goat would die of hunger, has doubtless preserved the Irish people during the long period of scorn and oppression".
>
> "Modern Ireland" (1906).

The dwelling-houses and living conditions were, of course, in keeping with the land whence they derived their existence and support. Irish landlordism, since its inception, having virtually repudiated all the obligations of ownership that just and sound landlordism elsewhere willingly accepted, the provision and maintenance of the

holding's dwelling-house fell entirely on the back of the unfortunate tenant. And it would be hard to conceive a sorrier or more wretched human habitation than the poor fellow contrived for himself and family, and to which he gave the incongruous name of "home". I saw many of these "homes of Connacht" in my time. They have all vanished now, due to the magnificent beneficial work of our own native governments over the past thirty-eight years; and I often think what a pity it is that a few of them, (certainly a "congested" or rundale village) were not preserved and maintained as national monuments, to remind succeeding generations, so apt to forget, what their grandfathers, nay indeed, their fathers had to put up with, even in the opening decades of this enlightened twentieth century.

These tenants' dwellings were the most primitive of structures, only a few degrees better than the mud cabin in that they possessed a chimney and a hearth. Here is Dr. Moritz Bonn's, the German economist's, description of the Irish mud cabin which was not so very much worse than many of the "houses" I saw in those years: -

> "The Irish mud cabin with its hump-backed straw roof which in place of a chimney has a hole, whose windows, if indeed any there are, cannot be opened, whose floor is the bare ground, whose

furniture is a couple of planks which serve as a bed, and a couple of other planks which claim the title of cupboard, is the most primitive dwelling-place that can be imagined. It has frequently no proper fire-place; against one of the walls and on the bare ground the turf is set alight. The only ventilation effected is through the door, or the hole in the thatch. A couple of little stools and a dresser upon which stand broken cups complete the furniture. Frequently, cow and calf, pig and hens, share the dwelling with the owners. Of such houses, there are 10,000 in Ireland".

("Modern Ireland And Her Agrarian Problem", Dublin, 1906, p. 22).

In justice, I should say that I did not see any cabin just quite as bad as what Dr. Bonn saw, so comparatively recently as 1906; and I saw very few in which the human living quarters were shared with animals. The mud cabin and the kitchen - or, rather, bedroom - byre had gone, or were passing out when I began my work in the agrarian field. Things were improving, but so slowly.

However, shortly after I joined the Land Commission, I did see one such bedroom-byrne dwelling-house, about the year 1924, I think. I was doing a tour of the Co. Mayo with the local Land Commission Inspector, the late Frank Stock, whom I had particularly requested to show me such a sight. The home in question was situate some miles down the

Mullett peninsula from the town of Belmullet. The house, a long, low, straw thatched one, with, indeed, a chimney and a hearth, stood on a slope, some distance up from the road. As he pulled up the car, Stock warned me that, if we were to see the cattle in the house, we would have to proceed there with the utmost caution because, if the family caught sight of us approaching, they would at once start driving out the cattle, they were so self-conscious and ashamed of exposing their conditions to strangers. And it was, of course, to see the cattle sharing the same habitation with the humans that I had come. We were careful; and we succeeded in getting within one hundred yards of the house when we were spotted, and then there was a sudden scuttle of ragged, bare-legged children into the house, followed almost instantaneously by a stampede of cattle emerging from the house's "hall door". As the last cow (I think there were three in all) emerged, we arrived at the house, and were met by the bean a tighe, a robust, healthy-looking woman in her early forties, with a shawl round her head, a whisk in her hand with which she had been belabouring the suddenly evicted beasts, and, like her children, stockingless and shoeless. She was, obviously, deeply embarrassed and ashamed at being

caught out with animals in the house. Her embarrassment, had she known it, was contagious, for I had that horrible feeling of having been caught out, prying into a private and unsavoury domestic secret of a family, which makes one feel a cad. However, we passed it off; and, presently, hearing that we were from the Land Commission, then so soon after the Hogan Act, looked upon as a kind of Santa Claus by those poor people, she soon got over her embarrassment, and got down to business. Her man was away at some fair; but she was not a Western woman for nothing, and, before we left, we got from her a long list of her "wants", and certainly they were mostly genuine wants, the greatest being, as in nearly every case then in Connacht, a new house.

I shall never forget the interior of that house. It was somewhat, but no much, longer than the usual house of its type, and consisted of a single large apartment. When you entered, you saw that the interior was divided by a deep rut, drain or gully, that ran the whole breadth of the house and emptied its liquid contents into the yard over the threshold, making it so filthy with manure and urine that you had to pick your steps with great care, on entering or leaving. The bare feet and legs of the children and the woman were liberally coated with bovine excrement and

carried thereon into the human section. The space, left of this gully, was devoted to the human section of the establishment; it comprised about two-thirds of the interior, fitted with primitive beds, such as Bonn has described, along the wall-side, a great open hearth at the gable end where a big, black pot was boiling on a bright turf fire; and along the opposite wall-side was a rough deal table. The floor was the earth, of exactly the same substance as the yard outside where the hens were wont to pick about; and, indeed, they were as often in the house as outside it. On the animal side, there appeared to be rude stalls for three (or was it four?) milch cows, with hay and rush bedding. The gully was overflowing with manure and urine, and the same was spattered around the floor of the living section, carried there on the bare feet of the residents who appeared quite unconscious of the existence of all that ordure.

I was told by the inspector that, a few years before I came on the scene, houses of that kind were the rule rather than the exception over much of Connacht. As I have said, the bedroom-byre outfit had almost disappeared by 1920; but what was left in the way of housing was certainly bad enough.

Now, I must say something about the congested or rundale village, an institution that was traditional, and traditional through necessity, in many parts of Connacht, and areas like Kerry and West Cork in Munster. And they were to be found elsewhere in the country, even in the hill-country of the County Dublin, but under much better conditions. Bad and all as were the living conditions of these tenants, they were rendered even worse by the circumstance that many of them, far too many, lived in congested or rundale villages. These villages were extremely common at that time, and were estimated to involve no less than thirty thousand tenants in the entire country, most of whom, though, were in the western half.

A congested or rundale village consisted of a number of the primitive type of dwellings I have been describing, bunched closely together on a very small area, perhaps not more than an acre, with the merest narrow cart-tracks providing them with streets that, in wet weather, were transformed into streams and watersheds, if not slush and mire. A village of this sort might possess anything from half-a-dozen to thirty or forty houses. Such sordid grouping, often very dense, constituted the "congested village"

or the notorious "rural slum". When you came into one of those villages, you were at once struck at the dwarf-size of the houses, low and small and shockingly thatched with straw and scroggs, little higher then the hedge or wall that lined part of the streets, and so inconspicuous, blending, as they did, in with their surroundings. These extraordinary roofs of poor straw and rushes or sods supported a luxurious growth of weeds - foxglove, ox-eye daisies, ragwort, groundsel, thistles and, occasionally, a small tree or bush. They also provided happy hunting grounds for the hens who resorted to them in considerable numbers for their pickings, and, not in vain. The "congested village" was quite unlike an ordinary country village that you saw glistening in whitewash neatness on the hillslope, or nestling in the valley, sometime before you entered it. The first thing that struck you about the "congested village" was its inconspicuousness. You came upon it suddenly without any warning, as it were. You became unexpectedly aware of its existence. It seemed to be hiding itself for shame of its misery. Actually, the first thing that, as often as not, drew your attention to such a village were the numbers of ill-clad, ragged, bare-footed but, withal, remarkably healthy looking children that swarmed along the

streets and that, on your approach, scattered and scurried, rabbit-like, and disappeared into the hedges or side-bush. The families of those congested villages were very large, and it was a wonder how those Lilliputian domiciles could put them all up at night. The houses were all one model - one storey, of course, and one chimney, with never more than two small apartments, and often only one; soil floors, and never more than two, often only one Lilliputian window, fixed rigidly in the mud wall and incapable of being opened. The only way the air could get in was through the door (which was on the half-door principle) which was sealed at night, as the night air was supposed to be injurious to health. A few large and primitive beds lined the walls and did duty as "sofas" or "couches" in the daytime; and there was always a primitive deal "dresser" that contained the rough, often cracked and broken and always scanty crockery. The brightest and most cheerful thing in the house was the huge, open hearth, with its eternally glowing turf fire, never without its big black pot or kettle simmering or singing away to the household's cats or dogs lying before it. The favourite corners in the room were the two wooden seats, fixed on either side of the fire, and, by tradition, dedicated

to the aged members of the household. Again, there was another change for the better in the lighting system, in comparison with the near-past. Not long since, they had to depend on the tallow candle for light, if they used any light at all other than the light from the fire. At that time, however, with the advent of John D. Rockfeller and the American oil companies, the candle had been replaced by the paraffin oil lamp, an ugly, oily, smelly but quite serviceable utensil, exceedingly cheap to run, whose double wicks gave forth a light surprisingly strong and mellow. Electricity hasn't it every way.

True, there were no cattle or pigs kept in these abodes. They had just got over that stage, and not so very long since either, I gathered; but fowl and ducks in great numbers, and even geese, made "liberty halls" of them, wandering in and out at will.

The food of these people was simple in the extreme - home-made bread, porridge, cheap, fat American bacon, potatoes, and, butter, curiously enough, galore. Butcher's meat, save for Christmas (in lieu of fowl or turkeys which they reared only for the markets) was unknown to them. Their drinks were fresh milk, buttermilk and tea of a very

high quality, which was drunk thick and black, with little milk and plenty of sugar. Fresh milk, or "sweet milk", as it was generally known by, was often scarce during the year, for one reason or another. A national teacher, with long experience, told me that always the period of milk shortage coincided with illness and disease in the school-going children, with an inability to concentrate on their studies.

Now, it may be asked, why did such people live in a cramped village instead of in isolated houses, which is the general pattern in Ireland, especially when there was so much room? The answer would appear to be, because of the peculiar type of tenure they were subject to, "rundale" or "intermixed". Generally, all of the holdings of these small people were held in rundale. There would be an area of land, say four or five acres, in which, let us say, ten villagers had an interest in rundale. In winter, that area would be worked by the ten as co-partners in a commonage on which each man ran a specific number of cattle, more or fewer in accordance with the value and size of his share. In spring, all the cattle were sold, the entire area was cleared and given over to cultivation. From being

purely pastoral in winter, it became mainly arable in spring and summer. But it was not cultivated in common, which would, of course, have been the sensible thing to do, with so many co-tenants. On that area of four acres, not only would every one of those ten people have a separate plot to till and work, but he would have several such plots; and, moreover, they would not always, indeed seldom, be co-terminous. I have known cases where one individual had twenty separate plots (there have been similar cases of forty plots), amounting in all to something well under two acres and, with hardly any of them, contiguous. The other nine tenants of the ten we are talking about would have the same, or less, or more, number of plots, scattered arbitrally over an area that, in its integrity, was very far from sufficient for one. They would proceed to cultivate their plots when winter had passed, and the cattle had been disposed of. It was most intriguing to study a map of rundale holdings. If there were enough colours to go round (generally numbers had to be resorted to, the tenants were so numerous and the area so small), you would have A's plots (perhaps fifteen) tinted red, B's plots (perhaps seventeen) tinted blue, C's plots (ten, say) tinted green, and so forth; and it was

extraordinary what a speckled production that map was, seeming as though it was affected with eight or nine different types of measles, all producing spots of different colours.'

Rundale holdings were, of course, the result of generations of devises by tenants on their death, resulting in the division and redivision, again and again, of the small tenancy inheritance amongst the issue, or on the marriage of the female issue - a kind of queer tenential subinfeudation, to employ a wrongful but not inapt simile.

How the rundale tenants could, each year, pick out each his tiny plotlets, scattered here and there in the area, seeing that there were no fences or even tracks on the ground to identify them, and, of course, no script of any sort, was indeed a miracle. But a still greater miracle was that a dispute as to the invisible measurings of those multitudinous plotlets was practically unheard of.

A rundale area, where the crops were well up in the late summer or early autumn, was a delightfully fantastic and, albeit on a small scale, colourful sight - here, a perch of corn, beside it a rood, or less, of potatoes, owned, of course, by another person; beside that again, another tiny plot of

cabbage, and so on. Rundale was, of course, amongst the very worst forms of usership of land known, nearly, but hardly quite as had as bad conacre or bad agistment (and I emphasise the adjective "bad" in the latter cases).

Those western, small, uneconomic holders, whether rundale or otherwise, could not, of course, possibly subsist on their holdings alone, and support their wives and their large families. They needed another outlet, another source of livelihoood if they and their dependants were to survive. That outlet was provided by the large Scottish farmers of the Lowlands of Scotland who, every autumn, sought strong labour for the intensely hard and trying work of gathering in the harvest. Those Scots found the men they wanted in the Western men, the men of Connacht, of Donegal and Kerry; but mainly the small men of the Counties Galway and Mayo. Accordingly, a custom grew up over long years of those tenants I have been describing, leaving their little farms in the autumn and winter of each year, after they had done their own scanty harvesting, and betaking themselves with their grown (and half-grown) sons (for every extra £1 that could be raked in was needful) to those Scottish farms in large numbers. One of the most trying and wearing of their jobs was

gathering in the potato crops, which got them the name of "Tatie Hokers", replacing that of "Spalpeens" of their grandfathers. As I say, their work was extremely hard, and their living conditions across the water just shocking; but, as they were exceedingly industrious, excellent and reliable workers, they were in great demand and never wanted for a job. And as they were tough, almost as immune to hardship as their Russian equivalents, and very thrifty, it was surprising the amount of money they managed to save and take back with them. That money, so hardly earned, bridged the difference for them between want and starvation and a frugal competence.

Well, that was the kernel, the heart of the land trouble, thirty years ago, as it had been, but in far greater magnitude, the heart of the problem from the beginning. That is why I have given more space to and detail of a subject in these pages that would appear more fitting for a work confined to land matters. For, did I not do so, readers of the twenty-first century might well miss the importance and gravity of the agrarian outburst of 1920. Its significance was profound, cutting deep down into historical memory and traditional background; that it was, that made it so dangerous.

But, grave as it was, the landlord and tenant aspect did not constitute the sole constituents of the trouble.

Apart from the thickly congested tenanted margins on those estates, always the poorest and least productive land, there were considerable, sometimes astonishingly large areas of untenanted land which generally comprised the fat of the estate. (It also, of course, comprised poor, barren, mountain land cut-away, useless bog, moor and heath, not even good enough to create tenancies on, and that was generally utilised as seasonal commonages). A share of that good untenanted land, the heart of it, usually comprised the landlord's demesne or mensal farm, which he worked with his steward and farm-hands, or, as often as not, let, retaining for his own use little more than a garden and a cow-plot. Most of those that comprised that remnant of landlords were far from affluent, indeed, impoverished; for one reason or another, the splendid wealth and prosperity, and certainly the high prestige, that they had enjoyed in former times had vanished.

The rest of the untenanted land on the estate, outside that which comprised his demesne or mensal farm, was hardly ever worked by the landlord. That area, often containing

some of the estate's primest and best fattening land, was usually let out, at a competitive seasonal rent, on the eleventh months' system, to a species of Irish Kulack, that were not, in any sense, farmers; they were purely cattle-dealers or cattle-jobbers. These personages, then very common in the West and Midlands, were the answer to the non-working proprietor of good land. They constituted a distinct and, at that time, a very opulent class of "cattle lords", or, to use the ancient Irish term, "bó-aires". Their method of business was to go the rounds of the Western fairs where the small, struggling, underproof farmer, that I have been describing, brought in the cattle he had bred and reared, buy as many head of that cattle that they wanted, and put them out on those great ranches which they had hired for the purpose. The rich pastures of the ranches rapidly put meat on the cattle, with the minimum of expense to the rancher. No food but the good grass alone was necessary; and, as I have said, the cattle-lord's outlay was trivial, particularly as regards employment, and out of all proportion to his regal profits. Dr. Bonn's description of a typical ranch in the Counties Dublin, Kildare and Meath in 1906 could, with little adjustment, be adapted for a Western ranch in 1920:-

"Many parts of the country", he writes, "especially in the Counties Kildare, Meath and Dublin, are nothing but grassy deserts, covered with a dense growth of shimmering, almost blue-green grass, and sub-divided into fields by hedges and ditches. There is scarcely a human being to be seen, for the cattle graze without a herdsman in the hedged-in fields, in the centre of which a solitary post or stone, against which the animals can rub themselves, is almost the only mark of human effort. Hundreds and thousands of ruined cottages are scattered about, dwellings in which human beings formerly dwelt..... It is these wide 'grazing ranches' which have made Ireland into a land of great silence".

In fact, the sole employment given by the average "cattle-lord" was to a herd, who was miserably remunerated and shockingly housed.

The lean bullocks and stirks from the starveling farms of Connacht put on condition rapidly on the prime pastures of the landlord's estate, and the cattle-lord would thus be enabled to despatch, in the course of the year, several relays of fat cattle to England, splendid looking animals with glossy sleek hides, reaping thereby large monetary rewards at trifling cost to himself.

It was certainly a fine way of making good, dry cash, particularly as the times for the meat trade had

seldom, in history, been better; and, as I have said, outlay was negligible and employment almost a minus quantity. Keeping well in the back of the mind that trinity of landlord, tenant and rancher, the traditional source of endemic land trouble, I shall now endeavour to describe and analyse the short but furious and exceedingly grave agrarian outbreak that erupted over the country in the spring and early summer of 1920, mainly over Connacht, Clare and Kerry, but with outpourings into many other counties as well, many of which had never before experienced agrarianism. Amongst the counties affected, in greater or lesser degree, were Kerry, Galway, Mayo, Roscommon, Meath, Westmeath, Kildare, Leix, Offaly, Carlow, Tipperary, Longford, Leitrim and Kilkenny. In describing that "blitz" land war of nearly forty years ago, I make no apology for quoting liberally from my aforesaid article in the "Manchester Guardian Commercial Supplement on Ireland", which was written in 1923 when I was very much younger, fresher and much nearer to those events: -

> "In February, 1920, paragraphs began to appear in the press, describing opposition here and there to holders of lettings or "takes" on the eleven months' system - a class of letting which grew up under Section 58 of the Land Act, 1881, and which, being

"for purely grazing purposes and for "less than a year", evades the provisions of that Act. This was not surprising, as nearly every spring, some disturbance takes place over the renewal of these lettings, particularly in the congested areas of the West. They are a cause of discontent in many parishes, as the small, uneconomic holders, who perhaps for years have been waiting for the division by the Land Commission of the neighbouring estate, consider their hopes foiled by those who thus take annually the landlord's grass lettings at high rents.

But, presently, rumours floated up to Dublin of a more ominous nature, telling of widespread cattle drivings, of the beating down of fences and boundary walls, and even of the destruction of property.

A little later came the news of the murder of Mr. Shawe-Taylor, a considerable landowner, as he was motoring to Galway fair. Then, of a sudden, all bonds were burst, and the fever swept like a prairie fire over Connacht and portions of the other provinces, sparing neither great ranch nor little farm, but showing a tendency to invade the smaller rather than the larger man, and inflicting, in its headlong course, sad havoc on man, beast and property. East-bound trains brought to Dublin large numbers of terrified landowners, who came beseeching the Dáil Government for protection, and suggesting that the only effective way to put an end to the trouble was to set up Dáil Courts. It was indeed a strange anomaly that the first persons to advocate the establishment of a Dáil Judiciary were not the supporters of Sinn Féin (who, on the whole, rather doubted its possibilities of success), but harassed landowners, mainly of strong

"Unionist sympathies and hence opposed to the Dáil in principle.

These refugees gave alarming accounts of their treatment at the hands of land-hungry people. All had had their stock cleared - cattle and sheep driven off their fields and for miles along the hard roads of Connacht until some died of exhaustion, and the value was depreciated. Walls and gates were destroyed and trees felled, and occasionally barns and outbuildings levelled by fire. Anonymous letters, signed sometimes, "I.R.A.", sometimes "Sinn Féin", and sometimes, with greater truth, "Captain Moonlight", commanding the recipient to clear certain fields of his stock, to surrender certain acres to a local "Land Committee", and frequently to clear out himself, on pain of "getting Shawe-Taylor's medicine", were very plentiful. Posters forbidding any person to bid at the annual auctioning out of certain eleven months' lettings were posted up on the piers of the gates of the lands concerned. In places where the landlord, or landholder, proved obstinate, there was a mute, significant and generally effective gesture, in the shape of a grave neatly opened on his lawn, or at his front door.

The trouble went from bad to worse, and frightful stories came pouring in of the treatment meted out to any sort of a landowner, big or small, in the affected areas, or even to their employees. There was, of example, the terrible case of a herd beaten to death for not having obeyed an anonymous command to give up working for the landlord - a piece

"of brutality that recalls the peasant rising of France during the revolutionary epoch.

It was clear that the Dáil must act; the great test had come and, if it ever was to claim the respect and allegiance of the people, it was bound, at least, to make an attempt to restore peace".

Such was the position when I got a message in my digs in Whitworth Road, Drumcondra, that Griffith wanted to see me urgently. He was then Acting President of Dáil Éireann, in the absence of the President, de Valera, in the U.S.A. I went at once to his office. He told me, more or less, what I have recorded, but gave me astonishing particulars about the numbers and class of people who had been calling on him and importuning him daily for weeks past, begging of him to do something for them. They were all of the landlord and Unionist class, mainly Protestants, and mostly from the West, though some came from Longford and Westmeath - people who, ordinarily, would not touch Sinn Féin with a forty-foot pole. "But misfortune doth make strange bedfellows!" Their story was all the same. Their lands were driven and trespassing "Committees of the People" had, in the name of the Republic, seized them and were letting them and otherwise utilising them, as though they were the owners, with nobody to say boo to them.

These good loyalists had, of course, seen the R.I.C., but they told them bluntly that they had neither the men nor the time to spare for police work, especially on a scale so intensive. They declared that it was candidly beyond them, with all their other troubles, to attempt to cope with the agrarian situation, for they required every available man of their much depleted units for their defence against the constant I.R.A. attacks. That explanation of the R.I.C. for their inability to help was, doubtless, largely true, for the reasons I have already given. But there was much more than that to their attitude, as we shall see in due course. Hence it was that these good loyalists were, willy-nilly, driven into the arms of the rebel government. In their grevious plight, they sought out Griffith, begging of him, if he was a government, to give them the protection of a government immediately, if their lives, as well as their property, were not to be forfeited. Outlawry was abhorrent to Griffith's orderly and, indeed, naturally conservative and constitutional mind. He listened patiently and sympathetically to his petitioners, and assured them that the assaults on their property and the threat to their lives had, of course, no sanction from either the Dáil Government

or the Sinn Féin organisation; and he promised them that he would see to it that they and their property would get the protection they sought, and that they were entitled to, as soon as possible. Griffith, in my interview with him, made it very clear to me that he took the gravest possible view of the outbreak and was definitely of opinion that if it was not speedily and effectively dealt with it, it might well engulf the great Sinn Féin movement that had been built up with so much toil and sweat, and sweep it away, together with its major creation, the very Dáil itself.

Griffith informed me that Art O'Connor, T.D. for South Kildare, and soon to be made Substitute Minister for Agriculture in lieu of Barton, who had been captured, was already in the West, engaged on an inquiry into the position, and he asked me to join him there as soon as I could. Accordingly, I took the next available train to Claremorris where I met Art O'Connor in the hotel.

That was my first visit to the County Mayo and, indeed, my first trip to the West. True, I had been to Sligo on my holidays which, it is true, is in the province of Connacht, but, even at that time, the conditions there were very much higher in scale than in Mayo and Galway, and

appertained much more to the Ulster pattern. In Claremorris I also met, for the first time, Conor Maguire (now Chief Justice), his father and mother, his twin brother, George, the doctor, and his younger brother, Gerald, a solicitor, like himself, practising in that town.

The Maguire family were all ardent Sinn Féiners; and Conor had, personally, done a great deal to get the local Dáil Courts floated in the constituency of South County Mayo, and had himself actually sat on them, heard cases and adjudicated thereon. He held very sound views about the agrarian outbreak and was under no illusions as to its dangers, not alone to its victims, but to the whole future being of the Dáil Government and all that it involved. Old Dr. Maguire and his kindly wife entertained Art and myself to dinner, and the family gave us ? landers" and strangers, in so far as the West was concerned, great assistance and sound advice in our investigations. The Maguire brothers, being Co. Mayo men and knowing the local conditions so well, were extremely helpful. Conor, in particular, was very concerned about the dangers in the agrarian outbreak if not speedily dealt with. "Nature abhors a vacuum", and, to cope with the menace to society,

local Arbitration Courts had spontaneously sprung up. Those Courts, in dealing with the ordinary civil lists that the County Councils dealt with, were very effective. But, though they had courageously taken on land cases - and dangerous ones at that - and were doing their best with them, it was clear that that was putting far too onerous a burden on local shoulders. No matter how sound the decisions of those tribunals might be in land matters (and any that I came across were very sound and just), the neighbour who was deprived of his land, or who was not awarded a slice of a neighbour's land by a Court comprised of neighbours, was, to put it no further, likely to take a very poor view indeed of such a determination. It was clear that, as regards land matters, at all events, the strain on the local Arbitration Courts would prove too severe and that the only effective way of dealing with a crisis so grave was by vesting power in some outside central authority specially constituted to deal with it. Conor Maguire saw that this was clearly the one and only effective solution, and advocated it strongly. Ultimately, a special Land Settlement Commission was created under the Decree of September 17th, 1920, of Dáil Éireann.

Art O'Connor and I toured the affected areas in the Counties Mayo, Galway and Roscommon, seeing conditions for ourselves and discussing the position with local leaders. Let me now return to my aforesaid article in the "Manchester Guardian" Supplement: -

"The causes of the 1920 outbreak are many and complex, differing in various neighbourhoods, and depending on questions so far apart as history, tenure, local conditions, personalities, etc. But, so far as it is possible to generalise, the following would seem to have been the immediate causes: -

1. The maturing of a new generation since the termination of the Land War in the last century;

2. The effects of the great European War in -

   (a) Staying, more or less completely, the Land Settlement work of the Congested Districts Board and the Land Commission;

   (b) Stopping, almost completely for four years, the enormous drain of the vigorous young manhood of the West, through emigration;

   (On this point, Lord French, the military Viceroy, was not far out when, in his interview with the Paris paper, Le Journal, published therein on January 23rd, 1920, he stated: "The principal cause of the trouble is that, for five years, emigration has practically stopped. In this country, there are from one hundred thousand to two hundred thousand young men from eighteen to twenty-five years of age who in normal times would have emigrated". In the eyes of British officialdom, so many young Irishmen being in their country was a wholly abnormal and most unsatisfactory state of affairs that required speedy "correcting").

(c) Cutting off for four years in the English and Scottish harvest fields, always an essential supplement of income, to the miserable holders of uneconomic holdings and to the young landless men. The former class usually have a huge family to support, whilst the latter, generally small farmers' sons, required money to purchase farms for themselves. This occurred in two ways, through a fear of being conscripted under the Military Service Act, which applied to Great Britain but not to Ireland, and, secondly, because of the large amount of such work undertaken during the war by the organised companies of "Land girls";

(d) Creating a great artificial inflation in price which had the effect of increasing enormously the normal value of land. At this period, it was not unusual for a small parcel of land to be sold for more than twenty times its pre-war value, and such transactions had, naturally, the effect of rousing the land hunger, particularly in the congested areas.

3. The astonishing intensification of deep, national feeling amongst the people, due to Sinn Féin propaganda, begetting a resultant determination, especially among the younger elements, to live at home at all costs, and on the land, if at all possible.

Granted the existence of those conditions, all that was necessary to creat a conflagration of major magnitude was a suitable opportunity. That opportunity was provided by the virtual collapse of the R.I.C. as a functioning police force; and by the fact that the Government of the Dáil, busied with other matters, had not had time to establish a Civic Guard of any kind to take its place".

My experience of what happened in 1920 regarding prices for land has, I fear, not over-stimulated my confidence in the capacity of our professional financiers to estimate and size up conditions, particularly abnormal conditions, with any degree of accuracy, and to deduce

therefrom an intelligent and, at least, moderately sound assessment of the proximate future in the agrarian economic world. When I was going the rounds of "tramp judge", as my critics termed me, I was amazed at the prices people were getting for their land. On the termination of the great and devastating four years war, it seemed that land had become almost literally as valuable as gold. Fantastic sums were given without any haggling for land that, clearly, was not worth a fraction of what was paid for it. The war had put the farmers of every degree - big, small, uneconomic, flourishing and bad - into the possession of, for them, unheard of wealth; and, true to precedent, when such a phenomenon occurs, they were spending their wealth, right, left and centre. However, a very considerable share of that money went to acquire more land, to invest, still more deeply in the great, new "l'or noir" that they had discovered all of a sudden; and so close to them too - actually just under their feet. That post-war craze of wild and reckless spending and extravagance was bad enough; but what made it much worse and gave it a false stimulus was the keen competitive hand all the banks took in it, as I have just described.

Before I depart from those Land Committees that were such a feature of that agrarian crisis, I would like to refer to a type of re-negation that was by no means uncommon in connection with them. I personally could never make sense out of that curious and wholly untraditional toadying for business in the public fairs and market places that was such a radical departure from the sterostyled respectability and conservation of the banks. At that period of aberration in their long and cautious career, they ran extraordinary security risks in many cases. Nearly the only thing that was necessary was that the person getting the advance should invest it in the purchase of land. That fatal stimulus that the banks gave to trafficing in land was, needless to say, whole-heartedly responded to. As I have said, everybody was interested in land. Those who had the money put it all into land purchases. Those who hadn't the money formed "Land Committees", and these committees, all having some solvent men therein, went to the banks and got what money they asked for to purchase at famine prices the land they sought. These "Land Committees" sprung up, mushroom like and over-night, as it were, all over the West and right into Leinster and down far into the South.

In the course of my peregrination between May and September, 1920, I met with and dealt with several of them. The pattern, the objectives and the financing were all the same wherever they were formed. The enormous increase in land values having violently stimulated the latent greed for land, a "Land Committee" representing "deserving congests" ? and deserving landless men" would be formed. They would then approach Mr. X., a landed proprietor, informing him they wished to purchase his land for their philanthropic objectives. If he refused to sell, his cattle were driven off, his gates and fences destroyed, and he himself, should he prove irrationally obstinate, fired at and, possibly, wounded, so as to reduce him to a more reasonable state of mind. He, of course, being a wise man (quite a number were not so wise and suffered for their folly) then agreed to do business with the committee, who solved their consciences by proclaiming that they did not want the purchaser's land for nothing, they were prepared to pay him a fair price for it. He accordingly would sell to them at a price settled by their valuers and his. In a great number of cases the unfortunate purchaser was, as things turned out, more to be pitied than envied, even went through, in numbers of cases, a certain

amount of duress in those sales. The price of land, soaring upwards to such an artificially high level, the figure agreed on was always, in my experience, excessive, and far more than the lands could ever be worth. The price settled, the Committee went to a bank, or, as likely as not, was approached by a bank, and had no trouble at all in getting the money, secured by a mortgage on the lands purchased, and the colateral guarantee of any man of substance amongst them, and there were always a few such. The purchase price, thus raised, having been paid over to the proprietor, the lands would be duly transferred to the ownership of the Committee, who would proceed to divide it into allotments, giving to each man for whom they acted a division at the price stipulated for. And it was at this stage that the Committee's difficulties generally commenced, for numbers of the "shareholder" beneficiaries would be found unable to pay the price stipulated for in respect of their share, when their share of land would be given to someone else who could and would pay up. Sometimes, indeed, when things came to the acid test of producing the money, it would be found that only a few on the Committee had sufficient resources to shoulder the liability to the bank and take over responsibility for all the lands. In many cases the final

upshot of such dealings in land would be that perhaps three or four, or, as often as not, but one man was found in possession of the land and liable to the bank for the excessive purchase money.

Conditions in the West proved to be much more serious than we had anticipated, so serious indeed that the people themselves, acting on the great unwritten law, "salus populi", took matters into their own hands and established arbitration courts to check the chaos. Those arbitration courts sprang up, as it were, from the hearts of the people, without the direct sanction of any Government, in order to cope with an emergency which threatened to overwhelm the whole structure of society. We found that those remarkable tribunals had grown almost in the same ratio as the speed of the fever, and during our visit we had opportunities of seeing many of them at work. There was nothing uniform about them. They differed in form and procedure in different counties and even in different districts. In some places we found a large bench of popularly appointed magistrates; in others but one or two. Then some counties like Roscommon had

established an entire Land Commission of their own, with a full-time registrar, Courts of first instance and an appeal Court. Nothing could surpass the eagerness of those arbitrators to eliminate all and deal out plain and simple justice to every man, be he landlord or tenant, claimant or "resister" (as defendants were called). The arbitrators were mainly selected from the public representatives on either the district or county councils, a priest being usually president of a Court. The fact that the judges were from the locality aided them enormously in forming just conclusions in the various cases which came before them. However, the very popularity of those courts was their weakness, for it was obvious that the responsibility of throwing grave questions of title on busy men who had no knowledge of law and who acted without any remuneration, was neither fair to the arbitrators, or the litigants.

There was also difficulty in some places in getting the decrees of these Courts executed. None saw the complexities of the situation clearer than the arbitrators themselves, who frequently approached us to prevail upon the Dáil to set up suitable machinery at once to deal with the crisis.

As we have seen, largely owing to the strong representations of the Maguires of Claremorris, Art O'Connor came to the conclusion that some special kind of arbitration court for hearing and deciding agrarian disputes, free from any connection with the local areas or their personnel, was essential; and he determined, so soon as he returned to Dublin, to get such a tribunal established and functioning at the earliest possible moment. Nevertheless, even that resolve of O'Connor's was not sufficient, as we all presently saw whilst in the West. The critical urgency of the situation would not wait on time. Conor Maguire put up to us a number of cases that should be heard at once, and heard by individuals who were not of the locality; and he suggested that Art O'Connor and I should hear them whilst we were in the county. Convinced of their urgency, O'Connor contacted the Dáil Government and got a sanction from them for him and me to sit and hear them forthwith as an emergency tribunal. Thus was held the first public sitting of any court directly under the authority of the Dáil on May 17th, 1920, which Art O'Connor in his Report to the Dáil termed "the corner-stone of our judiciary". And the first case heard by that court was

the famous one of Prendergast and Others, Claimants V Hyland and Murphy, Resisters.

At the opening of the case, the solicitor for the two joint tenants became apprehensive as to the nature of the submission form (which only the actual litigants were obliged to sign), and refused to compromise himself by pleading, unless the proceedings were held in camera. The submission form was a very simple and innocuous document, signed by the litigants and by a witness, binding the former, (1) to abide by the decision of the court, (2) to comply with any orders or obligations which the court might impose, and (3), not to submit to any alien tribunal any matter whenever the court had pronounced a decision or made an award. We told him we could not meet him there: the court had to be held openly, free to the public to come and see what was going on. He, however, declined to act, much to the disconcertion of the two unfortunate "resisters".

At this, the Very Rev. Martin Healy, the local parish priest, came forward, and pointed out to us what a hardship it would be for Hyland and Murphy, two poor men,

ignorant of the law, and wholly unable to plead on their own behalf, if they were to be deprived of expert aid, seeing that those who had caused them such grievous trouble, and were there that day, seeking to possess themselves of their lands, had the great advantage of being represented by an experienced solicitor, Mr. Conor A. Maguire. He went on to point out that he himself had made a special study of canon law during his theological course and, seeing that the principles behind canon law were similar to those behind secular law, he asked us to allow him to plead the case of those men before us, whom he felt had suffered grave injustice. This we did; and a right good ad hoc counsel, Fr. Healy proved himself to be, displaying an unusual knowledge of the law of evidence for a non-lawyer, rising occasionally and objecting to testimony, of a personal and bitter character, as not being evidence, and, therefore, irrelevant and inadmissible, which, indeed, much of it was. "There is no hatred like unto the hatred between neighbours".

Having heard the case, we reserved our decision, more because of the heat and bitterness involved in the case than because of any doubts we had about what our decision should be.

For doubts we had none. We had no difficulty in deciding in favour of the "resisters" and against the "claimants". Hyland and Murphy's holding was barely economic, barely sufficient for their needs and the needs of their families. And it was not the principle of the Dáil to cure wretched, uneconomic holdings, by making others equally wretched and uneconomic.

Nine days after the hearing, I delivered the unanimous judgement of O'Connor and myself in that case, at one of my first sittings as a Dáil Special Lands Commissioner, in the town of Ballinrobe. Seeing that it was the first judgement given by a court under the direct authority of Dáil Éireann, and as it is largely self-explanatory, I had better give it here in full, heading and all. Actually, I drafted it, at Art O'Connor's request.

"Arbitration Court.

In the matter of Anthony Prendergast & Others of Cornacarton, Fountain Hill, Knocknageehy, Kilmaine.	v.	John Hyland & John Murphy of Ballymartin, Kilmaine".

Recites that John Hyland&John Murphy hold 119 odd acres of the lands of Fountain Hill under lease from Edward Burke, Brunells, of date 26th October, 1870; and goes on -

"And Whereas the said lease is binding and absolute on the said lessees in every particular and respect;
And Whereas it is the duty of these Courts to respect and uphold solemn obligations freely entered into in writing;
And Whereas in the said lease there is a covenant absolutely and entirely forbidding the division and partition of the said lands under penalty of forfeiture;
And Whereas this court considers that of the said 119 acres, one-sixth only is arable, the remainder being stony, marshy and mediocre quality land;
And Whereas this court further considers that without the said 119 acres odd, the said lessees could not satisfy the reasonable requirements of their families;
And Whereas this court further considers that the holding of the said Anthony Prendergast and the other claimants, are far below the standard of economic holdings;
And Whereas this court takes cognizance of the fact that, in the townland of Frenchpark, and nearing the townland of Fountain Hill, there are about 700 acres containing at least 500 acres of good, arable and pasture land which, in the opinion of this court, is in better heart than the said lands of Fountain Hill;
And Whereas the said 700 acres is untenanted and at present in the possession of the body known as the "Congested Districts Board for Ireland";

Now This Court Hereby Orders

(1) That the claims of the said Anthony Prendergast and the other claimants to more land, in order to increase their present holdings on the basis of economic holdings, are established;

(2) That the claims of the said Prendergast and the other claimants to the said lands of Hyland and Murphy are not established;

(3) That the said Hyland and Murphy are entitled to enjoy undistubed and peaceable possession of the said lands of Fountain Hill;

(4) That the claims of the said Hyland and Murphy for the sum of £211 and upwards for the loss of sheep and consequential damages are not established against the said Prendergast and the other claimants;

(5) That each party to this dispute abide its own costs in this matter.

Signed: ART Ó CONCHOBHAR - Presiding Arbitrator.
CAOIMHGHÍN Ó SIADHAIL.

Arbitrators duly appointed under the Authority of Dáil Éireann.
The 26th day of May, 1920".

A few comments are necessary on that judgment. The first thing that strikes one about it is that it is an extremely conservative, indeed, "capitalistic" decision of a court that had emerged from a revolutionary ordinance. Furthermore, it will be noted that the term or duration of the lease is not set forth or referred to; the reason for that was that it was for a life, and any reference thereto might well cause the life to lapse before its natural term, in the then unsettled state of the county. Again, the judgment was clearly drafted to draw the attention of the claimants off Hyland and Murphy's holding, by slanting it towards the big adjoining ranch that had been for so long in the hands of the Congested Districts Board. With regard to the Board's alleged tactics, it is but fair to record that, since the spring of 1915, it had been precluded by the British Government from purchasing or dividing any lands under the Land Purchase Acts, all available money being channelled on the war effort.

Father Healy, the local parish priest, who championed the cause of the two assailed lessees, had some claim to have played a not inactive part in the constitution of that first court under Dáil sanction. There is on

record a letter from him, dated 2nd May, 1920, to Conor Maguire, Solicitor, Claremorris, requesting that he would "kindly ask Dáil Éireann to send us two men to adjudicate on (Hyland & Murphy). The only condition I would wish to put in being that they should be strangers, so that they would easily give their decision independently of any local influence, one way or the other".

Conor Maguire, in his capacity as President of the South County Mayo Comhairle Ceanntar of Sinn Féin, was a person of influence and standing in the locality, which explains why Father Healy wrote to him in that wise, despite the fact that he was the lawyer for the other side.

The claimants, as well as Hyland and Murphy, and their respective advocates, were in court; and, when the effect of the judgment which I had read, dawned on them, they were highly enraged and stamped out of the hall in an arrogant temper, proclaiming, in loud and angry tones, that we were "no Sinn Féin court" (which, of course, we did not claim to be), and that we were "worse than the British". They also proclaimed their intention of completely ignorning any order, which intention they carried out, continuing on in illegal possession of the Fountain

Hill lands. Furthermore, they boasted in the fairs and markets of their contumacy and their repudiation of the arbitration submission form that they had all signed, and jeered at the futility of the Dáil's authority. It was said at the time that the local R.I.C. were encouraging the disappointed claimants in their obduracy and contempt of our judgments. Naturally, that body, in its discomfiture and impotency, would not particularly welcome the success of its formidable rival that was so grievously harassing it and endeavouring to replace it.

It was certainly a bad state of affairs, and seemed to confirm the opinion of those Sinn Féiners who discounted the setting up of our courts, on the grounds of the impracticability of such a course. While it continued, it was obviously difficult, indeed, meaningless to go round the country, holding land courts under the authority of Dáil Éireann. If our decrees were to be flouted and mocked, the sooner we abandoned the idea, the better; to continue, in such circumstances, would mean a fatal loss of prestige to the Dáil Government and all that it stood for. The question of the capability of the Dáil to enforce the orders of her courts concerned me, at the time, very closely, as I shall show presently.

Art O'Connor returned from his visit of inquiry to the West, thoroughly convinced of the urgent need of creating a national lands court system, and of having it functioning as soon as possible, as well as the establishment of an effective executive arm to ensure the enforcement of court's orders. As a first step towards that objective, O'Connor obtained authority from the Dáil Ministry to summon a representative conference of Connacht deputies, I.R.A. commandants, Sinn Féin representatives and deputies from the West, Clare and North Longford. The Minister for Home Affairs (Austin Stack), the Minister for Defence (Cathal Brugha), Conor Maguire, solicitor, and myself were also present.

O'Connor summed up the result of this conference in his report to the Dáil thus:

> "The conference achieved its main purpose, by showing the necessity for a formal land policy. It showed, further, the suspicion, which was general, of all sectional attempts at land settlement not under the authority of An Dáil, and the absolute necessity for co-ordination between the work of the courts and the machinery to carry out the decrees.....
>
> As a result of the conference and many discussions I have had with people from different parts of the country..... I have come to the

> conclusion that the land question must be tackled by us, not in any half-hearted, dilettante manner, but with a desire to solve it where so many others have signally failed..... We must tackle the land question as a national proposition..... To this end, I suggest the setting up, immediately, of a Republican Land Commission under the authority of the Dáil".

That, however, was a consummation that could not be achieved for some time, and, as the epidemic was spreading with gathering force every day, some interim arrangement to deal with the distemper had to be provided immediately. Accordingly, O'Connor obtained the sanction of the Ministry to relieve the local arbitration courts of the unfair burden of land cases, and thenceforward to work the whole system of land tribunals, through a properly trained legal man, specially commissioned for the purpose. He also got the Ministry's sympathy for his suggestion that, till a Republican police force was definitely established, the Department of Defence should look after the execution of court decrees.

I was appointed special Judicial Commissioner for agrarian cases pending the establishment of a regular Land Settlement Commission. I was the only one so appointed,

though there was plenty of urgent work for a few more. I functioned continuously in the disturbed counties from May until the said Commission, established under the Dáil Decree of September 17th, 1920, commenced operations.

"From all parts of the country, especially the West and South, registrars of district courts sent in long lists of land cases that urgently awaited hearing, and eagerly clamoured for sittings of Dáil Land Courts, presided over by myself or some representative of the Dáil. As there was at that time no machinery devised by law to meet and deal with this great accumulation of work, it became necessary to make some temporary arrangement. Accordingly, with the sanction of the Dáil Ministry, I issued a warrant to Kevin O'Shiel as a Special Lands Commissioner.

During the months of May, June and July, and part of August, Kevin O'Shiel was engaged practically every week in holding Land Courts in the troubled areas. He sat in Ballinasloe, Claremorris, Ballyhaunis, Roscommon, Castlerea, Mullingar, Castlepollard, Birr, Portlaoghaise, Tullamore, Granard, Longford, Manorhamilton and, occasionally, in Dublin. An idea of the extent of the work is seen in some of his reports to me.

It was impossible for him to stay long enough in one centre to dispose of the entire list, the most he could do being to hear the more urgent cases and adjourn the rest until he had

attended to equally urgent cases elsewhere. However, with one or two exceptions, he was never less than two days in any town. He was twice in Roscommon, the first time for a week, and the second, for a fortnight. The conditions prevailing there during the sitting of the Court he describes as surpassing the public interest displayed in the assize court of the British system in the period of its hey-day. The hotels were packed with counsel, solicitors, land valuers and litigants, whilst the streets of the town swarmed with hundreds of witnesses. Every single solicitor in the county, despite politics, and many from neighbouring counties, appeared professionally at some time or another during the sitting. The court was crowded with the general public who took the greatest interest in the proceedings, and from the very start the people's courts were everywhere enthusiastically welcomed by all classes of the community, and their awards were, with comparatively few exceptions, loyally accepted and carried out. In Roscommon alone, he dealt with 69 cases, involving 11,575 acres".

But I must return to our defied order in the Hyland and Murphy case. Shortly after that case, I received my warrant as Special Lands Commissioner, and immediately set out, holding courts in the Counties Mayo and Roscommon, hearing cases and making orders in respect of them. Most of my judgments were obeyed without question, but there were some defiant cases that modelled themselves

on the Hyland and Murphy case (which still persisted in arrant contempt of our order). As time went on and no action was taken against the Hyland and Murphy delinquents, these defiant cases showed signs of increasing in number and in defiance. My position was becoming delicate, if not critical. What would happen if, instead of a few, dozens of my orders were being ignored! Hyland and Murphy was a key case and it was clear that it had to be settled if the administrative side of the Dáil Government was to succeed.

I felt it was essential to clean up Hyland and Murphy and kindred cases before I proceeded further, handing out orders that might, or might not be obeyed. So I adjourned my Western courts, and betook me to Dublin. I saw my Minister, Art O'Connor, who was wholeheartedly behind me, and had been doing his best to get action taken taken in respect of Hyland and Murphy. But he was, at the time, an extremely busy man, handicapped by a small staff. He suggested that I should see Arthur Griffith, then Acting President. Griffith was most sympathetic, fully understanding the position and its gravity. He, however, pointed out to me that, in his position of Acting President, he could do little at that moment, but asked me to go and see Cathal

Brugha, the Minister of Defence, and put up to him that his I.R.A. men should take the necessary action against the Hyland and Murphy rebels. He asked me, when I had seen Brugha, to come back to him.

Well, I saw Brugha. It was my first and only interview with that formidable man, although we had met on a number of occasions. He was, I think, a director of Lalor's, Church Chandlers, and had his office at Bachelor's Walk. He saw me at once: a quiet, steely-eyed little man, with a rigid, inflexible but wholly expressionless face. He was silent, at first, letting me talk, which I did. I pointed out to him the gravity of the Hyland Murphy affair which, if it were allowed to continue, would certainly spread, annihilating our courts in a storm of ridicule, thereby probably proving fatal to the Dáil itself and all it stood for. He listened to me in complete silence, his utterly immobile and expressionless countenance confronting me with steely impenetrability. When I had finished, he had his say. In a few, sharp, staccato sentences, he informed me that he had no use for courts, police or their ilk. They were the organisms of peace; but we were not at peace; we were at war. We of the Republic had, or should

have, only one idea, one objective, viz., to get the English out of Ireland. Nothing should deflect or distract us from that purpose. It was time enough to think of courts and police and so forth when the English had been got out. I pleaded with him, but saw that I made small impression. He did, however, ask me where the Hyland and Murphy lands were situate, and for the names of the misdemeanants, which I gave him and which he recorded on a pad.

When I left him, I went back to Griffith immediately; and told him the effect of my interview with Brugha. That little man smiled, pulled his tie, blinked his eyes, and said not to bother, all would be well. Then he took his hat and stick, and made off for some meeting or other.

A few days later, the news came that, in the middle of the night, armed men had arrested four of the most prominent resisters of our decrees, and carried them off to an "unknown destination". I found out that the action was taken on the orders of the Dáil by the local I.R.A. commandant. He was the son of a small tradesman, and his whole force was comprised of the sons of small farmers, some of whom were closely related by blood to the aforesaid resisters. I was immensely relieved when I heard this news;

and felt that that strong action would put a stop to local "Bolshevism" in the West. But my optimism was too previous. We heard that the women of the arrested men were now taking their place and were proclaiming themselves to be equally defiant.

That day, I called upon the late Dean Macken, parish priest of Claremorris. The Dean was a magnificent figure of a man, standing more than six foot high, with a strong, square, massive head, crowned by a thick crop of white hair. When I told him about the women taking over the work of the defiant men, and my trouble that it would be exceedingly difficult to arrest women and deposit them in an "unknown destination", he gave one of his great laughs, went to his sideboard and filled me out a stiff whiskey and soda, saying, "Mr. O'Shiel, you're a young man, but you don't seem to know much about women! You should know that women can't get on without their men! Leave them alone, and I'll lay you anything you like, they'll be shouting for their men to come back, inside a week"!

What the good Dean foretold came true. Inside a week, the women came to the I.R.A. chiefs, begging them to release their men, and promising that, if that were done,

they would all abandon their offensive against the lessers and let them hold their lands in peace. On that basis, they were released. No event did us, or our courts, more good. Hyland and Murphy had been out of their holding for three months, and had sustained considerable loss. During all that period, the claimants had been in occupation of that holding, enjoying the usorship of it for their own stock; further, for three weeks of that period, they had been in that occupation in open defiance of our judgment.

The courageous parish priest, Father Martin, I heard, suffered materially because of his altruistic efforts in the cause of justice, by his taking on the defence of Hyland and Murphy against his other parishioners; many of the latter vented their spleen against him by refusing to pay his dues.

So ended the first and gravest attempt to repudiate the orders of the Dáil courts. There were, of course, other attempts, but they were not just so serious, and they were all effectively met and dealt with, in due course.

The decrees of the Dáil courts were not, naturally, liked when they went against land-hungry claimants. But,

after that case, and a number of others, no disaffected claimant was bold enough to defy them, openly and brazenly. Other and more subtle means of endeavouring to reduce them to practical ineffectiveness were resorted to, from time to time; but, seldom, thereafter, save during the severe Black and Tan blitz in the winter and spring of 1921, when the courts were driven underground, were our orders brazenly defied. Prendergast and Others v. Hyland and Murphy was of supreme importance, as it established confidence in the rigid impartiality of the Dáil courts, and revealed the strong discipline of the I.R.A. when neighbours' sons, and family connections of the misdemeanants, carried out, to the letter, the arrests which could not but have been singularly distasteful for them.

This case (and a few other early ones) was the test case of Dáil sovereignty, and, in the numerous cases that followed, there was never so much as a suggestion to flaunt the decisions of our courts. Public opinion was a hundred per cent. behind them. How history repeats itself! How national characteristics, national qualities endure! King James 1's Irish Attorney-General, Sir John Davis, a

highly intelligent and observant Englishman, wrote a remarkable essay, called "A Discoverie Of The True Causes Why Ireland Is Not Conquered", the final paragraph of which was as follows: -

> "For there is no nature of people under the sunne that doth love equall and indifferent (i.e., impartial) Justice better than the Irish; or will rest better satisfied with the execution thereof, although it bee against themselves; so as they may have the protection and benefit of the law, when upon just cause they do desire it".

If that was true of us in the early seventeenth century, it was unquestionably true of us in the second decade of the twentieth century. Had it not been for that splendid sense of justice, embedded in the very fibre of the people, that Davis noted, the Dáil's attempt at running a judiciary would have been, particularly in the conditions then prevailing, a hopeless failure.

THE SPECIAL LANDS COURTS,

(May 17th to September 17th, 1920).

As I have said, the Hyland and Murphy case was the first to be heard, under the direct authority of the Dáil. Art O'Connor and I constituted the court that heard and decided that particular issue. We were, of course, a purely ad hoc tribunal, suddenly created to meet a dangerous and highly threatening position. Art O'Connor was Substitute-Minister for Agriculture, in place of Robert Barton, the Minister, who had been captured and was serving sentence as a convicted felon, under British law. In that capacity, Art was one of the prime executives of the Dáil Government. He rightly felt that, occupying such a post, he should not, nor could not, sit or act as a judicial personage, in any respect. Accordingly, I was appointed by him, under warrant of a special judicial commission, vested with plenary judicial powers, under the authority of the Dáil, to hear and determine all disputes and issues affecting the tenure of, and title to land in the country. Actually, I was the only judicial commissioner so appointed, under

that special authority, though there was ample work for, at least, a couple more. I had, accordingly, an extremely busy time of it, travelling round the country, hearing land cases, during the interval from May to the end of September, when the Dáil Decree of September 17th came into being, putting the land court operations of the Dáil on a firmer basis by the creation of the Land Settlement Commission.

On my appointment as Special Judicial Commissioner, the land cases, for hearing before the popularily elected district and constituency courts, were diverted to my emergency court, which resulted in my having singularly heavy lists to attend to, all over the West, as well as slightly less heavy lists in the Midlands and the South.

At that time, sittings were held in public, generally taking place in the town halls of the various centres, or in public halls, where available and where the former were lacking. The power and prestige of the British authority were then at so low an ebb that the Dáil Courts, of all types, were actually allowed to carry on their pressing business, without any molestation from the R.I.C. or the British military. But this

tolerance, on the part of those hostile bodies, was not, by any means, wholly due to the success of the I.R.A. Another very important reason for, seemingly, the Castle's decision to permit the free functioning of the Dáil Courts, was the expectation, not to say, hope, in its mind that, before long, their decisions would be so universally detested that they would be ignored with impunity. Thus, without any special effort on the part of the Castle, it was devoutly hoped by them that the Dáil Government, in attempting to adjudicate on vital issues between neighbours and relatives, would court wholesale unpopularity, thereby undermining its vast organisation and bringing about its own ruin and downfall amidst the ridicule of the populace, who had been so blindly supporting it. And, indeed, it was far from being a bad gamble on the part of Dublin Castle; for, as I have already stated, the idea of floating a fully equipped judiciary under the Dáil's auspices, had, by no means, the unanimous approval of the Sinn Féin organisation. There were many, very many, doubting Thomases who counselled against it, and foretold its collapse and failure. Well, to continue. Having got my special

warrant and the bother about Hyland and Murphy having been satisfactorily settled, I set forth on my long itinerary of circuits, tackling, in the first place, the large number of serious and menacing cases in the western counties, later going on to the midlands and the south, where the position was not so grave.

Before setting forth on my itinerary, I met Michael Collins in Dublin. When I told him what I was embarking on, he said, with rather more than his usual emphasis, "For Christ's sake, don't let them catch you! There's always plenty of our fellows in gaol. We've got to get on with the work, and going to gaol won't do that'".

I bore that counsel very much in mind during my court sessions, and said, or did, little that could possibly provoke the enemy to suppress me. However, I not only succeeded in keeping afloat for a while; but I did succeed in evading arrest and imprisonment.

At the first court I held in Ballinasloe after receiving my warrant, an I.R.A. officer came to me and told me that he, and a posse of I.R.A. men, had been detailed to act as police in my court, and see that things

went smoothly. He, naturally, not having any experience of court or police work, was anxious to know just what would be expected of him and his men, in their capacity as policemen, detailed for court duties. I told him that his work, and that of his men, would be simple enough - just keeping a general eye on things in the courtroom, maintaining the necessary silence and order, and seeing that none but themselves wore their headgear in court. These I.R.A. guards were everywhere excellent, and were a great help and buttress to me in those courts. It was certainly droll to look down from my bench on the assembled crowd, gathered there before me, and seeing, lined up on either side of the hall, about a dozen stalwart I.R.A. men, in trench coats and belts, all sporting hats, or caps, worn at every conceivable angle. And, droller still was it to behold two or three of the enemy R.I.C. men, standing up at the back of the hall, also sporting their caps - a curious and, of course, wholly unintentional mark of respect to the rebel tribunal on the part of His Majesty's Royal Constables!

Seeing that a number of R.I.C., in uniform, were nearly always present in my courts, I felt (having regard

to Mick Collins's counsel) that I should be somewhat cautious in the manner in which I promulgated my decisions, so as to give them no excuse to suppress me. With that end in view, I devised a formula that I always used when making "protection orders", i.e., orders forbidding persons from entering on the lands or interfering with any landowner whose case was sub judice in our courts. These orders were generally fairly drastically worded, forbidding all and sundry, on pain of "severe penalties", not to do anything to prevent the occupiers' free and peaceful enjoyment and user of his lands. Having pronounced the order, I would invariably add that that order would go to "the appropriate police authority, to secure its being given effect to". I could see, occasionally, a smile pass over the faces of the R.I.C. men present, when I would utter those words.

I dealt, in the first instance, as far as I could, with the trouble in the Counties Mayo and Galway, which was considered, at the time, most urgent. And, indeed, in both counties, things had been bad: - cattle-driving galore, levelling of walls, gates and fences; shootings, in more than one case, fatal; beatings-up and assaults,

the latter not even excepting some of the Franciscan Brothers of Kilkerrin, Ballinasloe.

COUNTY ROSCOMMON.

Having dealt with the more serious cases in the Counties Mayo and Galway, I crossed over into the County Roscommon. There, things were as bad as they could possibly be, and the volume of agrarian claims extremely heavy. So bad, indeed, was the agrarian trouble in the County Roscommon that that county had gone even further than others in establishing, in addition to its popular local courts, an entire Land Commission of its own, fully equipped with a registrar, court of first instance and a court of appeal. That remarkable tribunal was due to the imaginative energy of the famous Father Michael O'Flanagan, who was then curate in Roscommon Town, and to the assiduity and industry of a local auctioneer, the late Graham Sennett - that rare species, a Protestant Sinn Féiner. Sennett devoted himself, selflessly, to the building up of that local lands tribunal, and certainly deserves to be remembered for his altruistic work in that regard. Sennett, who was also registrar of the local arbitration courts, became registrar

of my special lands court, and, later, local registrar of the court of the Dáil Land Settlement Commission, on its coming into being at the end of that September.

Sennett, a man then in his early thirties, was an enthusiastic worker in the cause, a great friend of Father O'Flanagan, and he sent up to headquarters many letters and memoranda on this really grave condition of affairs in his own county. I do not think I can do better here than quote from his memoranda of May, 1920, to Art O'Connor, the Substitute Minister for Agriculture, as they give a good, albeit, perhaps, slightly prejudiced, contemporary picture of the then prevailing conditions. In reading Sennett's papers, it must be borne in mind that he was a fervent Sinn Féiner, and, as such, his deadliest enemy, after the British Raj, was the sectarian Ancient Order of Hibernians, who were the main buttresses of the official Irish Party.

Sennett's letter of May 20th, 1920, is headed, significantly: -

"<u>Regarding Cattle Drivers, Marauders, Terrorists and Hooligans</u>".

He begins by requesting the Minister, to whom the letter is addressed, "in the name of every man who has a stick in his name and who is not afraid to open his mouth, that you will see that something more invincible than a typewriter is brought to bear on the principal ringleaders". And he continues: -

> "The state of this constituency is something terrible, the most vile hooligans that did the dirty work against us in the General Election, including the cur that attempted Harry Boland's murder, are marching, with the tricolour, to commandeer lands.....
>
> I wish to draw your particular attention to the letter from Mannion, in the case of Owens's land. Firstly, the plea of necessity is absolutely overruled by the offer that Mr. Owens's stock 'will get a preference on the grazing line'; that is to say, that if the land is surrendered to those clients of Mannion's, they will take in Mr. Owens's cattle to graze upon it, at so much per head. The price these parties are offering for land, and at which they have got it, are in the ratio to the 'grazing line' revenue per half year of 5 to 2. Thus, if Mr. Owens sells to them at £25 per acre (he will be lucky to get so much) and lets his cattle back to graze, by the month or half-year, at so much per head, he will pay £10 per acre at least.....

"Secondly, Mr. Owens knows that the letter is quite enough to get six months for Mannion before the County Court Judge, and you must appreciate the fact that, instead of going to the R.I.C. in Strokestown, he comes here, twelve miles, to Roscommon to hand it to me, and you will admit that, when a man in his position has suffered as he has done, puts the most powerful weapon he has into our hands and asks for common justice, it is surely up to us to give it to him. .....

Now, I ask you to give us a hand in this job, because the Board (i.e., the Roscommon Land Commission), set up by the county delegates, has issued permits, and they have been walked upon. Every man in the county that has anything will stand by Sinn Féin and by the Republic, if we can prove that we can restore order and do justice where England could do neither, with all her tin hats.

It is not a case of buying their allegiance. They all admit the landless men have a case, and that there is more land submitted to me in one week, for a just decision from Sinn Féin, as to whether the owner is rightly called upon to part with some, or all, or any of it, in the interests of the landless men and non-economic holders, more land than the C.D.B. could imagine, or dream about, in all their existence.

We could do the two best things ever we did for the Republic, with the one stone:

(1) We could have every rich man and every landed man, and every employer, and all the class of the men that read the "Irish Times" into the ranks, in a few weeks; and

(2) At the same time, we could get more than enough land from them that would satisfy every just claim, and by absolute fair play between rich and poor, Sinn Féin could be top dog for ever and a day.

[I think my friend, Sennett, was somewhat optimistic in this regard.]

"I dont want to submit that those who want the lands are, <u>as such</u>, less desirable members than those who are well off, but I do submit that the ranks of the land agitators are bristling with bad eggs, who have come into Sinn Féin to look for land and who, if they had it to-morrow, would set it on the eleven months', and drink the proceeds.

The landless man has a case, and I am game to do all I can for him, (I have no land myself, nor has any of my family any, nor do any of us want any) but the men who are doing the harm and defying Sinn Féin are the ones with the <u>bad</u> cases. There are a few good "Shinners" who have lost their heads over this land racket, and they will see reason in a short time, but there are others who should not receive a moment's consideration".

He here asks for a proclamation from Dáil Éireann, aimed against cattle-driving; and he adds, "It will be necessary to refer, in strong terms, to the system of driving first and bargaining afterwards". And he aptly observes, "How can a man make a fair and free bargain while every moment means pounds to him, and nothing to the others"! He proceeds

"This question of letting back the cattle is the sore one, and it must be settled at once. The drivers say that, if the stock are let in till November, or even till July, the owners will have the military there, and it will be impossible to make them sell their land. We say this is not arbitration, it is terrorism. Let the question be decided by the supreme authority now. I attach a list of the leaders of the defiance of the authority of Sinn Féin, and ask that they be immediately ordered to do their duty, or get out. And, if they continue on their career of destruction, then it is a matter for H/Q to decide if the Minister of Defence should be brought upon the scene".

With regard to this letter of Sennett's, it is interesting to note his constant reference to Sinn Féin, as though it was a national authority, a national government, indeed. It was very commonplace and natural, at the time, to do so. Sinn Féin was the national resurgence, the incarnation of independence and separatism; and, at that stage, and for a good while later, the term "Sinn Féin" was almost synonymous with Dáil Éireann and Dáil Government. It was, indeed, the Sinn Féin Party that made the Dáil Government.

Attached to the letter, that I have just quoted, of Sennett's are some further letters and notes. Here are extracts from a letter of the much harassed Mr.

Dominic Owens, of Strokestown, to him, dated May 15th, 1920:

"I hold the farm of Grange, containing about 196 statute acres, in which I have a tenant right interest. My late father held it for over 30 years before his demise. My stock were driven off it to my door, [The farm was, apparently, non-residential] three weeks ago, and I have made no effort to send them back. I informed Mr. Stephen Featherstone, of Grange, as head of the deputation, that called on me to surrender the farm, that I was prepared to do so, provided I received a fair price and that I was permitted to return my stock, until I could dispose of them without loss, and that I would surrender the farm, at the furthest, no later than the 1st November next. He and the other members unanimously agreed to the reasonableness of my proposal, and said that, when they would bring it before their committee, they would let me know the result of the decision arrived at, which they have so far failed to do.

The stock removed consist of 40 head of cattle and 120 sheep which I have since been compelled to maintain as best I can, in a field of 24 acres, and are, of course, daily deteriorating instead of improving in value.

What I request of your Board is to obtain its permission to return my stock at once on the lands, on the terms stated, and to receive its authority to do so. I feel absolutely certain that, if the members of your Board would consider themselves as placed in my position, they would gladly comply with my request".

That letter is addressed by Owens to "The Secretary, Arbitration (Sinn Féin) Board, Roscommon". Again, the confusion of Dáil Éireann with Sinn Féin. But, of course, at the time, they were synonymous in the public minds, at all events.

Sennett reports that "there are drives being carried out in the Kilbride locality, under the title, 'The Landless Volunteers'. Some of these are Hibernians, others profess to be Sinn Féin, and others are nondescript. Some of the driving has been done under the tricolour. On Sunday, May 16, a drive was prepared, with a tricolour in readiness, to lead the advance, but the aggrieved man declared he would appeal to Dáil Éireann, so the white and orange was torn off the rag, and the job was done in the name of the A.O.H."

Sennett reports that, on May 20, the aforesaid Dominic Owens handed him a letter he received from a prominent leader of land agitation, called John Mannion, of Hollywell. It was directed to Mr. Owens, and ran as follows: -

"Dear Sir,

With regard to your land, I am directed to inform you that your cattle will not be

allowed back to the farm in question, but, if you complete your bargain (sic.), you will get a preference to get them back, on the grazing line. If, at any time, you wish to come to terms, communicate with me, and I will summon the deputation to wait on you. I am also directed to inform you that, no matter how long the fight may last, no man's cattle is to get back to the land".

This John Mannion was, it appears, Secretary of the Kilbride Sinn Féin Club.

Sennett, furthermore, reports that Gerald O'Connor, a wealthy draper of Roscommon, had his land driven. "Without a word of warning, his stock was driven off his farm at Ballinahaglish, and when he put them back again, under authority of the Committee of Arbitration, they were driven in all directions, and he and his employees, and his motor car, were threatened with smashing, if he put the stock back. ....."

"Dick Corr (Junr.) is Secretary of the Ballinaglish Sinn Féin Club. He admitted to me that he directed the driving of the farm, and gloried the more in it, because O'Connor was a relation of his. He refused to submit to any court or board, and insisted that the Club had full authority to decide all land disputes. .....

This was on Sunday evening, May 16, in the presence of a crowd of some 25 people, at the gate of Ballinaglish Chapel. I was there present on that business and other Sinn Féin business (I.R.B. Bonds)".

Sennett later describes this Dick Corr as -

"a bit of an orator and a hero of the hurley field, a terrible feather-head, and this last, in addition to his youth, should perhaps entitle him to a chance. I, as an officer of the organisation, say, most deliberately, he is not a fit person to be a secretary to a club.

Corr, Senior, also admitted being prominent in the driving of the farms, and advocated, in strong terms, no submission to any court, except in so far as it would help them to get possession of lands they failed to get otherwise. He quoted Mr. Arthur Griffith, T.D., as his authority, by repeating a perverted version of the article in "Éire Óge", entitled 'Emigration'. Amongst other enlightening remarks of his was this: - Court and Conventions and Dáil Éireann, or any other power, must bow to the will of the people, and the united will of the people of Ballinahaglish will make them all toe the line. This man is father to the above-mentioned Secretary, and has been a U.I.L. organiser, and Town Tenants organiser, in his time. He takes too much drink".

Sennett reports thus of the Ballintubber area: -

"The farms here are all cleared, and stocked with calves belonging to other people. All these calves are branded, "S.F.", and the tricolour is flying over some cleared fields, not yet stocked. ..... Hundreds of these calves were taken in, and branded, "S.F.", in Ballintubber on Sunday morning, May 16. I was there present, and saw it, and have two other witnesses from this town who were also there. Part of these farms extend into Southpark, especially Finnegan's, which, strictly speaking, is all Southpark; the only difference there is that the calves are branded 'I.R.'.

Sennett reports thus on the Hanley case: -

"Mr. Hanley of Carnaglough had taken the season's grass on one of the farms. It was advertised in the press, and there was no objection made to him. He paid half the money, and signed a bond for half. Without a word of warning, his cattle were left at his mother's door. He put them back, and there was another drive. It took him a week to gather them, and now he has them at home. They are penned up on a bit of tillage, up to their shoulders in mud, and, having eaten all the fodder he has, will die of hunger, and they are so hacked and lame and perished that no one will buy them. ..... He was present in Ballintubber when I went there, and Alec Kenny refused to let his stock in, permit or not. ..... Kenny said to me that they could never make the owner sell, if they let the eleven months' man in, and that it was a shame that the cattle-driving be stopped, because they had the

land nearly all got. I said, 'Ye have got the land, and ye have the country split! .....'
There is also the shameful treatment, meted out to Hanley, to be taken into consideration, regarding stripping him, naked, in the street on a fair day, in Creggs. Kenny had nothing to do with that, nor no knowledge of it".

Sennett reports on a Castleplunkett case, where -

"a Mr. Flynn of Heathfield sent a threatening letter to a Mr. Godfrey Clarke, demanding possession of the latter's land at Curlis. Mr. Clarke was a Unionist, but he came to me with the letter.
I wrote to Mr. Flynn, who is secretary of the land committee, which the local Sinn Féin Club has denounced, pointing out that his letter would be quite enough to find him guilty of the driving and scattering of Clarke's stock, and if he had any just claim on the land, either by right or necessity, to send it to me, and that if he had no claim, that any further interference with the stock or the land would result in the issue of a warrant for his arrest, followed by a courtmartial and perhaps a firing squad. To-day, Clarke has got notice that his case is adjourned for six months, and to put back his stock. I wrote Flynn that his 'court' was high treason to the Republican Government, whether they decided or adjourned, and again demanded a statement of their case, or a complete withdrawal. ....."

The admirably courageous, efficient and patriotic Sennett had no countenance for "private courts", no more then he probably would have had for "private armies".

Sennett concludes his interesting and contemporaneous report, from which I have been quoting, by emphasising what he calls the vexed question, namely, in driven farms, must the stock come back, if the owner wishes, till the case has been tried?

Art O'Connor, Substitute-Minister for Agriculture, replied that the status quo in that respect must prevail. Sennett, in all his reports and letters to the Dáil Agricultural Ministry, stressed again and again that that was the "sore spot", as he termed it, with them all. The cattle drivers felt, not unnaturally, that they would never "drive a bargain" (sic!) with the proprietor of land, if they had first to restore his driven cattle to his lands. Sennett felt strongly that that feeling prevailed so strongly amongst the "claimants" and their ilk that there would need to be austere action taken "before others will obey".

The agrarian position in the County Roscommon was, indeed, extremely bad, far worse, in a way, than in the neighbouring counties of Mayo and Galway. And it would have been even a great deal still worse, had it not been for two men - Father Michael O'Flanagan and his admirable aide,

the Protestant Sinn Féiner, Graham Sennett, from whose reports I have been quoting. These two saw trouble coming in that ranch-infested county of prime limestone land, with beef products rising hourly in price, with, of course, a consequentially steep uplift in the market value of land. They anticipated the approaching problem, by creating a County Land Commission that I have already described.

Looking back on it all now, I had harder work and longer sessions in that county than in any of all the thirteen counties I then visited and held my courts in. There was an aggressive, "bolshie" spirit about the Roscommon litigants that was certainly not so obviously present in the other counties, even the worst of them. Whether that was due to their particular character, or to the stronger I.R.A. influence and discipline in the other counties, I cannot say. But I do know what it meant to me. As a Special Judicial Commissioner for agrarian disputes, under warrant of Dáil Éireann, I was twice in the Co. Roscommon in the spring and summer of the year 1920. I sat in two towns in that county - Roscommon and Castlereagh; but, by far and away, my longest sessions

were in the former town. For example, I held a big land session in the Hamilton Hall (still standing, I'm glad to see!), Roscommon for 10 days; and in hardly one of those days did I rise before 11 o'clock at night, and, on at least two occasions, so far as I can remember, I went on to one o'clock in the morning. The court was crowded all day with litigants ("claimants" and "resisters"), counsel and solicitors and an intensely interested public. And, amongst that public, a sprinkling of R.I.C. men nearly always present.

In that interregnum period from May 20th until mid September when I went around the county holding my special Land Courts, I dealt in Co. Roscommon alone with over 60 cases. In all these cases the litigants on either side were represented by solicitors, or, more often than not, by counsel. A barrister who, in those days and in those courts, appeared frequently before me in those western counties was Charles Bewley. Indeed, to give him his due, I think he was virtually the only counsel that appeared before me there. (There was, of course, the late Louis Casimir O'Doherty, son of the Catholic Mayor of Derry and a strong Sinn Féiner; but, in that western area he had nothing like the practice that Bewley had, who was a member

of the Connacht Circuit). I had any number of solicitors, Protestants as well as Catholics, Unionists as well as Nationalists, appearing before me; but the Bar authorities, at that time, were much more sticky and less liberal than the Incorporated Law Society which frightened off Counsel. However, Charles Bewley"s courage stood him in good stead for, as far as I could judge, he must have made a small fortune before me. There was then, as I have said, plenty of money in the country and people were flaithiúl with it, as they generally are when they have too much of it. So plentiful, indeed, was the money that solicitors, having 10, 20, 30 or more claimants, thought nothing of charging them anything from £2 - 2 - 0 to £5 - 5 - 0 a head for preparing their cases; and a pound was a substantial sum in those days with twenty full-blooded shillings in it. The court fee for registering a case was, I think, £2 - 2 - 0, though I seem to remember a few instances when it was considerably higher. There can be little doubt that most solicitors engaged on those agrarian cases in those hectic days did very well indeed, whether they were appearing for the "claimants" to the lands or the "resisters" to those claims. No one made the slightest

objection to the high costs charged and, mirabile dictu, those costs were in nearly every case paid up.

In the kind of cases that came before us there were occasionally amusing incidents. I have forgotten most of those but one or two come back to me as I write. Charles Bewley was appearing on behalf of a Protestant land owner of the Co. Roscommon, where land, like most of that type around him, had been seized by popular committees and groups and his cattle driven off them. Charles was in his best form of "righteous indignation", and his eloquence was impressive, and, indeed, compelling, on behalf of his client. He opened his case by describing how his client, a highly respectable Christian gentleman, albeit not of the majority faith, was sitting in his study on a Sunday afternoon, engaged, very appropriately, in reading his bible when, to his alarm, the stillness of the Sabbath calm was broken by the sudden incursion of a noisy and hostile mob on to his front lawn. Bewley went on to relate how the mob placed a table and a chair (taken, of course, from the house) on the lawn and how their leader compelled Mr. X. to sit on that chair before that table. At this stage the claimants' solicitor rose amidst his numerous clients and

said to me: "Sir, I don't think my learned friend, Mr. Bewley, should take up the time of the court in this matter. I have here (holding up a deed) a properly drawn up and executed indenture, made between Mr. X. and my clients, whereby Mr. X. conveyed all his lands to my clients - for, of course, suitable consideration. I need hardly add we are not confiscators"! At this statement the 20 or 30 heads of Mr. Goff's clients, sitting behind him, wagged an emphatic approval.

I asked Bewley was he impugning Goff's deed on the ground of duress. "Yes", he replied, "on the ground of the most appalling and outrageous duress that I have ever come across or heard of". Bewley then went on to say that when they had his unfortunate client seated at the table, the leader came forward and placed in front of him the document just mentioned by Mr. Goff, the so-called conveyance, for his signature. "My client had only to glance at that precious deed to see that it involved the surrender to these so-called "purchasers" of his entire landed property for a fantastic trifle. He naturally declined to sign, whereupon two of these brigands who were standing beside him, drew revolvers and presented them at his head whilst others

of the terrorists began to dig a grave in the lawn just in front of him". Here there was much unrest among Goff's clients; seemingly Bewley's caustic words were stinging them. At a certain stage their leader, clearly on pressure from them, bent over to Goff and whispered him some instruction, whereupon he jumped up and addressed me thus: "I must protest, Sir, in the strongest possible way to the violent and uncalled for language of Counsel, and to his suggestion that this document (holding it up) was brought about by duress. My clients are amongst the most honest and respectable citizens in this county. Anything they ever got or came by, they got or came by honestly and fairly, as they came by this conveyance".

I asked Goff did he deny what Bewley had been telling us, that that man was brought out to a table on his lawn, pressed to sign a document whilst two men held pistols to his head and other men were digging a grave before his eyes. "No", Goff said, he didn't deny, or did not propose to call witnesses to deny the facts as stated by Mr. Bewley; but he took strong exception to Mr. Bewley's language, which was verging on the unprofessional; in particular he objected to his constant use of the word "duress".

"Well, Mr. Goff", I asked, "what would you call it then?"

"I would prefer", said Goff, "that my learned friend would use the word 'induce' instead."

In another Co. Roscommon case - that of Southpark claimants V. Sweeney - the unfortunate proprietor was getting a bad milling from the claimants' solicitor, the same patriotic Mr. Goff, for his alleged pro-British and imperialistic tendencies, and I was wondering how I could stop it, for it was one of the early cases and I had to feel my way warily so as to prevent them losing confidence in the court as a "British imperialistic" institution. Presently, the indefatigable Goff asked Sweeney was he not a "British J.P." and did he not know that the Dáil had passed an ordinance directing all citizens who were "J.P.s" to resign that office (which the Dáil had actually done)? Poor Mr. Sweeney was exceedingly embarrassed, to the no little pleasure and satisfaction of Goff's clients who were thoroughly enjoying his discomforture. I, too, was growing more and more embarrassed, for at the turn things were taking it was looking very like as though I would find myself trying poor

Mr. Sweeney for treason. However, the Lord sent me an inspiration that enabled me to get out of the awkward situation that was brewing and also to relieve Mr. Sweeney. I said to Goff: "This court takes no cognizance of foreign honours, Mr. Goff. Please confine yourself to the relevant facts in your case".

I should, perhaps, mention that when opening a session in any county I judged it advisable, so as to inculcate respect for our proceedings and loyal support for our judgments, to give a little prefactory dissertation in the nature of a directive. Addressing those before me, I would point out that I was there, sitting on that bench, because of their sovereign will. Therefore, they must ignore me as an individual. When I gave a decision, I told them, that that decision was theirs, not mine - the decision of the people through the organisations and courts that they had called into being and set up by their will. In the British judicial system, solicitors were the officers of their courts. Under our republican system, they, the people, were the officers of the court. It was, accordingly, their duty and their responsibility to see to it that every decree or order of those courts was honoured and obeyed in

every respect and particular. A defiance, or a contempt of such an order or decree, was not a defiance or contempt of me, who was but a citizen like the rest of them, but it was a defiance and contempt of the sovereign will of the people whose agent for court matters I was. And, if they acquiesced in that defiance or contempt, if they, through cowardice, or any other motive, declined or failed to help the republican authorities in giving effect to those orders, they were, by such misfeasance, in fact and deed, subverting the republican institution they had set up, and rendering impossible the functioning of the very government they had put into power by their votes. Mind, I would conclude, it mattered little to me as an individual whether my decisions were obeyed or not; but it mattered tremendously to them. Those dissertations were, I know, somewhat hyperbolistic and not wholly accurate. They were designed to meet the then prevailing conditions by endeavouring to give a people long divorced from a love of law and courts of justice, a good conceit of themselves where their own courts were concerned, with a view to creating a public opinion strongly behind them, thereby rendering it easy to give effect to their decrees.

In my capacity as an emergency Land Judge, or Judicial Commissioner, I sat and dealt with land disputes and claims to land in 9 or 10 different counties. Having cleared off a few heavy lists in Co. Roscommon I went to Co. Westmeath. I sat first at Castletown, Finea, to hear a very urgent case in that locality. Robert Ashurst Gradwell, of Dowth Hall, Drogheda, a large landed proprietor, held lands at Castletown comprising over 1,300 statute acres. These lands were the subject of proceedings before the local district arbitration court as far back as the spring of 1920. Mr. Gradwell did not appear at that court, and the President of the court decided against him and in favour of the claimants because of his default in entering an appearance. Gradwell, being thus deprived of the occupation and use of his lands, got into touch with the Dáil and agreed to submit the matter to my arbitration, and, as a result, I was deputed to proceed to the area and hear the case. The Castletown Court had been arranged really at Gradwell's request and to get him out of his trouble. On the case being called there was again no appearance by Gradwell or on his behalf. In my judgment I set out that the resister, having refused to recognise

the court despite his undertaking to do so, I would make the following interlocating order:

That Republican military and police protection be withdrawn from Gradwell's land in that district until he signs the arbitration form and pays a fine of £50 and £2 court fee;

That, pending submission of the dispute to an arbitration court, the claimants were entitled to enter upon and take possession of the lands;

That the claimants shall auction the meadow but must keep a strict account of the money received;

That the herd be entitled to retain possession of his house and freedom;

That that order was to hold good until November 1, 1920, when, in case of Gradwell not submitting, the claimants could come into court again and make their case for final judgment.

Gradwell eventually came into court, paid the £50 fine and the case was duly disposed of, the courts, I think, ordering alienation of a certain area of the lands at a certain price. Like a great deal of these alienation of land orders made at that time, the claimants couldn't raise the purchase money and the ultimate result was that Gradwell remained in possession of the lands.

I opened my special emergency land court sessions for the County Westmeath on July 2nd 1920. I sat in the County Hall, Mullingar, to deal with a rather full list. Most of the solicitors of the county were engaged before me during the few days I was operating there. In addition to the solicitors, there were a few barristers, Charles Bewley, of course; and Conor Maguire, the solicitor at Claremorris, was also present, appearing for a number of clients.

It was during that particular session that we were given very concrete and tangible evidence that the enemy was changing his tactics towards us. For more than three months he had left us severely alone and did nothing to interfere with us beyond sending a few of his policemen into our courts, more as "observers" than anything else. And the first day of the Mullingar sessions had passed quietly and serenely in the way we had come to expect, but next day there was a radical change. The morning had passed off as quietly and sedately as proceedings in any well-established tribunal. The public took a keen interest in the proceedings, which were fully reported and published in the local press, and large numbers of them were present,

listening to the cases. I should mention that Westmeath was one of the first counties that I came across where Dáil or Republican police had been organised. I had encountered them more north of the county in Castlepollard where, with the late Louis C. O'Doherty, B.L., Charles Bewley and a few solicitors, I had stopped after my Castletown Court for some refreshments. True enough, it was very late at night, or, if you wish, early in the morning, for my court was a lone one. Nevertheless, the pubs were open and doing a good business, for there were no ordinary police available or willing to see that the licensing laws were observed. And anyhow, were not the licensing laws the creatures of the alien government that was opposing us, and in what finer way could good republicans show their contempt for them than by breaking them!

After about half an hour of taking "our ease in our inn", a possé of republican police arrived, armed with revolvers, and in no time they had the pub cleared of people and shut up. The only thing they didn't to was to take the names and addresses of those who were on the premises, which was, perhaps, just as well in the circumstances! In Mullingar an efficient squad of republican police had been

organised by the proprietor of a local shoe shop, a man called Maguire. He had, as his aide-de-camp, a remarkable little fellow about 18 or 19 years of age, whose real name I never knew but who went by the name of "The Sleuth". This little fellow had established quite a record in detecting thieves and recovering lost or stolen property. Maguire was rightly proud of his local gendarmerie. He himself attended as Chief of Police in my court, with four or five of his men, and maintained very good order.

Well, to return to my court in Mullingar. After a peaceful and uneventful morning session on the second day, we resumed after lunch and were getting along very nicely indeed when about 5 p.m. there suddenly came up to us from the streets below the rumbling sound of heavy military lorries, armoured cars and tanks,with sharp military words of command. There was, apparently, a good deal of excitement going on below in the street, for every now and again derisive cheers and cat-calls would break out from the populace. Obviously, a military raid on the court was in process.

It so happened that we were in the midst of an extremely contentious case, with a long and bitter history

behind it, where two cousins, occupying adjoining farms, laid claim to the same parcel of land. One of those contestants, an old and rather deaf man, was in the witness box undergoing a lengthy and searching cross-examination by the solicitor for the other and opposing cousin, which he was facing with much spirit and indignation, giving his answers, often lengthy "speeches", in loud tones that must have carried out to the streets below. I assumed an attitude of complete indifference to the racket outside and an intense interest in the case at hearing in order to draw the attention of the audience in the court away from the external distraction. That was not easy, as every time there was an increase in the noise there would be a rush to the window to see what it was all about. Presently there was the sound of many footsteps ascending the stairs to our room. The Police Chief, Maguire, came to me in a state of suppressed excitement and whispered: "The enemy are coming up the stairs to suppress the court. Shall I order my men to open fire on them?". "You'll do nothing of the kind", I told him emphatically, "if you and your men have guns, hide them; and remember, whatever happens you are not to use them. Leave me to manage things".

This instruction seemed to disappoint him, and I am perfectly certain that had I told him to fire on the invaders he would unhesitatingly have done so, as he and each one of his six men carried loaded revolvers. The spectators in the room were getting more and more excited and noisy when I called in a loud voice for order and silence, saying that I found it impossible to follow what the witness was saying. Presently the door of the council room burst open and in came the D.I. of the R.I.C., accompanied by his sergeant and 2 or 3 policemen, while about two dozen soldiers in tin hats, rifles and full war kit filed in and took up position here and there in the room as directed by a young officer. If the military officer was young, the D.I. of the police was, if anything, younger. He could not have been more than 27 or 28, and spoke in an unmistakeable English accent. He was probably one of the new young English ex-officer recruits to the R.I.C. with which the British authorities had been replacing the large number of resignations from the force. He was, obviously, intensely nervous, and the large revolver that he brandished menacingly in his hand shook so violently that I was fearsomely expecting it to go off any second. When he

entered the room and had a look around at what was going on, his very youthful countenance registered extreme surprise, not to say, astonishment. To his English eyes what was going on looked very much like a properly ordered court of law, and with his inherent English respect for such institutions he appeared quite reluctant to pursue his orders any further. He saw the old man in the witness chair shouting out his answers to the cross-examining solicitor, utterly and wholly indifferent, perhaps unaware of his formidable intrusion. And when he turned to look at the cross-examining solicitor, who did he behond - none other than the late Mr. Joseph Shaw, a prominent and highly respectable local solicitor in whose handsome residence on the shores of Lake Owell he had spent the previous evening at a bridge party, for Mr. Shaw was by no means a Sinn Féiner! What an extraordinary country to be sent to serve in! Where were you? No wonder he was shaken, and looked embarrassingly at the sergeant as though querying "Haven't we made a mistake? Surely this is not what we've been sent on". But the sergeant was one of the old reliables - a tall, lean, grizzled old fellow that knew just what his masters in the Castle wanted and

was determined to see that its orders were discharged. There was a short and eager whispered conversation between the pair whilst I proceeded to ask the old witness several questions to which he readily shouted answers, assuming, as I did, an indifference to the intruders that I certainly did not feel. The next minute, stimulated and encouraged by what the sergeant had said to him, the juvenile D.I. came towards me, pointing his revolver at me. "Is this a Sinn Féin Court"? he asked me. "This is an arbitration court set up by the people for the people's service. Everyone present is here by his or her own will", and I asked the crowd before me, "Are any of you here against your will?" There was a roar of "Nos" that shook the hall. I observed the young D.I., "You see there is no coercion. And who are you?". That query he did not deign to answer; but after another whispered conversation with his guide and philosopher, the sergeant, he declared "This is an illegal gathering and I must suppress it. If you don't all leave the premises at once, I'll order my men to clear them by force". This announcement engendered a storm of derisive cheers and taunts from the corwd. I saw the soldiers getting their rifles on the ready and immediately called out as loudly as I could: -

"Citizens, leave this place at once and quietly. Give those who have broken up your peaceful court no excuse to use violence on you. It is now clear to you all on what side is law and order, and on what side is anarchy and terrorism. This court stands adjourned to another venue when, I promise you, the remainder of the list of cases will be duly dealt with. Citizens, depart now quietly and show these people that you are worthy to be citizens of a free country".

After that they all departed quietly and speedily, and soon there were none in the room but Joe Shaw, Wallace, another solicitor, Charles Bewley, Conor Maguire, myself, and the police and military. As I was walking along the street from the County Hall there were knots of men and girls hanging about on the pavements making good-humoured "cracks" at the soldiers who were surrounding the County Hall. Presently a large tank glided along, its gun wagging menacingly at the aforesaid knots of people, and a voice proceeded from its metallic depths, ordering the crowds to "gau 'home". One would expect a great iron tank, if it could speak, to possess a deep bass voice, but the voice that arose out of it was the highest, thinnest little voice of the male gender possible. It struck me at the time as being so deliciously incongruous - the heavy iron,

threatening-looking creature with its high, piping little voice.

Late that evening we reassembled in a modest but suitably obscure house in one of the back streets of the town, and completed our list without interruption from any quarter. I am not so sure that it wasn't a solicitor's office. At that new venue all the necessary counsel, solicitors, litigants and witnesses turned up, but, for obvious reasons, the public were not represented. It was, indeed, an extraordinary position: here was the very court, or "illegal assembly" to use the R.I.C. name for us, that had been duly suppressed that afternoon, reassembling sub rosa, with all the same solicitors, litigants etc., and continuing its proceedings to their conclusion. Mullingar knew all about this, I am pretty sure, but it was extraordinary the way the secret was kept from the British authorities.

The fact was that, thereafter, we could no longer sit in open court; we had been driven underground. The Castle saw that its gamble in tolerating the "Sinn Féin Courts" had failed. There was no split in the forces of the Dáil; its organisations, despite the many unpopular decisions of its courts, had stood up four-square to all the hostile winds that blew against them and were daily

gathering in prestige and popularity instead of the opposite, as the Castle had fondly counted on. The solidity of the people behind the Dáil and its rule stood unshaken.

That the attack on the courts was serious and determined every day's press gave ample proof, with reports of their suppression in various parts of the country, occasionally with intemperate and unnecessary violence, resulting in the slaying or wounding of judges and arbitrators, and nearly always in their imprisonment and internment.

Well, so much for my activities as a special Judicial Commissioner under warrant of Dáil Éireann to hear and determine emergent and critical agrarian disputes, pending the establishment of a National Land Commission. I roamed over a lot of country in that capacity, and was certainly very lucky in escaping arrest and imprisonment, especially after the Mullingar episode when I was caught, so to speak, "in flagrente delectu". Of course, my settled policy was to avoid arrest if at all possible, bearing in mind Collins's injunction that

there were enough in prison and that imprisonment was incompatible with the implementing of his slogan "Get on with the work"! Looking back on it all now, I certainly chanced a lot. I don't mean at all in taking personal risks; mine were nothing compared with the risks those brave men in the I.R.A. were running every day, indeed every hour of their lives. What I mean is I chanced my powers. Although working under the sanction of the Dáil and bidden to cure or check the dangerous agrarian tornado that was raging over large areas in the country, I was given no specific authority, by decree or otherwise, to compel the alienation of land in whole or in part. Of course, my emergency land courts were founded more on an arbitration than a juridical basis. Litigants coming before me had to sign the following submission form:

"DÁIL ÉIREANN

ARBITRATION COURTS.

In the Matter of .....

Concerning the lands of .....

SUBMISSION FORM

I, A.B. of Blackane in the County of X., hereby undertake, promise and agree

(1) To abide by the Award or Decision of this Court on the matter submitted for the determination in this case;

(2) To comply with any Orders or Obligations which the Court in its Award or Decision may impose;

(3) Not to submit to any Alien Tribunal any matter whereon this Court shall pronounce a decision or make an Award.

Signed..... A.B.

Witnessed by C.D.

Date.

That, on its face, was a good and, even in British eyes, a fairly innocuous Arbitration Submission Form, and was so drafted and intended to be. The Dáil was not looking for any red rag to wave at the British Bull; on the contrary, in pursuance of the policy of Griffith and Collins, it wanted to avoid any serious clash with the rival authority where the courts were concerned. Even Clause (3) was capable of a legal construction in harmony with the British point of view. Was not an "Alien Tribunal", a French, German, American, or even a Scots Court? And, of course, if my courts were genuine arbitration courts, the litigants binding themselves of their own free will to abide by my decision or award in an issue, there was nothing wrong or against the law in their doing so.

But whilst that was true enough, there was no doubt that some of the orders made, in the absence of express Dáil legislation, went very near the line, to put it no further, as, for example, their "Protection Order" giving a landowner the right to occupy and use his land in peace pending the outcome of the arbitration, or, even more so, those orders that withdrew protection from a proprietor who had gone back on his submission, or declined to submit his cause to arbitration. However, at no time were these issues raised before me, and I went along blandly, giving myself the benefit of the doubt, assuming I had all the legal power I wanted to make the orders I did make.

Before I go on to deal with the Dáil Decree of September 17, 1920, and the Land Settlement Commission it created, I think I should say a word or two about an earlier decree that I found very helpful to invoke in the course of my adjudications. That was the Decree made by the Dáil on June 19, 1920, which declared that "it has come to our knowledge that claims have been and are being made in various parts of the country to farms and holdings which are being used and worked by the

occupiers as dairy, agricultural and residential holdings, and that such claims are being based on the assertion that the claimants or their ancestors were formerly in occupation of the property so claimed.

And Whereas these claims are, for the most part, of old date, and while many of them may be well founded, others seem to be of a frivolous nature and are put forward in the hope of intimidating the present occupiers.

Now It Is Decreed by Dáil Éireann in Session Assembled

1. That the present time, when the Irish people are locked in a life-and-death struggle with their traditional enemy, is ill-chosen for stirring up strife amongst our fellow-countrymen; and that all energies must be directed towards the clearing out - not the occupier of this or that piece of land - but the foreign invader of our country.
2. That pending the international recognition of the Republic, no claims of the kind referred to shall be heard or determined by the courts of the Republic unless by written licence of the Minister for Home Affairs.
3. That in the meantime claimants may file particulars of their claims with the Registrar of the District Court in which their property is situate.

And It Is Further Decreed - that any person or persons who persists or persist in pressing forward a disputed claim of the nature referred to shall do so in the knowledge that such action is a breach of this Decree. And It Is Ordered that the forces of the Republic be used to protect the citizens against the adoption of high-handed methods by any such person or persons.

By Order of Dáil Éireann

This 29th day of June, 1920.

Department of Home Affairs.

Dia Leis an Saorstát"!

I often blessed that decree and made full use of it in the course of my court work, invoking it with effect in several bitter and contentious cases, thereby estopping the parties from proceeding before me, unless and until they produced the necessary licence from the aforesaid Minister. He, fortunately, was extremely conservative in issuing such licences, and the over all effect was that the decree, by preventing a lot of such cases from being heard, kept my lists, formidable as they were, from growing beyond all circumvention.

Art O'Connor, the Substitute Minister for Agriculture, having got the unanimous backing of the Conference of Westerns, already referred to, and others, for the immediate establishment of a National Dáil Land Commission, lost no time in making his preparations towards that end. O'Connor's intention was to create a body, vested with large judicial and inquisitional powers, manned by permanent Commissioners properly qualified in law or land values. In the Dáil Session of June, 1920, he presented for first reading a draft of a bill for the establishment of a body called the "Land Settlement Commission". Here are some of the salient clauses of that measure as summarised in O'Connor's report to the Dáil on the work of his Agricultural Department: -

> Clause 3 stated "that on and after the appointed day, to be a day to be later determined by a Ministerial Order, all claims affecting the ownership, occupation, or use of lands automatically pass under the jurisdiction of the Land Settlement Commission and its Courts".
>
> Clause 5 provided "that all claims to land be filed with the local Registrar of the Land Settlement Commission Courts. That pending the examination of and decision of these claims, acts of aggression against the persons in

possession of or enjoyment of the lands, or against persons working on the lands, or against the lands claimed, will seriously prejudice the future consideration of the claims".

And, in order to secure that no possible miscarriage of justice that might have been unwittingly committed in good faith by the popular courts in existence prior to the Dáil Courts, O'Connor attached a sub-section to Clause 5 which ordained that "all judgments affecting the ownership, occupation or use of lands pronounced by popularly created courts since January 31, 1919, shall be forthwith lodged with the local Registrars of the Land Courts. The Commission may confirm said judgments, or order a re-hearing of the issues before its own courts as it may think fit". This bill was read a second time at the August, 1920, session of the Dáil, and on September 17, 1920, in its finally amended state was passed by the Dáil. This Decree of September 17,1920, establishing the Land Settlement Commission of Dáil Éireann, consisted of 12 principal and several minor clauses modelled to a considerable extent on the provisions of the Land Law (Ireland) Act 1881 which created the "Irish Land Commission". It provided that

the Commission it set up would consist of one "Legal Commissioner" and two "Lay Commissioners" to be appointed by the President of Dáil Éireann, after consultation with the Minister for Agriculture. The Legal Commissioner, and every successor in his office, was to be a person who, at the date of his appointment, was a practising barrister or solicitor of not less than three years standing. That short and inadequate qualifying period reflected the dirth of suitable legal material at the Dáil's service. There were few legal men in either of the professions then prepared to compromise themselves, or their careers, by backing a revolutionary government that was, at the time, struggling desperately against its foes for its survival. In the event of the death, resignation or incapacity of any Commissioner, provision was made for the President of the Dáil, in consultation with the Minister for Agriculture, to fill the vacancy.

Clause (2) incorporated the Commission under the name of the Land Settlement Commission and declared that all the Courts of Justice of the Republic were to take notice of its official seal. That clearly reflected the purport

of Section 42 of the aforementioned Land Act, 1881 which declared that "Judicial notice shall be taken by all Courts of Justice of the corporate seal of the Land Commission". Actually the Commission, thus created, never had an official seal. Clause (3) dealt with the sub-commissions that might be constituted; Clauses (4) & (5) with the salaries of Commissioners; Clause (6) and part of Clause (7) with appeals to the Court of Appeal of the Commission and thereafter to the Supreme Court of Appeal of the Republic. The greater part of Clause (7) refers to the Commission's powers in acquiring, holding, allocating; leasing, alienating, etc., of the land, whilst Clause (8) gave it power to make rules to implement the decree. Clause (9) dealt with the appearance of parties before the courts of the Commission, while Clause (10) made it impossible for a Commissioner to be a Deputy of the Dáil, and Clauses (11) & (12) dealt with the Annual Reports and Accounts of the Commission.

Such was the scope and character of the "Land Settlement Commission" as created by the Decree of September 17, 1920. I had, personally, nothing to do

with the drafting of that decree, nor do I know who was responsible for it. Furthermore, I do not remember having seen it ever in toto. The clause that I was most familiar with was the 7th, which gave the Commission powers to acquire, hold, allocate and lease land, which, as the clause stood, impliedly meant, of course, to do so by legal means. And, as no specific provision to do so by the exercise of compulsory powers was included, it would seem that our compulsory alienations were without even our own legal sanction. Later on Judge Dodd actually so held in a case of ours that came before him for review, and, needless to say, commented pretty caustically, not so much on its omission from our code but on our innumerable orders of compulsory acquisition of land which, he declared, were "void, irregular and illegal" even according to our own law. And I am afraid there was something in Judge Dodd's contention, but, in the circumstances, we had no alternative. Compulsory acquisition orders were absolutely imperative if the agrarian epidemic was to be conquered; and we had to assume that the word "acquiring" in the text of the decree gave us that power, which, unquestionably,

the legislators and the Dáil Ministry intended to vest in us. It was an error of draftmanship, undoubtedly a serious one, but, fortunately, nobody questioned it during our operations in the highly critical period from October, 1920, to June, 1921. Anyhow, it was hardly possible for any lawyer to do so, for if the Commissioners were not very familiar with that decree, lawyers appearing before us barely knew of its existence. But that defect was not the only thing that was wrong, or at least irregular. We have seen that the decree provided that the membership of the new Commission was to consist of one "Legal Commissioner" and two "Lay Commissioners". Actually it was composed of two "Judicial Commissioners" and one Valuation Commissioner. After the passage of the decree, Conor Maguire joined me as a second Judicial Commissioner, and Martin Heavey, C.E., was appointed Valuation Commissioner. So that, instead of one "Legal Commissioner" and two "Lay Commissioners" as decreed by the Dáil Statute, there were two "Judicial Commissioners" and one "Valuation Commissioner". We received pretty liberal salaries for those times, viz. £750 a year, paid to us monthly and paid, even in the

worst period of the terror, with unfailing regularity.

The headquarters of the Commission consisted of a few modest rooms over Winstantley's Boot & Shoe Warehouse at No. 5, North Earl St. The brass plate on the door was simplicity itself and the essence of unostentation. It merely recorded "J. McCann, C.E., Land Valuer". We were supposed to be the employees of a "Mr. McCann", engaged in preparing maps and documents in connection with his undoubtedly extensive land business. Sailing under the cover of an engineer's and land valuer's office was eminently wise, for it would serve us, should we be raided, and enable us to explain the large number of ordinance sheets and maps dealing with the lands in dispute throughout the country. And the fact that our Minister was himself a qualified civil engineer with a good, respectable Trinity degree in that science, helped to materialise the fantasy.

Apart from the Commissioners, the permanent staff in those rooms consisted of a Secretary, the late Gearóid Magan, a Chief Registrar, Joseph O'Byrne, B.L., a lady shorthand typist, Miss Kathleen Devanny, later joined by

Miss Eileen Barry, sister of that fine young patriot, Kevin Barry, who died so nobly at the scaffold at the age of 18, refusing to buy his life by the betrayal of his comrades. Outside the Minister (Art O'Connor), the three Commissioners, the Secretary, the Chief Registrar and the two lady typists, we had, in the way of outdoor, inspectorial staff, a few professional valuers, such as J.F. Sharkey of Roscommon, who worked under Martin Heavey. But they only paid occasional visits to the office. The work of the firm of "J. McCann, C.E., Land Valuer" continued undisturbed in their rooms in North Earl Street all during that strenuous period. Through some miracle the office escaped detection, although nearly every house in the street was thoroughly raided at one time or another, some more than once. There the Minister of Agriculture conducted his business unmolested, and there the Land Settlement Commission, with its small but very efficient staff, drafted and issued final judgments dealing with over 300 agrarian cases and involving an area of over 60,000 acres. Gearóid Magan was the Secretary of the new Commission, and we largely owed our complete immunity from attack and the

preservation of hundreds of valuable documents, judgments, etc., to his well-worked out plans and foresight.

North Earl St., in the heart of Central Dublin, was a stormy zone. Nearly every day there were raids, and if not raids, armoured cars and "cages" passing up and down the street. The latter were big Crossley lorries surmounted by steel cages, behind which soldiers, Auxiliaries or Black and Tans sat, back to back, their rifles at the ready. The steel cages were to protect them from the bombs of I.R.A. ambushing parties. When those formidable lorries appeared first in the street, they struck terror in the people using the streets; and it was amazing how speedily those streets would be practically cleared of humanity on their appearance. Nevertheless, inside a few months that terror had evaporated, and when they appeared the people would crowd round, looking at them quietly in an interested, if cynical ,, manner. Not so the irrepressible Dublin street urchins, who, in their rags and bare feet, used to dance round them, pretending to scratch themselves, the gesture being intended to convey

to the encaged warriors that they equated to the monkeys in the Zoo Gardens! They had a song, too, those youngsters that they used to sing at their visitors. I cannot recall how exactly it went but its meaning was - "The Boers took the red coats off yez, the Germans put the tin hat on yez, and the Shinners put yez into cages" - followed by more "scratching" and dancing.

North Earl Street was a dangerous street for a Dáil Department to be functioning in, with the constant raids, searchings and shootings-up that were such a feature of that locality. Further down in Talbot St. - which, of course, was merely a continuation of North Earl Street - was Peadar Clancy's drapery stores, very conspicuously labelled "The Republican Outfitters". That place was the subject of constant raids. I remember well the famous raid in October, 1920, resulting in the death of Seán Treacy and several civilians. In the "safety" of our rooms over Winstanley's we watched that desperate fight about 150 yards further down in the street. We saw the lorry full of soldiers and an armoured car stopped outside the "Republican Outfitters". Suddenly a man dashed out of the shop

and ran up the street. Immediately, from the lorry jumped an intelligence officer named Price, who seized Treacy, for that is who the man was. A short but desperate struggle ensued which resulted in the death of both. The military fired away indiscriminately, killing and wounding several civilians. I understand Dick McKee had been in the premises but escaped. The British forces, however, captured Joe Vize on the premises, who had only about a month before been brought over from Glasgow by Collins to G.H.Q. as "Director of Purchases".

Those were certainly "Troublous Times" and one was always liable to encounter strife and slaughter. For example, a few months earlier, on September 22nd, 1920, to be exact, the late Gearóid O'Sullivan, Adjutant-General, I.R.A., asked me to go to the Abbey Theatre with him. At the theatre he introduced me to a Mr. John Lynch of Kilmallock, who that day had brought up to Dublin a sum of £23,000, locally subscribed to the National Loan, which he had handed over to Michael Collins. After the theatre, he returned to the Exchange Hotel, Parliament St., where he was staying, and retired to bed.

Next day, I was horrified to read in the press that Mr. Lynch had been murdered that night in his bed. It appears that about 2 a.m. a party of English officers and R.I.C. men, some in uniform and some in mufti, knocked at the hotel door. On admission by the night porter, they demanded the number of Lynch's room, and having got it, went upstairs, refusing to let the porter go with them. After a short while they came downstairs and departed. They had shot Lynch as he lay in bed, wrapping the bed-clothes so tightly round the revolver that the sound of the shot was muffled.

John Lynch was not a Volunteer and was quite unarmed. It was said they mistook him for Commandant Liam Lynch, leader of one of the Cork I.R.A. Divisions.

A sequel to this episode was that Collins, with his wonderfully organised intelligence system, right in the enemy's heart, soon discovered who poor Lynch's murderers were. One of them was an Englishman who lodged in a house in Mount St. under the name of "MacMahon". His real name was Angliss, and he had lately come across from England, with several others of the same kidney, to do intelligence and murder work. He was one of the

British secret service men who were shot dead by the I.R.A. on Bloody Sunday.

But to return to the "Dáil Land Settlement Commission" A little later on, about the end of January, 1921, if my memory is correct, the "Land Settlement Commission" and its courts, separated from the Department of Agriculture as such, and took offices in 10, Westmoreland St., over Bewley's, I think. There we were "Valuer and land agents" too, under some name that I cannot just recall. Westmoreland St. was a much safer area than Talbot St. and North Earl St., and we carried on there in absolute safety to the end.

Apart from going down the country from time to time, hearing cases, very sub-rosa of course, as the reign of terror was raging with a daily increasing impetus, Art O'Connor asked me to draft "Constitution, Rules and Regulations" for the new Land Commission. This I did, and it was subsequently published under the following inscription:

"SAORSTÁT NA hÉIREANN.

Provisional Constitution and Regulations of the Courts of the Land Settlement Commission",

1921.

The booklet contained 53 pages and was admirably printed by Messrs. O'Loughlin, Murphy & Boland, Ltd., 111-112 Dorset St. The Courts of the Land Settlement Commission were set out in three divisions, viz.

1. Division of First Instance,
   (a) Court of General Sessions, City of Dublin;
   (b) Courts of District Sessions.
2. Division of Emergency.
3. Division of Appeal.

Each of those Divisions had a section in the booklet allotted to them, setting forth their particular rules.

Hearings under the General Sessions were confined to Dublin. They were to take place before one or more Commissioners - Judicial or Lay - "according as the urgency or importance of the cases warrant, or as the Commissioners may deem necessary", provided, however, that where the point at issue was purely legal it was to be heard by one or more Judicial Commissioners; where purely valuation by one or more Valuation Commissioners, and where mixed by at least one Judicial Commissioner and one Valuation Commissioner sitting together.

Any of the "several classes of cases that the Commission has power to deal with" could be heard at General Sessions if the parties consented; but the following cases had to be heard at General Sessions:

> "(a) Cases which come from a County or District which because of the action or actions of enemy troops therein, or because of any other reason which the Minister of Agriculture may deem valid, shall be declared by a Departmental Order of the said Minister, a Special area for the Land Settlement Commission;
>
> (b) Cases which come from a County which, in the opinion of the Minister for Agriculture, has not a sufficient number of cases to warrant the hearings locally at a County Session;
>
> (c) Cases which would ordinarily come before a County Session and on the venue of which the contending parties cannot agree may be changed to the General Sessions on the application of either side by an Order of the Emergency Divisional Court".

That Rule 4 explains the raison d'etre for the Court of General Sessions. Ten Rules and 14 Forms were provided for the work and proceedings of the Division. The last Rule set forth the fees payable to the court; they

ranged from £2 for an "Enrolment Notice (Form 1)" or for an"Application for the Enrolment of a Society (Form 10)" to 10/- and 5/- for affidavits and minor documents.

The second part of the "Divisions of First Instance" related to "Courts of District Sessions". Those Courts were the most important, and, for a time, the most spectacular organisms in the Commission. They related entirely to sittings and sessions down the country at selected venues in the various counties. There were 8 Rules governing the work of those District Sessions. The hearings were to take place before one or more Commissioners (in practice never more than one, and he was always a Judicial Commissioner). The 10th Rule reflects the character of the times. It ran -

"Concerning The Courthouse - It is the duty also of the District Registrar to provide a fit and proper Courthouse in a reasonably secure part of the District, and measures must also be taken to guard against surprise at the hands of the Enemy".

The "Division of Emergency" hearings were to take place before one Judicial Commissioner in Chambers in

Dublin. It was, as its name indicates, a special court to hear and deal with urgent and critical developments by way of Conditional Orders pending the final determination of issues in the courts of the other more normal divisions. One of the more usual functions of that court was to make "Protection Orders", giving Dáil protection to an owner and his property who had submitted his case to the Dáil Land Courts.

The "Division of Appeal" similarly was just what its name indicated - an Appeal Court. Its hearings were to take place in the City of Dublin - "or elsewhere as the Minister of Agriculture may direct". They were to take place before "at least two Commissioners, one of whom shall be a Judicial Commissioner". In this Division the "Enrolment Notice" fee was £5; the "Counter-Appeal Statement" had a court fee of £2 levied on it.

In the Appendix of the booklet, 19 "Specimen Forms" are set out. In those forms the contending parties are given different names; not only "plaintiffs" and "defendants but "resisters" and "claimants" (i.e. those claiming the land and those resisting such claims). There are also

"Protestors" (in the Appeal Division) and "Co-Protestors", "Co-Resisters" and "Co-Claimants".

Such, then, in brief outline, was the structure of the Decree of September 17, 1920. It was, obviously, constructed on a very juridicial basis, with quite an elaborate chain of courts. But, like other provisions in that decree, it certainly cannot be said to have adhered, shall I say, "bigotedly" to the terms of that decree; or, for that matter, to the provisions of the aforesaid "Provisional Constitution and Regulations". For example, under Rule 3 of the Provisional Regulations of the Division of Appeal it was laid down that hearings under that Division "shall take place before at least two Commissioners, one of whom shall be Judicial Commissioner". In actual practice, that seldom happened. What happened was that I, sitting alone, heard appeals from Conor Maguire's decisions, and he, sitting alone, heard appeals from my decisions. We could, of course, have been impugned as not being appeal tribunals in accordance with our own laws and regulations, but we never were. Had we gone on much longer in anything like tolerable conditions, I have no

doubt whatever that the set up of our courts and our orders would have been so impugned, and impugned with success. I understand that much the same was the case with the Dáil Supreme Court and High Court structure; and, of course, in even greater measure with the popularly elected District Courts. However, we escaped any such disastrous challenge, at all events during the most critical periods. Despite our Decree and Regulations, we were really ad hoc emergency courts, rising out of those turbulent revolutionary times to meet a perilous and sinister threat to the newly organised national life which was, by such essential if unorthodox methods, effectively dealt with. It was another manifestation of the supreme law "Salus Populi". To a considerable extent we were compelled to play a game of, shall I say, "fee-faw-fum", assuming an authority and the coercive power to enforce that authority that we were, in fact, far from possessing. Of course, the moral power of the nation, the will of the people, was four-square behind us; otherwise we would have been a disastrous failure. And, anyhow, most of the decisions of all Dáil Courts were eventually reviewed, re-heard and regularised by the Dáil (Winding Up) Courts

established by the Provisional Government that was formed after the vote on the Treaty in 1922. I thus summed up the work of our Land Settlement Commission in my article to the "Manchester Guardian" already mentioned:

"The Dáil Land Commission was, by its very raison d'etre, an Emergency Commission. It sprang up at a moment when the national Sinn Féin movement, when the structure of society itself, was severely threatened. Its object was the protection and safeguarding of these fundamentals until peace and victory brought a more suitable opportunity and a more elaborate machine for dealing with the great problem in an enduring manner.

The work of the Commission has been generally admitted to have been just and impartial. As far as possible, decisions were made in conformity with the principles of the existing English law; but, as I have said, it was a time of necessity when the lives of many owners of a hundred acres and upwards of good land were in jeopardy, and when it was occasionally necessary to meet the extraordinary conditions with extraordinary means. However, the principles of the common law were departed from as seldom as possible. Alienation was only resorted to when the claimants were able to prove their case up to the hilt on the grounds of sheer necessity, and were further able to show that the landlord's property could reasonably bear the proposed partition. Fair compensation followed every award ordering alienation. Only in one or

two exceptional cases involving a small acreage was compensation refused; and that only because of the extraordinary history of those cases. Working at top pressure in a period of great strain and under the most unfavourable conditions, it is not claimed for the Dáil Land Commission that it solved, or even went near approaching the solution of the great land question. But I think it can claim with justice to have checked the mad career of an agrarian revolution, one of the most serious that this country has ever experienced, thereby saving lives and property and warding off what might well have proved a fatal blow to the supremacy of the National Government".

Summary of Land Cases dealt with under the Dáil Department of Agriculture.

1. The Period from May to December 31, 1920.

This period falls into two divisions, viz.,

(a) May 17 to September 20, and

(b) September 20 to December 31.

During (a) the cases came before myself as Dáil Special Judicial Commissioner in the interim pending the establishment of a national system of land courts. During (b) the cases came before the Commissioners, Judicial (of whom I was, of course, one) and Valuation, of the Land Settlement Commission, set up as the result of the Dáil Decree of September 17, 1920. For the seven months comprised in the period, some 229 cases in 21

counties, comprising some 49, 635 statute acres, came before us. Of those cases, 43, comprising 1,833 acres, were ruled out under the Decree of June 29, 1920. Of the remainder, 20,875 acres, affecting 83 different cases, were ordered to be alienated at prices to be fixed in due course by the Valuation Commissioner. Within that period prices to a total of £140,330 were so fixed in 25 cases, comprising 9,500 acres. In 67 cases, comprising 7,339 acres, the owners, or "resisters" were confirmed in their ownership and ordered to be left in peaceable possession and enjoyment thereof. And there were 35 cases, comprising some 17,714 acres, in which judgments had not yet been given.

11. The Period January 1st to June 30th, 1921.

During this period, which included the worst part of the Black and Tan War and the Terror, some 70 cases, in 15 counties, comprising some 13,497 acres, came before the Dáil Land Courts. Of that total, 15 cases, comprising 1,025 acres, were ruled out under the aforesaid June Decree. Lands totalling 6,094 statute acres in 29 cases, were ordered to be alienated at prices to be fixed by the Valuation Commissioner. In 31 cases, comprising 3,338 acres, the owners (or "resisters") were confirmed

in their ownership; and in 19 cases, comprising 4,004 acres, decisions were pending.

A note to the original returns explained that the above total number of cases dealt with might include some which are given as "Cases in which Decisions were Pending" on December 31, 1920, as whilst the actual court work might be finished, examination of titles and valuations might remain to be settled.

The note further warned that sums given under the heading "Purchase Prices Fixed" represented, in some cases, all the interest to which the lands were subject prior to purchase; in others only the tenant interest, with a continuing charge on the lands. As it was not possible to supply that detail in a general return, no sure data as to price per acre could therefore be deduced from the return. But, the note concluded, accurate data of all cases dealt with could be obtained on application by any deputy.

Some features of those returns are interesting. One is that of the 23 counties involved, only one, Donegal, was an Ulster County, and it had only one case, which I shall have something to say about later. No land case

came from any of the Six Counties, or from Counties Cavan, Monaghan or Louth. The worst county by a long head was Roscommon, with 88 cases involving nearly 17,000 acres. After it came Galway, with 40 cases and 10,407 acres, followed by, surprisingly enough, a Leinster County, Offaly, with 25 cases and 5,190 acres. Co. Mayo's contribution was modest enough for it - 24 cases and but 3,284 acres. The steep decrease in the number of cases for the second period, in comparison with the first, was largely due to two circumstances. Firstly, the diminution in the epidemic of agrarianism, the fever was spending itself; and, secondly the concentrated onslaught on the entire Dáil judicial system by enemy forces. For a revolutionary period and for revolutionary tribunals - for that was what they really were, depending wholly on the goodwill of their supporters - the alienation orders were by no means drastic, affecting considerably less than half of the total area involved. And the real position, the ultimate position, was even still more striking. For, as I have already stated, in a great number of those alienation cases, I should think the vast majority, the alienation order was rendered abortive by the failure of the claimants to raise the money to meet the price fixed by our Valuation Commissioner and his valuers.

SOME SPECIMEN CASES FROM MY LISTS.

I give below only the cases I dealt with myself. My colleague, Conor Maguire, dealt with many interesting cases, under difficult and dangerous circumstances, but, as we sat always alone, never together, I cannot give an account of them. However, I understand he has recorded them, or some of them, himself, for the Bureau. He had a very effective method of his own; he always dictated his judgements subsequent to his hearings, to a shorthand-typist, before he left his venue. The typist carried them with her, through the enemy infested streets, and, in due course, typed them out from her shorthand notes. That was an excellent system, ideal for the prevailing conditions, and I only wished I had thought of it, in connection with my own particular work.

The following cases are divided between those that I heard, as Special Judicial Commissioner, and those that I heard as Judicial Commissioner of the Dáil Land Settlement Court: -

A. - SOME COUNTY MAYO CASES.

1. "South Mayo District Arbitration Court.

In the matter of
Richard Mellitt & Ors. of Knockroe, Ballinrobe, Co. Mayo. v. Peter J. Daly, M.D., of Ballinrobe, Co. Mayo.

The decision was given in this case on May 5, 1920, signed by me, as "Presiding Arbitrator", and by Rev. Fr. Burke, C.C., Headfort, who sat with me. The decision was that lands, equivalent to a P.L.V. £50, be sold, and so divided amongst the claimants as to increase the P.L.V. of the entire area of each claimant to £11.

That a valuer be appointed by the Court, to be paid by the claimants, to determine what amount of the land in question would be equivalent to a P.L.V. £50;

That the valuer also apportion this land amongst the claimants in the shares mentioned in Order 5 (i.e., each to receive an addition, bringing their holding up to a P.L.V. £11);

That, when the said Valuer has made his valuation of the lands to be divided, the claimants and defendants do then select a valuer for each side, to ascertain the price to be paid by the claimants for the said lands;

That, if they fail to agree, the said Court Valuer to decide the price;

That, on the price of the lands being finally so fixed, a quarter of the purchase money to be paid by the claimants to the defendant, and a proper agreement of sale to be drawn up, the sale to be completed within three months of the agreement being entered into;

That possession of the said lands be given to the defendants when the balance of the purchase money is lodged by the claimants, in the joint names of Rev. M. Carney, C.C, and Dr. Daly;

That interest, at the rate of 5% p.a., be payable by the claimants to the defendant, on the said balance of the purchase money, from the date of possession until completion of purchase".

That was the only case in which I, as a Special Judicial Commissioner, sat with another Judge or Arbitrator.

2. Thomas Melia, John Holian, Patrick Lydon, Pat Carney, of The Cross, Cong. v. Walter Morrin, Patrick Morrin, Anne Morrin.

I gave my decision in this case on June 21, 1920, at Claremorris. I said that the claimants had established their claim to economic holdings, but that they could not be provided with such holdings out of the Morrins' lands, particularly whilst there were hundreds of acres of untenanted land let in the neighbourhood. Were there no other land available in the district, it might be essential for the Court to order the alienation of some of those lands, but, whilst there were so many acres of grass lands in the district, let by their owners, it was not the policy of the Dáil to divide up small holdings. Therefore, the Order of the Court was that the three Morrins were entitled to the peaceable and undisturbed possession of their holding at Ballymagibbon. The claim

of the claimants to economic holdings would be filed in the office of Agriculture and would be dealt with, under the new land scheme, which the Dáil was devising. I dismissed the counter-claim for damages, but declared that, if there was any further interference with the Morrins, my decision would be revised, with a view to imposing damages of a penal nature. Both sides were each to abide their own costs.

The solicitors in this case were James F. Moles, for the claimants, and Louis E. O'Dea, for the Morrins.

This case had a subsequent history. On July 21, 1920, just one month after I gave my decision, Louis O'Dea, wrote to the Agricultural Ministry, saying that, since my order of June 21, 1920, the claimants have ignored the decision, and were going about the country, boasting that they would not abide by the decision of the Court, and charged that the Arbitrator (myself) was bribed! They had their own, and other cattle, on the lands, and the Morrins' servants had got threatening notices, warning them to leave the employment of the Morrins. The Morrins' name had been posted up on the walls, in the neighbourhood, and a serious attempt

had been made to boycott them. "They groan and revile Sinn Féin", the letter said. Tom Melia and his wife were the worst offenders. This Melia, the letter informed us, was formerly a landlord's bailiff.

On August 8, 1920, Art O'Connor, the Minister, wrote to Louis O'Dea, saying that he had put the matter of the ignoring of my Order, in the hands of the Minister of Defence, with a request that the Morrins' land and persons should be protected, and that protection was being accorded them. My Order was upheld by the I.R.A., and peace was restored to the Morrins and their lands.

B. - SOME COUNTY GALWAY CASES.

1. Franciscan Brothers, Franciscan Monastery, Kilkerrin, Ballinasloe.) v. (Patrick Fannin, Thos. Reynolds, Michael Kelly of Ballymore, Co. Galway.

About April, 1920, the defendants (Fannin & Ors.), together with several others, took forcible possession of the Brothers' lands at Newtown, Ballinakill, Ballymore, Co. Galway, which the said Brothers held

in freehold. The defendants put their own stock in on the said lands, and left them to graze there. The Brothers then summoned the defendants before the Dáil District Court, at Tuam, on July 20, 1920, where plaintiffs proved their title to the lands, and that Court gave them a decree to that effect and also an order that the defendants, Fannin, Reynolds and Kelly, pay plaintiffs £100 compensation for damages. Mr. P.J. Hosty was the solicitor acting for the defendants at that Court. The defendants appealed against that decision, and the appeal came on for hearing at the sitting of the Special Emergency Land Court, held by me, when I confirmed the decision of the District Court, with costs. Louis O'Dea, solicitor, acted for the defendants before me, and Patrick Hogan, solicitor, Loughrea, appeared for the plaintiffs, at both sittings.

Messrs. Hogan and Shields, Loughrea, solicitors for the Brothers, some while after my decision, wrote into the Ministry, as follows: -

"The plaintiffs are since in full undisturbed possession of the lands, and are in receipt of rents and profits from same; but £100 compensation ordered to be paid by the defendants to plaintiffs, together with the costs of the circuit sitting (i.e., the appeal I heard) which have been fiated and certified at £23 - 10 - 0, have not yet been paid, nor any part thereof; and it is essential, in the plaintiff's interests, that the order be now registered, so as to enable them to be in a position to try for same, if necessary. The deposit fees on the first hearing were paid to Eamonn Casey of Tuam, on entering the case for hearing, as was also a sum of £10, on the hearing of the appeal case. This latter sum was paid by the plaintiffs in court, but they cannot trace any receipt for same.

Signed HOGAN & SHIELDS, Solicitors,
5, Stephen's Green, and
Loughrea".

This was a particularly notorious case, and showed that, when men were in the clutches of the agrarian fever, all was grist to their passions, including the Franciscan Brothers, who were running a farm and agricultural school there, for the benefit of the

sons of those same defendants, or claimants, and their connections. In an affidavit, sworn by Brother Xavier Cosgrave and Brother Jarlath Edwards, they stated that the defendants, and several others, had driven their lands of Newtown, comprising 67 Irish acres, and then had put their own stock thereon. They also levelled the fences on the farm, including 62 yards of a wall, enclosing the farm from the public road.

Forty-four defendants were listed and served in this particular case, and they did not stop at personal violence. One of the Brothers was assaulted by them on the public road.

The finale of that case was that, on February 2nd, 1925, it came before Judge Wylie in the Dáil Éireann (Winding Up) Court, when he made an order, confirming mine, and ordering the payment of £100 plus £4 interest from July 2nd, 1920.

At that hearing, Eugene Sheehy, B.L., was Counsel for the defendants, and Conor Maguire (now a B.L.), Counsel for the plaintiffs.

C. - SOME COUNTY ROSCOMMON CASES.

1. Mulherin v. Ballinaheglish Sinn Féin Club.

Mulherin's solicitor, Patrick Neilan of Roscommon Town, said his client had lately been given possession of seven acres. He also appears to have got 4½ acres of bog from the C.D.B., which was vested in him by that body on June 6, 1920. On that night his boundary walls were levelled, and his stock all driven, and new stock, belonging to the drivers, put in on his lands. Mulherin received plenty of threatening notices - "Mulherin, if you have anything further to do with that land, you will lose your life"! - and suchlike. Mulherin, in evidence, admitted to the horrific fact that he was a Hibernian, but added, "I am one of the poorest men in the district, and didn't think any club in Ireland would stop me, in a little patch of land like this". I had no difficulty in deciding in favour of Mulherin against Bartley Goff's clients, the Sinn Féin Club. Mulherin had no trouble after that.

2. William Farrell v. The Walk (Clooneybeirne) (Claimants).

Lands of Killarney.

Farrell signed a submission to Arbitration Form on June 25th, 1920, and applied for a "Protection Order". I gave him one. It went as follows: -

"DÁIL ÉIREANN

ARBITRATION COURTS (LAND).

To all whom it may concern:

William Farrell of Roxboro, having agreed to submit the matter of the Killarney Lands to the Arbitration Court appointed under the authority of Dáil Éireann,

It is hereby ordered that, pending the decision of the court, no interference be made with his person, stock, buildings, servants or property.

Given this 28th day of June, 1920, by Kevin O'Shiel, President of the Court at Castlerea".

In this case I eventually decided that the club could purchase the lands at a certain price. The late Frank G. MacSherry, Solicitor for the owner, wrote in some time afterwards to say that the claimants couldn't raise the price and that, accordingly, his client had now peaceful possession and use of his lands.

3. Patrick Murray v. Dysart Claimants.

Lands of Lisnamucklagh, 86 acres (English).

My order in this case ran as follows: -

"DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

LAND SETTLEMENT COMMISSION COURT.

Having received the report of the Court Valuer concerning the lands in dispute in this action, which report has been duly sanctioned by the Valuation Commissioner,

This Court Hereby Orders

(1) That the Dysart claimants to that part of the lands of Lisnamucklagh (Deerpark) containing 86 acres (English) and at present in the possession of Patrick Murray, have not established their claims to the said disputed lands;

(2) That the said Patrick Murray is entitled to the full, free and peaceful possession, use and employment of the said disputed land;

(3) That both parties to this dispute abide each their own costs so found by the Chief Registrar.

Given this 11th day of February, 1921,

Kevin R. O'Shiel,
Judicial Commissioner Presiding.

It will be noted that this case was heard by me as a Judicial Commissioner of the Dáil Land Settlement Commission

which had been set going in October, 1920.

On May 4th, 1920, Joseph Dixon, Solicitor for the owner, reported that the Dysart Committee were, despite my order, still in possession of these lands and refused to vacate them in accordance with the terms of my order. He requested the Ministry that steps be taken to have the order of the court carried out.

Accordingly, Art O'Connor made the following order:

"SAORSTÁT NA hÉIREANN

Department of Agriculture

Land Settlement Commission.

Patrick Murray v. Dysart Claimants.

In re the lands of Deerpark, Dysart, Co. Roscommon

ORDER

Whereas by a Judgment of the Court of First Instance of the Land Settlement Commission dated 11th day of February, 1921, Patrick Murray was granted peaceable possession and enjoyment of his lands at Lisnamucklagh containing 86 acres (English) more or less;

And Whereas it has come to the knowledge of this Commission that you, with sundry other persons, have shown contempt, and continue to show contempt for the said lawful judgment of this said lawful court, to wit, by continuing in improper and

illegal possession of the said lands, the lawful property of the said Patrick Murray,

Now Therefore This Commission Hereby Orders and Commands you, Martin Gately, Garrynagran, Dysart, under pain of incurring summary and drastic punishment

(1) to discontinue at once the said improper and illegal possession of the said lands of Patrick Murray;

(2) and, furthermore, to discontinue all vexations and annoying practices that militate against the said Patrick Murray's peaceful enjoyment and possession of the said lands, his lawful property.

Given this 15th day of June, 1921,

ART Ó CONCHUBHAIR
Substitute Minister for Agriculture".

I drafted that order and I cannot say why the Minister, and not the Land Court, made it. Things were exceedingly flexible in those days, even to the extent, as I have pointed out, of creating a Commission in a form that the Dáil never enacted!

The following note from the Dáil Police gives the happy ending of that particular affair:

"DÁIL ÉIREANN

Priomh-Oifig na Siothmaor
(Police Headquarters).

The following is an extract from report received from O/C Police, South Roscommon: -

"The parties trespassing on the lands of Patrick Murray, Dysart, for which I received a Protection Order, have all complied with the wishes of the Order and have removed the stock".

4. Mealy v. Kelly.

On September 30th, 1920, S.G. Sennett wrote to H.Q. asking for an order in this case, which was one pending judgment which I had heard. He wrote that there was much local hostility to Mealy and his family, and that that hostility was extended to men who gave him assistance in his hay-making and, he added, "some threats have been made which are most improper". The claimants, despite the sub judice character of the case, were still in unlawful possession of the lands.

On October 6th, 1920, Sennett again writes the Minister of Agriculture that Kelly was going around openly boasting that he will not be put out of the lands as there is not a man in the locality to support Mealy. A week

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21
BURO STAIRE MILEATA 1913-21
No. W.S. 1770

ORIGINAL

PART VIII

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

ROINN COSANTA.

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS.

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 1770.

Witness

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

Identity.

Judicial Commissioner, Dáil Éireann Land Courts, 1920-1922;
Commissioner, Irish Land Commission, 1923 to date.

Subject.

National Activities, and Dáil Éireann Land Courts, 1900-1921.

Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness.

Nil.

File No S. 909.

Form B.S.M. 2

ORIGINAL

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

later, on October 11th, the indefatigable and highly conscientious Sennett again writes up to H.Q. warning that if "Mealy and Kelly are not settled soon there will be a repetition of the Keegan and Fannin case" which is now pending trial, for grevious bodily injury, for the District Court". On November 22nd, 1920, I gave my judgment in this case. It ran as follows: -

"DÁIL ÉIREANN

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE.

Co. Roscommon Session

July, 1920.

Bernard Kelly, Kilglass, Rahara,

v.

Thomas Mealy, Curroghlinaveen, Rahara.

JUDGMENT.

This Court Hereby Orders:

(1) That the land in dispute, containing 48 acres, 1 p.m., be divided into two equal moieties containing 24 acres, 1 p.m., each, of which one moiety shall be the 24 acres on which Bernard Kelly now resides;

(2) That the said Bernard Kelly retains the moiety which he has held prior to the July session of this court, and that the defendant, Thomas Mealy, be given up full

possession and enjoyment of the other moiety;

(3) That a Court Valuer mark out the division line on the said lands along which a fit and proper fence shall be erected to the satisfaction of the said Court Valuer;

(4) That one half of the fence specified by the said Court Valuer shall be erected and kept in repair at the cost and expense of the said Bernard Kelly, and one half thereof at the cost and expense of the said Thomas Mealy;

(5) Both parties in this dispute are each to abide their own costs".

5. Erritt Claimants v. Erritt Lessees.
Frenchpark.

The lands in question contained 150 acres, 1 p.m., and formed portion of the de Freyne Estate. Some 40 years prior to these proceedings (about 1880 or so), de Freyne evicted wholesale about 12 or 14 tenants and incorporated the lands that constituted their holdings into his demesne at Erritt. In that year, 1920, a number of small holders, with holdings averaging about R.V. £4, surrounded the demesne lands and were occupied by the former de Freyne tenants and their children, including the said evicted tenants. Lord de Freyne's father had let the Erritt lands to his uncle, who went to England to

reside, and he, in turn, let the entire area on the eleven months' system, continuously, year by year. Sometime prior to the 1920 proceedings, some 36 tenants adjoining the Erritt lands approached de Freyne with a view to getting him to sell those long-let lands to them; but he declined to do so. Canon Geraghty, P.P., Loughglynn, interested himself very much on the tenants' side in that project. In reply to a letter of the Canon to Lord de Freyne asking him to sell the said lands to the said parties, the latter wrote on January 30th, 1919: "I do not kind who buys Erritt. Whoever gives most for it will get it". After that, Staunton, Solicitor, communicated with the C.D.B. with a view to purchasing the lands for his clients, the aforesaid tenants. The C.D.B. communicated with de Freyne, but got no reply. On March 3rd, 1919, Staunton wrote de Freyne saying that his clients, the tenants, were prepared to buy the lands for cash, and pointed out that they were all ready and willing to buy and "were all tenants on your estate". De Freyne did not reply. On March 18, 1919, some tenants entered in on the lands of Erritt and took possession of them. At the subsequent Petty Sessions Court proceedings, Staunton attended on behalf of the

defendants and stated the facts, including de Freyne's promise to sell. Also, he pointed out that the eleven months' parties were aiding de Freyne in what he considered to be the unfair treatment of his clients. The magistrates of the Petty Sessions Court were, seemingly, sympathetic, for they adjourned their decision with a view to allowing de Freyne time to carry out his promise to sell. According to Staunton, the majority of the grazing tenants admitted that justice was on the side of his clients, and intimated their willingness to relinquish them, but two of them, Maloney (a former game-keeper of de Freyne) and Raftery, would not agree, and things remained as they were for some time.

The next thing that transpired was that de Freyne, in May, 1920, made, behind the backs of Staunton's clients and in violation of his promise to sell, twenty-one year leases to all the said grazing tenants. Then there was further trouble. There was great public resentment against the new lessees, resulting in further summonses for intimidation being issued against Staunton's clients. A day or two before those summonses were heard in the Petty Sessions Court, Raftery went to Dublin and got a

Protection Order from the Dáil preventing further interference with him pending the hearing of his case in the Dáil Court. But, curiously enough, when Raftery was in Dublin invoking the Dáil tribunals, his wife appeared at the Petty Sessions Court and gave evidence for the police prosecution against Staunton's clients for intimidation. A real case of having it both ways!

Staunton's clients signed forms of arbitration consenting to their claims being heard before a Dáil Court; but the lessees declined to sign any such forms.

The decision in this case was given on November 11th, 1920, and was as follows: -

"DÁIL ÉIREANN

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

LAND COURT

CO. ROSCOMMON SESSIONS.

Erritt Tenants v. Erritt Claimants.

This Court Hereby Orders:

(1) That the said Erritt tenants continue in peaceable possession and use of the disputed lands of Erritt, containing 150 acres, 1 p.m., up to and until March 31st next ensuing;

(2) That a Court Valuer ascertain, through an inquiry,

(a) the persons most worthy of retaining all these holdings, as amongst the Erritt tenants (if any), and the persons (if any) most worthy as amongst the Erritt Claimants of acquiring new holdings on any part of the said disputed lands;

(b) the area of land each person so found is entitled to receive; or the manner in which the said lands are to be held by the persons that may be so selected therefor;

(c) the fair and proper purchase price to be paid for the entire area of the disputed lands which may be alienated as the result of the said Court Valuer's inquiry.

(3) That in the event of the said Court Valuer's inquiry resulting in a complete, or any change, either in the personnel of the present holders, or the extent of their present holdings, then,

(a) not later than the 31st day of March next ensuing, the said persons so selected as the result of the said inquiry shall pay unto all or any of the Erritt tenants as may be directed, the fair and proper purchase price in fair and proper proportions;

(b) the persons so selected as the result of the said inquiry shall raise all the monies necessary for carrying out the settlement so arrived at;

(c) in consideration and on receipt of the said purchase money (but not later than March 31st next) the said parties amongst the Erritt Tenants, or all of them, as shall be so directed as the result of the said inquiry, shall make over and convey unto the said selected parties all their rights, interests and title in the said disputed lands, or alienated parts thereof as the case may be;

(d) possession of the said disputed lands, or alienated parts thereof, as the case may be, shall be granted to the said selected parties when the said fair and proper purchase price has been fully paid to the parties, in the proportions as directed.

(4) That in the event of the Court Valuer's inquiry resulting in no change, either in the personnel

of the present holders, or the extent of their present holdings, or in any other way, then the present holders, called the Erritt tenants, shall be confirmed in their present possession and ownership of the said disputed lands.

(5) Both parties to this dispute, each to abide their own costs in these proceedings.

6. The Creggs Land Committee) v. (Thomas Maloney
John Corian) ((and a host of
Austin Collins) (other dispossessed
Patrick Kilby) (owners).
Michael Murray.) (

This was the most unique and remarkable case that came before me in my Dáil Court work. The "claimants" were mostly from a stratum very different from that they usually belonged to. Generally claimants were drawn from the needy, small farmer class, possessing sub-subsistence holdings and having genuine claims to additional land somewhere. In this case they were mainly not genuine farmers at all, but mainly (certainly the leaders) merchants and traders, albeit small ones, in the village of Creggs, just over the Co. Galway border from the Co. Roscommon. The treasurer of that famous, and, for a time, exceedingly affluent committee, one Patrick Kilby, was the proprietor of the village pub. I should explain that Creggs had a peculiar and particular history and

tradition of its own. Creggs was the last place Parnell addressed a meeting shortly before his death in October, 1891. The Creggonians, consequently, were and had always been staunch Parnellites. They were, however, in latter years, equally staunch supporters of the Irish Parliamentary Party and the United Irish League, largely because of their loyalty to John Redmond, whom they regarded as the "Chief's" legitimate successor. They were, therefore, far from being Sinn Féiners and had no sympathy at all with that movement. And, of course, they did not care for what was then generally termed the "Sinn Féin Courts", particularly when those courts were not likely to sanction their actions. I could never understand the violent and far-reaching wave of agrarianism that those Creggonians organised and directed. They, certainly the leaders of that local movement, were not poor or needy men by any manner of means, albeit they had numbers of such in the "army" of supporters and backers whom they used in their wide-flung work of land acquisition, who, no doubt, were looking to them for ultimate shares-out if and when their vast ill-gotten estates came to be divided.

The Creggs Land Committee, composed, as I have said, of respectable and by no means indigent citizens, built up for itself an immense landed "property", comprising at its height anything up to 4,000 acres, by the simple process of driving their neighbours' cattle off their owners' lands, seizing those lands and using them for their own, or other cattle, as they thought fit. That, no doubt, was what happened in all cases of agrarianism; but, what made the Creggs case different was the type of ring-leaders and the wide extent of their operations - as far out as 12 miles from their centre.

Having thus illicitly acquired, by such means that were nothing short of pure outlawry, a great territory, and having swept it clear of the rightful owners' stock, they proceeded to let it out at the highest prevailing rents - and grazing rents were then at their record maximum. They had not the slightest difficulty in securing grazing "clients", amongst them being numbers of the unfortunate owners whom they had dispossessed, who, to maintain the cattle they had invested their money in, had no alternative but to get the permission of their expropriators to take them back on their own lands at the

very substantial grazing rents those expropriators demanded. The committee, despite its bandit-like actions, adopted a kind of business-like routine in its transaction, that was designed, no doubt, to cast an atmosphere of respectability and disinterested altruism over their operations. For instance, they had properly drafted and well printed "Seasonal Grazing Letting" Forms, with the title "Creggs Land Committee" at the top -

"Austin Collins, President.
Patrick Kilby, Treasurer.
John Corian, Secretary".

The form informed all and sundry that Mr. A.B. of C.D. had rented for the eleven months beginning..... and ending..... "our lands of ....." for such and such a rent. The result of the "conquests" and activities of that highly industrious committee was that its members waxed prosperous and rich, as they might well do with a fine, dry income of from £5,000 to £6,000 a year at their command, and that unencumbered by any charges such as income tax, super-tax or rent. With such an income, in those days, when a £1 contained 20 real shillings, the four or five top men could afford to be generous; and they were, not alone to their employees but also to themselves.

Their sons got good jobs as herds, "fence repairers", managers etc., on the estates at weekly salaries from £3 to £5 - really fabulous salaries for that time, and for the work they were supposed to be doing. As for the sovereign committee of "Commissars", they did themselves handsome. They gave themselves several delectable outings from time to time. And why not? Men with their large "landed" responsibilities were surely in need of and entitled to some relaxation. For example, it was their practice to patronise, "in globo", Galway during the Race Week. They always put up at a good hotel when there for the Races, and dined and wined well, the wine, need I say, being invariably the finest champagne, and plenty of it, too. And why not? What need was there to stint themselves?

In my judicial wanderings I had heard, of course, much about the doings of that famous committee in its salubrious, policeless region, and was always on the look-out for its appearance before me. But because of the cuteness and cunning of its President, cases listed before me kept getting adjourned and postponed, on some pretext or another, at the instance of the committee's astute lawyers. Now and again only an odd small case, involving

the committee, would be argued before me. It was extremely difficult to penetrate the defence of the wilely leaders of that famous committee. They were, of course, out for delay and all the procrastination they could succeed in getting, for they were well aware of the fundamental weakness, not to say, impossibility of their position. They were out to make hay whilst the sun shone on them, knowing full well that the day was not too far off when it could cease to do so. They played a very clever game, never even hinting at the possibility of their ignoring the Dáil Court and its orders. Far from it; they kept protesting their loyalty to the Dáil and its institutions, declaring that in acquiring the land they had acquired, they were acting wholly altruistically, not for themselves at all, but for the benefit of the poor, down-trodden agricultural slaves, to whose alieviation they had nobly dedicated themselves. Another point that they made much of was that their committee was run on sound, business principles, with a secretary and a treasurer, and with books and accounts kept with meticulous care. Those books, they declared, were there for anyone to inspect; not a penny would be found to have not been accounted for. Collins was a highly accomplished twister who could, and

did, wriggle himself and his accomplices out of all kinds of tight corners; or nearly did, for he and they were caught at last.

"President" Austin Collins possessed an innocent, childlike countenance that masked a singularly subtle and convolvulistic mind; that, and his general demeanour and manner conveyed the impression of a disarmingly simple and honest man, by no means well off, but, nevertheless, only anxious to do the best he could for his neighbours who were even less well off than himself. Giving way always with graceful magnanimity when cornered on small issues, he kept slipping through my hands for a long time on the great ones. The Creggs Land Committee certainly had a fine run for its ill-gotten money before it was finally dealt with. Having gathered a great deal of information about the "doings" of the famous committee, I eventually had its major cases listed for a hearing at an unknown venue in the district, for it was the February of 1921 and the terror was in full spate all over the county. In the next chapter I record that somewhat adventurous trip. Suffice it here to say that the court arrangements broke down and I had to return to Dublin without having heard the cases I set out to hear. Later in the year, at the

end of June, just coming up to the Truce, I again went forth, this time to Creggs. If I remember correctly, I stayed at Tuam and motored to Creggs next morning. Tuam was a safer place than Roscommon for me to spend the night in, as I was not so well known there, although Roscommon would have been somewhat nearer. I had with me the District Registrar, one Eamon Casey, a tough Clareman who had been transferred shortly before that from the Clare to the Tuam I.R.A. The court was held in a local hall; and practically all the cases listed involved, in one way or another, the Creggs Committee. Though the proceedings were strictly "sub rosa", the little hall was crowded with men. Gazing down on them I perceived in their midst the bland, innocent countenance of the "President", reflecting a perfectly stainless conscience. Seán Ó hUadhaigh, Solicitor, Dublin, represented most of the dispossessed owners, and Louis E. O'Dea, I think, appeared for the committee. That time I heard about half the cases on my list, and returned to Dublin, saying I would be back inside a fortnight to complete the list. Inside a fortnight I did return. Conditions were much pleasanter then as the Truce, which had been proclaimed on

July 11th, was in operation, and one had no longer any need to resort to furtive and clandestine methods. Having heard the remainder of the cases, I made an interrlocution order which very much surprised the committee and which they certainly did not anticipate or like. I ordered all the books, papers, accounts, etc., of the committee to be produced to me next morning in court. Next morning, when I inquired, no books or papers were forthcoming, the excuse given being that the Treasurer Mr. Patrick Kilby, had not the time to collect them. I thereupon made another order appointing the Registrar receiver for the property in the committee's hands, and directing him to attend that evening in the hall where the books were to be delivered into his hands by Mr. Kilby. At this highly unpopular decision there was much shuffling of feet and murmuring as those present left the court. Next morning, when I was at breakfast, in walked Mr. Casey, a broad smile on his face, and under his arm a large brown paper parcel containing the books and papers. And he had by no means an easy job in getting them. He told me that when he reached the hall at 8 p.m. the previous night he found it crowded with men, including, of course, the leaders. The atmosphere was definitely hostile; there

was much shuffling of feet and an undercurrent of giggling and sarcastic comment. The bold Casey ignored all that, and sitting at the table at the head of the room he read out my order appointing him Receiver and directing them to hand over to him their books and papers. Having read the order he said, "Now, Mr. Kilby, I'll take the books and papers from you, if you please". Kilby remained silent, with a grin on his face; no books were forthcoming and clearly no attempt was being made to procure them. Casey, a very quick-tempered man, told me that after two or three such demands, with no result, he felt his temper beginning to leave him. So, after a final demand, equally futile, he rose from his chair and made for the door, to the accompaniment of great ironic laughter, jeers and cat-calls. They were sure Casey was away empty, and they had won. But they were soon disabused of their mistake. When Casey got to the door he slammed it tight, put his back against it and, drawing a large revolver from his pocket, pointed it at them, saying: "Any man that tries to get out of this hall until I get those books and papers I'll shoot dead". And he told me he was in such a rage at the time that he certainly would have done so. However, nothing

so drastic was called for. The jeering and the cat-calls stopped instantaneously and silence reigned supreme. "You could hear a pin drop", Casey told me. Eventually Kilby asked permission to go to his house in the village, collect the papers and bring them to him. Casey let Kilby out for this purpose, who presently came back with the documents, whereupon Casey left in his car for Tuam, in dead silence.

The next direction I gave Casey was to get printed and posted up all over the district small posters announcing that the Dáil Land Court had made an order appointing him Receiver of the lands then in the occupation of the body known as the Cregg Land Committee, and calling upon all those who paid rents to the said committee to pay the said rents to him. A similar notice appeared in all the local papers. In due course the Creggs Land Committee was wound up and its ill-gotten lands restored to their rightful owners. It was certainly the most unusual case that I was called upon to determine.

7. <u>The Hanley Case</u>.

Mr. Hanley of Carnaglough had taken the season's grass on one of the farms in the Ballintubber area. It was advertised in the press, and there was no objection to

him from any quarter. He paid half the money and signed a bond. Without a word of warning, his cattle were driven. He put them back, but there was another drive, so extensive that it took him a week to collect his scattered cattle and restore them to the fields he had taken. They were again driven and were so hacked and lame that he feared they would all perish. He finally had to leave them all pent up in a little paddock, up to their shoulders in muck and dirt. There was also the shameful treatment meted out to Hanley when he was stripped naked and whipped through the streers of Creggs on a fair day there.

B. - SOME OFFALY AND LAOIS CASES.

1. Mulrennan v. Kelly and others.

In this case there were no less than 25 claimants laying claim to the lands of Croghan Hill and Ballybeg, comprising about 200 Irish acres. In a letter dated December 18, 1922, to Kevin O'Higgins, T.D., the claimants recite (and their recitation gives the history of the case) "that the lands of Croghan Hill being let in grazing, we approached the landlord with a view to purchase same for division amongst ourselves, and had the matter practically completed when the plaintiff, Mulrennan - who actually was

the herd - bought it from the landlord behind our backs. We, thereupon, removed the crops when the time came for doing so, and then the plaintiff issued a writ, the subject of this matter, claiming damages and an injunction against us before Lord Justice Powell. We did not defend the proceedings but brought the case into the Land Arbitration Courts at Tullamore, and the plaintiff signed a form to abide by the result of the said court in October, 1920. The judgment given by Mr. Kevin O'Shiel, B.L., was that all further proceedings in the High Court be stayed. He also ordered that the lands were to be divided among the applicants, including the plaintiff, by two land valuers who were to be sent down by Dáil Éireann. The plaintiff is still in possession of the land and went on with the undefended proceedings in the High Court and marked judgment against us for £936 and £200 costs. We are informed and believe that we are about to be seized on and request your intervention". As can be seen, that was a singularly awkward case for the Provisional Government What happened was that the claimants accepted the Dáil Court, but, Mulrennan, the recent purchaser of the land, did not. Mulrennan took proceedings, at the height of the

trouble, in the British High Court for damages against the claimants. They, on the advice of the Sinn Féin Clubs, ignored those proceedings and entered no defence. Time went on; the Black and Tan terror of the winter of 1920-21 raged and no action was taken in any court, British or Dáil, to determine that particular issue, Mulrennan remaining out of possession of his lands, and the claimants, or their nominees, occupying them. Things went on in this fashion until 1922, when the Free State Government had restored order in the country and restored the authority of the old British Courts which they had taken over. Mulrennan then proceeded to have his order for damages and costs carried out. There was consternation in the neighbourhood. The twenty-five farmers concerned were terrified to put out their cattle even on their own lands for fear of the sheriff and his men pouncing upon them, seizing them and selling them to realise the terms of the judgment. That particular case had to be dealt with by special legislation in the new Land Act. There was an old history attached to that case. There had been agitation for the Croghan Hill lands for many years, and the leader of the claimants, indeed the chief instigator of the agitation, was Mulrennan, the owner's herd.

Having stirred up the countryside and made things difficult for his landlord, and inculcated in him a desire to sell and get out, Mulrennan went behind his crowd and bought the land. That circumstance engendered much bitterness and personal spleen against Mulrennan, whom the locals regarded as a renegade.

2. Marcella Minnock v. Patrick Rabbitt.

Lands of Ballyare.

This was a curious case. There had been an auction of these lands in 1899 which had proved abortive because of interference. That auction was followed by a second auction where, because of interference, Rabbitt got the lands extremely cheaply, and far below their real value.

I ordered Rabitt to pay £10 compensation to Mrs. Minnock, on which he was to be left in undisturbed and peaceable possession of the lands.

3. James Egan & Another v. Margaret Doorly.

Bullock Island and M Island.

I heard this case in Birr, I think, and gave judgment on June 24th, 1921.

The lands, the subject matter of the proceedings, were two islands in the River Shannon, namely,

Bullock Island	-	50 a. 0 r. 22 p.
M Island	-	12 a. 3 r. 22 p.
		63 a. 0 r. 4 p.

held by Miss Doorly under a lease of December 7th, 1897, at a rent of £47 - 10 - 0 p.a. The issue in this case really was one of price, as Miss Doorly was prepared to sell if she got the price she was looking for.

My judgement was that the lands be sold by Margaret Doorly to the claimants for the sum of £1,700; that on payment of half that sum, viz. £850, the claimants could take up possession of the lands but were to pay Margaret Doorly at the rate of 6% p.a. on the balance of the purchase money from the day they entered into possession until the "sale was completed in every respect and particular".

An appeal was lodged from my judgement fixing the price at £1,700. That appeal was heard by my colleague, Conor Maguire, who increased my price to £2,500. I should add that my price (as, I think, was the price on appeal) was estimated by our Valuation Department, as I, certainly, had no particular qualification for the valuing of land or the estimating of land prices.

4. William Hayes v. Lambe and others.

The history of this case was that in 1907 the lands of Derrysallagh, comprising some 90 Irish acres, were the subject of an agitation, and a man called Corcoran, who

held them on the eleven months' system, was compelled to give them up. Between 1907 and May, 1913, when the lands were taken by the present plaintiff, Hayes, negotiations were pending with the Estates Commissioners for the sale of the Lyster Estate, on which the lands were situate; and one of the conditions of the tenants was that the untenanted land on the estate should be acquired and divided up amongst the tenants with small holdings. The untenanted land at that time consisted of Derrysallagh and Cappagh. The landlord agreed to sell at 22 years purchase and divided Derrysallagh and Cappagh, but the tenants would not give 22 years purchase. When the negotiations broke down on that point, the landlord put stock of his own on the lands; and tried to let them, but in vain. They were "tainted lands", wanted by the local small tenants. In May, 1913, the present occupier, Hayes, took over the lands and constructed a tin hut on them. Subsequently, in 1917, he erected a dwelling-house and out-offices at a cost of £1,000. All this made him extremely unpopular with the local tenants, who contended that that untenanted land, being in the Lyster Estate, they were entitled to have acquired and allotted amongst them, and that his action in stepping in and taking the lands shut the tenants

off from getting what they considered their rights thereon.

The evidence before me was that, in that particular locality, there were several much larger holdings than Hayes's, and that these holdings were all let out in agistment lettings for years without let or hindrance from any quarter. Hayes submitted that having regard to all the circumstances, he had a perfect right to execute, as he did, a lease of 99 years for the lands. And that lease was a judicial one, so found. Hayes's lawyer told the court that his client was a Protestant on excellent terms with his neighbours. There never had been anyone evicted off the lands, which were untenanted until Hayes took them. Indeed, until the spring of 1920, when some people came forward demanding 40 Irish acres of them from him, there never had been any trouble.

I heard this case in Birr on September 9th, 1920, and gave judgment on November 13th, 1920. My judgment ran as follows: -

"DÁIL ÉIREANN

LAND COURT

LAOIS AND OSSORY SESSION

JUDGMENT.

Whereas William Hayes holds 90 acres, 1 p.m., of the lands of Derrysallagh under a lease for 99 years as

And Whereas the said William Hayes is a farmer with a family and has no other means of livlihood;
And Whereas it is not the policy of these Republican Courts to break up the moderate sized farms, particularly when there are large ranches as yet untouched;
And Whereas it has been shown that the claimants are mostly uneconomic holders and landless men;

Now This Court Hereby Orders: -

(1) That the said William Hayes is entitled to the peaceable and undisturbed possession and use of the said lands;
(2) That the said claimants have established their claim to more land but not to the disputed land;
(3) That all parties abide their own costs in this matter.

(Signed) CAOIMHIGHIN Ó SIADHAIL

President of the Court".

My judgment was highly unpopular in the locality, and on June 27th, 1921, the O/C of 'K' Company, 1st Battalion, Ossory I.R.A., wrote a letter to Stack, Minister for Home Affairs, about it. With the letter was enclosed what was headed "A Sketch of the Land Dispute of Borris-in-Ossory" which stated that that dispute "has aroused a lot of ill-feeling in the neighbourhood for the past couple of years". "The

Sketch", which was undated, was signed anonymously "The Tenants". Having referred to the prior negotiations with the landlord for sale through the Estate Commissioners, and their breakdown, "The Sketch" points out that, since then, the lands were practically boycotted; and that Hayes "has since been approached by the clergy to give up the lands with a view to dividing them, and agreed to give up 30 acres. It was then put to your court (sic!) and the decision come to was not in their favour. The net result, therefore, of submitting to your court (which was done without the consent of the clergy) is that the 30 acres would now be divided as both Mr. Lister and Mr. Hayes were perfectly agreeable..... The tenants cannot see any reason for your decision against them, especially as the landlord is willing, and under the circumstances they ask you to re-submit the matter to the Hon. member of the court with a view to their altering their decision".

Stack, Minister for Home Affairs, passed on that statement to the Dáil Land Settlement Court, whose Chief Registrar replied, on July 8th, 1921, to the aforesaid O/C I.R.A. as follows: -

"I beg to inform you, for the information of all parties concerned, that a court of the Land Settlement Commission cannot, under any consideration, reconsider its promulgated judgment. In this respect our courts are strictly bound like the British, French, and American, or any other judiciary. If a party in a cause is aggrieved at a judgment of a Divisional Court, he can appeal to a higher tribunal. This particular case was heard by a Court of First Instance in Septmber, 1920 (judgment was given in November, 1920), and though there was a right of appeal, no appeal or complaint was sent to this Department in the meantime. For your exclusive information, I may add that I have shown the documents to the Commissioner who heard the case, and he states that the alleged history dealing with the lands is worthless as a legal document because it is neither signed, witnessed, nor dated".

E. SOME CO. TIPPERARY CASES.

1. The Carden Case.

By agreement dated October 30th, 1920, Sir John Carden, Bart., sold some 1,232 acres of his lands to John Egan and Others for £50,000. William Meagher, Solicitor, Templemore, was Secretary and Solicitor of the Purchasing Committee, to which post he was appointed on February 23rd, 1921. That Purchasing Committee was appointed under two orders of the Dáil Land Settlement Courts. William

Meagher, in his affidavit, averred that the Land Court, under the supervision of the Minister of Agriculture, divided up this land between small holders, landless men and labourers in the Town and District of Templemore. The allottees went into possession in April, 1921, and were in occupation at the time Meagher ceased to act as solicitor for the said committee. Complaints then ensued that none of the beneficiaries had paid up his portion of the purchase money as each had covenanted to do, which meant, if these portions were not forthcoming from the said beneficiaries, that the members of the Purchasing Committee would be financially ruined. An affidavit to this effect was sworn on February 12th, 1921, and on February 17th, 1921, I held a sitting in Dublin under the Emergency Division of our system. The court opened at 1.40 p.m. Evidence was given by Very Rev. Daniel Kiely, P.P., Templemore, representing the committee to which he had been appointed by the Minister of Agriculture on November 1st, 1920; by William Meagher, Solicitor, John Egan, Chairman, Templemore Urban District Council, representing the original purchasers; W. McGrath, representing the townspeople of Templemore; Michael Cahill representing local labourers; Jack Lily, representing

local small holders, and S. Duggan, representing the Irish Volunteers.

William Meagher, on behalf of the complainants, said it was an application by Notice of Motion in the Emergency Division for an order that the purchasers of the Carden Estate be at liberty to proceed with the distribution of the estate pending final judgment. His committee was working with the townspeople's committee, which included James Shelly, Chairman of the Dáil Éireann Loan Bond Committee. When the land had been purchased by the Meagher Committee (seemingly somewhat surreptitiously), and when, at William Meagher's request, the Minister of Agriculture promised to send down an inspector, "matters then became public", and whilst they were waiting for an inspector, Father Kiely, at the request of some tenants, called a public meeting for October 9th, 1920, to discuss the case. According to Meagher, the five men who got up that public meeting were the largest tenants on the estate. A resolution was passed at that meeting asking Meagher and his clients and committee to hand over to them all correspondence and deeds in

the matter of the Carden Estate. The sale was to be completed before February 1st, 1921. A deposit of £5,000 was paid out of their own moneys, and the liability of £45,000, together with interest and all costs, was "still on their shoulders". And Meagher declared that they were being pressed for the whole purchase money. He thought it a most unfair suggestion of Father Kiely in his affidavit that "someone had informed the Crown Forces that that meeting was being held", and he (Mr. Meagher) begged to take the strongest exception to that insinuation and could assure the court that the original Committee Purchasers, his clients and associates, had received far more attention from the forces of the Government than had Father Kiely or any of his friends. He himself (Mr. Meagher) had been searched many times. No later than the previous night was he held up and searched thoroughly and was in great danger, as he was carrying important letters down for the Minister of Agriculture. One of the members of the Purchasers' Committee, Thomas Maher, had been arrested, tried and sentenced to imprisonment.

Father Kiely, on his part, emphatically repudiated that any allegation in his affidavit referred to Mr. Meagher and his friends. He said his statement was intended merely to emphasise the near impossibility of holding meetings of any sort in the Co. Tipperary.

Mr. Meagher denied emphatically Father Keily's allegation that the purchasers took proceedings against trespassers in the foreign courts. They had not prosecuted anyone for trespass; under the terms of the sale, such prosecutions, if called for, were to be undertaken by Sir John Carden.

At this stage I asked Mr. Meagher: "I take it you would be satisfied with an increased representation on the committee, and also that the interests of Mr. Dwyer's clients should be considered?" And he replied, "Yes, that really is the whole question".

Father Keily then opened his case. He declared that the whole case against him could be reduced to two points, viz. (1) that he did not regularly call meetings of the committee, and (2) that, owing to

neglect on his part, those people had been damnified by (a) timber having been stolen to the value of £1,000, and (b) hindered in floating a loan of £20,000".

I then said: "You are anxious for peace: any sort of an adjustment that would bring peace, you are anxious for. That is the position, I take it? My decision will be one in which I shall take into consideration the various facts and grievances. I shall probably arrive at a decision in which no party to this dispute shall get everything, and each side will get something". And Father Keily said: "Whatever the decision will be, and I can speak for those who are acting with me, we will work it".

I gave my decision some little while subsequent to that hearing. It took the following form: -

"SAORSTÁT NA hÉIREANN

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

LAND SETTLEMENT COMMISSION COURT

EMERGENCY DIVISION.

ORDER

Whereas the matter at issue in re the lands of Sir John Carden, Bart., were tried at the Co.

Tipperary Session (1920) of this Court;

And Whereas by a judgement of November 11th, 1920, a Committee was appointed and a power was vested in the Minister of Agriculture to dissolve such committee at his discretion;

And Whereas by order of December 14th, 1920, the said Minister of Agriculture, by virtue of the said power vested in him by the said judgment, dissolved the said committee and appointed certain persons to form a new committee;

And Whereas the matter came before this court on February 10, 1921,

Now This Court Hereby Orders: -

(1) That all committees, groups of persons and sections of persons, acting or purporting to act in connection with the said estate, are hereby dissolvent;

(2) That a new committee be formed for the purpose of carrying out the provisions of the said judgment in the manner hereinafter described;

(3) That this said new committee, and it alone, be legally entitled to be known as the "Carden Estate Advisory Committee";

(4) That the said new committee be formed in the following manner: -

(a) The Rev. David Kiely, P.P., to be Chairman,

(b) The clients of the said William Meagher, Solicitor, to appoint 5 members from amongst themselves to act thereon,

(c) The client of the said William Dwyer, Solicitor, to appoint 5 members from amongst themselves to act thereon;

(d) The clients of the said Rev. David Kiely to appoint 5 members to act thereon.

(5) The new committee, composed in accordance with the terms of Clause (4) of this Order, to be formed within 10 days of this Order, and the first meeting to take place within 20 days of this Order;

(6) All members of the said new committee to abide equally their part of the finance now borne by the said William Meagher and his clients".

Finally, the new committee was to carry out the provisions of the said judgment of November 10, 1920, "fittingly and properly in every respect and particular"; but every one of their acts and decisions, other than acts and decisions unanimously agreed on, were to be ratified by the Minister of Agriculture before being given effect to.

That was the beginning and the end of my connection with that particular estate under the Dáil Land Settlement Commission Court. But it was by no means the end of those proceedings. They dragged on, one way or another, for years, and were finally dealt

with by Judge Wylie under the powers of the tribunal appointed under the "Dáil Éireann Courts (Winding Up) Act, 1923-25". The last order of that tribunal in this matter was dated February 18th, 1927, and dealt wholly with liability of the 44 beneficiaries or co-purchasers of the Carden lands, as to their share in the purchase money of £50,000.

G. SOME CO. WESTMEATH CASES.

1. Scally v. Weldon.

I decided this case on July 24th, 1920, at Mullingar. It was hardly a land claim at all; more of a loan matter under common law. The decision, which took a curious form, explains it, I think, sufficiently clearly. I suggested to the parties that they should come to some agreement and that that agreement could be made a rule of court. After an adjournment for that purpose, the following undertaking was made by Patrick Weldon and handed up: -

"I, Patrick Weldon, do hereby undertake and agree that if at any time within ten years from the 1st day of August, 1920, James Scally

of Grange, refunds to me the sum of £1,000 which I paid to him for the lands of Grange, the subject-matter of Folio 2290 of the Land Registry of the Co. Westmeath, I will reconvey the said lands to the said James Scally, his executors, administrators or assignees. I am to have the use and benefit of the said lands in the meantime, and, if they are not claimed within the said period of 10 years, they will become my absolute property.

Dated this 24th day of July, 1920.

Signed: PATRICK WELDON.

Witnesses: J.E. Wallace, Solicitor.
Nicholas Crosbie.

This Agreement is hereby made a Decree of this Court,

KEVIN R. O'SHIEL

President, Land Court. "

2. <u>The Gradwell Case</u>.

I have already described this case and the action taken; so I do no more here than record it.

H. SOME COUNTY CLARE CASES.

1. The Hardy Case.

Lands of Walterstown, Crusheen, comprising 140 acres, 1 p.m.

These lands were in the Hardy family for many years. On April 8th, 1920, without any warning whatsoever, Godfrey Hardy was accosted by a gang of armed and masked men who, with threats, demanded that the whole place be given up to them within a fortnight. In fear and dread of the consequences, Godfrey Hardy's trustees made an offer to sell 40 acres, which was refused, the agitators stating that they must have "the whole place or nothing". Godfrey Hardy and his sons had no title whatever to any other lands; and had, in fact, no other means of livlihood other than those Walterstown lands. Godfrey Hardy was suddenly set upon when out alone, walking along the road, by a gang of from 15 to 20 men with blackened faces. They beat him and kicked him and demanded that he go down on his knees and swear to give up his land to them. This he courageously declined to do, telling them that he

didn't own the lands but only had a life estate in them. He was thereupon tripped up, blindfolded, his hands and legs bound and revolvers pointed against his side and back. They again demanded that he would agree to surrender the lands to them within a fortnight. Hearing the row, his sister, Miss Violet Hardy, ran to his rescue, and shots were fired at her. The Hardy's workmen were intimidated, their houses being fired into. Cunneen, their chief workman, was terrified out of his employment with them, but the local priests organised a collection for him. Boycott notices were posted up all over their lands, and along the roads leading to them.

Mr. Hardy, in the hearing of the case before me at Ennis, emphasised that the attack was made on them without any notice or warning whatsoever, much less any suggestion of negotiation. He seemed particularly to resent that, seeing that he and his family lived for years past on excellent friendly terms with all their neighbours, though they were not members of the dominant Catholic Church. He could not understand why hostile action of so aggressive a character should have been taken against them without any attempt at a preliminary friendly approach. He did not think that he, or his

family, deserved such treatment at the hands of neighbours whom they had never wronged. Their little farm was purely a residential, agricultural holding, and was all they possessed.

My order, made at Ennis on July 7th, 1920, declared: -

"(1) That the said Godfrey and the said Violet Hardy are entitled to full, peaceful and undisturbed permission and enjoyment of the said farm of Walterstown, Crusheen;

(2) That if there be any further interference with the citizen rights and liberties of the said Godfrey and Violet Hardy, it will be decreed to be an offence against the Decree passed by the Dáil on June 29th, 1920, and offenders will be dealt with in a prompt and summary manner".

I may mention that, while I was hearing this and other cases in Ennis, "His Majesty's High Court of Assize" was sitting in the Courthouse there, and was having a very easy time indeed. Few cases were proceeding before it, and it rose early and departed therefrom. As for me, I was kept busy until well on into the night.

2. <u>The Rineen Ranch.</u>

There was another Clare case of a very singular

character. Unfortunately, I have forgotten the names of the parties. It concerned, if I am right, the big grazing ranch of Rineen. About 20 or 30 years before I came on the scene, there was ciolent agitation by the locals for the acquisition and division of that ranch. Eventually the landlord sold the ranch surreptitiously, behind the backs of the agitators, to a certain man for, doubtless, a satisfactory price. That was bad enough, in all conscience, but one can imagine the feelings of the agitators when it subsequently became known that the purchaser was one of themselves, and not only that, he was their leader!

He was certainly a man of extraordinary obstinacy and determination, for, despite the most intense boycotting and enmity he held their lands for 20 or 30 years. He lived in a shack that he had erected on the lands, and beside that shack was erected a police hut, where three or four R.I.C. men were stationed to guard him. For 30 years no neighbours had spoken a word to that man. For 30 years, wherever he went, to Church, to fairs, to markets, the three R.I.C. men, with loaded carbines, accompanied him on a side-car. He was often fired at, and often wounded; but, despite all that, budged not one

inch up to the time of my court sitting in Ennis. He came into my court, who induced him, I do not know. But, though he came into my court and got Republican police protection, he did not dispense with his R.I.C. guard, who escorted him to my court, waited for him there and, after the hearing, escorted him home. My decree in this case was that the lands be acquired by a committee representing the local claimants; that the purchase money be estimated by a Court Valuer, and that, on its payment to the owner, the committee take the lands over for division, every successful allottee repaying to the committee his share of the purchase money for his allotment. I never heard how that case worked out, but I am almost sure the tough, old owner found himself ultimately in secure possession of the lands, the claimants having, as in so many cases, failed t raise the purchase money. This case illustrates the fier and almost irrational passion for land and the indomitable clinging to it. From another angle, it gives an interesti insight into the fury and intensity of the land fever. As a man once said to me, not without some element of truth, "They'd sell their mothers for land". Does that intense passion for land exist to-day (1959)?

I doubt it.

THE TERROR AND THE DÁIL COURTS

(October, 1920 - July, 1921)

I have described how the Dail Government and its institutions - in particular its Courts, - were permitted a period of peace, or, rather tolerance, for the first part of the year 1920. During the months of May, June, July, August, and, indeed, September, in certain parts of the country, the Dail Courts operated without interference from the British Authorities. As I have said, that toleration appeared to have been designed, to have been a resolved on line of policy. The Castle people, as I figured it, concluded, and not without reason, that if they held their hands and let the republican Courts function, the result would be chaos, in which the entire Sinn Fein and Republican movement would be embedded. Sinn Feinism and Republicanism would consume themselves in the ensuing anarchy and"decent, law-abiding people" of all religions and politics, bereft of their substance and in constant danger of their lives, would soon be hollering for the return of British order and British Law.

It was, of course, a gamble; but it was quite a worth-while gamble. As I have pointed out our Court structure was largely illusionary, little more than a façade with a seeming strength behind it. Had there been anything like considerable defiance of it, particularly of our Court Orders, as might well have been the case, our pretence at running a Judiciary, with all its penal and coercive powers, would have been a farce; all, everything would have collapsed in ridicule, - that most dangerously corrosive of all elements on the Irish character.

But the Dail Courts, to the surprise of everyone, were an extraordinary success. They were able to make orders, and to make orders that were extremely unpopular, directed with equal impartiality, as much against the Dail's most faithful supporters as against its enemies and to have most of these orders carried out. In the particular line with which I was concerned, - that of agrarian disputes, where the feelings between the contenders have always been traditionally passionate and bitter, I, and my colleagues could have been given away to the enemy time

and time again, by bitterly disappointed litigants; but we never were. It was really phenomenal that, with so little real power, or should I say, material power behind us, we succeeded so well, of course we had moral power behind us in full tide - the will of the people; that, in conjunction with their traditional distaste of selling anything in the nature of a patriotic organism to "th' auld enemy." The Dail Courts were such a sweeping success that the Castle people behoved themselves to change their tactics. They saw these Courts functioning openly over the greater part of the country with a public acceptance and an efficiency that they never imagined possible. Furthermore, they saw their own Courts withering. They beheld their Judges, - High Court and County Court, - touring the country with their panoply of attendants, with their escorts of military and police, sitting in Courthouses that were deserted save for a small sprinkling of unemployed Barristers and Solicitors, where only raison d'étre seemed to be to declare that the cases, as called, were "settled" or "withdrawn"; - which meant, of course, that they had been transferred to the "illegal Jurisdiction", probably sitting to a crowded

audience in a very modest structure, a few streefs away. The Judges of the King, presiding in those great empty courts, waxed indignant and angry at Sinn Fein's "unprecedented insult to the Crown"; and that was about all they could do. They could not compel litigants to come into their Courts, and accept their adjudications; nor could they prevent them from submitting their cause to the Arbitration Courts of the Dail.

The whole development was maddening to the Castle people. Their quite intelligible trial at a toleration of the Sinn Fein Courts proved a complete failure from their point of view. Far from resulting in the fiasco that they so confidentally hoped for and expected, these rival Courts were growing, day by day, im power and prestige whilst the Crown Courts, as I have said, were withering, - indeed vanishing as effective organisms in the Irish body politic. Accordingly, in the late Summer the word went forth that the "Sinn Fein Courts" were to be vigorously suppressed, and all connected with them arrested, gaoled or interned.

I have described the suppression of my Land Court in Mullingar. I think that that was the first Court suppressed by the British authorities; - certainly the first Court

functioning under warrant of Dail Eireann to be so suppressed. It was mildly done, and none of us was arrested or even searched. Indeed, had a search taken place I fear Mr. Maguire's Policemen, with their revolvers, would certainly have been in for it.

The new Anti-Dail Courts policy took some time to hot up, and speaking for myself, for about a month or so after the Mullingar incident I was able to hold Courts in the open in Tullamore, Maryboro' and Birr. Actually, in Birr I did get warning that my hotel would be raided, and I was transferred, late at night by the I.R.A. in a car to the parochial house of a friendly priest (was he the P.P. of Moumtmellick?). Right enough my hotel in Birr was raided that night but, of course, without result. The local I.R.A. had, seemingly, excellent information of the enemy's movements. From September onwards things grew worse and worse, and presently there was no prospect or hope at all of holding open Courts. The Castle soon demonstrated that it was very much in earnest about suppressing the courts. Thenceforward we read, every day, in the press, of the steady and ruthless suppression

of the popular Courts, sometimes Judges as well as litigants being shot down.

As the Summer of 1920 glided into the Autumn, and Autumn into Winter, the Terror waxed fiercer and fiercer. The British Authorities and their Castle agents decided that the time had come to strike back against the Dail, and to strike back ruthlessly with a mailed and bloody fist. In this regard the first thing they had to attend to was the reorganisation of the R.I.C. which the I.R.A. had largely paralysed. The stream of Irish recruits to that famous gens d'armerie had dried up. Sinn Fein had see to that, had seen to it that no Irishman worthy of the name would ever again don the dark green uniform of the Royal Irish Constabulary.

Seeing that there were no recruits forthcoming from Ireland to that body, recruits had to be procured elsewhere Advertisements appeared in the English and Scottish papers, calling for recruits to the R.I.C. and offering tempting conditions and terms. Soon, in answer to those advertisements, a curious ill-assorted medley streamed across the Irish Sea from Britian to be "Royal Irish Constables".

These individuals were mainly ex-soldiers of a very poor type, largely low-class adventurers, not a few with gaol records, but recently discharged from the British Army. The stock of R.I.C.. uniforms was so scarce that these newcomers had to be clothed in whatever kind of uniform, or part uniform, that might be available. Accordingly, you would see a possé of these new "policemen" mauling by, with very unpolice like rifles slung across their shoulders and revolvers in their belts, none of whom was wholly garbed in the proper regulation R.I.C. uniform. One half of the possé might have dark green R.I.C. tunics and khaki trousers, whilst the other half might have khaki tunics and dark-green constabulary trousers. Again, some would sport the dark constabulary kapé and some the British khaki Army cap. The first contingent of those weird "policemen" was sent down to Co. Tipperary, which, at that time, was practically controlled by the I.R.A. They happened to be stationed in the country of the famous Fox Hunt known as the "Black-and-Tans". Immediately, because of their party-hued raimant, the locals christened them the "Black-and-Tans." And that name stuck to them and spread out

from Co. Tipperary all over the country, to designate those official brigands (for they were nothing else) and in due course passed into the English language in permanent form.

These Black-and-Tans, comprised as they were of a very low-grade type of British Army and gaol rift-raft, did not shine at all in their encounters with the I.R.A. And so it became clear to the British Authorities, that darning up the vacancies in the R.I.C. with that particular class of material, must would not do. Something more was required; some better type of protagonist, with higher morale and keener fighting qualities to measure themselves against the very formidable I.R.A. guerilla fighters. Hence it was that, on the advice of Churchill and Sir Henry Wilson, a new corps was founded, and a corps that, unquestionably had fighting qualities and morale as high as the I.R.A. itself. That new corps was recruited entirely from ex-British Officers with a good fighting record in the service. They would, perhaps, correspond today with the officer element in a Commando regiment: - certainly not to be despised. Nor, indeed, were they. The Auxiliary Division of the R.I.C. - to

give it its official name - wore dark-green, well-cut uniforms and snappy dark green "Tam-o-Shanters" with long dark-ribboned streamers flying out from them, which ensemble gave them a formidably efficient if reckless and rather dare-devil appearance, thereby differentiating them from the old, legitimate Royal Irish Constables whom they were supposed to reinforce. The "Auxies", as they were known as, were as tough, reckless and brave a crowd of men that could be collected in any country. They numbered about 1,500 and were organised in 15 companies. They were despatched to these districts where the I.R.A. were dominant and active and required tough, determined and vigorous handling. Sometimes they were posted in R.I.C. barracks with the remnant of the old R.I.C. But they never got on well with these "allies" of theirs; and there were more than one instance where the rival group of allies turned their guns on each other. But mainly they were quartered by themselves in houses requisitioned for their accommodation. The Crown's new policy of attack, inaugurated in September, 1920, expanded and intensified during the ensuing months of that Winter, followed into the Spring and Summer of 1921.

On September 20 the Auxiliaries opened their offensive on the people by the sack of Balbriggan after a Black-and-Tan had been killed in that town as the result of a drunken brawl. That sacking was closely followed by similar sackings of several other towns and villages throughout the country; for example, places as far apart as Carrick-on-Shannon, Ennistymon, Tuam, Miltownmalbay, Kilmallock. Lahinch, &c &c. The columns of the daily press were packed ad nauseam with accounts of the violent and bloody doings of the Crown forces, particularly by the two newly formed legions of the Crown's irregular "police"; searches, arrests, raids, sackings of towns, murders and killings of civilians, hangings of captured I.R.A. men, wholesale suppressions of Courts, burnings of houses of Sinn Fein sympathisers as reprisals for the failure to inform the Authorities of ambushes, and the carrying round in their lorries of Sinn Feiners as hostages against attacks. On the other hand there were numerous and ever-increasing reports of the counter-action of the I.R.A. forces:- ambushes, attacks in and burnings of barracks, slaying of informers, detectives and intelligence men, burnings of income tax offices and Court-houses throughout the country, as also of the

houses of pro-British sympathisers in retaliation for the burning of Sinn Fein houses. That particular reprisal stopped the extension of that particular practice by the British as, of course, two or three big mansion or manor houses were infinitely more costly and irreparable than dozens of small houses and country cottages. Added impulse was given, about this time, to the attacks of the resistance movement by the creation of two new corps in the I.R.A. viz. Flying Columns and the Active Service Unit. The former (the conception of Dick McKee) were wholetime units established and operating in various parts of the country; the latter comprised 50 carefully picked men, operating in Dublin City and its environments. Both were whole-timers paid weekly wages and withdrawn wholly from their usual avocation. The A.S.U. was largely the executive Unit of Collins' Counter-Intelligence men.

Practically the only function left to the British Courts of Law was the hearing of claims for the malicious burnings of towns and houses and the awarding of compensation therefor, struck on the local rates. For example, the awards made in respect of the sacking

of Tuam amounted to £50,000 and for the sacking of Mallow £200,000; - huge sums for these days.

Early in September, 1920, Collins' men sent me word to make myself scarce as the Black and Tans were looking for me. This surprised me as it never occurred to me that my peaceful operations would drawn down on me their ire. The explanation was that they had come to the conclusion that I was the "Sinn Fein Judge" who sentenced their men to death, in absentia. Of course their conclusion was absurd, and was probably based on the circumstance that I had been the first judge to operate in the country under the warrant of Dáil Éireann; so I suppose they convinced themselves that I was the chief judicial factotum of the invisible Dail Government, for the sanctioning of some of its nefarious deeds. At any rate, in the interests of my health, I could not very well seek an interview with them, and explain to them their grave misconception of my functions. No tip from Collins' men could be safely ignored; and so I decided to act on it at once and betake myself to another habitat. At that time I had been residing with my brother, a medical student, in lodgings at "Muckross House", Whitworth Road, Drumcondra. The

house belonged to Mr. Dagg who lived there with his wife and grown family of 2 sons and 2 daughters. Another daughter was married and lived elsewhere in the city. Mr. Dagg had been a Deputy Superintendent of the G.P.O. and had retired shortly after 1916. He was a tall, erect, thin wiry old man with an iron-gray beard and spent most of his days in retirement on Clontarf Golf Links, at which game he excelled. He was a good Church of Ireland man, a fairly prominent freemason, unquestionably conservative, and, I should say, Unionist in his outlook. He was a rather dominating assertive old man where his family was concerned and I rather think ruled, or at any rate, attempted to rule them from his wife down, with a firm hand. I have heard that he had been very much of a martinet with his staff when in the Service. However, as far as my brother and myself were concerned he was most courteous and kind, bringing us out, from time to time, to his Golf Club for a round of Golf and afterwards dispensing hospitality to us with a liberal hand. Indeed, he often went out of his way to shew us a kindness. For example, it was his wont once

a month to go out to dinner in the Masonic Lodge, Molesworth Street. He would return home between 11.30 and 12 o'clock, and shortly after the hall-door closed behind his admittance there would be a knock at the sitting-room used by my brother and myself, followed by his appearance, resplendent in full evening dress and masonic trappings and decorations. In absolute silence, without as much as bidding us the time of night, he would advance slowly towards us, somewhat unsteadily as he had certainly dined well, and present each of us with a superb double corina cigar. Bowing, he would withdraw in absolute silence. I don't know exactly how often that little ceremony happened; but it was one of the kindnesses that I remember of that original old character; for a bit of a character he certainly was and kept up his characterization to the end, departing from this world at the ripe age of 100. Mrs. Dagg, with whom alone we had our dealings, was a mild, kindly, soft-hearted, stoutish woman. She had no maid, but ran the establishment mainly with the assistance of a young and rather small daughter. To tell the truth, Mrs. Dagg was one of those poor ladies who was chronically hard up and seldom out of debt. often making requests to us for payments in advance to meet ever-pressing claims.

I have an idea that she ran up bills, unknown to her husband and was compelled to resort to moneylenders when the pressure from one quarter or another became critical. But whatever about that she treated my brother and myself with the greatest kindness and consideration, doing us well for what we paid her. When I got Collins' message to make myself scarce, my brother and myself had been nearly two years with the Daggs. Although I often had chats with Mr. Dagg and his wife I never broached politics for I guessed the Daggs were Unionists and I was loath to discuss my own activities.

I found it very difficult to tell Mrs. Dagg that I intended to leave her, but when, at last I did so, she appeared thunderstruck. What had she done? What was wrong? Tell her, tell her at once and it would be immediately remedied. I told her, vaguely and dishonestly some palpably bad excuse and the poor lady went off, weeping, saying that she did not know how she'd tell Mr. Dagg on his return from Clontarf in the evening. It was, of course, the loss of my few weekly pounds that Mrs. Dagg would chiefly feel by my departure. That evening my brother and I had just finished supper when Mr. Dagg strode into our room. "Mr. O'Shiel what

is this I hear? You are not serious, surely" &c &c.
Mr. Dagg had been a good friend to us and he was so genuinely distressed at the news of my leaving his home that I determined to make a clean breast of it and tell him the truth. I assured him, as I readily could, that my leaving his hospitable roof was in no way due to any remisness on the part of his wife or family, all of whom had been so consistently kind to me. I furthermore assured him that had I my own wish I would gladly stay on with him; but circumstances were against me. And then I told him all about my being active in the Sinn Fein movement up to my neck, and how unfair it would be for him and his family if, because of me, his house was subjected to raids and his family to indignity. To my great surprise he replied that he knew all about my connection with Sinn Fein and my Dail Court work but that my being in his house was no embarrassment at all to his family or himself. He was, he said a Unionist and a member of the Church of Ireland; but he had no use for "Those blackguards the Black-and-Tans." He also told me that his sons and his daughter Sophie, a good looking young girl who was studying music, were most sympathetic to Sinn Fein. Then he said to me - "Mr. O'Shiel, there's no safer house in this district for you than this house. Come here till I show you", - and grasping my arm

he pulled me into the hall. "Look at that," he said, pointing to a huge framed etching of King Edward VII in full regalia as Supreme Grand Master of the British Freemasons. "Look at that! If they come here they wont dare touch or search anyone under my roof with <u>that</u> picture before them!" Then calling one of his sons he bade him show me how I could get out on to the roof and thence away, in the event of a raid. Of course, after all that there was nothing for me but to stay on. And stay on there I did for a further fortnight. By that time raids, followed by arrests, were every day and every night increasing occurrences all over that part of the North City.

When I left the Daggs I went up to my old friend, Mrs. Fox of the "Hell Fire Club Tea Rooms" at Glencullen, where, from time to time I had put up before. It was an excellent place for anyone in those days who had occasion to "make himself scarce". To begin with the Foxes and all their retainers were strongly behind the movement, so that the atmosphere was absolutely sympathetic and favourable, and therefore safe. Again, because of the high situation of the house, near the crest of a hill on the side of an extremely steep road that no car then made could take on top gear,

it would be very easy to hear a raiding car, a mile away below, wending its way upwards, and there would be time to be warned and get out over the mountain's side at the back of the house. Again the Crown Forces did not particularly relish driving their lorries and armoured cars up steep hills with no near descent, as those were precisely the positions chosen by the I.R.A. for their ambushes.

Foxes had all these advantages but for a man with only his feet to manoeuver in it was too far out. About that time I came acquainted with Lionel Smith-Gordon, and he invited me to come and stay with him and his wife in their house in Harcourt Terrace. They wanted me to be their guest but, of course, I would not hear of that though they pressed me very strongly; so I settled on terms as a Paying Guest that were certainly not onerous. Smith-Gordon was Managing-Director of the National Land Bank, the Bank that Collins had founded; his wife was a charming young American lady, daughter of one of the Senators from Florida in the then U.S. Senate. I was made very comfortable during my stay in that pleasant hime. Harcourt Terrace was.(& is) a highly respectable and rather secluded area, and was not troubled too much by raids and searches. Actually the Smith-Gordon's house was, if I

remember rightly, never raided; but a few doors away, No. 2, the house of my good friends Ned & Lillian Stephens was frequently raided. And not without cause; as they often put up men "in their keeping".

From my exceedingly comfortable quarters in Harcourt Terrace I used to sally forth, in pretty fair security, to hold my courts in the country, or to spend the day in the Land Settlement Commissioners offices in Westmoreland Street. In December things were becoming so bad, so many more raids, so many more beatings up of householders, so many cases of rifling and robbery that I told my kind host and hostess that really I should depart and not bring down on them a horde of unwelcome and undesirable guests in the small hours of the night. But they would not hear of it. Smith-Gordan saying that he was in the movement every bit as much as I was myself. And so I remained with these kind friends until sometime before the Truce. Their kindness and deeply considerate treatment of me during that period I shall not easily forget. Residence in the pleasant home of the Smith-Gordans, softened considerably the asperities of life then for a fellow like myself. After a stealthy drive down into the country to hear a court in some remote spot, with the ever-present fear of being

raided and captured it was exceedingly pleasant to find myself safely back once more in the beautiful little home of the Smith-Gordan's where I was always sure of a warm welcome and congratulations on my successful return. Both Lionel and his good little wife were, as I have said, enthusiastically behind the outlawed Dail and its miserable underground government and that, of course, deepened very much the friendly feeling and understanding between us. Indeed, that was one of the wonderful compensations of those severe times: - the extraordinary sympathy and friendship, indeed, nearly affection, that knit all of those in the revolutionary movement as closely together as though they were brothers and sisters within the one family. Not only that; that wonderful sympathy that showed itself in so many extraordinary and most unexpected ways, and that I, personally, so often experienced, was not by any means confined to those within the movement. It was nearly as manifest amongst perfect strangers who had no connection with the movement in any way, often Unionists and former Diehards. Indeed, it was almost universal throughout the whole country. Almost the whole country was extremely sympathetic to the men and women working for the proscribed Dail, - even those who were not, nor would not be Sinn

Feiners; but if they were not Sinn Feiners they were the next best thing - detesters of the Black-and-Tans and their activities.

Well, from that pleasant, cultured home I would sally forth every morning, on my Dail business, generally into the Land Court Office in Westmoreland St. with occasional trips, about two or three times a month, down the country to hold a Land Court in some safe place either in an isolated country district or in a room in the back street of some town. During the dark, dismal days of that Winter of Terror (1920-'21) it was curious, harrowing experience to be abroad, travelling in Ireland. Even walking through the city to my Dail Land Court Office, could be a harrowing and trying enough ordeal. Apart from the military and "Tan" lorries you were apt to run into Igoe's Murder gang, 50 plain clothes R.I.C. from all parts of the South and West who moved along the pavements in packs and pounced upon identified victims. One morning going down Grafton Street I passed a British military lorry with Seán Ó hUadhaigh in it, as a hostage. We saw each other, and that was all! When I had occasion to go down to a country venue, a taxi called for me and brought me to the Station, either the Broadstone or Kingsbridge, where I caught the first train

in the morning for my destination. It was generally essential for me to travel early as the railway journed covered but part of my itinery. When I reached the particular railway station that I was making for I would (save in the case of a town venue? generally have a pretty fair distance to go by road to reach the modest habitation that had been appointed for my Court Sitting. Getting there from the station was always an uncertainty; as often as not it would happen that arrangements would be so distorted and upset, nothing turning up to meet me or to direct me, neither vehicle or contact that, after hanging about for hours I had to abandon the attempt and make my way back, as best I could to Dublin. Thank God I always managed to do so. Indeed, God was very good to me. During the four pre-Truce years I had been active in Sinn Fein and my Dail Land Court business I was never arrested, never prosecuted in Court for any brand of sedition or treason-felony, nor did I ever suffer imprisonment at the hands of the British. All that I suffered were numerous searchings. My immunity was, of course, luck and God's goodness; but my own contribution to it was that, in the words of Michael Collins I deliberately "made myself scarce". On a few occasions

during the more open period some photographers wanted to picture us in action, but I found some excuse for preventing them doing so. Again, I was always most careful to see to it that, during the period of violence, I carried no papers that could in any way identify me with the Dail. When the Dail Government and all its departments went underground, it became necessary for me to adopt another name, as my own had got a great deal of publicity in the local papers in the South and West that always reported proceedings before me very fully. I decided on a name near to my own so I called myself "Seale" my reasoning being that if supposing someone asked me "Aren't you O'Shiel or Shiel?" I would explain that my name was not "Shiel" but "Seale" and forgive him his understandable error! So my name from October 1920 to the Truce became "Seale - Robert E. Seale" It also became necessary to provide myself with some colourable excuse for roaming through the country when I should be questioned, as, in fact, I frequently was. And here my old friend Ned Stephens came to my rescue. About a year or so before this time Ned had acquired the proprietory rights in a patent ointment called "Gitsol". The ointment was the invention of a Limerick chemist, a Mr. Robert Gitson; and it sold extensively at that time

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in the neighbourhood of that city. It was of the Zam Buk" type of preparation, and claimed, with equal infallibility to cure all the ills that that famous balm asserted vanished at its touch. It so happened at this time that one of Stephen's travellers had left him, so he appointed me in his place, one of the firm's authentic travellers, giving me all the necessary papers, credentials &c. and, what was best of all, my predecessors books made up to date. Those books showed the towns and villages he had visited, the people he had called on and the business done. It thus clothed me in very authentic colours. As a matter of fact I did call on a number of chemists and booked a few orders; but I greatly regret to say that the Irish public much preferred the rival concoction of "Zam-Buck" despite the fact that it emanated from the enemy country! When I was held up and searched by police of various descriptions, which happened, often enough, the production of my "Gibsol" credentials at once assured them, and I was let go on my way without question.

My narrative of my experience and activities in those exciting years, already too long, I fear, must now draw to its close. But before I leave this particular aspect of the Courts I should like to say a little more about the way these Courts were carried on during those harrowing seven months from

November, 1920 to July 1921.

After four months of the Terror the then British Prime Minister, Lloyd George gave vent to this curious and dubious boast: "Six months ago, (i.e. August, 1920) the Irish Republican organisation had all the symbols and realities of a Government.....Sinn Fein Courts were held openly and attended by litigants, jurors and advocates, and their decisions were respected. Sinn Fein soldiers patrolled the towns....." "Sinn Fein controls, military and police have gone. Sinn Fein courts have disappeared into cellars...."

One could imagine the Chief of the Vandals rejoicing in similar terms where he had destroyed Roman law and order. True, the Dail Courts were "in cellars"; but they certainly were not gone. In the offices in Earl St. and Westmoreland St. Conor Maguire and myself carried on as Judicial Commissioners with Martin Heavey as Valuation Commissioner. For the purpose of going down the country, Conor adopted the disguise of an insurance agent, and Martin went forth as a Land Valuer, which happened to be his calling, replete with ordnance sheets and scale. We were luckier than numbers of the other Departments of the Dáil, for the enemy never discovered our offices.

We were also lucky in that we three Commissioners escaped arrest and imprisonment. Our excellent Chief Registrar, Joseph O'Byrne was not so lucky. He was captured and suffered a term of incarceration. Gearóid Magan, the very efficient Secretary of the Dail Land Settlement Commission and to whose ingenuity and precautions we largely owed our immunity, was also one of the lucky ones, escaping capture.

On a day in January, 192o, I set forth from the Smith-Gordan's to hold a clandestine court in the town of Sligo. It was a bitter, dark, wintery morning with an icy North Eastern blowing and plenty of rain and sleet. At the Broadstone Station there was the usual atmosphere of suspicions, fear and strain that I had become so familiar with, the particulars and peculiar atmosphere of the Terror, hanging, like a pall, over everything.

That was a grain-going age, the automobile being largely the reserve of the "better classes", and the station was pretty crowded with travelling public. There were also there in considerable numbers units of British military, and quite a large division of Black-and-Tans with whom were some Irish R.I.C. men. The contrast in

The English and Irish accents of those two "unitedly disparate" segments of the same force was at once striking and incongruous. And there was, of course, a goodly showing of the inevitable detective and intelligence men. The only element there that could be said to be nonchalant or at all natural were the railway men, the porters and the guards. And practically everyone of those were sworn-in I.R.A. men in one capacity or another. Curiously enough I recognised in the crowd some well-known Sinn Feiners who knew me well. Persons,like us, engaged on the delicate missions of Dail Eireann, had to be perpetually on guard, so as to avoid letting anything slip that would betray us, or any others of our type present, to the hoards of watchful eyes and ears that infested the premises. We dare not, for example, appear to recognise, much less to converse with a friend or colleague in the movement who might also be travelling. Hence, it was that I could not dare to recognise my friends, or they me. We instinctively got into different carriages. I had a pleasant and uneventful journey till the train reached Mullingar, where, to my horror, five fully armed Auxiliary Cadets got into my carriage. Their appearance in my carriage gave me a big shock as I was ~~something~~ sure they were going to arrest me; and, had I to be "taken into

custody" to use the official euphuism, I would have preferred that to have been done to me by some of the other divisions of the Crown Forces. I soon perceived, however, that they had little interest in me. They seemed tired and played out, as though they had been after a strenuous campaign, or a strenuous night, and not in good talking form. When the train had got under way again, one of them, a big, well-made fellow, said to a little fellow sitting opposite him. "Now John, where's the swag?" The little fellow, with great alacrity pulled out from under the seat a large sack from which he extracated a bottle of Scotch and a bottle of Irish Whiskey. Glasses were produced, the men helped themselves liberally to the "swag" which they obviously had in strong supply, and presently conversation amongst them began to run in a steady stream. I should say that I was the only traveller in the carriage when they entered it at Mullingar, two or three others having got out there. Their conversation dealt mainly with woemen of their acquaintance, what they thought of them and their prowess over them. But even that fascinating topic sagged as we trundled along. Presently one of them drew from his pocket the latest edition of the <u>"Weekly Summary"</u> (the Black-and-Tan

counterpart to the Dail's "Irish Bulletin") and began to read out bits there-from about the heroic doings of their "braves" in various parts of the country. Up to this they took little or no notice of myself who was reading quietly in a corner seat, but then I thought I saw them casting a few suspicious glances in my direction. I decided it would be healtheir for me, seeing they had been drinking a good deal not to arouse their somewhat alcoholic suspicions by silence but, boldly, as a man with a guiltless conscience, to make contact with them.

I had been reading the English "New Statesman" and bending across to the big man opposite me I offered it to him. The "New Statesman" was it? Darned if he'd waste his time on that thrash. That blasted paper was worse than the Shinnon stuff and did more harm. I decided on the role or a Liberal Home Ruler, all for a federated British Empire, and, of course, a detester of violence and rebellion "which gets you nowhere". (That, actually, was my boring refrain). Doing the "Home Rule stunt" on those fellows was obviously far better; more natural and less obvious than pretending to be a die-hard Unionist and a whole-hearted backer of theirs. In short I decided to bore them; and went on in a boring monotone, like an

unending tube of tooth-paste, telling them, ad nauseam about the terrific heal-all of Irish troubles Home Rule would be, praising Gladstone, and Asquith and regretting that Lloyd-George hadn't passed Home Rule long before that. I could see that I had more than succeeded in boring them; and they were not slow to shew me so, by impatient signs and stamps of the feet &c. Suddently the big fellow said to the little fellow the custodian of the "Swag". "Hi there Johny: stick a glass of the swag down his bloody throat and for Christ's sake shut him up!" A very substantial glass was duly administered to me which pretended great diffidence in accepting as "I only partook of spirits when indisposed, or ill. Generally I partook of an occasional bottle of stout, or, perhaps a little sherry...." and so on. Nothing is more deadly than the uninteresting, mediocre man boring about his petty pedestrian doings. To stop me, one of them looking at me rather suspiciously inquired What was I and what did I do. This gave me the chance I was hoping for. Out came my little case of Gibsol products, replete with suitable literature including long, authoritative testimonials from those on whom the

ointment worked miracles; and at once I became an ardent and enthusiastic advocate of the miraculous balm, presenting each one of them with a free sample, remarking that one never knew when it would come in useful! I also gave each of them my "business" card which I took the precaution to have printed. "Robert E. Seale - Agent for Gibsol Productions" They left me at Carrick-on-Shannon and I never saw men so gladly quit a carriage for, when I like, I can be a prime bore. They left me rather gracelessly with hardly a "good-day" amongst. But if they were relieved at their escape from me the reader can imagine how much more I was at my escape from them! The train pulled into Sligo Station a little after mid-day, and collecting my packages I made my way through the town to the Imperial Hotel on the Mall. It was a bitter, harsh day, with a black sky and a violent wind and heavy rain and sleet. The streets were practically deserted and beyond an unusually big traffic of police lorries I saw nothing else to cause me alarm. We people, engaged on those kind of errands were, of course, always on the qui vive for trouble.

The Imperial Hotel is a great square 4 or 5 storey block of a house facing the Bridge under which the River

Garavogue flows from Lough Gill to the sea.

As I approached the short steps that led to the entrance porch I saw, to my dismay, two very military looking men, in mufti, of course, looking out of the large dining room window as though they were expecting somebody. Heavens! I said to myself, I'm in for it! They knew all about my Court and I'm going to be collared.

I was absolutely certain that these men were the County Inspectors and the District Inspectors of the R.I.C. and that they were there for my apprehension; which also explained the big police activity I noticed in the town. As I slowly walked up the steps I pondered should I not go into the trap? Should I not go elsewhere? I decided that it was too late to do anything but face it. Anyhow the two police officers, the "County" and the District Inspectors had seen me. So in I

walked determined, to the best of my ability, to brazen it out. My contact in the hotel was the boots. He happened to be standing in the hall as I came in and as there was nobody there I revealed myself to him in the pre-arranged manner. Immediately he was all smiles. I was expected. The Court would be held in the Mayor's Parlour in the Town Hall. The boots warned me to be careful about entering the Town Hall as nearby there was an R.I.C.barracks. I asked the boots who the two men were whom I noticed looking out of the window, but he couldn't tell me. They only arrived that morning. No, they were not the local police officers but they could well be there in some police capacity, as all sorts of strange individuals, official and semi-official were constantly coming to and going from the hotel.

After lunch whilst I ate at a table adjoining that at which the two strangers ate theirs, I made my way, alone, to the Town Hall. The Sligo Town Hall is an impressive structure in modern Italianate style, the only thing wrong about it being that it occupies an inconspicuous site in a small, back street. But just before you turn into this back street - is it Quay St.? - you observe, almost facing its entrance, the R.I.C.barracks of Wine

/Street

Street, Sligo town's second police barracks. As I made my way through the pelting rain and cold I observed, with relief, no sign of activity at the barracks, other than a few R.I.C.men at the door, like a few bees at the mouth of a hive. The main door of the Town Hall was open where I was at once met by the registrar and escorted into the Mayor's parlour, where the Mayor met me and gave me a glass of wine; then took his departure. The registrar thought that with luck, I'd get away soon and in safety as there were only two cases listed. As I was chatting with the registrar the door of the parlour opened and in came the litigants and their solicitors. My surprise can be imagined when I say that amongst them were the two men whom I had taken for R.I.C.officers - One of them was Mr.Lipsett, Solicitor, of Messrs.Lipsett & Ramage, Solicitors, Ballyshannon, Co.Donegal, and the other was his client Mr.John A.Barry, of Barrycourt, Ballyshannon. The case was a curious one with a long history, and was by no means a usual agrarian dispute.

It appeared that subsequent to proceedings to realise the amount of a Judgment mortgage against one Andrew McGowan, John Barry became owner of the lands of

/Moneylaghan,

Moneylaghan, situate in North Co.Sligo on December 11, 1911, going into possession immediately afterwards. During the ensuing years the former owner, the above-mentioned defendan obstructed his successor in every way possible, and notwithstanding that an injunction restraining him against doing so was obtained in 1912, the obstruction still continued until a few years previous to my Court, when MacGowan went one better, taking forceable possession of the lands. Having heard the case I made an order in favour of Barry, confirming him in possession of the lands and ordering McGowan to desist from interfering with him.

The second case was that of Skreen and Dromard Cooperative Society v. Kennedy, Carrowloughlin, Dromard. This was really a matter of/the purchase price of the Carrowloughlin lands, and I made an order appointing our Land Valuer Mr.Quinn to go down and value the lands. This he only did despite much Black and Tan interference and I fixed the price, on his estimate thereof at £1,623.

I was able to finish in good time and got safely back that night to the Smith Gardens. I should mention that Mr.Lipsett and his client, Mr.Barry were good, hundred per cent Protestants and Unionists with absolutely nothing in common with Sinn Fein or Dáil Éireann. "Verbum Sapienti!"

/With

With this account of my Sligo Court in the January of 1921 I shall close my personal reminiscences of the Dáil Land Courts. I had, of course, many more experiences during that period than I have recounted here. For example, there was my abortive trip to Dunamon, Co.Roscommon, to hold a court when I had with me Guy Moytin, the representative of the American Press, one of our first and most steadfast friends, an American editor of that grant Englishman, Hugh Martin. With him came his friend, a Canadian, called Fitzgerald, was it? He had some Irish name, but he was anything but pro-Dáil. Anyhow Guy guaranteed him and that was enough for me. We got to Dunamon Station but nobody, as per arrangement, was there to meet us. I did not know the individuals who were to contact us. Anyhow nobody turned up; and there were we, three far from country-looking individuals, alone on that little bare, windswept, country station platform. Alone, save for one solitary porter who appeared to be station-master and everything. Moystin, looked what he was, an unmistakable American. That was alright; he could pass well enough, as Americans are not exotics to Irish soil. But Fitzgerald! No! He was perfectly attired with a bowler hat, white silk scarf Blue Melton overcoat, furled umbrella, and, to crown all:

white spats! He looked what he wanted to look, a typical Londoner; and as his short military moustache suggested an enemy commander-in-chief, is it any wonder, what try my best, even taking him to some extent into my confidence, that I could get n'ere a word from the porter!

However, he did vouchsafe us the time of the East bound train to Dublin, and so for some hours we hung about that dreary isolated empty area with not even a public house within Christian distance. Whilst we were there two lorryloads full of raucous drunken Black-and-Tans and their unfortunate prisoners roared by, each lorry decorated with the Union Jack and the Pirate's Skull and Cross-Bones; so my friends did see something after all! Eventually we all got safely back to Dublin, and I think our Canadian friend was relieved to see the last of us. Anyhow he left us on some pretext and Guy and I returned to some quier hostelry where we had food and drink and pleasant talk.

Note of Correction: A good friend of mine who was deeply in the old movement and who was kind enough to read through these pages, has drawn my attention to a general observation of mine anent the Courts where somewhere I say,

/or.

or appear to say, that all the judgments of these Dáil Courts were given with a strict regard to the great legal principle of "fiat Justicia"; or words to that effect. These papers, as must be obvious to the most casual reader, were written hurriedly, in fits and starts, over a period of nearly four years. Sometimes they were set aside for months, and resumed when the whole thread of sequence had left my head. Much of my manuscript has had little or no scrutiny. All that I was aiming at before it was too late, or before I got too old and lazy, was to put down my reminiscences of the period as fully and as accurately as possible for posterity. Therefore, whilst I hope and believe my memory has not let me down and that my facts, at all events, are sound. I would not necessarily apply the same view to all my <u>obiter dicta</u>, some of which were, by the nature of the circumstances under which I was working, hastily begotten. In this regard I except all the earlier part of this production, particularly that dealing with the Carson-Bonar Law conspiracy. My observations in that connection represent my considered judgment thereon, for what it may be worth.

With regard to the Dáil Courts, all Dáil Courts

/of

of whatever description, may I say that whilst undoubtedly orders were made and acts committed under them that could not and eventually, did not stand the scrutiny of a regular Court of Law, functioning in peace, that did not affect in any way the bona fides of the amateur judges. They were earnestly anxious to do justice and, as far as I know, in the majority of the cases that came to be dealt with by them, they succeeded. They did not, as they could not, so succeed in every instance; but their failure was one either of ignorance, inexperience of the terrific pressure of the revolutionary forces. I have explained, for example, the extremes we in the Land Courts had to go to, from time to time, to keep the people with us, or rather behind us, and to keep the insane agrarian outbreaks, a revolution within a revolution, in control; at least beind its banks.

As far as the Land Courts were concerned perhaps I had better end my account of them by quoting here from the last two paragraphs of my aforesaid article in the "Manchester Guardian's" Ireland of May 10,1923:-

"The Dáil Land Commission was, by its very raison d'etre , an Emergency Commission. It sprang up at a moment when the national Sinn Féin movement, when the structure of

/society

society itself, was severly threatened. Its object was the protection and safeguarding of these fundamentals until peace and victory brought a more suitable opportunity and a more elaborate machine for dealing with the great problem in an enduring manner.....

.....Working at top pressure in a period of great strain and under the most unfavourable conditions imaginable, it is not urged for the Dáil Land Commission that it solved, or even approached the solution of, the great land question. But I think it can claim with justice to have checked the mad career of an agrarian revolution, the most serious that this country has ever experienced, thereby saving lives and property and warding off what might very well have proved a fatal blow to the supremacy of the National Government."

E N D

SIGNED: Kevin R. O'Shiel

DATE: 25th March, 1959.

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1913-21.