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AN OLIVE BRANCH IN IRELAND
AND ITS HISTORY



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WILLIAM O'BRIEN, M.P.

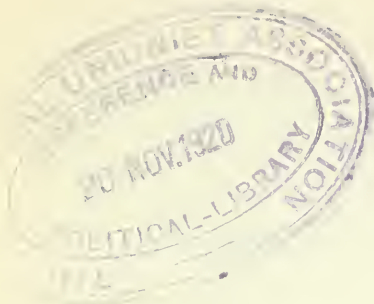
AN OLIVE BRANCH
IN IRELAND
AND ITS HISTORY

BY

WILLIAM O'BRIEN, M.P.

MACMILLAN AND CO., LIMITED
ST. MARTIN'S STREET, LONDON

1910



AMPROLIAD TO VIRU
ZLEBONA ZOLTA
YRABLI

“ON reflection I think that what I said to you in our conversation at Eton may have amounted to the conveyance of a hope that the Government would take a strong and early decision on the Irish question. This being so, I wish, under the very peculiar circumstances of the case, to go a step further and say that I think it will be a public calamity if this great subject should fall into the lines of party conflict. I feel sure that the question can only be dealt with by a Government, and I desire specially on grounds of public policy that it should be dealt with by the present Government. If, therefore, they bring in a proposal for settling the whole question of the future Government of Ireland, my desire will be, reserving, of course, necessary freedom, to treat it in the same spirit in which I have endeavoured to proceed in respect to Afghanistan and with respect to the Balkan Peninsula.”—(MR. GLADSTONE TO MR. BALFOUR, December 20, 1885.)

“I have as yet had no opportunity of showing your letter to Lord Salisbury or of consulting him as to its contents, but I am sure he will receive without any surprise the statement of your earnest hope that the Irish question should not fall into the lines of party conflict. If the ingenuity of any Ministry is sufficient to devise some adequate and lasting remedy for the chronic ills of Ireland, I am certain it will be the wish of the leaders of the Opposition, to whichever side they may belong, to treat the question as a national and not as a party one.”—(MR. BALFOUR TO MR. GLADSTONE, December 22, 1885.)

“On one point I may state my views with tolerable clearness. In my opinion, the best plan of dealing with the Irish question would be for the leaders of the two great parties to confer together for the purpose of ascertaining whether some *modus vivendi* could not be arrived at by which the matter would be raised out of the area of party strife.”—(MR. H. CAMPBELL BANNERMAN, December 23, 1885.)

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THIS BOOK IS DEDICATED
TO
ONE WHO, LOVING AND BELOVED,
WAS NEVER DEJECTED BY ILL FORTUNE
AND NEVER ELATED BY SUCCESS

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INTRODUCTION

DURING the last seven years there has been going on, to the inconvenience of all political parties, and almost unknown to the general public, a transformation of unique interest in the relations between the races which divide Ireland, and in their mutual attitude towards the Empire. For the first time in a history of many centuries of spoliation and oppression on the one side, and unconquerable resistance on the other, a means has been found of making the substantial interests of the warring races and creeds identical, and at the same time of making their fusion an event of no less happy augury for the neighbouring island, whose interest, or at least statecraft, once lay in preventing it.

The only other two attempts at national reconciliation which have any resemblance to the present were foredoomed to failure. The nominal union of Irishmen symbolised by Grattan's Parliament and by the noble pageantry of the Volunteer movement of 1782 was rather rhetorical than real. It left three-fourths of the population out in the cold of civil, religious, and economic slavery, and promised the Catholic Gaels little present advantages beyond garlands of flowers around their chains, while the blandishments of the Irish nobles and gentry for their serfs were heard of with scarcely less uneasiness in England than the Declaration of Independence by the American Colonies.

The only approach to a genuine outburst of friendliness to England on the part of the Irish masses, on the other hand, was that evoked by the genius of Gladstone and Parnell during the strangely underrated alliance of 1885-1890—that period of general forgiveness of bitter personal as well as historic wrongs which the thoughtless or the ignorant of both

nations think they have sufficiently dismissed to the derision of history with the nickname of "the Union of Hearts." But here again there was a fatal flaw. The loyal Protestant minority were not only missing from the pact, they were against it almost to a man and to the verge of frenzy. To the average occupant of a London 'bus who is said to govern England, and who was innocent of the slightest suspicion that "the Irish Esau" had rather more to forgive than be forgiven, the new-born friendliness of Irish peasants, only a few years before seething with rebellion and locked in deadly conflict with the Liberal Party themselves, weighed but little against the fact that the loyal Protestant minority—his own kith and kin, his own "Irish Garrison"—were kindled into a state of open and flaming disaffection by the Home Rule Bill of 1886, and, making all allowance for tall talk, were quite plainly quivering with the terror of being stripped of their property and subjected to Roman Catholic ascendancy of a character which their reminiscences of their own ascendancy enabled them vividly to picture.¹

It would be, perhaps, too much to say that if the genial Colonel Saunderson and the delightfully honest-hearted Mr.

¹ That the civil war for which active preparations were going on in Ulster was largely of English party manufacture, like most of the evil chances of Irish history since the Union, one characteristic anecdote will sufficiently indicate. It will be remembered that the Tory Party went to the General Election of 1885 with the broadest hints of Hungarian Home Rule for their Irish allies, and after a romantic assignation in a vacant London mansion with the Irish leader. Shortly after the disappointing results were announced, one of the most potent of the Tory leaders—a man, notwithstanding anything here set down, of keen knowledge of Ireland and unquestionable sympathy with her aspirations—met Mr. Justin M'Carthy at a friend's London dinner-table and discussed the situation "between the cheese and the pear." "Well, M'Carthy," was his observation, "I did my best for you as long as there was any chance of pulling our unfortunate party through. We've broken down, and now I shall have to do my best against you." And, a few weeks afterwards, he was over haranguing a mass meeting of hot-brained Orangemen in Belfast, and announcing that "Ulster would fight, and Ulster would be right." Even the staid Sir Stafford Northcote, who had not the excuse of young blood, but who, no doubt, could plead all the English party politician's inability to comprehend into what a powder magazine he was bringing his own not very inflammable eloquence, made a tour of the enraged districts of Ulster with a series of speeches which all unconsciously did more to provoke immediate riot and proximate rebellion than could be beaten out of all the drums of all the Lodges that find celestial music in "The Battle of the Boyne." Nor was the other English party or our own party free from similar indiscretions in the opposite direction. No candid man will now dispute that, however extravagant were the threats of armed resistance to Home Rule upon any large scale, the alarm and spirit of revolt on which the party politicians worked were altogether genuine and formidable.

William Johnson of Ballykilbeg, with a couple of their graver co-religionaries, had been bidden to a Round Table Conference with their fellow-countrymen from the opposite camp such as assembled in the Dublin Mansion House seventeen years later, in place of being mocked for their fears and quizzed over their rebellious threatenings, they might have hit upon some scheme of national reconciliation such as English genius, in its most inspired hour, could never as happily adjust to Irish susceptibilities. The time was not yet for the success, or even for the attempt. Neither side had yet begun to feel the lassitude of the fratricidal battle. In the savage but horribly expressive phrase afterwards used in another fratricidal fury, "the knives were out!" Gladstone, it is true, endeavoured to satiate the landed men, who formed the blood and bone of the loyal minority, by offering to compel the Irish tenants to pay them considerably in excess of the sum for which the Land Conference settlement, crippled though it was, has since secured them the ownership of their holdings.¹ But even if the Gladstone Purchase Bill were anything more substantial than a skeleton put together at a few weeks' notice as an appendix to a Home Rule Bill already past praying for,² a proposal for the total abolition of landlordism, no matter on what sumptuous terms, would have sounded to the Irish landlord of that day, who felt the bright wine of privilege still proudly coursing in his blood, as little less scandalous than the abolition of the Throne. At the same time, the purchase proposals, which were scoffed at by the landlords as the price of expatriation as well as expropriation, finally sealed the fate of the Gladstone-cum-Parnell coalition with the quiet British elector, since the party politician did not scruple to hold up before his eyes a vision

¹ The Liberal and Irish politicians who regard the Purchase Act of 1903 as an act of outrageous largess for the landlords strangely forget that, while the Act of 1903 prescribes no fixed statutable price, the Gladstone Bill of 1886, for which the Liberal Party and the Irish Party made themselves jointly responsible, proposed to employ compulsion against the tenants to pay as much as 22 years' purchase of first term rents (equivalent to 25 years' purchase for two-thirds of the purchasers under the Wyndham Act, and 27 years for the remainder), while the landlords were left free to accept or reject, without any legal compulsion.

² If, indeed, Mr. Chamberlain's readiness to give the Home Rule Bill a second reading on condition of the postponement of the whole question to a further session had been closed with, the land settlement as well would doubtless have been licked into better shape. But that is another story.

of hundreds of millions of British sovereigns hurtling through the air, in addition to all the rest of the venerable institutions to be torn into fragments by the constitutional earthquake shock which he was called upon to set going. Agreement between Irishmen themselves was at the moment as impracticable as a combination between fire and water. The bewildered British elector at the General Election of 1886 without hesitation rejected the proffered friendship of the Irish majority, in tenderness for a minority who claimed to be of his own blood, and whose faults and misfortunes were at all events largely of England's own making.

Five years followed of exultant repression on the winning side and stubborn resistance from the vanquished. The bitter recollections of the Mitchelstown massacre and of the barbarous evictions by which the Plan of Campaign was avenged might well have undone all the amazing progress made towards a better understanding between the two peoples and written the old passionate decree, "*Nullus amor populis nec foedera sunt!*" anew on the hearts of the young generations. Happily throughout those years of common stress and travail between the English and Irish haters of coercion the cheerfulness with which one historic British party sacrificed its unity and devoted whatever strength remained in its shattered ranks to the service of the beaten cause, the quiet fortitude with which Privy Councillors like Mr. Shaw-Lefevre, high-strung idealists like Mr. Wilfrid Blunt, austere worshippers of law and order like Mr. John Morley himself, even Englishwomen of station and refinement like Lady Sandhurst, Lady Winifred Robinson, Mrs. W. P. Byles, and Miss Amy Mander, braved scenes of police violence, imprisonment, and social penalties more hurtful still, in order to share the perils and cheer the hearts of their Irish brethren, above all the undaunted confidence with which the Liberal leader lifted up his voice as a trumpet over the conflict in its darkest moments, did wonders to take the sting out of the resentment caused in Ireland by the rejection of her proffered hand of peace. Better still, the mass of honest British folk who are not politicians, and who dispense a certain rough justice of their own as between the politicians, were a good deal fascinated by the mingled geniality and courage of

Ireland's attitude and made angry by her sufferings, and, in one British constituency after another, expressed their reprehension of the governmental excesses into which the Mr. Balfour of his apprentice days allowed himself to be betrayed by a faction whose true moral value he was afterwards to discover. Remembering how largely the British verdict of 1886 was reversed in 1892, even after Ireland had been sunk for two years in degrading internal discord and in a great degree alienated from her British allies, it is not easy to set bounds to the possibilities of a permanent peace between the two islands which were extinguished by the tragedy of errors known to history as "the Parnell split."

But that fatality was decisive. The effort to retrieve the situation dragged along for a few years through a painfully feeble Parliament amidst the recriminations of Irish factions, all of which were perhaps rather the victims of Ireland's unlucky destiny than of any wrong-doing of their own;¹ but it was with a soul-killing unreality under which even Gladstone's heroic determination languished to death. The key to the understanding of all later Irish events is the fact that the particular method of settling the Irish difficulty by Parliamentary escalade, which Gladstone's sublime heedlessness of obstacles in a just cause, and Parnell's genius for governing his own countrymen alone could have made realizable, was at an end on the day when the two men separated for their mutual overthrow. Other methods had to be found, fresh forces to be called into action, if the process of national appeasement was to go forward. The death of Parnell left the Irish leadership, so to say, in commission between half-a-dozen men, all of them of high character and of striking ability in varied spheres, but none of them with any marked capacity for pre-eminence all round, such as could still the passions let loose by the Parnell tragedy or silence the rivalries which are inseparable from any political party of the finest fibre after the jars and disappointments of twenty years of unrewarded warfare. No new Parnell, and indeed no new Gladstone, was to be looked for. Success had to be

¹ "My heart bleeds for the poor fellows!" was Gladstone's remark after parting with a deputation of the Irish Party which waited upon him in the interests of peace during the agonising days of "Committee Room 15."

won, not in the Parliamentary lobbies, but in Ireland; not among partisans, but among old Irish antagonists; not by the calculations dear to the Party Whips, but by the harder task of influencing the interests, if not all at once the sympathies, of an Irish minority, whose means of livelihood, as well as the prejudices to which they were born, were at stake. And the work had to be undertaken with such a disregard of merely political party risks, or rather with a sufficiently robust confidence in the innate strength of one's own political tenets as to induce one set of men to embrace the policy of conciliation with the intent of "killing Home Rule with kindness," and another set of men with the still more confident programme of "killing the objections to Home Rule with kindness." There is in a sentence the difference between the new school of workers for Ireland and the old.

The new method was discovered in 1902 by what will seem at first sight one of the oddest accidents of history; but, in a manner which will be unfolded in these pages, it became the means of re-establishing the foundations of Irish society upon a basis so unlike the old that, since Queen Elizabeth turned the country into shireland and King James undertook his Plantation of Ulster, there is no precedent to be found for the transformation. The vast material interests and the anxious social and religious apprehensions which gave the repugnance of the Protestant minority to Home Rule its strength were for the first time looked squarely in the face. The strong hand—now cruelly exercised on one side and now on the other—gave place to that spirit of sensible compromise, which is of the essence of England's successes in the world, but which never before entered into an Irish political programme. The new legislation was to be framed, not by Englishmen according to their shifting party exigencies, but between the Irish majority and minority themselves *tête-à-tête*. It had been the bane of all English intervention in Irish affairs that the patronage of one British party involved, as by a law of nature, the hostility of the other. For the first time both parties in the State were brought to vie with one another in acclaiming an Irish compact which brought honour to both of them, without being the exclusive glory of either.

Not alone were the landlords to have their £120,000,000 worth of precarious property transmuted into gold sovereigns, they were to have the transaction effected by the goodwill of their own countrymen, and without any compulsion on either side from the iron hand of the law. Nor was this all. If they were to be expropriated as landlords, it was in order to be raised to honour as citizens. One of the essential clauses of the Land Conference Report declared it to be a matter of high national polity that the expropriated landlords should not be obliged to quit the country, but should be induced to live at home and to employ their energies and invest their money in Irish enterprises.¹ With this express object they were secured in all the amenities of their own mansion-houses and demesne lands, and were welcomed in unambiguous terms to a place of honour in the future government of their own country, on the simple condition of making it their own. All former attempts to lay down the equitable commercial price of the land of Ireland had come to shipwreck on the historic difficulty that the landlords' indebtedness on the one side, and the iniquitous confiscation of the tenants' improvements by their needy lords on the other, had closed the market except on terms which must spell either beggary for the vendors or insolvency for the purchasers. This stumbling-block to all previous legislation was removed by the provision that the difference between the price which would mean ruin to the one and the price which would mean ruin to the other should be supplied in the shape of a bonus by the State, whose own wicked statecraft in the past had encouraged the landlords' prodigality and abetted the impoverishment of the tenants. Nor did the poetic justice thus enforced impose upon the common Exchequer a burden at all disproportioned to the sacrifices required of the landowners in divesting themselves of territorial privileges and dignities as dear to them as his crown is to a king; or of the tenants in surrendering those theories of "prairie value" which at certain stages of the

¹ Clause 3 of the Land Conference Report: "That it is desirable in the interests of Ireland that the present owners of land should not as a result of any settlement be expatriated, or, having received payment for their land, should find no object for remaining in Ireland, and that . . . inducements should, wherever practicable, be offered to selling owners to continue to reside in that country."

agrarian struggle seemed to promise them the almost total annihilation of the landlords' interest; not to speak of the risks patriotically undertaken by the ratepayers of Ireland, who did not flinch from charging themselves with the initial losses of the Imperial Exchequer in financing Land Loans, as well as with the whole responsibility for the repayment of the purchase money by the tenants. The £12,000,000 eventually contributed by the Exchequer as the price of ridding the Empire of the whole brood of turmoils and miseries bred by Irish landlordism was a very modest quit-rent indeed for the £3,000,000 it had heretofore to disgorge every year that came for swollen police and judicial establishments whose real effect was to subsidise landlord oppression and to keep the wound of Irish disaffection for ever bleeding.

All political parties, English and Irish, who were willing to found their hopes upon the material prosperity of Ireland and the happy intercommunion of all her classes and religious confessions, were equally prompted by every motive of enlightened statesmanship to join in this great process of appeasement, without forswearing any principle of their own. The Unionists were free to co-operate on the calculation that they were adopting the surest means of weaning a population of contented small freeholders from the passion of national self-government, which according to their belief was an invention of the agitators. Nationalists, with the courage of their convictions, accepted the risk with a cheerful heart, arguing that a Protestant minority thus reassured as to their property and their future status by the generous goodwill of their own brother-Irishmen would soon lose all trace of the old terrors of spoliation and persecution into which they had been thrown by the spectre of Home Rule on its first sensational apparition, that the concrete reality of a settlement by the good sense and reciprocal concessions of Irishmen themselves of an apparently incurable malady against which forty-two abortive Acts of the Imperial Parliament had been prescribed in vain would be the best of all demonstrations to the positive English mind of the fitness of Ireland for the management of her own business, and that, in fact, the harmonious debates of 1902-

1903 among Irishmen who had hitherto only met to cross swords in an implacable civil war, would unavoidably suggest to the two British parties and the two Houses of Parliament, who were little more than admiring lookers-on, that the scene had only to be changed from Westminster to Dublin to deliver the Imperial Parliament from its most humiliating failure and its most besetting reproach.

The legislation thus amazingly initiated—the first Act of Parliament of Irish inspiration ever enacted for Ireland at Westminster—was crowned with a no less astonishing success in action. Within five years, roundly speaking, more than half of the whole area of the country passed from the ownership of the landlords to that of the occupants, and wherever the change came, the subsidence of agrarian unrest and social ill-will and the expansion of Irish trade and wealth followed as universally as the daylight follows the dark. But the success, vast and durable as it is, was robbed of half its virtue in respect of the abolition of landlordism and of almost the whole of it in the wider sphere of propitiation between Irish classes and between the people of the two islands. It is in order to tell the singular story of how the policy of conciliation was prevented from yielding a tenfold fruition of the hopes of its authors that these pages have been written. Neither of the contracting parties chiefly concerned in the pact of 1903—neither the tenants nor the landlords—have, broadly speaking, proved false to their bond. A superabundance of estates came into the market. The Irish tenantry hastened to possess themselves of the inestimable blessings of occupying ownership without paying much heed to the vehement assurances of powerful advisers that the Act of 1903 was “a landlord swindle” and must end in “national bankruptcy.” The purchase money was repaid with a punctuality that put the traducers of Irish honesty to shame. It was the phenomenal success of the Act, at a moment when Imperial credit had from very different causes fallen low, which became an actual incitement to the Exchequer to curtail its operations and so play the game of the enemies of land purchase. More strangely still, although the circumstances here recorded have led a majority of the Irish Parliamentary

Party to condone the tactics of overt hostility to the land settlement of 1903, the party have never rescinded any of the numerous resolutions by which they pledged their troth to the policy of conciliation—if, indeed, the most of them (including their leader) have to this moment abandoned their inmost conviction of its wisdom.

Where, then, did the rift come in? The secret of the miracle wrought by the Land Conference was that the party spirit had been for the first time exorcised in the dealings of both the great British parties with Ireland, and of both Irish parties among themselves. The secret of why its success, far-spreading and enduring though it is, has been so maimed and impeded as to protract for a great many years to come a national resurgence which might have been already all but consummated will be found in the fact that, by a train of circumstances which it is the purpose of this book to lay bare, party interests were enabled to reassert their disintegrating sway over the Nationalist, Unionist, and Liberal parties alike, after an interval of disinterestedness perhaps too austere for our poor political imperfectibility long to maintain. Of the Act itself the only considerable defect was that it made no provision for the tremendous collapse of the Imperial borrowing powers which followed the Boer War. Even this, however, like every other flaw revealed in the administration of the Act, could have been cured in the following session by an amending Act couched in the same spirit. But the sovereign reason why the Act of 1903 was not presented as a better Bill, was not more effectively amended in Committee, was not administered with a bolder and more generous hand, and was not followed by that full reciprocity of sympathy and interest between Irishmen of all ranks and creeds which must now be the work of patient years of waiting, had its origin in an ever-to-be-lamented mischance for which nobody and nothing except a stroke of Ireland's characteristic ill-luck is to be blamed, namely, that certain Nationalist leaders, whose services and influence gave them an incontestable right to be numbered among the four representatives of the tenants at the Land Conference, happened to be omitted from Captain Shawe-Taylor's original list of invitations, which (and it is

not the least of the singularities of the revolution that followed) was drawn up without consultation with anybody either in the tenants' or the landlords' camp.

If the intensity of the differences that afterwards manifested themselves could have been foreseen, it is possible that the edge of these gentlemen's hostility to the whole policy of Conciliation might have been turned by more assiduous consultation and a more painstaking inquiry into their point of view on the part of their colleagues whom destiny charged with the torturing responsibility of representing the interests of 400,000 Irish tenants. The writer is not exempt from compunctions of his own as to what might have been if the danger had even been suspected and a larger patience shown in smoothing away every possibility of misunderstanding. Be that as it may, it is now an indubitable fact that at least three men of great and deserved weight in the national counsels managed to convince themselves, and subsequently to convince a small but active section of the Irish Party, that the whole Land Conference policy covered some insidious conspiracy against the power and indeed the existence of that party in the interests of insatiable landlords and of Tory conspirators against Home Rule, and, from the first hour the Land Conference agreement was published, considered it their duty as patriots to discredit it and frustrate its operations. Their apprehensions were none the less formidable for not being communicated to their colleagues while they might still have been satisfied of their groundlessness, nor (excepting the action of the late Mr. Davitt, who made frank public avowal of his hostility) boldly laid before the party and country while they were every other day pledging their adherence to the new policy as an immeasurable national blessing. The time came, however, when a party taught to regard their own seats as threatened, and indeed the efficacy, if not the very life of the party, which was Ireland's only instrument of national redemption aimed at by Heaven only knew what landlord and anti-national machinations, were brought to proclaim the exclusive predominance of the party as against all scot, lot, or parley with "our hereditary enemies" as the supreme issue of the hour. Under the

influence of three discontented politicians, the Irish Party retracted their repeated pledges, and the country was whipped into submission by the threat of dissension.

The Rigbys and Tadpoles of all the other parties were not slow to copy the example. The Ulster Orange Party, who were no less alarmed on their own side by the prodigious growth of the new spirit of national fraternity, had no qualms about co-operating in the endeavour to reopen the old wound. They gladly trooped into the same division lobbies with their dissident Nationalist colleagues in their warfare upon Mr. Wyndham, and outbawled them in their denunciations of "the wretched, rotten, sickening policy of conciliation." As soon as Mr. Wyndham realized that the promised union of Irishmen in support of that policy threatened to become a bitter coalition against it, the first fervid dreams inspired by his Geraldine blood became sicklied over with the rudely realistic reflections of the Unionist Party man, his hand wavered in the administration of the Purchase Act, and he ran away altogether when the first publication of the Devolutionist (or rather inevitably Evolutionist) phase of his Irish programme was received with as much bitter ridicule in Ireland as horror in the *Times*. From that time forth it became the settled party policy of his not over-chivalrous Unionist friends to say as little as possible of Mr. Wyndham or his Irish adventure. The Liberal Party for their own part, having with considerable self-denial renounced their traditional dislike of the landlords at the magnanimous call of the Morleys, Campbell-Bannermans, and Greys, were not inconsolable to find eighty Irish ex-Conciliationists flocking back into the Opposition lobbies, and taunting the Unionists with their Devolutionist flirtations and inveighing against the landlords as savagely as if nothing had been settled, and nothing forgiven on either side. They not unnaturally concluded that a Unionist Land Purchase policy which they heard stigmatized from the Irish Benches as big with national bankruptcy and repudiation by the tenant-purchasers had no longer much claim for tenderness in the party calculations of the Liberal Whips. As soon as the task of financing land

purchase fell upon the shoulders of a Liberal Chancellor of the Exchequer in embarrassed circumstances, their misgivings as to the policy of conciliation became convictions. Accordingly, in silence, and before even the House of Commons, not to speak of the country, understood what was happening, the unexampled union of all party interests, English and Irish, from which the Act of 1903 received its legal consecration, was converted into a no less universal consensus of all party interests, English and Irish, to minimize its merits and to cripple its operations, or at the least to shift to other shoulders the responsibility for their extension.

King Party reigned again. It seems almost unimaginable that a small group of politicians should have been able for seven years past to go on cheating this benign revolution of half its efficiency and turning its blessings into curses, without any knowledge of the English public, and, a more tragical thing still, without any real understanding of what was going on by the masses of the Irish people themselves. The fact is nevertheless so. Those who throughout that trying period of misunderstanding have struggled for perseverance in the happiest experiment ever devised for sweetening the relations of Ireland's races and classes with one another and with the British people, had not only to contend against a Press boycott which prevented their words from penetrating to three out of the four provinces of Ireland, but against a determined shrinking from the subject on the part of both British parties in their newspapers or Parliamentary debates, and, most curious phenomenon of all, against the bitter antipathy of England's own officials in Ireland. It was the writer's singular fate to be a great deal more effectively opposed by the powers of Dublin Castle while striving for a peaceful accord between all the old elements of social and interinsular antagonism than throughout all the years when his life was devoted to making England's task in Ireland a hateful and impossible one. The truth lay, indeed, at the bottom of a well, but all the powers of earth seemed to conspire to prevent its voice from reaching the surface.

That events of such profound significance should have

escaped notice in England and be not much better understood in Ireland is, however, a freak of human destiny for which neither the Irish nor the British peoples are to blame. The readiness with which the All-for-Irelanders deliberately relinquished all the usual means of trampling their way to an immediate victory for the sake of the national honour is, in fact, one of the new methods in Irish affairs which may be well worth studying, and whose tameness, however little satisfying it may seem to the fighting politicians of the moment, may find its justification by and by in a more inspiring ideal of Irish public life. Nothing would have been easier than to have awakened the Irish people in the autumn of 1903 to the danger which was all unknown to them opening under their feet by reason of the determination of the malcontents to baffle the plans agreed to by the responsible National authorities for a systematic test of the new Purchase Act. Few who know anything of the distribution of strength in the Nationalist camp at the time will dispute that the Conciliationists then spoke for five-sixths of the Irish Party and of the National organization, and that it was not they who need have shrunk from publicly grappling with the minority, if mere personal satisfaction could have compensated for a public disaster. But to have carried the appeal to Caesar under the circumstances that will be detailed hereafter would have been to convulse the country with another ruinous split at the moment when the Purchase Act was coming into force—a split in which the people's most trusted advisers would once more have been ranged in opposite camps, and in which a question of far-seeing national wisdom—the forgiveness of ancient injuries—would have been soon lost in that least edifying of all Irish experiences, a contest between personal preferences and attachments. For the first time in the records of Irish intestine quarrels, it was the majority who effaced themselves, rather than assert their predominance at the expense of planting new roots of bitterness and shame. A split was rendered impossible by the simple method of leaving the malcontents in undisturbed possession of the entire strength of the National movement in Parliament, in the

United Irish League, and in the Press, that they might be free to try out any more sagacious plans of their own, since they had chosen to make any other plans unworkable. But the further inevitable effect was to leave a bewildered Irish public in total ignorance of the circumstances that will be here for the first time narrated, and to enable the minority who were thus made supreme to prevent any connected revelation of the truth from ever reaching the ears of three-fourths of the population. Nay, the irony of fate would have it that it was the cry of "national unity" and of "majority rule" that the group of malcontents thus raised to power did not scruple to employ after they had totally failed to use that power to any great national purpose themselves, in order to drown every appeal made in after years for a return to a saner political mind. Those who had voluntarily disarmed themselves rather than use their weapons in civil strife have never had any reason to disconcert themselves with taunts like these, nor even with the reproaches of weakness from those full-blooded partisans of their own who did not always remember that years are but as moments in a nation's larger life, and that in the long run there is no strength like the strength which lies in truth. But for the time misconception and blank ignorance of the facts in Ireland had to be submitted to.

The policy of turning the other cheek to the smiter, even to spare Ireland the anguish of another horrid domestic war, was still less likely to find favour with English party politicians, and least of all with the busy and uninformed English "man in the street," who simply bothered himself no further on the subject. "The new methods" in both countries gave place to "the old methods" of mutual misconstruction, rekindled prejudice, and brute force. Traditionally, Englishmen can only measure the importance of Irish events either by Parliamentary votes and "scenes," by the criminal statistics, or by some lurid electioneering conflicts in Ireland; and the advocates of national fraternity were determined not to "make sport for the Philistines" by affording them any of these foul sources of enlightenment. The news-gatherers of the parliamentary lobbies might well be forgiven if they failed to get any inkling of Irish developments which did

not manifest themselves either by angry controversies among Irishmen on the benches of the House of Commons or by election results accentuated by some grim record of savage recrimination or broken limbs.¹ Even any endeavour to arouse the interest of English statesmen of either party by a private propaganda could only have led to humiliating conclusions as to the incorrigibility of Irish dissensions, and a resigned submission to the Party Whips for their rule of life. Accordingly England was left in a darkness still more Cimmerian than that of Ireland while the fate of the land settlement, big with so much good or evil for the future, was in gestation.

The time has now come when the whole matter can, and ought to be cleared up. The period of fair trial accorded in 1903 to those who ought to have been prepared with wiser alternative counsels of their own has now in all conscience expired. For seven years they have been the undisputed masters of the conscience and political resources of the country—of the Parliamentary Party, of the United Irish League, and the National Press, and, it may be added, of the titular ruling powers of Dublin Castle—with a completeness far surpassing the power of Parnell at its meridian height. They have been quite free from those occult entanglements in America and calumnious campaigns in the English Press which were that great man's daily portion, and they had the twofold advantage, for which he laboured in

¹ The facts (for which there seems to be no precedent in parliamentary history) that the present writer's seat for the largest constituency in Ireland remained unfilled in spite of him for nearly twelve months,—that he was not only himself re-elected without any opposition (except, indeed, his own), but a second candidate professing his views elected unopposed upon a vacancy occurring through the death of his colleague,—and that on Mr. Sheehan's expulsion from the Irish Party he was re-elected (once more without opposition) after resigning his seat in order to put the antagonists of the All-for-Ireland policy to the test, passed without a word of comment in the English newspapers, and for the very reason that they were expressions of public opinion so nearly approaching unanimity that nobody dared challenge them. Later on, the writer's offer to gauge the real feeling of the people by staking his political life at the polls in any one of nine constituencies which contained one-ninth of the Nationalist population of Ireland entirely escaped notice in England. It was only when, emboldened by his retirement from the field, Mr. Redmond's advisers presented a candidate for the great city of Cork and were soundly beaten, that the English Press for the first time began to suspect the extent of the forces that were working under an apparently untroubled surface. It is the old vicious formula of the government of Ireland; nothing to shock, *ergo* nothing to study.

vain, of dealing both with a Unionist Government too weak for Coercion, and a friendly Liberal Government powerful enough for far-reaching concession. Their most charitable clients must have begun to find out by this time that the upshot of all these favouring omens and unparalleled opportunities has been failure, unmitigated and conclusive, the shaming of all they prophesied of evil for the policy they assailed, and a record of utter barrenness of achievement on their own part.

Having put a spoke in the authorized plans for amicably but cautiously safeguarding the tenants' interests in putting the Purchase Act of 1903 to the proof, they substituted no intelligible guidance of their own. Having scoffed at peace with "our hereditary enemies" and vaunted the superiority of the "old methods," and inaugurated one "really virile campaign" after another with much waste of blank cartridges, they failed to come to close quarters with a single territorialist of the old arrogant breed, but reserved all their warlike vigour for those of the landlord class who evinced their willingness to cease to be landlords and live as "Irishmen first of all." The practical effect of the chaos they created in the tenants' counsels was themselves to produce the higher prices they strove to attribute to the Act. The official statistics, which assuredly nobody will pretend have been manipulated to their disadvantage, exhibit the damning proof that wherever their advice was disregarded, and in proportion as it was disregarded, prices were cheapest and sales most extensive; wherever their "really virile campaigns" found a following, prices ruled higher, the landlords proved more obstinate, and the people were in addition harassed with heavy penalties in extra police charges following upon meaningless and wholly mischievous turmoil. They had no more real command of the situation than a landsman who should get hold of the helm of a tempest-tossed barque.

Even under the less favourable conditions produced by their folly, the Purchase Act denounced by them as a national calamity before five years turned 250,000 occupiers into owners. So far from the country finding itself face to face with the national bankruptcy they predicted, the trade of Ireland (overwhelmingly agricultural) bounded up within

these five years by a figure three times greater than the entire rental of the island. The only considerable legislation obtained for Ireland since the Act of 1903—the Evicted Tenants Act of 1905, the Labourers Act of 1906, and the Irish Universities Act of 1907, as well as the Dudley Commission Report of 1908—were all of them won, without any initiative of theirs, by the Land Conference methods of friendly conference and sensible compromise which spelled Ichabod in their eyes, and, as will be seen later on, might all of them have been won sooner and have been greater measures only for their ill-judged interference. Had their wild work been accompanied by any improvement in the prospects of Home Rule, there would have been some justification for their governing theory that a disturbed and irreconcilable Ireland alone can make any progress on the road to national self-government. Unhappily, the story of the Home Rule cause, under the patronage of a powerful Home Rule Government—the abject predicament of those who derided Unionist Devolution when they came to be the apologists of Liberal Devolution, and were hoist with their own arguments—form a chapter which it would be cruelty to emphasize. They have not only frozen up the growing confidence and liberal-mindedness of the Protestant minority, they have made it sound Tory policy to recant and forget their half-spoken pledges of seven years ago, and sound Liberal policy to shut themselves up in a mutism as to their intentions for the future, only broken by a rare coquettish word from some electioneering platform where the Irish vote runs high. Those who were responsible for the policy of 1903 have at least proven to both English parties that there are representative Irishmen whose word can be trusted to stand the test of fire, and to find no terrors in injustice even from unthinking countrymen of their own. It must surely be the most grievous thought of all for those who have brought the Home Rule cause to its present posture, that the primary fault is not fairly to be laid at the door of either English party. In their panic-stricken eagerness to proclaim their independence of the Unionist Government and of the Liberal Government in turn, they have proved themselves to be unreliable allies of both.

Even from the lower politicians' standpoint, the penalty has already overtaken them in Ireland. The annual subscriptions, by which alone popular feeling can be measured, now that angry public conflict has been happily eliminated from Irish political usages, have fallen off to such a pitch that Mr. Redmond has just confessed the party would have been bankrupt at the General Election only for subscriptions from America. The Irish Party are no longer maintained in Parliament by the contributions, which are their only constitutional means of sustentation. They now confess they must long ago have been disbanded from their posts at Westminster only for the help of funds obtained in Australia and America by preaching the very doctrines of Conciliation and National Fraternity which those moneys were employed to frustrate and revile at home. The great daily newspaper which was the prime mover in the revolt against the Land Conference policy has received a still more exemplary lesson as to the country's matured judgment of its procedure.¹ Even more ominous than Mr. Redmond's personal repulse at the Cork election of last May is the general attitude of mere lassitude or indifference typified by the East Limerick elector, who spoiled his ballot-paper by inscribing on it, "Neither of the candidates is worth a X." Finally, the national organization which was given up to them in a state of abounding prosperity has so far decayed that its officers have transferred their allegiance to a sectarian secret society² 60,000 strong, whose fitness as an instrument for winning Home Rule from the fears and prejudices of Protestant Ulster and of England is sufficiently illustrated by its initial rule that none but Catholic Irishmen can be admitted to its lodges.

It is a severe indictment, but an indictment founded upon the living experience of seven years. What is to become of every principle of constitutional freedom if the Irish

¹ The *Freeman's Journal*, which in 1903 was earning an annual profit of £12,000, could only show even a nominal profit of £217 in the latest balance-sheet for 1909 (the substantial loss having really been £2000), with the result that no dividend was paid either to the ordinary shareholders or to the preference (6 per cent) shareholders.

² "The Board of Erin," members of which (it was admitted at a recent trial in Dublin) form a majority of the Standing Committee of the United Irish League, and are consequently in a position to control its machinery and its funds.

people are to be held down in everlasting oriental submission to an administration of their national affairs which is passing from the stage of stagnation to one still less supportable by men of high purpose? Is it altogether safe, even for Englishmen, to go on refusing the smallest sympathy or attention to the most hopeful phenomenon in all the ill-mated connection between the two countries? They may be right in apprehending but slight Imperial danger from the present feeble and incoherent strategy which is known in Ireland as "the Policy of Sham-fight," but he would be indeed a purblind student of Irish psychology who should overlook the possibility of the "sham-fighters" being succeeded by some man of capacity with genuine revolutionary aims, who would be able to quote the authority of England's own officials for the utterly misleading and untrue declaration that the prices obtained for the land of Ireland have been 60 per cent in excess of its just value,¹ and could with more truth point out that English party opinion has only rewarded with neglect and contempt those who put any trust in peaceful measures of propitiation.

The ways of all Irish leaders and of all Irish policies are hard; and the able Irishmen who have been entrusted for the past seven years with a blank cheque for the prosecution of the Irish cause can solace themselves with many a noble precedent of failure, if their particular methods have proved unavailing, and if they are asked themselves to give an equally practical trial now to other measures and other advisers. The alternative national policy is not far to seek. The country has simply to be left at liberty to take up the programme of 1903 at the point at which it was then hung up (but not withdrawn) in order to shame contention. For it is one of the happiest characteristics of the policy of Conciliation that it is the first political programme in Ireland's plentiful history of combat which has prospered by avoiding a fight; to such an extent that, having abandoned all the usual means of propaganda or self-advertisement, it has nevertheless been the vital principle of each of Ireland's recent legislative or social progressions, and has at the present moment, when the average newspaper reader is scarcely

¹ See the Annual Report of the Estates Commissioners for 1906, *passim*.

aware of its existence, so far worked its way into acceptance by the national mind that it offers the only conceivable programme for the future save one of boisterous nothingness.

Perhaps it is the very fact that its advocates have always refused to give it a separate existence as a political party, which, however its value as a voting asset may have been for the moment diminished in the calculations of the party wire-pullers, is preparing the way for its quiet adoption by the more far-seeing men of all parties in the inevitable hour when the living truth within it bursts into action. It is notorious that if party expediency would only permit the most potent men on both the Parliamentary front benches to say publicly what they say in their confidential moments, there would be an all but universal agreement that in the essential principles of that policy, and in these alone, lie wisdom, statesmanship, and safety, National and Imperial. This is equally true of the mass of Irishmen, however the wording of their resolutions or their acquiescence in the reign of the established powers in the matter of Parliamentary elections and local organization may seem to say the opposite. It is even true of the mass of the Parliamentary party themselves, if they could once shake themselves free of the unworthy terror that boldly to say so would be to risk dissension or dissolution for the party. There is no considerable section of Irishmen—not even the Protestant minority, grievously though their growing confidence has been chilled—who, if the party interdict were once removed, would not confess joyfully that all hope and happiness and glory for the Irish nation are to be found alone in a policy of National Fraternity which would dwell upon all that brings Irishmen closer and not upon all that divides them, in a policy of All-for-Ireland which would enlist the energies of all her honest sons and all her honest friends in a common host, where all differences would have sufficient elbow-room, and all opinions breathe a liberal air, rather than in the narrow rival creed of None-for-Ireland except those who are ready all in a moment to place their necks under the yoke of a particular political faction. This new movement in Ireland has the vine's quality of flourishing the more it is cut to the earth.

One other matter remains to be made clear. It would be puerile to affect not to see that a great part of the hostility to the Land Conference pact was due to the negotiators rather than to the bargain. The fact is no special reproach to Ireland or to Irishmen. It is as old as the complexities of human motive and as world-wide as the imperfections of the guess-work science of politics. This difficulty is in great measure removed by the retirement from Parliament of the man upon whom, by a curious caprice of destiny, fell the major part of the responsibility before the Nationalists of Ireland and of all the odium that followed his silent withdrawal from the scene. Nor is this apparent self-denial in the least claimed for the virtue it might possibly be in the case of a man of a different natural bent, or a cause of self-reproach to those who have acted upon honest convictions in helping to necessitate the step. During the better than five-and-thirty years of his public life, the writer has never accepted any position of prominence which he could find anybody else willing to occupy in place of him ; and this not through any ascetic renunciation of the pleasures of public applause, but through a contented knowledge of his own limitations and an unconquerable inborn aversion to all the ways, arts, and ambitions of Parliamentary life—an aversion which at all times made the compulsion of duty to Ireland more tolerable when it exacted a long term of imprisonment than when there was question of a sentence for the same term of servitude on the most splendid scene of public service in the world. So true is it that his withdrawal from public cares carries no pang for himself, that, as soon as the charitable souls who saw in his disappearance only the disappointment and defeat of a man living but for the passion of power and leadership find out how powerless any stings of that kind are, their genial activity is more than likely to take the opposite line of taunts at his self-indulgence in seeking the peaceful delights of a private station. The partial ruin of Ireland's opportunity in 1903 was, it cannot be denied, a heavy sorrow, personal as well as public ; but, like the disappointment caused by the Demi-Paix of Villafranca, was one to be comforted by Mrs. Browning's cry :

It was too great a deed !

. . . Brothers, we must wait !

A United Italy has not waited in vain.

If his part in the Land Conference was the first of a good many ungrateful tasks in which his prominence raised him up perils from his brethren, the circumstance has its consoling side in the fact that it is one of the surest tokens of success, as well as its penalty ; but indeed he had a very much nobler reason for welcoming the close of his Parliamentary life with content and thanksgiving. He has lived to see the fruit of his travail in a measure far beyond his deserts, and beyond the experiences of incomparably better men who have fallen wearily in the wilderness before him in faring to the Irish Promised Land. To have counted even for a little in making hundreds of thousands of tillers of the soil, in his young days as liable as foxes to be hunted, the freeholders of their own fields ; in transplanting 40,000 half-fed labourers from unspeakable hovels to flower-girt cottages and plenteous gardens ; in restoring 3000 evicted tenants, the maimed and wounded of the old wars, from depths of neglect and despair to the warmth of their own old reilluminated hearths ; in publishing abroad the requirements of the Congested Districts, which were fifteen years ago as unknown as those of Mid-Africa still are, and which are now the common-places of every official brief ; and (no less pleasant thought) in aiding to rescue another order of his countrymen from a state of financial entanglement in which enmity and oppression became as the necessaries of life and to give them a higher function in their native land—is a retrospect which might well moisten eyes the least accessible to emotion. So far from nourishing any grudge against his countrymen, he will remember with life-long gratitude, for the sake of the national character even more than for any gratification of his own, the unerring instinct, the inexhaustible trustfulness with which they refused to credit the remotest suggestion to his dishonour, throughout the years upon years when a more stupid or less generous race might well have been argued into doubting whether he was not the fallen archangel of some Satanic plot against Irish nationality in the interests of the Irish landlords,

and when no voice in his defence was ever suffered to reach their ears. No great reform ever succeeded at the first offer. "At my first defence, no man stood with me, but all forsook me," was written of certitudes to which even the most fortunate of our dim human gropings after political betterment can have no pretension. Considering that the Irish people were called upon with startling suddenness to embrace doctrines of still more startling novelty, in face of the exhortations of distinguished Irishmen who held by the more intoxicating war-cries of "No compromise with our hereditary enemies!" and "No transaction with English rule!" the success of the new evangel was amazing and will be enduring. Besides, at the worst, Irish quarrels, fiercely as they may rage until the fight is done, have a way of clearing off as peacefully as the cannon-smoke as soon as the clash of battle is over.

Therefore, with the elimination of a personality grown to be a hindrance by no fault of his own, or perhaps of anybody else, and with the certainty that under no conceivable circumstances will his ghost return to vex the Parliamentary arena, disappears one considerable difficulty in the reconsideration of the Irish situation by the light of recent events. Whether or not, with respect to other men, a change of measures should involve a change of Ministers, partial or total, is a question not so important as it may seem, with which he, however, cannot claim to meddle. What is perfectly certain is that, in every department of Irish life—political, intellectual, and (as the phrase goes) economic—there are forces abounding with generous national sympathies, and substantially united in all but name, which would be irresistible if only the missing *Aliquis* would arise with the cementing force to bind them all together to a common end. There is an abundance—perhaps a superabundance—of men with the requisite talents, if their unbending Keltic individuality were once steeped in the inspiration of a sublime national purpose incarnated in a leader of genius. If at this moment the eye searches the horizon in vain for such a man, Ireland is a country fertile in surprises and not unfertile in heroic sons. Should the opportunity create the man, the materials at his hand—the new

legislative conditions which make the friendly intercommunion of the majority and minority in Ireland not merely a pleasant theory but a necessity—the happy temper of a country, as young in spirit as it is old in story, vibrating with the glad tidings of good things to come and that have come already—the affectionate allegiance of a democracy sturdy as the sturdiest in self-respect, but with scarcely a trace of the class hatreds for mere hatred's sake which are the *odium theologicum* of most modern States—and, at the other side of the Channel, two British parties watching each other to see which will first have the courage to shake off their ignoble party trammels to do by Ireland what the inmost conscience of both of them already consents to—offer a future such as no race-leader since Joshua ever saw smiling before him, such, assuredly, as Grattan or O'Connell or Parnell in his most sanguine hour would have taken for the mockings of some grinning spirit. Where or how soon the necessary man of experienced good sense and generous imagination, with the necessary formula of conciliation, is to be found, who may tell?

But that he may be found or may be recognized on either side of the Channel, there is one preliminary condition which is not to be dispensed with. Both the Irish and the English peoples must first know, what is at present hidden from them in clouds and half-truths that darken knowledge, the origin and potentialities of the policy of 1902—why things have thus far progressed towards the unification of Ireland, and why they have not been allowed to progress further? This is the information which the writer will with sincerity strive to give, as much as is in him.¹

VILLA CERRUTI, VALLOMBROSA,
September 20, 1909.

¹ Portions of the above Introduction were printed in the *Nineteenth Century* of March 1910. It was all written before the late General Election.



CHAPTER I

THE PARNELL TRAGEDY OF ERRORS

THE time is not yet come for a detailed publication of the chapter of misunderstandings and cross-purposes in the autumn of 1890 which, even more than the original exciting cause, split the Irish Party asunder like a rock, most of whose fragments were indeed brought together again after many mournful years, but with the scars remaining and the old secret of cohesion gone. But in order that the reader may understand the action of those who sacrificed in 1903 a policy only just sanctioned under every form that could bind the party and the country, rather than subject Ireland to another such agony of shame, some account must be given of the attempt that was made to avert by conciliatory means the tragedy of 1890, and of the strangely similar spirit of headstrong and irresponsible short-sightedness by which then, as later on, the appeal to good sense and to the more permanent interests of the country was baffled, to Ireland's heavy cost.

When the Divorce Court suit was first bruited abroad in the spring of 1890, the uneasiness of the Irish Party was deepened by the scandalous whispers that had long been in the air, but, in the absence of any positive information of their own, the general tendency was to attribute the proceedings to some new development of the strategy of defamation by which their great leader had always been beset, and from which he had but lately emerged with a triumph as modestly borne as the attacks had always been tranquilly endured. It was none the less an anxious time. The annual dinner given in his

honour by his colleagues at the Westminster Palace Hotel on June 28, 1890—the last occasion on which the soldier-statesman and his marshals met in the pride of an unbroken unity before a more unyielding Fontainebleau—was not free from a foreboding note of forced gaiety, not too far removed from tears.¹ But, when the announcement was first made public property, I wrote him from Glengariff, where I was then in the thick of the fierce hostilities of the Plan of Campaign struggle, a letter in which, while giving him the assurance of my ardent sympathy, I was still able to write confidently of a triumphant result. The reply was one which, while it spoke with complete tranquillity of the legal victory, gave me the first shuddering apprehension as to the substantial character of the danger. The letter was lost in the confusion of my arrest three or four days after, but one phrase remains engraven on my memory as in letters of fire. It was, almost *verbatim*, this :

You may rest quite sure that, if this proceeding ever comes to trial (which I very much doubt), it is not I who will quit the court with discredit.

When the blow fell, Mr. Dillon and myself, who had escaped to France in a fishing-boat from a Coercion Court in Tipperary under circumstances of some excitement in order to rouse the United States to our assistance, were prosecuting our appeal to America with a sensational success. Our mission was, in the American fashion, “booming” with the delirious excitement of a wild morning on Wall Street. For two nights running, Philadelphia thronged to our meetings and subscribed £4000 on the spot. In

¹ The circumstance, looked back upon now, may have its significance that it was on a message from Mr. Parnell that he specially desired to be present at our wedding on June 11 of that summer that our original arrangement to have our marriage a strictly private one had to be departed from. He was in the highest spirits on the occasion. His refined face, so brilliantly handsome for all its pallor, his shy gentleness, and words of affection are remembrances never to be dimmed. We often, by the light of later days, recalled the emotion with which in the little church, crowded with happy faces, he remarked to Archbishop Croke, who performed the marriage ceremony, “How happy I should be to be married like that !” It may as well be said here once for all that, owing to a fate not of my own settling, this narrative will have to deal constantly with events in which I bore a prominent part, or the events it deals with cannot be related at all. The paltriest of all vanities is that of being afraid to be thought vain.

Boston, we had its two greatest theatres filled to overflowing on the same day, and had our friends flying about all the afternoon to hire a third. In the Academy of Music, in New York, the scene was one of such frantic eagerness to contribute as was probably never witnessed before, the house ringing with shouts of "A hundred dollars!" "Five hundred dollars!" "A thousand dollars!" until the collectors were able to announce in the Hoffman House that night that the receipts had totalled 37,000 dollars—say £7000. There was a rapturous sense in all minds of beholding Home Rule riding into harbour with swelling sails. To men burning with the desire to express their feelings in bank bills and gold pieces, since that was the only standard of sincerity available, it seemed a bagatelle to pour into our laps the £250,000 that would have enabled us to complete the discomfiture of a Coercion Administration already staggering under English as well as Irish blows. And, will it be believed by the perverse folk who can see nothing but blind hatred of England in the romantic love of the Irish-Americans—the most steadfastly Conservative force in the United States—for the land of their fathers? If every mention of Parnell was received with a chorus of deep content by those fire-eyed audiences, the name of Gladstone had only to be pronounced—it was still before the poisonous breath of mutual distrust had once more passed over the scene—to produce a startlingly deeper, stronger, and more prolonged thunder-shout, at every roll of which all who yearned for good-will between the Gaelic and Anglo-Saxon races might well have echoed King Henry's cry: "A hundred thousand rebels die in this!"

Chicago, never to be outstripped in its race for pre-eminence with New York, had sworn by all its gods to double the subscription of the Academy of Music. The night we arrived there every inch of the far vaster Drill-hall was covered with an audience, at least fifteen thousand strong, whose breathless excitement would doubtless, under happier circumstances, have made good the boast. But, in the meantime, the judgment in the Divorce Court, Parnell's re-election by the Irish Party, and Gladstone's

answering letter had come, thunder-clap after thunder-clap, and the rending-asunder process in Committee Room 15 had begun, and by one of those dramatic transformations which Greek tragedy itself would have hesitated to invent, those thousands of men who had counted upon a night of mad enthusiasm and triumph without alloy, sat there facing us, sick with doubt and fear, their myriad questioning eyes full, indeed, of speechless sympathy for our own dread responsibility, their faces straining for some word of comfort which they, nevertheless, with splendid self-restraint forbore to call for, here and there an underswell of unspoken suspicion and gathering rage vividly visible on the faces of the younger men, and over the entire pained assemblage a silence as of men standing by a death-bed more awe-inspiring even than that by which an individual sorrow can at least weep out its heart.¹ By an instinctive agreement not a word was uttered by any speaker on the topic with which every heart was full; but with that night of intolerable strain and silence of death ended the American mission, and all the dazzling promise with which it began.

The action of most Irishmen in the Parnell crisis (certainly, it must be frankly stated, my own) was not determined by the verdict in the Divorce Court. In the case of any other man entrusted by the Irish people with their confidence, the scandal must instantly have terminated his public career, without the possibility even of debate. There is no country on the earth where the depravity that could lay waste a happy home excites a truer horror or is more pitilessly punished. But in the case of Parnell, not only was the moral delinquency deprived of its most odious aspects by now notorious circumstances which it would not

¹ Aeschylus has not pictured a more pathetic figure than was that of old Mrs. Parnell, the mother of the great Irishman, who sat on a front seat immediately under the platform. Poorly and somewhat eccentrically dressed, but with a something of fine lace in her head-dress, which distinguished her as effectively as if it were a crown of gold, she sat all the speeches through with a queenly serenity, amidst which, in spite of her, the appealing hungry eyes followed our every word, as if it might carry life or death in its sound. The next day, when she knew that six of the seven delegates to America had pronounced against her son, the noble old lady met them at a social gathering, with an unflinching courtesy as sweet as if no speck of shadow had crossed the Irish sky.

be at this moment proper to particularize, but the offence to public morals, taken at its worst in his own enforced absence from the witness-box, was outweighed by a public interest which Tartuffe himself must have owned to be of greater magnitude, when it came to be a question of discarding, on the eve of a General Election, big with the fate of Ireland, the man who had led his people to that supreme point with a skill and intrepidity not unequally matched with the genius of Gladstone himself, and above all, whose disappearance would once more unloose the fasces of Irish national unity which his firm hand had bound unbreakably together, and leave unlucky Ireland once more the prey of fretful and ineffective factions. For myself, I should no more have voted Parnell's displacement on the Divorce Court proceedings alone than England would have thought of changing the command on the eve of the battle of Trafalgar in a holy horror of the frailties of Lady Hamilton and her lover. But English Puritans, for whom Parnell bore no such argosy of their nation's fortunes in his bosom, were wholly within their rights in repelling the co-respondent of the Divorce Court as their ally with the ruthless righteousness of their Ironside fathers; and it was just that inexorable attitude of the Liberal Nonconformists, inspired not by any crooked design against Home Rule, but on the contrary by the persuasion that an act of deference to the national conscience alone could save Home Rule at the polls—this was the *ἀνάγκη* which, added to the moral argument that would have been fatal in the case of any other man, the argument of national interest as well, and with whatever misgiving and misery of heart for Irishmen, turned the scale against the continuance of Parnell in the Irish leadership. Gladstone or his advisers may have been wrong in their estimate of the strength of the Nonconformist sentiment, but they alone were qualified to make a correct estimate on the subject; and assuredly no nation was ever called upon for a more cruel proof of its fidelity to an ally, or thrust its arm more unflinchingly into the fire rather than brand its Liberal auxiliaries as conscious liars and traitors to Home Rule.

From the first hour of the crisis to the last, through

good report and evil, the position of the American delegates, with one exception,¹ was substantially this :—

(1) That whatever might have been said previous to the issue of Parnell's Manifesto, accusing Gladstone and Mr. Morley of availing themselves of his hour of agony for a perfidious plot against Home Rule, and charging his own party broadly with making themselves their corrupt accomplices, the issuance of that Manifesto made his retirement from the leadership unavoidable, if Home Rule was not to be annihilated at the polls, and annihilated through allegations which were to our knowledge false, and which would make any further trust in Ireland's word by honourable allies impossible.

But (2) that, remembering Parnell's imperishable services, and the immeasurable disasters that must attend the outbreak of a ferocious civil war at such an hour, his retirement must be sought by the patient labours of those in whose friendship he had the best reasons to confide, and that methods of attack, such as sullied the debates of Committee Room 15, could but alienate the world from his assailants and destroy all hope of disarming the resentment of a man of Parnell's proud and dauntless spirit.

And (3) that the course best calculated to save the situation both in Ireland and in England ought to have been and could have been laid down by a frank and confidential interchange of views between Parnell and his English allies on the one side and his Irish colleagues on the other, the moment the proceedings in the Divorce Court became public property ; nay that, even after Gladstone's letter and the Parnell retort, and the savageries of Committee Room 15, the one remaining hope of safety either for the Irish Party or for the Liberal Party lay in the mediation of those who were still free from the passions of the immediate theatre of strife, in the friendship of some of whom, at all events, Parnell had a still unbroken trust, and who, while equally resolute in their abhorrence of the fatal Manifesto and of the brutalities toward an illustrious

¹ Mr. Harrington, who confessed that it was his fondness rather than his judgment which led him to side with Parnell, but who throughout all the subsequent strife, as in later days throughout the era of the policy of Conciliation, proved himself a stubborn friend of peace and decency in Irish public life.

Irishman with which it was avenged, were not disposed to give up all as lost because of the moment of celestial wrath which precipitated the Gladstone letter, or because the desperation of a magnificent fighter at bay drove Parnell to a wildly unjust retort, or because the struggle in Committee Room 15—rather volleys from opposite sides of a barricade than debates—was disfigured by three or four expressions for which the second thoughts of history will no more hold men accountable than for the ravings of a high fever. It is the Irishman's fault to blurt out *urbi et orbi* what the Englishman will reserve for the confidences of the smoke-room.

After the experience of twenty years I find nothing to alter in the view I expressed to an excited meeting in Cincinnati on November 25, when the thunderbolt had just fallen :

Don't you be a bit perturbed by the news of a lamentable event which has grieved and shocked us all. . . . Mournful as has been his error, heavy and deplorable an affliction as it has brought upon our race, I say still more deplorable and more base it would be if in this hour of darkness for him we could for one moment forget the debt Ireland owes to his genius and to his matchless qualities as a leader. . . . All that we have got to do in this crisis is to keep our heads cool, and to go on steadfastly with our work, with the firm confidence that Mr. Parnell and the representatives of Ireland, in consultation—in frank and friendly consultation with Mr. Gladstone and the rest of our hitherto faithful Liberal allies—with an unshakable confidence that their deliberations will discover and will agree upon the course—whatever it may be—that is the wisest for the cause of Ireland.

The capital fault of Parnell in the public forum, and in a minor degree of the Liberal leaders, was that that "frank and friendly consultation" never took place. If, as soon as the result in the Divorce Court was certain, Parnell had taken his own followers and his English co-partners candidly and without *arrière-pensée* into his confidence and said, "Here is how matters stand: let us put our heads together and see how the danger to the public cause can be minimized. If we are agreed that nothing has occurred which would not make a change of leadership in such a conjuncture the worse of two evils, well

and good—let us sit tight ; if the evidence is really cogent that we shall lose England unless we bow to the storm, let any question of personal punctilio be your last consideration ; I am in your hands.” Had he taken this course, and had the consultation disclosed the slightest trace of the machinations afterwards alleged in his Manifesto as the justification for his resistance—viz. a Liberal design to trip up the Irish leader and corrupt his followers, with a view to the hamstringing of Home Rule—every element of honesty in the party and in Ireland would instantly have flown to his side in a passion of indignation, Ireland’s strength would have remained unbroken, and the reprobation of mankind would have been turned instead upon the heads of the plotters. If quite otherwise, one hour of generous confidence convinced him that this betrayal was the nightmare of one long estranged by the circumstances of his private life from intercourse with his fellows ; that the most influential of the Liberal leaders were scarcely less ardent than his own best friends in the party to preserve his leadership at any price short of the certain sacrifice of Home Rule for our generation ;¹ but that, none the less, all friendly advisers, Irish or English, were agreed that the emergency called for a striking act of deference to a moral judgment only less clamorous in Ireland than in England by reason of her closer clinging to her great leader—his retirement would have been effected under circumstances of more lustre than any other deed in his life, and his triumphant return to power later on would have wiped out from universal memory the one stain upon a career of magnificent achievement for his country.

Fate willed otherwise. Parnell chose to be guided by

¹ In one of his conversations with me at Boulogne, in January 1891, as he was launching out into a diatribe as to his treatment by Gladstone, I broke in : “ Parnell, where is the use of that kind of thing ? Surely nobody knows better than you that the Old Man has as vital an interest as ourselves in maintaining you as the Irish leader, if the thing can be done without destruction for the whole of us.” “ Yes,” he replied somewhat tartly, between his teeth, “ because he knows I’m the only man who could get his Home Rule Bill accepted and worked for him.” When I pointed out that there was a slight inconsistency between this and the position taken up in his Manifesto, he answered, with the smile with which he was always ready to acknowledge himself cornered, “ My dear O’Brien, you’ve got to meet that old gentleman with his own weapons.”

the astuteness of the party politician rather than by the magnanimity of the national liberator. He sedulously avoided any meeting either with his own party or with his English allies until he was able to confront them with the *faits accomplis* of the Leinster Hall Demonstration, which bound the hands of Ireland, and his re-election to the chairmanship, which landed his own party in all the bewilderment and contradictions which were to follow.

That was the initial scene in the tragedy of errors, but it was only the first of a series as perverse as if they were predestined to destroy the wisdom of the wise and the prudence of the prudent. The next was the failure of Messrs. Gladstone and Morley either to come to a decisive judgment themselves, or to make their decision known with sufficient gravity and in sufficient time either to Parnell or to his party.¹ It was only while the party meeting was assembling that either Parnell or Mr. Justin M'Carthy was saddled with the knowledge that the Liberal leaders had resolved to declare the re-election a death-blow to the Home Rule alliance. The mass of the party acted in total ignorance of the news that was whispered around the table at a moment when it was too late for consultation. Even if they had been apprised of it, under such circumstances, they must either have regarded the Gladstonian message as a bombshell of dissension exploded in the midst of them, or more probably as a diplomatic precaution devised by the Old Parliamentary Hand to save his face with his Nonconformist supporters. Still less excusable was the haste with which the Gladstone missive was given to the Press, thus angrily joining issue with the Irish Party, when it was or ought to have been known that the mass of the party acted in ignorance of its purport and without any further attempt by private repre-

¹ Mr. Morley has told us how his efforts to open up communications with the Irish leader were baffled. Nobody could find fault with a statesman of his rank, if he did not himself exhaust all the resources which are at the command of party wire-pullers in such emergencies; but his own knowledge of the world might well have warned him that a man of Mr. Justin M'Carthy's gentle and accommodating temper was not the medium to arouse either Parnell or the party to the magnitude of the consequences they were about to challenge. He was acquainted with Parnell's private secretary, Mr. Henry Campbell, who was always kept in a position to communicate with his chief at need, and it is not credible that through this channel he might not have forced upon Parnell a knowledge of the gravity and sincerity of his message.

sentations to Parnell or his colleagues to avert a public declaration of hostilities.

A third entanglement (perhaps, indeed, the first in the order of time) was the impetuosity with which Mr. Davitt hastened into the Press to re-echo the somewhat challenging summons of the Rev. Price Hughes, Mr. Stead,¹ and their brother-zealots to Parnell to lay down the Irish leadership at a moment when reserve on the part of Irishmen was the first condition of safety in an emergency of cruel difficulty. It was one of those impulses of abstract candour at any cost, whose inopportuneness he was always himself the most generous to acknowledge in more reflective hours. His intervention thus early had a doubly disadvantageous effect. In England it encouraged a fanatical outcry, when there was need of the most tender circumspection; it thus gave colour to the suspicion of some sour-blooded English plot against the great Irish leader. In Ireland, where Mr. Davitt had found himself in honest conflict with Parnell at more than one critical juncture, his haste to declare against him in this hour of gloom for his fortunes created the wholly unjust popular suspicion that he had designs upon the Irish leadership himself, and in that way gave its point to the national alarm that flamed forth at the Leinster Hall meeting in Dublin.²

But the Leinster Hall meeting itself was unquestionably the root-error from which sprang both the rash forejudgment in Ireland and the no less rash self-righteousness in England, the chivalrous impulse of an uninformed Irish Party and the perhaps less pardonable precipitancy with which the

¹ Mr. Stead, of whom Mr. T. P. O'Connor once wittily said, "Stead would be a capital newspaper man if he were not so much of a fanatic, and a capital fanatic if he were not so much of a newspaper man," went over to Ireland with a cargo of pamphlets reeking with the uncleanness of the Divorce Court details, and consulted a prominent anti-Parnellite in Dublin in whom he made sure of finding a sympathetic spirit as to how it would be if he went down to Cork to distribute them. The reply was: "You will unite all sides to a man in throwing your pamphlets and yourself into the river, and if they don't I will do it myself when you get back."

² How deeply the untutored national instinct was wounded by Mr. Davitt's unlucky haste may be judged from the fact that his paper, the *Labour World*, which enjoyed a circulation of over 40,000, sank within two weeks to less than as many hundreds, and in a short time disappeared altogether. But with a man of Mr. Davitt's mould, any consideration of mere personal loss weighed no more than with an early Christian in the arena of the Colosseum.

Liberal leaders mistook their chivalry to a beloved chief for hostility to their English allies. The meeting was originally summoned in aid of the evicted tenants. That it was by any instructions of Parnell's own it was diverted into an attempt to stampede Irish opinion in the political crisis would be so incompatible with his usual contempt for the meaner shifts of politics as to be wholly unbelievable. It was probably the thought of two or three hot-headed enthusiasts in Dublin, whose irresponsible impulse can be more readily excused than the assent of a man of Mr. John Redmond's cool temper.¹ The consequence, at all events, was that the evicted tenants' portion of the programme was lost to view in a tremendous outburst of national confidence in Parnell, and a people who heard the resolutions supported by most of the principal members of the Irish Party, as well as by the Lord Chancellor and the Attorney-General of the last Liberal Government,² might well be excused if they assumed that they spoke for their allied parties in pledging the country's unalterable allegiance to Parnell, and if they listened to imputations of cowardice if not of treason to the national cause, against those who a few weeks afterwards found themselves forced by the inexorable pressure of events to alter their attitude.

We of the American delegation cannot complain if we are put to the answer for our own share of accountability for the Leinster Hall meeting. It has been cast in our faces in a thousand hours of anger: "If you believed Parnell's re-election to be a danger, why did you cable to the Leinster Hall meeting an enthusiastic tribute to his priceless services as a leader?" The reproach was a fair one, and had to be borne without reply for many a year of bitter injustice during which it was impossible to give the

¹ It is but fair to remember that Mr. Healy, whose speech in support of Parnell was the trumpet-note of the meeting, and was afterwards the favourite weapon against him of those who made the most unsparing use of his rhetorical excesses on the opposite side, had barely escaped from the clutches of a dangerous attack of typhoid fever, when he was dragged to the Leinster Hall meeting in support of what he took for granted to be the settled National and Liberal tactics.

² Sir Samuel Walker, now again Lord Chancellor of Ireland, and the Rt. Hon. The MacDermot, K.C., who has since died.

simple explanation which there is now no longer any reason for withholding. The train of coincidence by which we were forced to make a prominent figure at a meeting which would never have been held if we could have forbidden it beats for impishness all the rest of the Puck-like freaks of that unlucky time.

Mr. Dillon was in New York, I was in Boston myself, and the rest of our colleagues were scattered on lecture tours in different States when a cablegram reached us from Mr. John Redmond and Dr. Kenny, M.P., urging us to cable the Leinster Hall meeting in support of Parnell's leadership. To rush a national decision at a chance Dublin meeting, summoned for a different purpose, in a country whose allegiance to Parnell nothing short of the manifest sacrifice of the Home Rule cause could for a moment shake, seemed to me the acme of unwisdom, at a moment when caution and reticence until the full proportions of the danger in England had developed was the supreme duty of Ireland's representatives, and when any aggressive declaration of defiance could only intensify the difficulties of the Liberal leaders in dealing with absolutely conscientious heart-searchings among their own followers which time and conciliatory treatment alone could allay. Without the delay of an hour I opened communications with Mr. Dillon to see if anything could be done to dissuade our friends from the Leinster Hall project. The first trunk telephone had just been laid between New York and Boston, and from the office in the Parker House I was able to ring up Mr. Dillon. But the instrument obstinately refused to work. We could occasionally hear one another's voices, but not a single connected sentence could be patched together. In spite of the prolonged exertions of the hotel clerk and myself, we had to give it up. It is one of the mocking chances of history that, if the telephone between New York and Boston was working that morning as smoothly as it is now, the Leinster Hall meeting would never have been held, or, if held, would have been kept to its rightful purpose; for I very soon ascertained by telegraph that Mr. Dillon's conviction of the danger of a decisive national pronouncement in complete ignorance of the comparative elements of the crisis was as

strong as my own. But Mr. Dillon hesitated to take action without consultation with Messrs. Harrington, T. P. O'Connor, Gill, and T. D. Sullivan, who were scattered many hundreds of miles apart, and with whom a consultation by telegraph with adequate freedom was impossible. Strongly as I urged that time was of the essence of the emergency, if the Dublin arrangements were to be forgone, and that a message from us two to Messrs. Redmond and Kenny, who had taken our places in charge of the Plan of Campaign and Evicted Tenants' movement at home and who had cabled to us alone, would almost certainly be effective, Mr. Dillon hesitated to act, and there was nothing for it but to abandon all other engagements so that the delegates from Ireland might all come together at Buffalo.

When we assembled at Buffalo, it was too late. The Dublin meeting was to be held on the evening of the day on which we met, and only a couple of hours remained in which any communication from us could reach our colleagues. We were all in agreement that failing some justification to us unknown, the manifest design to commit Ireland and the Irish Party irretrievably before the first factors of the problem could be known, was an act of inconceivable folly, and our first thought was to stave off the danger by cabling our colleagues that we would return to Ireland by the first boat, and begging them to avoid any precipitate action in the meantime. Circumstances had given Mr. Dillon and myself so large a share of influence at the time that it may without vainglory be affirmed that, if we had been at home when the crisis began, or if at any subsequent stage we could have returned with the power of freely communicating with the Irish Party and with our people, a *modus vivendi* would have been found which would have reconciled the two sovereign necessities of letting the winning battle for Home Rule proceed to the General Election, and at the same time of satisfying the national jealousy for Parnell's honour and power. But even while we met, a newspaper man arrived with a "flimsy" announcing that Mr. Dillon and myself had been that day sentenced to six months' imprisonment at Tipperary, in our absence, and that consequently all hope of personal contact with our colleagues was cut off.

There remained the ignoble alternative of silent aloofness in this our country's hour of extremity. But, with one exception,¹ we were all united in regarding the loss of Parnell's leadership and the terrors of the unknown sea on which it would set us adrift as dangers immeasurably more menacing to all the earthly prospects of hundreds of thousands of blameless Irish households than to the public morals of a race wholly incapable of being contaminated by one evil example, however conspicuous, in private conduct. With the spirit, then, of the Dublin Demonstration we were in accord. Besides, the two men from whom the appeal for our co-operation had come were our own *fidei-commissi* in the direction of the movement in Ireland, as well as devoted friends of Parnell. What right had we to refuse to believe that they were acting in pursuance of some such concerted understanding between Parnell and Gladstone as seemed to be the obvious alphabet of the situation? And, if that were so, were we to cast the first stone at a leader whose fate might be at that moment trembling in the balance by coldly refusing that assurance of solidarity from America for which, so far as we knew, all the men behind the scene at home were imploring us? "God's puppets, the best and the worst, are we." Any pretension to impeccability in the midst of a crisis shifting into new and incalculable shapes with every sun that rose would be an argument of folly grosser than any that can be imputed to the message of good cheer we, with any feeling but good cheer in our hearts, decided to despatch to the Leinster Hall meeting. But it was one of the comical injustices of the subsequent wars that both sets of combatants united in laying at our doors the responsibility for all the misfortunes that followed the meeting of the Leinster Hall, which, if some of us could have been heard, would never have been held, and in which nothing short of a chain of fatalities worthy of all the rest of the mischances of that evil time could have coerced us to participate.

From that first step over the brink, the descent was as inevitable as the law of gravity to Parnell's re-election by a mystified party, the instant retort of the Liberal leader, the

¹ Mr. T. D. Sullivan, with whom the sinfulness of the Divorce Court story consistently precluded all political considerations.

clash of tumultuous passions by which the Irish mind was torn—the conflict between fidelity to the Liberal alliance and whisperings of foul play towards a matchless Irish leader—until the deepest depth was reached in the despair and shame of Committee Room 15. If it was the Leinster Hall meeting that decided the Liberal revolt against the co-partnership with Parnell, it was Parnell's own Manifesto which alone could have turned the scale against him, either in the Irish Party or in Ireland, as it was the Gladstone letter and the brutalities of Committee Room 15 that prevented the judgment of Irish Nationalists on the subject from being sufficiently overpowering to make the subsequent civil war impossible. In the daylight of history, no imputation could well seem more pointless than that of tergiversation against the majority of the Irish Party, because having rallied around their leader under the delusion that he represented the united host on whose victorious banner Home Rule held the first place, they had patriotic unselfishness enough to reconsider their action on the discovery that his continued leadership, on the contrary, involved the instant shipwreck of the Home Rule coalition, and the postponement to perhaps mythical kalends of the hopes which had buoyed up their people throughout many all but intolerable years of sacrifice.

But had Parnell left the Liberal leader's choleric communication to the Press unanswered, it was still possible that the prevailing Irish feeling would be one of impatience sufficiently acute to make even another prolonged sojourn in the wilderness as a united band more bearable than the sacrifice of their leader in obedience to the arrogant self-righteousness of the Price Hugheses and the Steads. It was Parnell's own astounding rejoinder, calling upon Ireland to believe that the cataclysm caused by his own imprudence was really due to a perfidious conspiracy of the Liberal leaders against Home Rule shared by an Irish Party so debased as to be ready to "throw him to the English wolves" for their own corrupt price, which finally kicked the beam. Colleagues, not conscious to themselves of any inmost thought but one of passionate belief in Parnell's irreplaceable qualities as an Irish leader, found themselves summoned to follow him, not merely in surrendering all

present possibility of Home Rule, but in doing it upon grounds known to them to be false, which stamped not only an English statesman and party who had endured much for Ireland, but the representatives of the Irish people themselves, with inexpressible turpitude and dishonour. Nothing was easier for some of us than to forgive the moment of madness that prompted that Manifesto ; but to accept it for our rule of life and rectitude was unthinkable.

But scant justice has been done to the conduct of the Irish Party or the Irish people in those evil days. The unshakable determination with which the majority of the party confronted all the horrors of division and disruption in order to save the honour of Ireland and her fidelity towards her libelled English allies was little remembered by a newspaper public, not altogether ungratified by the scenes in Committee Room 15 ; still less was the no less Spartan self-immolation with which hundreds of thousands of Irishmen of the truest temper cast all material interests to the winds at the first breath of English treachery to a beloved leader.

The one alleviation of our situation in America was that it freed us from the temptations which might well have betrayed the most self-contained of a lightning-blooded race into rash judgments or irrevocable words on the immediate scene of such a conflict. On the other hand, almost any hideous excitement of the battle would have been preferable to the weeks of helpless inactivity we passed in a Chicago hotel under the eye of a cohort of Pressmen, encamped night and day in the corridor, raging with the unsatisfied hunger for news¹ while the fate of the country and the party which held the heart-strings of our lives was being sealed in an English upper chamber far away amidst words and deeds of which our position of onlookers enabled us to realize all

¹ Mr. Harrington having one night come upon one of the newsmen with his ear to the keyhole of the room in which we were reading the night's "flimsies" from Westminster, we ventured a gentle suggestion to the hotel manager that the gentlemen of the Press might in future be requested to wait in a parlour downstairs. "No, gentlemen," was the gloomy reply ; "I tried that game once in the interest of Jefferson, the actor, who proposed to draw the line at being interviewed in his bathroom. The next morning the Chicago papers announced in headings as loud as a fog-horn that smallpox had broken out in the —— Hotel. I guess I ain't going to bring them boys on my potato-patch no more."

the errors and to feel all the shame. Whatever counsels of appeasement we could give, we gave. When Parnell cabled asking us to suspend our judgment until we read his Manifesto, we replied imploring of him not to aggravate the situation by taking an irreparable step. When the text of the Manifesto arrived, putting an end to all possibility of our identifying ourselves with the shocking injustice done to Messrs. Gladstone and Morley, and the still more appalling consequences for Ireland, Messrs. Dillon, O'Connor, Sullivan, Gill, and myself cabled a declaration which we can still read with thankfulness as a calm statement of the two principles in which alone we could discern safety for our cause. The first was that the Manifesto had made Parnell's retirement from the chairmanship of the Irish Party essential if Home Rule was not to be sacrificed and Ireland's honour and trustworthiness as an ally sacrificed with it. The second was that, on penalty of a no less disastrous rending asunder of the national forces, his retirement must be sought with the most patient indulgence for the tragic reverse which had but raised his proud spirit up in arms and with an ever-present remembrance of the fact that we were dealing with one of the three greatest Irish captains who ever lived.

The struggle in Committee Room 15 unhappily took a turn which put the two essential terms of our advice in bitter antagonism one with the other. We found ourselves as sharply divided from those of our colleagues who held that Parnell was only to be argued with by ferocious personal insult as from those who would prate of nothing but English treachery and corruption as unanswerable reasons why he should let the sky fall rather than abdicate his position. The majority of 45 to 29 who finally declared the chair vacant, while sufficient to make their constitutional right pedantically sound, was scarcely of a character to justify a war of extermination against a minority including the man who had created the party and was the keystone of its successes. A new element of complication was the entry of the Irish Catholic Bishops on the scene. The Bishops are free from the reproach, justly due to all sections of the politicians, of unchaining the winds by precipitate and ill-considered intervention. Some of them, and notably the Archbishop of

Cashel and the Archbishop of Dublin, were animated by incontestable personal friendship for Parnell, and keenly alive to the perils to the national cause that must follow the downfall of his power. It seems one of the strangest oversights of the time that nobody seems to have thought of invoking their friendly mediation while it might still have been all-powerful. But once the Irish Bishops, with only a solitary exception, united in staking the whole power of the Church on the dethronement of Parnell, the effect was enormously to embolden those who, from motives of personal enmity of which they were themselves but dimly conscious, now began to cry out with growing fury against any form of friendly compromise or even quarter; while for those who had always associated danger to the national movement with the collective interposition of the Bishops in Irish politics, the apprehension of a Liberal plot against Home Rule was still further embittered by the suspicion that the Bishops also were but giving way to an ancient jealousy of his power by overwhelming the great Irishman with an ecclesiastical thunderbolt in his hour of prostration. As the days went on, the Irish race in America were red with shame and rage at the abominably distorted and over-painted cable news from Committee Room 15; and now the scene was to be transferred from the comparative restraint of a Parliamentary Committee Room to the scenes of unbridled outrage in word and deed at the Kilkenny election.

One last hope remained of either ending the scandal or at worst of putting down the barbaric methods in which the original issue whether or not Parnell's leadership could be saved without ruin at the General Election, was being wholly lost sight of. Mr. Redmond and Dr. Kenny had cabled that an accommodation was still possible if Parnell and myself (whose close mutual confidence and affection remained almost the only undoubted fact in the general break-up of old relationships) could meet in France. My selection as the representative of my colleagues in America had the further recommendation that I had been for many years on terms of the most intimate comradeship with Mr. Healy, who was now the leading man of action on the anti-Parnellite side, and that he had, in fact, nominated me as

Chairman of the Board of Directors of the new daily newspaper (the *National Press*), which was in course of establishment to break down the monopoly of the *Freeman's Journal* (then, as in later years, an unscrupulous instrument of mischief in every hour of travail for the nation). The chance of success was indeed one forlorn enough to daunt even one for whom desperate ventures had come to be the warp and woof of Irish public life; and the spirit in which the announcement of the mission to France was received on both sides was not calculated to add to the exhilaration of the adventure;¹ but as we had a very precise idea, indeed, of the conditions on which Parnell's retirement might be brought about without a pang of humiliation, but, far otherwise, with honour and lustre for his name, my colleagues and myself resolved to dare the issue, satisfied that we were treading the last thin film of firm ground between our country and an abyss whose horrors those who were now drunk with the fury of battle little recked of.

¹ Parnell's cable promising to meet me in France, while full of personal goodwill, contained a haughty and disingenuous allusion to "the seceders," which forced me to make it clear to him that he must reckon myself among "the seceders," in all but the savage personal aspect of the warfare against him, while the anti-Parnellites only grew more and more coercive in their demands for uncompromising partisan messages to Kilkenny from Messrs. Dillon and O'Connor while I was on the sea.

CHAPTER II

THE WAYS OF THE PEACEMAKER

WHEN the Dutch steamship *Opdam* emerged from the thick haze off the port of Boulogne at dawn on Christmas morning the outlook of our mission was as cheerless as the opaque icy fog that froze us to the bone. Mr. Justin M'Carthy and Mr. Sexton, who came out in the tender to meet Mr. Gill and myself, displayed from the start a largeness of view and a foresight of the ghastly consequences of continued strife which to the end of our negotiations made them steady friends of peace. A very slight discussion, indeed, of the object of our mission led them to abandon the expectation with which they had doubtless come, of securing from me some public message of congratulation to the electors of North Kilkenny upon the blow they had just dealt at Parnell. They acquiesced without difficulty in the proposals by which we hoped to reconcile Parnell to an honourable retirement. But everybody else we met or heard of spoke swords and daggers. We had scarcely landed before it was painfully evident that it was different men and a different spirit which the triumph over Parnell in Kilkenny had made the real ruling power in the Anti-Parnellite Party. The first telegram put into my hands—it was from a most worthy Wexford priest, the late Canon Tom Doyle, P.P., Ramsgrange—"Don't disgrace yourself. Avoid the adulterer"—was but a foretaste of the spirit we found to be now rampant on both sides.¹ A graver matter was a message from an influential

¹ It was in the parish of the same excellent old gentleman that the local League a few months afterwards passed a resolution severely censuring the Almighty for not sending the ships that brought Mr. Dillon and myself back from America to the bottom—without any reservation as to the fate of our unoffending fellow-passengers.

Catholic clergyman (still living) of enormous influence in the south—in peaceful days one of the most amiable of Christian gentlemen—which reveals, as with a lightning flash, the appalling temper of the time :—

Just one word to you. Upon no account offer any compromise to Parnell on the basis of his leadership now or at any future time.

So far as we are concerned Parnell is dead. . . .

Stay in Paris. Read up all he has done and said since the 24th November. When you have done this you will never again be tempted to think of his past services.

From Paris write a daily letter to the *Insuppressible*. Go for the man as strongly as you can—the stronger your letter will be the better.

What we want is to finish him up quickly and close our ranks. Every day Parnell is abroad is a day full of misery and anguish. . . .

Give no quarter to the man. He will take none and will give none. If there be any wavering now on your part we are done for. Strike home, strike hard, and strike often. Our salvation is at that price.¹

I did, indeed, with aching eyes “read up all he had said and done since the 24th November.” All Parnell’s inborn dignity had been thrown aside under the stings of his tormentors in the squalid election scenes in Kilkenny. His reckless injustice to his assailants, even the coarseness of his vituperation, knew no bounds.² But even more shocking

¹ It is a not unimportant fact that the author of this atrocious letter is now a scarcely less furious adversary of the All-for-Ireland movement in the interest of Parnell’s chief lieutenant, to whom he now looks to “finish up quickly” and “give no quarter” to the man who failed to act upon his missive to Boulogne.

² If it was a time for preferring private grudges to higher interests, I had myself grounds for personal resentment perhaps more substantial than a few bitter words thrown across the table in Committee Room 15. When the delegates to America had pronounced for Parnell’s retirement, the following were my instructions to the manager of *United Ireland* as to the attitude of that paper in the controversy :

“CHICAGO, 2/12/90.

“If Irish Party vote for Parnell’s leadership, hand over establishment to anybody authorized by Parnell. If Party decide against Parnell, let *United Ireland* strenuously support our views, avoiding all unkind language of Parnell personally, and permit nobody to interfere.”

To which I received the following reply :

“Message received. Your instructions will be obeyed strictly.—DONNELLY.”

Some days later a cablegram reached me from a distinguished quarter in Dublin, representing that an outrageous campaign of calumny was being carried

than the spectacle of a great mind unhinged, and a refined gentleman vulgarized by misfortune, was it to read the companion volume of electioneering literature of North Kilkenny—the personal violence, the obscene insults, the ingratitude and uncleanness heaped upon the head of a man whose one offence was counterpoised by a thousand memorable services to Ireland.

The terrible words: "Give no quarter to the man. What we want is to finish him up quickly and close the ranks"—or in the words of a great London Liberal organ of the time: "A bubble and a squeak and all is over"—give a perfectly honest picture of the infatuation which took possession of Parnell's adversaries after his defeat in North Kilkenny—the belief that he was a spent force, and that all statesmanship and patriotic courage lay in administering to him one final blow, and the sooner and with the more brutality the better. The truth was that the memories of the Kilkenny contest, so far from lessening either Parnell's own resolution or the passionate devotion of his followers, went near putting an end to his or their readiness to hear the word "compromise" so much as whispered of. In a letter dated "Kilkenny, Dec. 18/90," while the result was still unknown, he wrote me in the friendliest terms:

out by the *Freeman* against the majority of the party, and urging strongly that I should permit *United Ireland* to strike back with interest, and that its coloured cartoons should be specially utilized. I cabled this answer to the editor:

"NEW YORK, 8/12/90.

"Must insist no personalities against Parnell. Don't in any way use cartoons in this controversy. Hold firmly but temperately to Parnell's retirement as *sine qua non*, but remember my injunction, avoid all unkind language of Parnell personally. Write everything yourself."

A few days afterwards, Parnell, who had six years before (with a wisdom I fully approved) withdrawn from his Directorship of *United Ireland* in order to avoid the legal penalties which were then falling in showers upon the paper and upon me, broke into the office of *United Ireland* at the head of an armed mob, not a man of whom had ever risked a shilling or an hour of his liberty for the paper, and took forcible possession. Under the circumstances, it was not a very kind or scrupulous thing in the absence of the man who had given seven years of his life to the foundation of the paper—years of such unbroken resistance to seemingly omnipotent odds as no newspaper ever survived before. But such is civil war; and my personal ill-treatment never for a moment occurred to me as a reason for declining to meet Parnell at Boulogne on the country's business—no more than, indeed, did to him the fact that, a few days after the seizure of *United Ireland*, he went within an ace himself of being dragged out of the train and lynched by my indignant fellow-townsmen in Mallow.

I am unable to leave Kilkenny until after the declaration of the poll, and consequently regret much being unable to meet you on your arrival . . . but I write to say that I will come to you as soon as I can possibly get away from Ireland.

This letter was delivered to me on landing by Dr. E. Byrne, the editor of the *Freeman*, who, however, told me that Parnell was much changed by the Kilkenny defeat, which he attributed largely to a strongly partisan appeal against him cabled by Messrs. Dillon and O'Connor after I had left America, and took back the letter he had written to me from Dr. Byrne's hand, and was with difficulty dissuaded by Messrs. Redmond and Harrington from putting it in the fire.¹

In the grim phrase already quoted, "the knives were out" on both sides. To those like myself, who knew the men and forces already committed to Parnell, the glib assurances of the victors that all was over except the *Te Deum* was the craziest of delusions, and their belief that dragging the body of their great countryman deeper through the mire was the best way of achieving whatever remained to be done was even more stupid than it was unnatural. Nobody ever questioned that the declaration of the Bishops had settled the question at the polls in most of the rural constituencies; but, manifest as it even then was that all the great urban centres—Dublin, Cork, Limerick, Waterford, Kilkenny, Galway, and the rest—were seized with a maddening suspicion that some deep treachery to the Irish cause was on foot, which Parnell's iron hand alone could put down—that even in the depths of

¹ "Parnell, after John's and T. P.'s cable to Kilkenny just before the election, said what was the good of expecting anything from your moderation when those men, while you were coming as their ambassadors, took sides so violently at such a moment. After the defeat he naturally was opposed to going to see you, and I know Redmond, Harrington, Kenny, and others had to argue with him very determinedly."—(Letter, dated 28/12/90, from Mr. V. B. Dillon, one of Parnell's principal advisers in Dublin.)

"When I met Parnell first he was most anxious for the meeting with you. It appears that although he has expressed to his supporters the utmost faith in your affection for him, I am sorry to learn that he made a wide distinction between yourself and Dillon in this respect. He has told his followers all along that he could rely to the fullest on your sincerity, whatever you did, but they tell me he could never be induced to make a similar declaration with regard to John. The Kilkenny election has widened the breach horribly. . . . Kilkenny has soured him and soured his followers, and like the insolence of the *Daily News*, instead of weakening him, has given him a firmer hold than ever upon the mass of honest Nationalists."—(Letter from Mr. T. C. Harrington, M.P., dated "Dublin, Dec. 27, 1890.)

the country vast districts as profoundly religious as Meath and Roscommon had caught the flame, and others even more militantly Nationalist like the counties of Cork, Limerick, and Tipperary, were only saved from following by the popularity of a few priests who had signalized themselves as leaders in the Plan of Campaign struggle—the frame of mind of men who calmly proposed to raze that enormous body of Nationalist opinion out of existence by a few country elections and the methods of rhetorical butchery, was one scarcely to be contemplated without a fear that even some of the shrewdest minds in the country had gone demented.

But how to induce men burning with such passions on both sides to give any attention to counsels of compromise, of toleration, of thought for the future? It was no longer a question of two lines of national policy, but of two armed camps, two political religions, two sets of fires already smoking for the heretics of one persuasion or the other.

To complete my comforts, a letter was awaiting me from Mr. Dillon breathing a disheartenment scarcely short of despair. Having agreed upon every particular of our proposals for facilitating Parnell's withdrawal, he was now doubtful whether even his withdrawal from the chairmanship could save the General Election, or secure us against such a defection of the Whiggish wing of the Liberal Party as would seem to justify Parnell's warnings and cover us with discredit and defeat, and his conclusion was :

As at present advised, my judgment is strongly that you and I should retire, declaring that Parnell's action and the amount of support he has got in the country has rendered it impossible to retain the Liberal alliance or to win the election. . . . It is almost impossible to arrive at any decision, such a horrible multitude of difficulties and complications are on every side. Since writing this I have read it for T. P. He does not take so strong a view as I do. I wanted him to write you his view, but he would not.

There was one fact which caused me steadily to disregard the discouragements, not to say impossibilities, which were closing around on all sides. The worst of the *energumènes* of both factions were new men to the National movement, who, either through subserviency to the anti-Nationalist section of the Episcopacy on the one side, or on the other, from the

habit of cringing for favours in the rent-offices, or again owing to a revolutionary hatred of constitutional methods, had fallen out of sympathy with the popular organization and took advantage of the present fratricidal strife between the old leaders to capture the foremost places, and with all the convert's fiery zeal cry out against every suggestion of compromise as cowardice and treason. Some of the most war-worn veterans, on the contrary, who had taken sides under one standard or the other, had sustained too many scars in the long wars against the common enemy to see anything but horror and ruin in the continuation of the present conflict, and were deeply distrustful of the new-born zealots who had done them the evil turn of taking their side. If these incorruptibly honest influences from both sides could be only brought to make common cause in pressing a sensible agreement that would satisfy both the political exigencies of the hour and make Parnell's retirement rather a glory than a disgrace, the overwhelming sense of the country, always generous and always horrified by dissension, would have little difficulty in driving the irreconcilables at both extremes back again to their lairs. It was a poor chance, but it was the only one that offered any escape for Ireland from the years of misery that were to follow.

When Parnell and I met at Boulogne on December 31, 1890, he wore something of the pathetic air of a cedar struck by lightning, but of a cedar still erect and stately, and he approached our business with an assumption of unbending confidence in his own position and contempt for the "seceders" which threatened to terminate the interview before ten minutes were over. He had brought Mr. J. Redmond, M.P., Mr. Clancy, M.P., Dr. Kenny, M.P., Mr. W. Redmond, M.P., and Mr. John O'Connor, M.P., in his train, and proposed to make them parties to our conference. I replied, "Parnell, that is impossible. Unless you and I can agree, we may as well shake hands and go our ways." He assented without demur, and at once launched out into particulars of the intrigues of certain of the Whiggish and Radical leaders and newspapers against Home Rule, in concert with certain personal enemies of his nearer home, under cover of the Divorce Court troubles and the backbonelessness of the Irish Party in their hands. "If

you had been here," he added, "and knew it all, you would be the first to say it would be a crime for me to leave the Irish cause at the mercy of such a lot." "Parnell," was my reply, "it would be only distressing to both of us to go on talking like that. Surely you know the very obvious retort—if you are right, the time to test it would not be now when the mischief is done, but when the emergency arose by taking your allies and your own party candidly into your confidence and letting the country judge whether there was any foul play in their attitude towards you, instead of letting us all stumble in the dark into this muddle." He said he all but came to blows with Sir Frank Lockwood (the respondent's counsel) when insisting that he should be himself examined in the Divorce Court, and intimated that if he had prevailed, the political complications could never have arisen;¹ but immediately harked back upon the publication of the Gladstone letter in a fit of spleen, and the weakness with which the Irish Party instantly took to their heels. "How am I to abandon the country to such a pack of sheep?"

"Parnell," I said, "for God's sake let us not drift into a controversy as to whether the fault was with the sheep or with the shepherd. I told Dr. Byrne distinctly, when he gave me your letter, that I for one should as soon think of putting my arm in the fire as of following your leadership on the lines of your Manifesto. On the other hand, I am sure you know I have nothing but horror for the methods of warfare employed against you. Let us discuss what is the minimum of concession on your part that will save the General Election, and what is the maximum of concession on our part that will save you from the smallest humiliation and guard against the dangers you apprehend. If we cannot stick to that, we may as well break off the interview." With the tranquil pertinacity I so often knew him to apply to better purposes, he stuck to his parable of Liberal hypocrisy and the incompetency or malice of his Irish assailants, and I thought it best to put an end to the hope he still seemed to entertain that I might be affected by this futile line of

¹ That genial giant, Sir Frank Lockwood, confessed to me in after years: "Parnell was cruelly wronged all round. There is a great reaction in England in his favour. I am not altogether without remorse myself."

discussion by telling him frankly no good could come of continuing the conversation and quitting the room.

For several hours I remained in my own room while Parnell and his fellow-travellers were lunching together. To Mr. John Redmond, who visited me there, I declared that so far as I was concerned the matter was at an end, that it was plain Parnell did not mean business, knowing as they all did that it was perfectly useless for us to go into any topic except the terms of his retirement from the chairmanship. Mr. Redmond, who throughout the peace negotiations at Boulogne displayed the sound judgment which scarcely ever fails him, as well as, unhappily, the lack of moral fibre which so often brings his finer qualities to nought, implored me for God's sake not to come to any hasty decision, and, with a sincerity there could be no mistaking, promised that he and Dr. Kenny and Mr. Clancy would do all that men could do to bring Parnell to reason. After an absence of some hours Mr. Redmond returned to my room with the assurance that Parnell was now willing to listen to terms of retirement, and once more entreated me not to give up this last chance of bringing about a settlement.

On my return to the little sitting-room in black and gold of the Hôtel du Louvre which was to witness so many moving scenes within the next few weeks, I found Parnell discussing with Mr. Gill the terms suggested by the delegates to America for his retirement, which were, briefly, that the more or less irregular proceedings in Committee Room 15 should be cancelled, and a new meeting of the entire party held, under the chairmanship of the Senior Whip, Mr. Richard Power, at which Mr. Justin M'Carthy should be unanimously elected chairman, Parnell continuing to be chairman of the National League in Ireland, and the whole party uniting in sponging out the memory of recent irritations and paying a tribute of unstinted justice to his incomparable services to Ireland. The moment I re-entered the room, Parnell commenced with this startling speech to me: "O'Brien, there is one condition, and one only, on which it would be possible for me to retire, and that is that you should take my place." Recent events had given me a first stern lesson in the worldly wisdom of tincturing an unbounded faith in human

friendships with a certain portion of that indulgent scepticism of which later life seldom fails to preach to us the necessity, and my first impulse was to smile at the proposal as an all too transparent manœuvre to set myself and the majority who had elected Mr. Justin M'Carthy by the ears and possibly to bring about another estrangement as between Mr. Dillon and myself. But the thought was not worth dwelling upon, for there was not a moment's difficulty about the reply: "That is out of the question. There is no need of the least humbug on my part. Even if I had the necessary qualifications (and I have not), any good I have ever been able to do is because I have made up my mind that the only selfish interest I shall ever have in Irish public life is an interest in getting out of it. But," I added, "there is an alternative far better. Next to yourself, there is no man in the party with anything like John Dillon's qualifications as a respected figure in Parliament and a Nationalist, with the right stuff in him, and his sympathy with you in this matter is as ardent as my own. You have only to say the word and all trouble with Justin M'Carthy or Gladstone or with your own friends or ours in Ireland will be at an end."

A cloud immediately fell upon Parnell's brow. He could not be induced to break silence as to his objection, but he returned again and again to the dogged formula: "You are the only man among them I could give way to." "Don't you think," I remarked, to change the line of resistance, "there would be something farcical in electing a chairman who would have to go to jail for six months before he could take the chair?" "That objection would apply equally well to Dillon," was his reply. "But why should you do anything so foolish as to go to jail? You should only have to return to America with the prestige of having made peace at home, and you would turn in as much money as you pleased, and before you had half worked the mine you would have the General Election over and the Liberals in power—if you really think you can trust them," he added, with a malicious smile. One condition only Parnell made on his own part—that, in order to save the *Freeman's Journal* from destruction, I should decline the chairmanship of the new *National Press* Com-

pany to which I had been appointed without my assent, during my absence in America. I told him that, if there was peace, the new project would most likely not be persevered in, adding that in any case he might very well let the *Freeman* take care of itself. "My dear O'Brien," he said, with the humorous twinkle in his eye which always attended any excursion of his into history or poetry, "you forget what became of the Irish rebels after Humbert surrendered at Ballinamuck."

There is no need of setting forth here the conversation prolonged far into the night by which I was convinced, at least, of the sincerity of Parnell's own willingness, and still more patently that of his followers, to fall in with this arrangement. Whatever the certainty of misrepresentation from outside and of unmitigated misery of mind for myself, it was an emergency in which it would seem the grossest form of selfishness to give any heed to personal considerations if the supreme object of restoring the fortunes of the Irish cause on terms personally gratifying to Parnell could be achieved. I promised to cable the proposal immediately to Mr. Dillon and to be guided by his advice—provided always, of course, that it should prove acceptable to the majority of the party. And as soon as the cablegram had been despatched, the conversation for the rest of the night, under the influence of Parnell's amazing power of detachment, wandered away from reminiscences¹ (not at all too ill-natured) of the recent horrors to a discussion of the practical labours with which an Irish Parliament ought to occupy itself for the next thirty years, which he set forth in minute detail as composedly as if Committee Room 15 were situate in a different planet.

Mr. Redmond, in after years, charged Mr. Dillon with having been, by his action in reference to this proposal, "the man who, more perhaps than any living Irishman, was responsible for the disunion and ruin which overran the national cause."² He particularised :

¹ When somebody referred to the fact that Mr. Healy's windows in Mountjoy Square had been broken by the mob, Parnell slyly remarked, "People with glass windows ought not to throw stones."

² *Irish Daily Independent*, July 22, 1895.

When that generous proposal was made by Mr. Parnell, Mr. O'Brien cabled—and I have copies of these telegrams in my possession—Mr. O'Brien cabled to America to Mr. Dillon to ask him whether, if this proposal was carried out, and he accepted the leadership for the time being,¹ he could count on Mr. Dillon's agreement and support. The answer that came from Mr. Dillon was: "Don't consent; do nothing. I am coming back myself." And I well remember the discouragement of Mr. O'Brien when he received that cable. We thought the difficulties had been almost got over, but the moment Dillon sent that cable Mr. O'Brien was unable to go further with the negotiations. . . . If Mr. Dillon had acted differently that time, the crisis would have been brought to an end. Mr. Parnell would have retired for a short period. The misery and dissension of the last four years would never have been heard of. . . . I tell you those things in order to prove the statement that Mr. Dillon, more than any Irishman living, is responsible for the present state of dissension in the Irish race.

Allowance must be made for the recklessness of electioneering oratory; but as a matter of fact, the representation of Mr. Dillon's attitude towards my proposed election is a grossly unjust one, as the publication of the cablegrams, if Mr. Redmond really possesses copies of them, would amply attest. On receipt of my first cable, which was thus worded:

BOULOGNE, 31/12/90.

Astonishing proposal made by him. He will retire if I am appointed chairman. That is his last word. Accepts our other conditions, and promises cordial co-operation in Ireland and America. Need not say what misery this involves personally, but can see no other practical solution. Would face responsibilities if assured of your approval and hearty co-operation. Your advice will determine me.

Mr. Dillon was at first haunted, as I was myself, by the suspicion that the proposal might cover some design to embroil us with the majority of our colleagues, and in the friendliest possible terms cabled to put me on my guard against the danger; but the moment I made him aware that

¹ From beginning to end there was no suggestion of the temporary character of Parnell's retirement—"for the time being" was an invention of later days to excuse Mr. Redmond's own departure from his engagements at Boulogne—but neither of course did I make any stipulation that would imply a sentence of life-long disability against the great Irishman or deprive the country of the advantage of having his power in reserve.

"my acceptance would be conditional on assent of majority" he cabled the following generous message :

Confidential. You will have our warmest co-operation. Your name splendid effect everywhere, specially America, where such solution eagerly welcomed. Urge you before committing yourself ascertain feelings majority with view their future attitude. Be sure you are not led into impossible position. Papers already publish proposal here.

DILLON, O'CONNOR.

To which my reply was :

PARIS, 2/1/91.

Confidential. Message received with deepest satisfaction. Will keep warning in mind, but believe proposal honestly intended. Trouble possible with section bent on personal vengeance, but peace feeling is overwhelming. Do nothing pending further cable. Thank O'Connor.

The first step towards escape from the abyss seemed to have been safely taken. I was able to wire Parnell on the same day :

PARIS, 2/1/91.

Confidential. Satisfactory message from Dillon. In view of mischievous newspaper rumours would strongly urge you to authorise me to communicate with M'Carthy and Sexton. Will of course take nothing for granted, but my personal position, difficult enough already, would be intolerable if obliged to keep them in the dark.

To Archbishop Croke as well, who had written me "as your staunchest and truest friend," imploring of me to put an end to the suspense, I felt justified in making the following plea for patience on the part of all who were still willing to listen to any voice except that of headlong passion :

"PARIS, 2/1/91.

Confidential. Wrote and telegraphed Thurles. Would give worlds for chat with your Grace. Convinced you would see Dillon and I are taking only course that can possibly reunite Ireland, while satisfying England. Delay cannot be more than few weeks at furthest. Precipitancy landed us in all this sorrow. For Heaven's sake trust D. and myself¹ a little considering frightful issues at stake. Nothing will be done without assent majority.

¹ On the previous day, and before the arrival of Mr. Dillon's message, I had received a letter of fervid joy at the good news from Mr. Harrington, who was the most resolute in beating down the resistance of the more malignant spirits on his own side, and had replied : "Heartily reciprocate spirit of letter. Would risk anything short of dishonour to end horrors of dissension. All depends now on Dillon's decision and Parnell's continuance in spirit of interview."

Controversy will always find much to say on both sides as to the motives with which Parnell himself now introduced a new complication into a situation where the difficulties, perplexing as they still were, showed the first tendency towards straightening out. On the following day I received from Parnell, from the Westminster Palace Hotel, London, a letter dated January 1 (and the date is important as proof that it was not written with the view of creating new trouble after all had been made smooth by Mr. Dillon's message, for his message was not received until the day after the London letter was written), in which he said :

My conviction is, I regret to say, growing that these (our) proposals, however kindly meant towards myself personally, will neither enable you and the party to stand upon solid ground in the future, nor permit my retirement with any consistency or regard for my responsibility, while as regards the immediate object in view—viz. the securing of unity in the country and the satisfaction or appeasement of English public opinion—the result would be most doubtful—the means necessary to obtain the one almost certainly ensuring the destruction of the other object. I have, however, considered another proposal of a much more simple and workable character which, if it secures your approval and that of Mr. Justin M'Carthy, would enable me to retire, perhaps indeed without any immediate or present vindication or credit, but which would secure that, as far as is possible, what you believe are the present intentions of Mr. Gladstone and his colleagues—namely, the proposal of a satisfactory measure of Home Rule—will be actually carried out when the time comes.

The new proposal was that I should ask Mr. M'Carthy as the officially recognised chairman of the party to obtain from Mr. Gladstone a confidential memorandum engaging on behalf of his colleagues that the next Home Rule Bill would satisfy two conditions, regarded by all sections of the Irish Party as essential, viz. the conversion of the Royal Irish Constabulary into a civil force, and an undertaking either that the Irish Land question should be settled within three years by the Imperial Parliament or remitted to the Irish Legislature for settlement; "that Mr. Gladstone should transfer this memorandum to your custody, and that if after consultation between yourself and myself it should be found that its terms were satisfactory I should

forthwith announce my retirement from the chairmanship of the party." Was the new suggestion an astute obstructionist move, or the patriotic precaution of a statesman? Parnell would be the last to attitudinize as "the unshrinking martyr and confessor of the public good." It is always possible that the satisfaction he demanded was sweetened by the calculation that it might involve a certain amount of embarrassment for the Liberal leaders and for their too credulous Irish believers. Parnell was more of an idealist than most men suspected. But he was above all things a practical politician, always open to a transaction, and always keen to drive a hard bargain. It would be a rank injustice to his memory to doubt that his action in all these matters was largely dictated by a very real belief in his own mission as the only conspicuous Irishman with the requisite power and firmness to keep the group of Liberal recalcitrants in check. He was throwing away substantial immediate satisfactions in order that his retirement should have its full propitiatory effect, and at the same time taking advantage of an excellent moment for judicious pressure on the Liberal leaders in order to secure to his successors in the direction of the Irish Party solid guarantees against surprise when he was gone. Moreover, there could be little difficulty about obtaining the guarantees he asked for, unless on the supposition that the Liberal leaders were ready to see Ireland torn with civil war rather than agree to stipulations which by common Irish assent were indispensable. And on a first reading it seemed as if the new proposal dropped Parnell's objection to Mr. Justin M'Carthy's retention of the chairmanship, and so removed all pretext for demur on the part of the majority of the party.

This last hope was, however, taken away by the reply to a telegraphic inquiry addressed by me to Mr. Harrington, as the sincerest ally in Parnell's confidence we could count upon :

PARIS, 3/1/91.

Confidential. Does new proposal mean withdrawal objection to M'Carthy continuing chairman? Letter not clear on that point. If M'Carthy continues chairman, think new proposal practicable and would do best to carry into effect.

Mr. Harrington's reply was :—

DUBLIN, 3/1/91.

Proposal is subject your acceptance of chairmanship, and you alone. We are with Chief in that. He would depend on you alone to consider his feelings and consult. Your message raises my hopes. God bless your efforts.

HARRINGTON.

This intimation decided me once for all to withdraw my own conditional acceptance of Parnell's first proposal. That I should not merely be placed in the odious position of seeming to engineer my own election, but put upon Mr M'Carthy the duty of going to Hawarden with a halter round his neck to arrange for his own displacement in my favour and obtain ministerial assurances of whose sufficiency he was not even to be admitted as a judge, was a humiliation to which no man of honour in Mr. M'Carthy's position could submit, and which assuredly no consideration could induce me to impose on him. On Parnell's return to Boulogne on 6th January I told him plainly my name must be mentioned no further in connection with the chairmanship, and that if his new proposal was to be entertained at all, it must be on three conditions:—first, that Mr. Dillon's name should be substituted for my own as chairman of the reunited party; second, that I must be free to take Messrs. M'Carthy and Sexton fully into my confidence as to all that had passed; and third, that Mr. M'Carthy should be associated with Parnell and myself to pronounce upon the sufficiency of the Liberal memorandum. Thereupon ensued another day and night of heart-aching struggle in the Boulogne hotel, which threatened hour after hour to end in an irreparable rupture. Once more, he objected flatly to Mr. Dillon's nomination with such persistency that I found it necessary to break off the interview altogether and quit the room; and once more Mr. Redmond, M.P., and Mr. Clancy, M.P., took up the advocacy of peace with a zeal so resolute that after an hour or two they were able to return to me with the news that they had at last (in their own phrase) "bullied" Parnell into the acceptance of Mr. Dillon's name. My other two conditions were, without much difficulty, subsequently conceded, although one of them not until after the following

form of agreement had been drawn up as the upshot of our labours :

1. That Mr. O'Brien ask Mr. M'Carthy to obtain an interview with Mr. Gladstone and ask from the latter a memorandum—

(a) Stating whether he and his colleagues intend to deal with the Irish Land question themselves by legislation in the Imperial Parliament, or to regard this as one of the questions the power of dealing with which would be conferred upon the Irish Parliament, and if the former course is to be adopted, whether this question would be dealt with by purchase or upon the lines of the measure annually introduced by the Irish Party during this Parliament and supported by the Liberal Party.

(b) Stating whether Mr. Gladstone and his colleagues will agree to insert a provision in the next Home Rule Bill that the control of the Imperial authority over the Irish Constabulary shall cease within a definite number of years (say five), and that this force, with such modifications in its character and numbers as may be deemed necessary, shall then be transferred to the control of the Irish Executive responsible to the Irish Parliament.

(c) Stating whether Mr. Gladstone and his colleagues will consent that the solution of the questions dealt with in (a) and (b) upon the lines agreed upon shall be regarded as vital.

2. That Mr. M'Carthy should transfer this memorandum to the custody of Mr. William O'Brien, and that if Mr. Parnell and Mr. O'Brien should find from its terms that the intentions of Mr. Gladstone and his colleagues are in accordance with the views expressed in sub-sections (a), (b), and (c) thereupon.

3. A meeting of the whole party shall be called and a resolution proposed acknowledging the informality of Mr. M'Carthy's election, and that after the passage of this resolution Mr. Parnell will retire from the position of chairman, and Mr. M'Carthy from that of vice-chairman, and Mr. Dillon shall be elected chairman.

4. That the terms of Mr. Gladstone's memorandum shall not be disclosed to any persons save the persons named

in these heads of agreement until after the introduction of the Home Rule Bill, and not then unless such Bill should fail to carry out those terms; but if the Bill should be found satisfactory, Mr. Parnell should be permitted to publish the memorandum after the passage of the former into law.

It will thus be seen that Mr. Redmond participated actively in promoting the election to the chair of the man he stigmatised, in the injustice of later years, as "the man more responsible than any Irishman living for dissension" owing to his previous imaginary rejection of my own name for the office. The truth is that it was the substitution of his own name for mine, under circumstances which it was so difficult to explain by cable, which really led to an amount of resistance and distrust on Mr. Dillon's part that very nearly led to the shipwreck of all the advantages gained from Parnell's very substantial concession. It became so impossible by the agency of the cable to relieve him of the apprehension lest he should be led into a false position towards Gladstone or Mr. M'Carthy or both, that the utmost he could be brought to do was to return to France immediately himself, "reserving right in certain eventualities state publicly I never approved demanding pledges Gladstone"; but adding, "do not wish tie your hands, and if upon your own responsibility can make arrangements with M'Carthy shall not interfere."

His apprehensions turned out to be, happily, so groundless that even tied as my hands were until his arrival, I was able to obtain Messrs. M'Carthy's and Sexton's cheerful assent to our written heads of agreement, and to make certain that Messrs. Gladstone and Morley, at least, among the Liberal chiefs were ready to furnish publicly and without any conspiratorial mystery the guarantees demanded by Parnell as the price of his retirement. But these hopeful omens could not be communicated to the public until Mr. Dillon's own decision was known. Week after week had to pass in which everything seemed to be at a standstill, to the general bewilderment, and with such an effect upon the irritated nerves of the combatants on both sides that my appeals for patience and a continuance of the armistice only succeeded in turning their united irritation against myself.

It was all perfectly natural. If it were possible for me to go to Ireland and let the country know how near we were to an agreement, the feeling would have been one of such overpowering relief that no combination of malicious influences could have tempted the people to grudge the time necessary for the happy completion of the negotiations. But fate decreed not merely an enforced absence but an enforced silence. To the average simplist mind, the issue was as plain as between black and white, and the admission of a third view that Parnell's opponents were as fatally wrong in their way of fighting him as he was in pushing his private quarrel to the destruction of the Liberal alliance seemed an intellectual subtlety springing from soft-heartedness if not weakness. Men who had no vision of the long years the country was destined to pass through without any decisive advantage for either of the rival forces chafed against every day and hour that detained them from the fray, which, with all the tragic self-deception of Napoleon on the morning of Waterloo, they were led to believe would be *une affaire de déjeuner*. The programme "strike home, strike hard, and strike often" was one I had practised with so little hesitation myself throughout eighteen years of unsparring warfare with landlordism and Dublin Castle that many honest folk did not all at once understand why it should not be equally politic and heroic when turned against an illustrious Irish leader for the prosecution of a civil war against at least one-third of the most fearless Nationalists of Ireland. This impatience of the honest general public was daily worked up to fury by the powerful new anti-National or anti-Parliamentarian forces which were fast obtaining the mastery in both camps, and which any friendly compromise would reduce once more to insignificance. The speeches and leading articles on both sides were equally unscrupulous in turning my silence to their own account. With every rumour of peace from Boulogne there came a taunting shout of "Parnell's capitulation" from the anti-Parnellite organs, and of "O'Brien's surrender to Parnell's leadership" from the Parnellites: every rumour of a breakdown was hailed with insolent exultation by the prophets of evil in both camps. And pending Mr. Dillon's arrival, there was

absolutely no remedy beyond a warning through Reuter that "I am responsible for nothing except my published declarations," and an intimation that "if all sides approach controversy in spirit of Mr. Morley's speech at Newcastle (on his way to Hawarden) it is still perfectly possible to save the country."¹

A few days after, I was forced to take action in the case of the *Insuppressible*, published in my name by the anti-Parnellites in Dublin after the seizure of *United Ireland*. Throughout the Boulogne peace negotiations, this paper, under whose title "WILLIAM O'BRIEN'S PAPER" was printed in giant characters, daily contained writings deeply inimical to the interests of peace—"Too much Boulogning"—"Time is up!"—"No more white-flagging!" being among the least spicy headings of the leading articles it contributed under my own name to the delicate deliberations on which the peace of Ireland for ten years depended. When the publishers went one step further to force my hand, and sent me a requisition to make myself publicly responsible for the paper, I was put to the pain of making the following reply to the editor, who was one of my most devoted friends, and had not himself written any of the offending stuff:

Boulogne, 22/1/91.

Letter received pressing me to make myself responsible for the continued publication of *Insuppressible*. As you are aware, my cablegram from America only authorized the continued publication of *United Ireland*, and that on lines distinctly laid down in my cabled instructions. You are aware also that once I became acquainted with the tone and contents of *Insuppressible* I have only been restrained by motives of national policy from at once dissociating myself publicly from any responsibility for its writings. Since I am now pressed to assume such responsibility I regret to be

¹ My correspondence by post and telegraph during these weeks would form an amusing picture of the varied tribulations of the peacemaker. One day I had to wire the editor of the *Freeman* that the exasperating tone of his evening edition (edited by one of the most virulent enemies of peace) in trying to turn the truce to partisan advantage would, if persisted in, make a public protest on my part inevitable; to which there came the prompt reply:

"DUBLIN, 13/1/91.

"Just back. Your telegram immensely strengthens my hands. Depend upon our absolute peacefulness, notwithstanding gross exasperation from H. and B. Have finally muzzled M. [the editor of evening paper]. Fully appreciate delicacy of situation.

BYRNE."

obliged, for reasons which it would serve no useful purpose to dwell upon at this moment, to request that my name shall not be further used by the publishers of *Insuppressible*.

Perspicacious critics on both sides took it into their wise heads that at a moment when I had put aside in favour of another Parnell's offer to me of the chairmanship of the party, and resisted at the same time Mr. Healy's pressure to accept the chairmanship of the *National Press* Company, I was all the time intriguing busily at Boulogne in the interest of my own selfish ambitions. By another of life's little ironies, one who more ardently than any of my colleagues and to the derision of some of them had ever privately and publicly insisted upon the legitimate influence of the clergy as the oxygen of the Irish air, was now supposed to be the centre of some rabid anti-clerical conspiracy, and was in consequence pursued in powerful quarters with a bitterness of indignation which has not even yet spent its force. Two of the most powerful of the Nationalist prelates were fully alive to the impolicy, ecclesiastically as well as nationally, of the cry for no quarter to Parnell, but even one of these, a few days after Mr. Dillon's arrival from America, wrote us that "public indignation was rising" against us, and that "strange as it might seem, confidence in us might easily be lost"—as if, indeed, anybody versed in the story of conspicuous Irishmen needed to be reminded how near the Tarpeian Rock is to the Triumphal Capitol. Whatever could be done to remove the hallucinations as to an anti-clerical plot was done, but without much effect, by constant confidential communications with Archbishop Croke.

There are two men as to whom I have sometimes doubted whether a more patiently assiduous ambassador might not have been more successful—Mr. Davitt and Mr. Healy. I was hampered in their case by the seal of secrecy which confined my confidences to Messrs. M'Carthy and Sexton, as well as by the perhaps too hasty conviction that, owing to quarrels of older date with Parnell, their hostility was not to be disarmed. Mr. Davitt stood aloof with some disdain from negotiations for a peace which he regarded as already won by force of arms—with how much reason may be inferred from the fact that a few months afterwards he

found reason to quit the country disheartened and disgusted. Mr. Healy did indeed visit me in Paris, but as it was with the object of forcing me to make an immediate choice as to the chairmanship of the *National Press*, which was one of my most valuable means of pressure upon Parnell, I did not perhaps take the pains which our old and still unbroken personal friendship would have warranted to press upon him my own view of the situation. But to Mr. Chance, M.P., who was in Mr. Healy's intimate confidence, I wired at an early stage: "For goodness' sake beg our friends have a little patience and a little confidence that Dillon and myself are not altogether fools," and to the editor of the *Insuppressible* I wired (12/1/91) begging him to "tell Healy nothing will be done without assent majority. Given good faith and forbearance both sides, and all promises well. If bad faith, no ground lost." If there was any defect of patience on my part in dealing with Mr. Davitt and Mr. Healy, it must be added that Parnell himself on more critical occasions than one showed as slight a regard for the susceptibilities of both these men as Gladstone did when he left Mr. Chamberlain dependent upon a paragraph in the *Leeds Mercury* for the news that he had made up his mind for Home Rule. While the Parnellites were embittered by the cry, which smells rank of the brutalities of the hour, that "Parnell was hanged in Kilkenny and was cut down at Boulogne," it was necessary at the same time to keep up a constant fire of protests to Parnell and his friends against the unscrupulous injustice with which they represented the delays at Boulogne as a hint that I had forsworn my American declaration against Parnell's leadership.

Still more mischievous was the activity of the English Party Press. Blind to the fact that it was the cry of "English dictation" which gave Parnell his firm hold on tens of thousands of the best Nationalists of Ireland, the Liberal organs almost daily gave fresh strength and justification to the cry in such wise diagnoses of the situation as the following: "Mr. O'Brien has no authority to speak for any one except himself. To make a compromise is beyond his power, even if Mr. Parnell were willing to accept any terms more plausible than the unconditional surrender of his foes"

(*Daily News*, January 1, 1891). "It is to be regretted that these conferences should be continued any further. They can only tend to disquiet the public mind with a sense of uncertainty where no real uncertainty exists. Mr. Parnell has ceased to be the Dictator of Ireland, and there is an end of the matter" (*Daily News*, January 2). "Mr. Healy and Mr. Barry, two of Mr. Parnell's staunchest and most courageous opponents, are now in France. They will be able to tell Mr. O'Brien in plain language that the Irish Parliamentary Party will make no terms, and enter into no compromise with their late chief. If Mr. O'Brien chooses to make an arrangement with Mr. Parnell on his own account, he must fully understand that he commits only himself" (*Daily News*, January 6). "It was announced yesterday with a plausible show of official confirmation that a compromise involving Mr. Justin M'Carthy's resignation and the substitution of a successor chosen by Mr. Parnell has been or was about to be arranged between the negotiators. It never seems to have struck Mr. O'Brien how any 'compromise' he may come to is to be put in force. Mr. O'Brien has no more authority to propose or accept the resignation of Mr. M'Carthy than to undertake the abdication of the Queen" (*Daily News*, January 8). "A few more services of this kind to the Coercionists and Mr. O'Brien may return to Ireland without the slightest danger of being locked up by Mr. Balfour" (*Daily News*, January 12). "The policy of the pocket-handkerchief has ended in what we may call a programme of the pocket, Mr. O'Brien has wept, but Mr. Parnell has won. He is willing to pay over some money to new Tipperary, but on the other hand he has pocketed Mr. O'Brien, and the use to which he proposes to place this new occupant of his pocket is to stultify the patriots by persuading them to depose their leader, etc." (*Pall Mall Gazette*, January 8). On January 10 Mr. Stead's paper actually published an interview from "a leading member intimately associated with Mr. Dillon in New York" (who could only be Mr. T. P. O'Connor) in which it was stated that "there is an absolute certainty that Mr. Dillon disapproves in the strongest possible way of the attitude assumed by Mr. O'Brien," whom Mr. Dillon and Mr. T. P. O'Connor had

themselves sent to France with a paper of proposals drafted by the three of them in concert. Finally the *Pall Mall* on February 12 chortled over the breakdown of the peace negotiations, which Mr. Stead finely described as "an abortive harlequinade" in an article headed: "As you were—minus O'Brien and Dillon." The present narrative will enable the reader to appreciate the sagacity of these light-hearted estimates of a quarrel which was for ten years to divide almost every household in Ireland and condemn the Liberal Party to fifteen years of barrenness. Nor was the Unionist Press to be put down in prescience or in delicacy in the affairs of nations. The following was the *Daily Telegraph's* genial and truthful account of the first interview in Boulogne: "The very last subject broached was that of Mr. Parnell's retirement from the leadership. On the main point Mr. O'Brien almost entirely submitted to Mr. Parnell's judgment, and desired nothing better than to be guided by Mr. Parnell's counsel," and so on. And all this was duly copied into "WILLIAM O'BRIEN'S PAPER" in Dublin as confidently as though it were an extract from the Gospels!

CHAPTER III

LOST BY A NECK

E pùre si muove! In spite of an infinitude of obstacles, our little world, like Galileo's, went its way. The hard fact remained that Messrs. M'Carthy and Sexton, as representatives of the Majority Party, and all Parnell's principal lieutenants on the other side stood pledged to our agreement, and it could not be doubted that the Irish people, in overpowering strength, would approve, the moment its terms came to their knowledge. By the time Mr. Dillon reached France I was able to announce that the Liberal leaders had been prevailed upon to furnish us with a memorandum embodying in substance and in truth the guarantees Parnell held out for. The following is the memorandum which was a few days later put in our hands, and did the Boulogne negotiations bear no other fruit, it will constitute an historic clause in the charter of Ireland's national rights.

POLICE

Mr. Gladstone expressly said, in introducing the Home Rule Bill in 1886, that he and his colleagues "had no desire to exempt the police of Ireland in its final form from the ultimate control of the Irish Legislative body." The complete organization of a civil police by the Irish Government to take the place of the present armed and semi-military force ought not to require more than a moderate amount of time (say five years *or less*). During that interval the present armed police, under the control of the Lord-Lieutenant, would undergo a rapid reduction or transformation (subject, of course, to a strict observance of all engagements made by the Imperial Government with the R.I.C.), and would on the completion of the arrangement for a civil force finally disappear.

LAND

It would be obviously inconsistent with the concession of Home Rule to Ireland that the power to deal with the laws relating to land in Ireland should be permanently confined to the Imperial Parliament. It will have to be exercised simultaneously with the establishment of Home Rule, or within a limited period thereafter to be specified in the Home Rule Bill, or the power to deal with it must be committed to the local legislature.

We have seen the injustice of the accusation that it was a jealousy of my name on Mr. Dillon's part which prevented Parnell's retirement from being happily effected ; neither then nor for at least five years afterwards was the friendship between us ever for a moment clouded, save by those occasional differences as to tactics which are unavoidable in a time of universal upheaval of all the old standpoints. But there is undeniably one grain of historic truth in Mr. Redmond's assertion that it was Mr. Dillon who—by one of those fatalities which appear to be our special patrimony in Ireland—was the means of breaking off the Boulogne negotiations. It happened all unconsciously on his part and at a moment when Parnell's cordial assent to Mr. Dillon's taking his place at the head of the party had been brought to the point at which scarcely anything remained except the public announcement of the result. Up to the present the public mind has remained in an impenetrable haze with respect to the cause of the final rupture. In his final letter in excuse for his failure to carry out his promise to join us at Boulogne, if there should be any breakdown, Mr. Redmond made this remark, 9/2/91 :

I am afraid John's interview with P. at Calais had a *very bad effect* and accounts for much of recent events. Ever since P. has been saying if *you* were to be the leader, as he originally strongly urged, the difficulties would be very small. I wish to God this could be so. I well know John would not be the one to object.

In a letter dated "10th February 1891" at the same juncture, Mr. Harrington, M.P., who, with Mr. Redmond, had been attending a final gathering of Parnell's friends in London, after mentioning the nominal grounds on which Parnell proposed to break off, wrote :

However, we had no difficulty in inducing Parnell to put the thing before you directly again. His confidence in you is as strong as ever, but something must have gone very wrong at Calais. I think John said something to him about the funds in Paris which wounded him terribly . . . yet with all this I don't believe he is even yet averse to a settlement himself, if it was a matter of dealing with you.

There is no longer any reason why what "went wrong at Calais" should not now be dispassionately narrated. By one of those exhausting night journeys, without sleep or regular food, which destroyed whatever remained of Parnell's fragile health, he travelled for two nights from Ennis in order to discuss with me at Calais the memorandum of the Liberal leaders. He arrived in a state of high nervous annoyance at a mischievous account in the *Daily News* of that morning, that I had accepted the Liberal assurances behind his back and that Parnell was already practically disposed of as a factor in the Irish situation. He threw the newspaper cutting on the table. "That is how your colleagues of the majority observe a bargain!" he said, with that rushing swish of words through his teeth that, in the present tragic circumstances, worn as he was with fatigue of body and mind, produced a weirdly fierce effect. "My dear Parnell," I said, "is it the first proof you and I have had that the dearest hope of your enemies is to gall you into making peace impossible?" "Yes," he said, "I dare say they would be all very happy if we two fell out," and he settled down to his modest supper with restored good-humour.

When we came to discuss the Liberal memorandum, he suggested two or three amendments, including a promise that the cessation of the armed Constabulary would be brought about by a provision of the Home Rule Bill and not merely by a disuse of the existing statutory powers, which a future Tory Government might revive, and the omission of the provision continuing the Irish representation unimpaired during the period specified in case the alternative of reserving power to deal with the Land question to the Imperial Parliament for a specified period was adopted. But although the latter suggestion had an ugly look of opening up an acutely contentious problem for the Liberals, obviously he

was rather exerting his ingenuity in showing that the *Daily News* had not been very serviceable to its party in leaving him out of calculation, than disputing that his requirements on the Land and Police questions had been substantially complied with. Were all else in satisfactory train, it seemed impossible that a solution should not be found for the reservations now suggested. Mr. Dillon and myself had arranged that he should remain in Boulogne until I should be in a position to judge whether or not Parnell would welcome an interview with him. As the night progressed Parnell discussed his own retirement as a practically accomplished fact, and was so full of cordial goodwill and counsel as to all that was to follow, that I had no difficulty about suggesting: "Don't you think it would be better to chat all these things over with Dillon himself, who is at Boulogne?" "I should be delighted to see Dillon, if he can drop over," was the ready response, and upon my telegram Mr. Dillon arrived in Calais by the first train the next morning.

The meeting between the two men was unaffectedly kind on both sides, and was worthy of an historic occasion. The question of Parnell's retirement from the chairmanship of the party was no longer debated. It was regarded as already settled. He even put aside our renewed suggestion that he should remain chairman of the National League, with every circumstance of honour. "No," he said, "there would be no use in a divided empire. I must trust to the passing of a good Bill for whatever credit those who come after us are likely to give me." Besides, he mentioned that he had arranged to spend a couple of years' holiday in the United States. He said he had an old intellectual as well as family interest in American institutions and industries, and had never been able to study either in the hurry-scurry of political missions. "Politics," he said, "is the only thing in America that is not interesting to me." Our conversation turned upon the arrangements for the meeting of the reunited party, at which he anticipated no difficulty as to Mr. Dillon's election to the chair. If my memory serves me rightly, he even dropped his request for a resolution acknowledging the informality of Mr. M'Carthy's election. He gave Mr. Dillon much detailed advice as to the future management of the

party. He especially cautioned him against having a committee associated with him in the management—a piece of advice whose shrewdness we had reason to appreciate for many a bitter year to come. “Get the advice of everybody whose advice is worth having—they are very few,” he said, “and then do what you think best yourself. Nobody will object except those who are good for nothing else.” As to future relations with the Liberals, his observation was: “You will be in a position to make your own terms, Dillon. Use your power and the Old Man will be rather obliged to you. It will only be a question in which direction he is pressed the hardest—by Harcourt or by Ireland.”

We then discussed the future administration of “the Paris Funds,” a sum of over £50,000 lodged with Messrs. Monroe, the American bankers in Paris, in the joint names of Messrs. Parnell, M’Carthy, and Kenny. We suggested that the funds should be transferred to the joint credit of Mr. Dillon as chairman of the party, Mr. Parnell, and Mr. M’Carthy. Parnell objected that this would amount to throwing over Dr. Kenny. “Don’t you think, Dillon,” he said, “it will answer all purposes if the funds are placed in your name and mine?” “Yes, indeed,” was Mr. Dillon’s amazing reply, “yes, indeed, and the first time I am in a fix leave me without a pound to pay the men!”

Parnell started and grew pale as if a pistol had been fired into his face. It was one of those unaccountable ebullitions of maladroitness and coarseness of expression which, at three or four critical moments in Mr. Dillon’s career, have marred the effects of years of well-directed eloquence and admirable good sense. The observation was possibly only meant for a rough pleasantry; but, spoken as it was in a tone of some acerbity, as of one who had discovered an opponent in an unworthy trick, and addressed to a proud man in the moment of his life most trying to strained nerves, and on a point of honour the most sensitive that could be touched, the effect was indescribable and was irreparable.

Parnell rose to his feet, white with passion. “Dillon,” he said, with that power of his to produce the effect of ice and of fire at the same moment; “Dillon, that is not the

kind of expression I had a right to expect from you after the way I have behaved to you." He said nothing more on the point. We strove desperately to restore the happy current of the conversation by various conciliatory suggestions. He himself quickly recovered his coolness, and resumed a courteous but henceforth carefully reserved part in the conversation during the interminable half-hour before the boat for Dover was to start; reverting now obstinately to the points in which he had found the Liberal memorandum defective. But we all spoke with the unreality of physicians prescribing for a patient who had already expired under our eyes. I accompanied Parnell to the gangway of the Dover boat, and pressed on him to dismiss the incident from his mind, gently reminding him that it was a moment when the nerves of all of us were agitated, and that he must make some allowance for the cruel anxieties with which Mr. Dillon must look forward to his responsibilities as his successor. Parnell was perfectly calm, but wore an air which there was no misreading. "O'Brien," he said, as we shook hands, "you have all but achieved the impossible. You and I could have done anything, but what are you to do with a man like that?"

We went on with our efforts to get the necessary emendations made by the Liberal leaders, but it was now with all but a certainty that any difficulties in that direction would only be used as pretexts for a rupture of the peace negotiations. When the reply came from the Liberal leaders that "they will not alter a comma," we could not quarrel with their decision, however unwisely it was phrased. Our last hope of bringing sufficient pressure to bear on Parnell not to throw away what we knew to be his own last chance, as well as Ireland's, was to bring over Messrs. Redmond and Harrington and their friends to Boulogne to carry out their promise of being with us to the last as they had been from the first in bringing Parnell to reason. As to the solemnity of their promise there could be no equivocation. "Do anything which does not involve Parnell's humiliation," wrote Mr. Harrington, M.P., 27/12/90, "and we will be with you to a man." "If it comes to that point," wrote Mr. V. B. Dillon, 8/1/91, "do not come to

any conclusion without having Redmond, Kenny, Harrington, and Clancy with you at Boulogne. I cannot conceive a state of things arising which would place these men now in antagonism to you and John." On the very eve of the Calais meeting, Mr. Redmond, M.P., wired me :

P. entirely agrees. He goes London to-night. Meets Gill there to-morrow. He will write you. Have no anxiety about *bona fides*.

It is equally certain that all these gentlemen believed with all their hearts that our agreement was the only escape from ruin either for Parnell or for Ireland, and attached no serious importance to the points of objection he raised to the Liberal Memorandum, except as means of smoothing his way to the sacrifice involved in his retirement. In a letter of February 5 from Mr. Redmond, begging me to "use all my influence" to have the Liberal assurances strengthened in a way that would gratify Parnell, he added :

And I say this as one who is *quite as anxious* for the settlement as you are yourself. I think the last suggestion P. has made might fairly be accepted. . . . There is not much difference between this and the proviso in the Memorandum. Of course I can quite understand a feeling of impatience on the part of G. and his friends, and God knows *you* have special reasons for impatience, but so much is at stake and we have approached so near an agreement that it would be horrible if a breakdown came now. All the influence that Harrington, Clancy, and I possess is being used in season and out of season in the right direction, . . . but there are other influences among his friends besides ours, as you must know, and I must earnestly beg of you to leave no stone unturned to bring about the small further concession which is now needed to put us all right. . . . I need scarcely tell you that you may count on my continued assistance, whatever it is worth.

But it was just because Parnell knew this¹ that, having now made up his mind not to give way to Mr. Dillon, he determined to prevent his chief supporters from returning to Boulogne by summoning a general meeting of his Parliamentary followers and coming to a resolution which would close their mouths. This meeting of the Parnellite Party was held in London a few days before Parnell announced

¹ In one of our interviews in Boulogne, I remarked to him : "Surely you know that every friend you have worth speaking of is in favour of this agreement going through." He replied, with some vexation : "Yes, my own friends are my greatest weakness."

the breaking off of the negotiations for peace. The temper in which his principal supporters approached it is luminously evident from a letter of Mr. V. B. Dillon, 6/2/91 :

Redmond and Harrington go to London to-night, and go, I assure you, not to allow as far as they can any matter of form or any alteration from the original proposals as agreed to by you and John to be made. Indeed I do not think that Parnell means to make any, but as I told you all along he won't have these men or his other best friends with him. I quite understand the position, I think, and I am sure I quite know these men's minds. . . . Indeed so well do I know how thoroughly they are with you and John that I might almost say they would not go one inch beyond what you and he would consider reasonable.

It will not be denied that Parnell's Parliamentary followers at the London meeting, with one inappreciable exception, were in their minds and consciences ardent for the loyal execution of the Boulogne agreement, and that if men of the stamp of Messrs. Redmond, Harrington, Clancy, Kenny, and Leamy—the brains-carriers and debaters of his following—had the moral courage, in mercy to their beloved leader as well as to their country, to press their own convictions upon him as stoutly as they had done in the two Boulogne interviews, the result would have been equally satisfactory. Had they even proposed to adjourn the final decision until they had paid us their promised visit in Boulogne and possessed themselves of our reply to the fantastic points as to the Liberal Memorandum to which Parnell now wholly directed himself, there can be little doubt that the strength of feeling among his own followers would eventually have decided Parnell to pass a sponge over the unlucky interlude at Calais. If they shrank from a candour which at such an hour might have been stigmatized as desertion, it is easy to understand how obediently Parnell's passionate appeal against the supposed equivocations of his Liberal assailants was listened to by the rank and file of his followers, who were unacquainted with the details of the Boulogne negotiations, for whom the taunts of the Liberal newspapers only too strongly corroborated insinuations of Liberal treachery to Home Rule, and who saw little except ruin and implacable hate for their leader and

themselves in the indecent exultation with which the men of power in the opposite camp celebrated the prospect of Parnell's "surrender."

At all events Parnell's followers with heavy hearts accepted his decision, and our requests to Messrs. Redmond and Harrington to rejoin us, as promised in Boulogne, only led to letters in which it was painfully plain that it was their hard destiny, and not their own desire, that was at fault.

"I am sorry to say," Mr. Redmond wrote, "my power for good and that of Harrington, Clancy, etc., has been enormously lessened if not destroyed by the statements in the Press, especially those made yesterday by 'An anti-Parnellite Member who was at Boulogne,' that we are determined to join M'Carthy, and that you and Dillon have informed G. that you are satisfied with the assurances as already given. As to the matter of the permanent retention of the members, I don't think this will stand in the way. I can't go over to Boulogne, and if I did I could not add anything. I am doing my best, but as I say I fear my influence is less than ever. I must return to Ireland, where my poor mother is lying hovering between life and death. God grant you may succeed in your work in the end."

And in a postscript he adds the passage already printed as to the effect of "John's interview with P. at Calais."

Mr. Harrington, in a letter full of noble and patriotic feeling, wrote (10th February 1891):

I returned from London in so gloomy a frame of mind on Saturday evening that I found myself unable to write to you on Sunday, and I hoped yesterday might bring us some news and some hope. I had every reason to expect that our arrangement would have been completed last week. Here in Ireland Parnell was in an excellent frame of mind. He spoke freely of all the arrangements Dillon ought to make when he was chairman, and seemed to have his own plans fully arranged upon that basis. But when on Gill's and Clancy's summons we went over to meet him in London on Saturday we found the whole situation changed.

And then followed the reference above given to "something John said to him about the Funds in Paris."

Now a' is done that man can do,
And a' is done in vain!

These lines from Burns' "Rightfu' King" went constantly humming through my brain during our last day in Boulogne. Our first step towards liberty of action or

communication with either our Parliamentary colleagues or our countrymen was to purge the sentence of six months' imprisonment that stood against Mr. Dillon and myself. We gave to the Press declarations in almost identical terms, making no reference to the trivialities on which Parnell nominally broke off negotiations, but claiming without hesitation that (in the words of my own declaration):

"It will not be seriously questioned by any of the parties to these consultations that upon the main points contended for on both sides a substantial agreement was established," which would have both convinced the British people of Irish friendliness and good faith and satisfied the national self-respect of Ireland, and was only shipwrecked at the last moment by verbal contests, "which a little more magnanimity and less suspiciousness on both sides might have prevented, and which offered a shockingly inadequate excuse for committing the country to the struggle now before her."

Mr. Dillon added for himself:

I arrived at Havre on Jan. 18, and after a most full and careful consideration of the entire situation in Ireland, Mr. O'Brien and myself found ourselves in the most perfect accord as to the facts of that situation. . . . Events have since fully borne out the truth of Mr. O'Brien's views, for in the course of the negotiations which have been carried on in Boulogne it has been clearly proved that an arrangement such as he contemplated, viz. one which would, with the hearty assent of all parties in Ireland, restore peace and unity to the national ranks, while at the same time securing the Liberal alliance and success at the General Election, was perfectly possible. . . . Those who either from ignorance or from malice have sneered at and obstructed our efforts will before long realize the full extent of their responsibilities.

By the first boat the next morning we crossed to Folkestone on the way to our prison in Ireland, and in beds hastily improvised for us in the New Scotland Yard offices that night enjoyed the first sound sleep which had visited our pillows for a good many weeks.¹

¹ The following private letters, the last which ever passed between Parnell and myself, will sufficiently indicate the spirit in which we parted. My letter accompanied a business one disabusing him of some delusion he had conceived as to "new proposals and demands of the Liberal leaders":

"BOULOGNE, 8th Feb. 1891.

"MY DEAR PARNELL—I presume the last word has now been said on these unhappy efforts of mine for peace, and I only write this (also in the strictest

confidence) to tell you what a woful thing it seems to me that if you were to break off the matter at all it should be under the influence of a misunderstanding for which there is not the smallest shred or shadow of foundation. So far from in any manner allowing myself to be made a party to humiliating you, you must know well that I have freely exposed myself to calumny and sacrificed any influence I possessed in the determination to preserve you from any personal humiliation, and it is because my desire on that point continues to be as strong as ever to this moment that it seems to me so unspeakably sad and tragic that you should gratify your enemies by throwing away what is the last chance of saving all of us from the horrible struggle now before the country.—Sincerely yours,

“WILLIAM O'BRIEN.”

“Private.”

“HOUSE OF COMMONS,
“LONDON, *Feb.* 11, 1891.

“MY DEAR O'BRIEN—In addition to the longer letter which I sent for publication, I desire to write to you a few words expressing how deeply I feel the kindness and gentleness of spirit which you have shown to me throughout these negotiations. I have felt all along that I had no right to expect from anybody the constant anxiety to meet my views or the intense desire that all proposals claiming your sanction should be as palatable as possible to me, which have so distinguished your conduct of the communications between us. I know you have forgiven much roughness and asperity on my part and have made allowance for some unreasonable conduct from me, which to anybody gifted with less patience and conciliation than yourself would have been most difficult. I appreciate intensely the difficulties which have surrounded you in these negotiations, the constant and daily anxiety of which would have been overwhelming to anybody of less courage and devotion than yourself, and I fervently hope and believe that the prospects of Ireland are not as dark as you fear, and that, after a little time, having passed through these clouds and darkness, we may once again stand upon our former footing when in happier days we were comrades in arms on behalf of a united Ireland.—My dear O'Brien, always yours,

“CHAS. S. PARNELL.”

CHAPTER IV

CHAOS COME AGAIN

WERE Mr. Dillon and I right in actively taking sides on quitting Galway Jail, or should we have done more wisely in preserving still to the country the only approach to a dispassionate tribunal left, to whose good offices the best men on both sides, weary of the savage conflict, might some day have recourse? The course we took was one in which I, with many misgivings, subordinated my own judgment to Mr. Dillon's, but the only other alternative—namely, that we should take different roads—would have been assuredly the worst evil of the three.

On the evening before our release, we found the means of meeting to discuss with the fullest freedom what was to be done.¹ Indirect communications which reached me from time to time during the six months of our imprisonment had led me to believe that Mr. Dillon had been rather confirmed by the course of events in the view he intimated to me from New York, that the only choice left to us was retirement from the contest, if it could only be conducted by methods we detested, and I was somewhat surprised to find when we met that he had already made up his mind to declare unconditionally for the anti-Parnellites. He had been much impressed by the electoral defeats of the Parnellites, especially at the recent Carlow election, as proof that Irish public opinion had rallied to our own view as to the impossibility

¹ Ever since our success in 1888 in tearing Mr. Balfour's first ferocious prison rules to shreds and establishing our status as political prisoners, our prison severities had been much relaxed, and Mr. Michael Murphy, the Governor of Galway Prison, exercised his dispensing powers with the affectionate tenderness of a father and a friend. It is one of the queer paradoxes of English rule in Ireland that long after the governor had been struck with paralysis and quitted the service, his life was preserved for a number of years solely by his devouring interest in the national cause and in the fortunes of his old prisoner.

of Parnell's leadership with a strength which it was a duty on our part to respect and support. He was also greatly struck with a message which had reached me¹ that young Mr. Gray, who had damaged the fortunes of the *Freeman* with boyish recklessness in the Parnell interest, was now willing to be guided by our views in the conduct of his great journal, and with the further fact that Mr. Redmond and others of Mr. Parnell's most influential lieutenants had of late abstained from any activity in a losing cause. Another consideration which seemed to weigh heavily with him was the more or less menacing messages that had been conveyed to both of us that some of our fastest friends and fighting men in the Plan of Campaign struggle were bitterly incensed against us,² and would place the entire responsibility for the future of the evicted tenants on our shoulders if, on our release, we should hesitate actively to take their side. He pointed out with much force that the support of such men in the party would give us sufficient influence to convert the struggle from its present barbarous aspect to decent and civilized methods, while their hostility, the inevitable misconception of our attitude by the Bishops, and the shameful injustice with which the Parnellites were already claiming us as their partisans, would deprive us of all power to soften ill-feeling on either side, and would make the collection of any further funds for the evicted tenants impossible.

I acknowledged all the force of these considerations. We had no choice unless between the less bad and the worst. But I urged that the Sligo and Carlow elections had proved nothing except what we foresaw without any difficulty from the first: that in the great majority of the county constituencies Parnell was bound to be overwhelmingly beaten; and that these results in no way changed the fact that enormous

¹ The late Mr. E. H. Ennis, Under Secretary for Ireland, who was then a leader-writer on the *Freeman*, obtained an interview with me in Galway Jail, in which he informed me that young Mr. Gray, whose first errors of judgment, on his return from Australia to the whirlpool of Dublin politics, were excusable enough, had been quite converted to our view, and was only deferring publicly saying so until he saw what line we took on our release, and how far we might be able to secure fair play for the *Freeman* from the more embittered of our colleagues who had the *National Press* already in the field as its rival.

² He named especially three of the members of Parliament who have since most giddily distinguished themselves in the revolt against the policy of Conciliation.

masses of the electors' sons, as well as of the staunchest militant Nationalists of the old wars, stood as firmly as ever behind Parnell—indeed, all the more firmly and bitterly for these defeats. The message from Mr. Gray, I pointed out, opened up an avenue to the gradual reconciliation of the Parnellites, through the journal which was their only organ, to a policy of appeasement in the National ranks, and we had every reason to believe that the abstention of Mr. Redmond and his friends from the recent Parnellite manifestations was rather a proof that they were holding themselves in reserve to co-operate with us, as they had done in Boulogne, should we renew our exertions for peace on our release. If we were even to confine our action to the interests of the evicted tenants, we should be in a position as non-partisans to claim the Paris Funds from both sides as their indefeasible property, as the nation's common care, while if we rushed at once into the thick of the political mêlée it was certain the Paris Funds would no longer be within reach, and the necessity for raising a national contribution for the maintenance of the majority party, who were without funds, would leave the evicted tenants without any other source of escape from ruin and starvation. Neither of us for a moment contemplated any retreat from the position that Parnell's continued leadership, or the repudiation of the Liberal alliance, was impossible; but the party and the country had already proved their good faith to their English allies by as severe a strain as ever a high-spirited nation had gone through; and it was time, in the interest of the Liberals as well as of Ireland, to consider whether both factions, already sufficiently wearied and horrified by their experiences of the past six months, might not be willing enough to listen now to counsels of friendliness, if we did not throw away the last chance by plunging ourselves head-foremost into the fight and making chaos worse confounded. For it was only too clear that even the impatient warriors who, on the welcome news of the Boulogne breakdown, rushed to arms as light-heartedly as Monsieur de Charette and his Chouans sang their

Prends ton fusil, Grégoire !

were already in considerable affright, even at their victories.

In fine, I urged that, unpopularity and misrepresentation from both sides being in any event inevitable, we should do more wisely for the country by incurring them in calmly awaiting the certain eventual return of good sense, than by constituting ourselves, instantly and without further information, the more or less helpless associates of men with whose ways, if not with some of whose ends, we were in profound disagreement.

But I found that it was too late to debate the matter further. Mr. Dillon had made up his mind irrevocably to speak out the next day in unconditional adherence to the anti-Parnellite cause; and he made it almost brutally clear that that would be his course, whatever line I might determine upon for myself. The all too patent fact that his decision was based almost wholly upon Parnell's electoral defeats in Sligo and Carlow was to me in the last degree repellent. Nevertheless the close friendship and harmony between Mr. Dillon and myself in all essential points of national policy was the last remnant of stability left in the universal break-up of all the country's old anchorages and landmarks. In the absence (soon to be for ever) of Parnell, he represented the only force sufficiently effective, in my view, to give much hope of the ultimate reconstitution of the shattered party. Even if I was not willing to concede that his very decided judgment might be better founded than my own, there was no alternative to bowing to it except the unthinkable one of going my own way the next day, avoiding both crowds, and declining to make any declaration to either of them. The effect would not only have been to add the last note of discord to an already horrid din, but, infallibly, to give confirmation to the misrepresentations already busily spread by the Parnellites that I had abjured our American declaration against Parnell's leadership—a misrepresentation which had not a shadow of justification beyond the fact that I had been true to the other article of the American declaration as well and refused to trample him down by foul and dishonouring means.

For good or ill, at all events, the die was cast and Mr. Dillon and I went forth to undergo the same fate together. Outside the prison gate at eight o'clock the next morning

the two parties—a group of priests and members of Parliament on the one part and the young men of Galway in full force on the other—were awaiting us, the first in a mood of subdued exultation and the others under a cloud of gloom and disappointment amidst which a gleam of the old friendliness would irresistibly break through. We were to breakfast at the Bishop's, and as we stepped into his carriage with the Administrator, a grizzled old Parnellite called out, "We're sorry to see ye in bad company, but God bless ye, anyhow." The whole of our day's experiences inspired an infinite pity for the sorrows of the distracted people and admiration for their self-restraint. After the anti-Parnellites had given vent to their relief and triumph at an indoor meeting, the Parnellites, who held the streets, would insist on presenting us with an address of personal greeting, avoiding with better than ducal good-breeding any allusion to the subject with which their hearts were sore. When we reached Dublin, the same scene was reproduced on a gigantic scale. The thin company of Dublin anti-Parnellites on the railway platform, frantic with joy, were but a drop in the sea of the Parnellite population of Dublin who overflowed the approaches to the terminus, friendly, sorrowful, silent, in that impressive self-recollections of a multitude that has ceased to cheer and has not yet commenced to hoot. On that day, and indeed on all other days throughout the civil war, the Irish people acquitted themselves better than their leaders.

That was on July 30, and within little more than two months afterwards Parnell was dead. It may or may not have been (God knoweth) by an error of ours the opportunity was lost of so humanizing and softening public feeling by abstaining from partisan interference ourselves that his death would have been the signal for the instant cessation of the strife, but there can be no dispute that that solemn event offered men of enlightenment and patriotism a still better probability and even certainty of terminating the country's tumults with honour to the dead as well as to the living. I am afraid Mr. Redmond will be scarcely acquitted of the chief responsibility for all the years of national misfortune which followed by reason of his conduct in this emergency. Throughout the Boulogne negotiations he had shown himself, in his own

phrase, as active a friend of peace as ourselves. His letters, and my own observation of his firm and even coercive attitude towards Parnell in the two interviews at Boulogne, make it clear that he recognized in our peace proposals the road of patriotism, honour, and safety, both for the great Irishman and for his country, and that (again in his own words) "in season and out of season" he had striven with all his soul to dissuade Parnell from repudiating the Boulogne agreement. That Mr. Redmond deserted us at the last moment, when one further stand might have carried the day, was a weakness for which many excuses might be found both in an excess of tenderness for a great leader and in the ungenerous provocativeness of his foes. Neither could some of us see anything but malice and insanity in the taunts of cowardly desertion of Parnell which were directed from our own side against Mr. Redmond, when he abstained from attending partisan demonstrations all through the summer in view of the possibility of a resumption of the peace negotiations on our release from prison.

But the time was now come to test his sincerity and statesmanship. He had only to say the word (it is quite certain Mr. Harrington would have gladly said it with him) to have united the country around Parnell's coffin in a spirit of generous justice to his genius, in which all recent pettinesses and injustices would have passed from notice as easily as the spots on the meridian sun. Unluckily Mr. Redmond failed wholly to rise to the opportunity of his life. In place of discovering that here was once more the national concord for which he had sighed and laboured with us—in place of nobly standing up against the hurricane of fury into which the great Irishman's dramatic fate swept all unreflecting minds, he failed to utter a word to temper that fury. He did worse, he ministered to it. He put himself at its head.

If the circumstances of Parnell's last days were such as to inspire with fathomless sorrow every one whom a clear but hateful duty had forced to oppose him, even with the most legitimate weapons, assuredly Mr. Redmond's own conscience could scarcely have been free from bitter recollections. Parnell had been for a number of years suffering from Bright's disease in a form which in 1888 brought him to

the brink of the grave, but which had subsequently been attenuated by the regimen of delicate food and strictly regularized habits which Sir Andrew Clark had laid down for him. The anxieties of a struggle in which he had to withstand odds more tremendous than met the eye of Ajax had, of course, brought the disease back in all its body-and-mind destroying force ; but the cause which precipitated his death was incontestably the series of weekly night journeys between Brighton and Ireland and back again which he undertook in the desperate effort to prolong his single-handed agitation. A man in the glow of youth could not long have borne up against the strain of that weekly Saturday and Saturday night in mail-trains and mail-boats, with speeches at every Irish railway station, and the next day a series of open-air speeches to disheartened audiences in some remote Irish village under every circumstance of discomfort as to food and lodging, followed by another night and day by rail and sea back again to Brighton.¹ The story of the last meeting he attended (it was at Creggs in the distant county of Roscommon on September 27, 1891) was one to make angels weep. Mr. Conway, M.P., one of his supporters, relates that Parnell had begged Mr. Redmond by wire and letter to accompany him to the west, and when he reached Dublin felt so ill that he sent urgent messages to Mr. Redmond and others of his chief supporters, asking them to take his place at Creggs, or at least to lessen the strain by going with him. All the messages proved unavailing, and he was obliged to take his lonely way to the west by the night mail-train in a condition of collapse of mind and body so mournful that his attempt to address the meeting the next day was one of the saddest episodes of a heart-breaking time, and on the way back he felt so lonesome and

¹ One incident of the time will illustrate the conditions of recklessness of personal comfort with which these journeys were carried out, as well as irradiate the tragedy with a gleam of Parnell's characteristic humour and equanimity. On the morning after he had travelled over to a meeting in a southern Irish city, one of his most influential old friends in the city had called to his hotel in a state of the deepest distress at the fate which placed him in the opposite camp from his chief. "Certainly, my dear fellow—I quite understand," said Parnell genially ; whereupon he suddenly added, "By the bye, Stephen, could you let me have the loan of a clean shirt?" He had travelled with a tiny handbag containing nothing but his night-dress and a comb and brushes !

sleepless that he entreated the *Freeman* reporter not to go to sleep, but to remain awake and talk to him during the night journey to Dublin.

It is intelligible that even at so pathetic a call Mr. Redmond should shrink from an active part in Parnell's forlorn campaign, although less intelligible and less excusable than his aloofness during the months while peace was still in the air; but the part he now took, when Parnell was no longer living, and when every motive of honour to his memory as well as mercy to the country ought to have prompted him to complete the national appeasement he had strenuously laboured for at Boulogne, is one for which the most compassionate critic of Mr. Redmond's career will search in vain for an excuse. Apart from the circumstances just mentioned, he was a man of too cool and settled blood to be carried away by the storm of mad indignation at Parnell's fate which turned younger heads and scorched more sensitive hearts. As long as Parnell lived there was always in the background his magic gift of leadership to justify his followers in running even the wildest risks. There was no longer that justification or any justification whatever for giving a new start and fresh venom to a strife amidst which the national cause was perishing visibly and with shame. It was to be no longer a question of Parnell's leadership but of vengeance for his wrongs; no longer a question of reuniting the country but of immolating her to his manes.

His countrymen will willingly prefer to believe that Mr. Redmond was overawed by the thunders and lightnings of popular passion which broke over the country at the news of Parnell's death rather than moved by a politician's sense of the tremendous force it placed at his own disposal, as Parnell's most capable lieutenant. He uttered no moderating word while Parnell's funeral was being worked up—largely through influences bitterly hostile to the Parnell of his golden days—into the signal-fire for an implacable war of extermination against all who (like Mr. Redmond himself) had differed with him just this once in his great life. He allowed himself to be steadily pushed to the front as the apostle of the new avenging war. Time will not soon wash out a still deeper stain. He allowed the principal

force of the popular fury to be directed against Mr. Dillon and myself, and in a country still wholly uninformed as to what had taken place in Boulogne, he, who had co-operated with all his soul in our efforts to smooth the way to Parnell's retirement—who had pressed it as hard as we upon his chief as the one sovereign means of safety for Parnell's honour as well as for the country's deliverance—who, even after he quailed at the final test of the courage of his convictions, still wrote me lamenting that I had not complied with Parnell's desire that I should accept the chairmanship myself, and prayed: "God grant you may succeed in your work in the end"—now became the principal of a band of avengers who habitually held Mr. Dillon and myself up to execration as in a special manner the "betrayers" and even "murderers" of Parnell.¹

At all events the failure of Mr. Redmond on Parnell's death to give effect (as by one courageous sentence he could have done) to the passion for peace he had manifested at Boulogne will give him in the eye of history a responsibility for the misfortunes of that unhappy time as unenviable as the ill-timed sale of his Wexford estate subsequently attached to him for the breakdown of 1903.

By a fatality common enough in the affairs of politicians

¹ On Tuesday, October 13, 1891, two days after Mr. Parnell's funeral, a manifesto was published signed by Mr. J. E. Redmond and the other members of the Parnellite Party, in which they stated:

"The great leader is dead, but the cause lives on, and, relying on your devotion to Irish nationality, we propose to carry on the struggle until the principles for which he lived and died have triumphed, and the national unity has been restored around a Parliamentary Party pledged to work for Ireland under the flag of Independent Opposition and absolutely free from the control of any foreign power or party. . . . With the men immediately responsible for the disruption of the National Party, who in obedience to foreign dictation have loaded with calumny and hounded to death the foremost man of our race, we can have no fellowship, and in their guidance Ireland can have no safety. Between them and the men who stood true to the cause of national independence Ireland must choose."

Mr. John Redmond, presiding at the meeting of the National League on October 20, 1891, said:

"How could they (the Parnellite Party) with any sense of self-respect enter into political relations with these men—he did not care to mention names, but those whom the cap fitted might wear it—those men who for the past nine months had degraded and disgraced the public life of Ireland by the use of methods which could not be justified by any rule of honour or even of expediency? As for the others, what offer or hope of a basis of union with them existed? It was arrant hypocrisy for some of these men to talk about peace."

who strive to be something besides politicians, Mr. Dillon and I now found ourselves the objects of a double assault from front and rear—from the anti-Parnellite Parliamentarians for our endeavour to save Parnell, and from the Parnellite War Party for having “betrayed” and “murdered” him. Not only did the combination not surprise us, but we had little difficulty in confronting and getting the better of both bodies of assailants with the comfortable consciousness that the interests and good sense of the country stood outside the one factious camp and the other. Within our own party the situation was complex and indeed all but inextricable. Messrs. Justin M’Carthy and Sexton were still, as they had been at Boulogne, on the side of moderation and conciliation, but Mr. Sexton’s temperament made him an unstable force in hours of action, and although Mr. Justin M’Carthy had the courage of a lion as well as a personal charm beyond compare, the very sweetness of his qualities made it as unreasonable to look to him to cope as a leader with a divided Liberal Party in addition to a divided Ireland, as it would be to expect a flower-bed to do the duty of a battery of artillery. Mr. Dillon, then, and for many years after, seemed to me, after Parnell, the man best equipped both for holding the recalcitrant wing of the Liberals in check, and conciliating the confidence of those Irish Nationalists who were honestly horrified by the weapons employed against Parnell. But once their apprehensions were removed by our declarations in Galway, it became the chief aim of the no-quarter school among our colleagues to discredit the influence of Mr. Dillon and myself, and when at the sessional meeting of the party those of our own way of thinking proposed Mr. Dillon as chairman, we were scarcely surprised to find that he only received nine votes in a party meeting, blooded with the North Sligo and Carlow victories, and where even Mr. Sexton had some sarcastic allusions to “picturesque personalities” to the address of Mr. Dillon and myself.¹

¹ It was an amusing instance of the intricacies of the situation that as Mr. Dillon and myself returned from the Antient Concert Rooms, after the vote of our own colleagues and the sarcasms of Mr. Sexton, we were hooted through the streets of Dublin by a lively band of Parnellites, who paid no attention to our assailants on the other front. Another of the ironies of political justice—The only reference of mine to Parnell which even malice could fasten upon as harsh was one referring to the unreasonableness of expecting us to fight for our lives

But the death of Parnell instantly put an end to our difficulties in our own camp and to all desire to minimize our influence. The men who had gone into the fray bursting with confidence, proclaiming Parnell to be a mere *fainéant* living upon the brains and achievements of his lieutenants, and persuaded that we alone stood between them and his immediate and ignominious collapse, fell straightway into a panic when they found that even in death Parnell's genius had raised hundreds of thousands of the stoutest soldiers of Irish liberty to arms against his foes. It was, I am afraid, with a spice of malicious pleasure we found how suddenly all desire to dispute our prominence or make our "picturesque personalities" their witty chopping-block was now dropped by the men who had scoffed loudest at Parnell's influence and were now trembling before his ghost. Practically the whole burden of the fierce and even bloody election contests that followed in Cork City and Waterford City, where the tide of Parnellite passion ran highest, was left upon our shoulders.¹

Mr. Redmond, on the other hand, remained mute while those who had got possession of *United Ireland* by assault and battery pointed me out not obscurely as Parnell's First Murderer.² He himself led the way in

"with sugar-stick" while we were being denounced by our critics as "demons out of hell" and other the like figures of speech, sometimes taking practical shape in paving-stones. The "sugar-stick" simile was actually utilized in speeches to angry crowds, as though it was some incitement to violence against Parnell, the truth being that the speech in which it occurred was from beginning to end a passionate plea to both sides to carry on the controversy on the highest plane of mutual courtesy and good-will, and was at least as bitterly assailed for its moderation on our own side as distorted in the opposite sense by the wavers of "the bloody shirt."

¹ It is but just to Mr. Healy, as to whom even those who might charge him with every other crime in the calendar would draw the line at laying cowardice to his charge, to exempt him from this censure.

Throughout the awful months following Parnell's funeral, he literally carried his life in his hands through the streets of Dublin, by night and by day, with a fearlessness which those who wanted but the opportunity to take it were the first to acknowledge. He showed, perhaps, the higher form of courage by keeping away from the Cork and Waterford elections in what was known to be the interest of his own side. Still less, of course, is any reflection intended upon Mr. Justin M'Carthy, who lived in London, and whose physical bravery had been already abundantly attested.

² "Slain, sacrificed by Irishmen on the altar of English Liberalism, he, the greatest Chief that this land has known in the struggle of centuries against English domination, has been murdered by the men whom he dragged from obscurity and

directing popular fury against the Boulogne peace pourparlers in which he had been my foremost ally. But frenzied as were the feelings of the moment, and wholly ignorant as was the country of what really passed at Boulogne, the people were not to be deceived by the pictures of us as slayers of the man whom we had risked what most politicians value as the apple of their eye in order to protect even from verbal insult, or as "Whigs" bartering our nationality to England through the hunger for "Liberal sweetbreads"—whatever might be the charms of that singular dainty.

It is Ireland's unlucky destiny that her foibles attract universal interest, while the good sense, industry, poetry, and charm of her higher and truer life are seldom fortunate enough to command the notice even of the neighbouring nation which will persist in governing her. Because there was little or nothing of the Parnell split to be read in British newspapers, except wherever a blow was struck or savage words exchanged, British self-righteousness has come to think of the Irish disruption as proving how little Irishmen are to be trusted, either to be true to their promises to England or to conduct their own affairs with decency or self-restraint. Never was there a deduction less generous or less true. It is too often forgotten that if Irishmen submitted to have the national strength built up with so much labour and self-sacrifice torn asunder in a night, it was because a vast majority of them were determined at any price to stand fast by their engagements with their English allies, and it was because the minority were animated by the no less chivalrous instinct of springing to the rescue of a great leader the moment the suspicion

who hated him, even while they fawned upon him, because they could never repay all that he had done for them personally. Murdered he has been as certainly as if the gang of conspirators had surrounded him and hacked him to pieces. 'I shall drive Parnell to death or madness,' said the infamous spokesman of the Bantry Band. And the leprous traitors—the Abrahams and the Barrys who talk of morality with a lie in their hearts—they may rejoice to-day that their purpose has been accomplished. Is Mr. John Dillon satisfied now? Is Mr. William O'Brien—dead Caesar's Brutus? Are they as happy as Mr. Thomas Sexton, who plotted the Great Betrayal of November last? Shall Ireland exact no punishment for what has been done? Shall this fatal perfidy, this slow torture unto death of our beloved leader go unavenged?"—(*United Ireland*, October 10, 1891.)

arose that the one great error of his life was being taken advantage of by faithless aliens and native traitors. This was not an ignoble issue on either side on which to struggle and suffer. Parnell had become, in Mr. Healy's own striking phrase, "not so much a man as an institution." The struggle for his displacement was not a change of chairman but a change of dynasties. It was one which in England, in similar circumstances, might very easily have been fought out between charging squadrons in the field. If, in a disarmed country like Ireland, words, which are the only weapons, are apt to get sharpened and poisoned to a point shocking to the sedate controversialists of more settled lands, there is something extravagant in the criticisms even of the worst excesses of the Irish combatants, for the truth happens to be that even the roughest of the brutalities of speech exchanged in the heat of electioneering conflicts, aflame with every passion that could make civil war terrible, will be found not at all to exceed what were a generation before the recognized English controversial standards of Byron on Southey, or Southey on Byron, of Macaulay on Montgomery, or Sydney Smith on the Methodists, or Disraeli on O'Connell, or the *Quarterly Review* on Keats or Shelley, not to speak of the *mores mitiores* of the *Times* towards its opponents down to a date which it would be uncivil to particularize. But as to the main point, never did a nation put to the cruellest of all tests—the parting with the greatest of her captains rather than forswear the national honour for his sake—conduct a civil struggle with fewer words or deeds that need be repented, or prove her capacity for self-government with more unflinching steadiness and completeness than did Ireland assert the victory of national good sense at the polls. Even in the first violence of the avenging war, and in the districts where its fanatics were hottest, we were able to pass through every part of the country without any excessive physical danger (indulgent though the authorities of Dublin Castle almost invariably showed themselves to any over-ardent band of physical force men whose sticks and stones were addressed in our direction),¹ and when the General

¹ Even in the fiercest arenas of conflict the bitterness was tempered with the generous humanities that are never long absent from Irish hearts. At the acme

Election of 1892 was over, only ten of his colleagues were suffered to go back to Westminster to follow Mr. Redmond's unhappy lead.

It were well if as favourable a verdict could be honestly given of the leaders as of the people; but it cannot. It must, I am afraid, be conceded that by as much as the masses in both camps proved themselves magnanimous, tolerant and worthy of a great lead, their chief counsellors failed in the higher requirements of the emergency, either through a narrow quarrelsomeness or feebleness of grasp; and I am too sensible in what earthen vessels we all bear our poor treasures to disclaim my own share of the reproach. Never were the prophecies that the Irish Party would fare all the more prosperously when delivered from the mythical tyranny of Parnell's "one-man power" more wofully belied by experience. "One-man power" was replaced for Ireland by eighty-man powerlessness. There was not wanting in all sections a sufficient proportion of men *ministrables* in the French sense of the word—each of them with special gifts and brilliancies of his own—this one in Parliamentary debate, the other in moulding popular opinion, a third in private counsel, a fourth in harder business capacity; but the crisis produced no man fitted to bind their varying capacities together with due subordination of their individual talents and rivalries to a great common purpose. There was not one leader, but a dozen.

of the fight for Parnell's seat in Cork, when the streets were every night the scene of pitched battles between the conflicting crowds, there was one night an armistice proclaimed while a society of young men, who were among our most formidable opponents, presented my wife with a portrait of myself by Mr. Thaddeus, which they had ordered as a wedding-gift before the split broke out. On the occasion of a second desperate contest, I received, on the eve of the polling, the cut of a stone on the temple which, had it struck half an inch lower down, must have deprived me of sight. The result was that the next day my majority was increased by the votes of over 500 Parnellites, who expressed in this way their feeling as to the outrage. Even in Waterford City, where the crowd was almost wholly, and on more than one occasion with blood-stained fury, opposed to us, when upon the gloomy Christmas Eve of 1891 we were quitting Waterford, ignominiously escorted to the train by a troop of hussars, and at the terminus delivered into the thick of a mob of the victorious Parnellites, the gigantic Ballybricken butchers, who had been the kernel of the Parnellite strength, surrounded us amicably on the platform with the salute, "We beat you, and if you come down on the same business we will beat you again, but all the same we are sorry for you, and we are sorry for ourselves." There is no despairing of the nation that can fight its battles at such an hour in such a spirit.

Another great opportunity was Mr. Redmond's if, having played the part of an Avenger with perhaps more than the necessary zeal up to the General Election, he had then bowed to the manifest will of the country, and with his ten followers applied himself earnestly to smoothing the path of the Home Rule Bill. There is no resisting the evidence that he and they, on the contrary, throughout the Parliament of 1893-95, devoted themselves in scarcely disguised concert with the Unionist opposition, to sowing tares in the seed-ground of the Home Rule Government and discrediting and obstructing the Home Rule Bill. The Home Rule majority, shorn of the overpowering strength it might have had but for the Irish tragedy, was in all conscience weak enough to deserve something better from its friends than the comforts of Baldad the Suhite and Sophar the Naamathite. An entry I made at the time gives a somewhat instructive glimpse of the circumstances in which the Parliament of 1893 began its work :

First meeting of the Committee.¹ Justin reported interview with the G.O.M. He looked dreadfully wrinkled and was in depressed spirits. He said he could no longer hope to be in at the finish ; that there was a strong feeling among his own friends that a couple of years must be given to British legislation ; that his own chief interest now was Home Rule, but that Home Rule must not be everything. Sexton suggested that the Home Rule Bill should be sent up to the Lords every session. The Old Man said that would be Parliamentary folly. Altogether a sad beginning. Several ugly indications in the Liberal ranks. — (one of the most active of the Radicals) remarked in the smoke-room of the Reform Club that the G.O.M. was too old and ought to be sent to the Upper House. Dr. — (another who was once one of our most uncompromising friends and was now left out of the ministry) asked me in the Lobby last night, "Are the Irish to be with us or shall we have to fight you? We're not going to stand much more of the Old Man's flirtations." I was bursting all the evening with the reply I would have given much to make to him.

Here was a Government with a majority of forty-two at the best, almost as shifting as it was slender, which at least from us its friends might have deserved some tenderness in

¹ Elected sessionally by the majority party and consisting at the time of Messrs. Justin M'Carthy, E. Blake, J. Dillon, T. P. O'Connor, T. Sexton, T. M. Healy, Arthur O'Connor, W. Abraham, D. Sheehy, and myself.

the herculean task to which Gladstone had consecrated the last efforts of his genius in the teeth of discouragements before which even a man in the high tide of youth might well have thrown down his arms. The smallness of the majority was very largely of Mr. Redmond's own making. The Home Rule Bill was one which satisfied Parnell's largest stipulations and which the writer of Mr. Redmond's letters to Boulogne would incontestably have welcomed at that time with glad relief. Nevertheless Mr. Redmond and his friends pursued the Home Rule Bill throughout all the battles and ambushes of its passage through the House of Commons with that species of fatal friendship which is the deadliest of Parliamentary weapons. He who, in the Boulogne letters, had paid such scant respect to Parnell's ingenious attempts to pick holes in the Liberal Memorandum now himself raised points very much more futile and pressed them home amidst the joyous cheers of the enemies of Home Rule and with their ardent support in the division lobbies. He who was constitutionally an Irish Nationalist of the most moderate type threw out hints and vague demands which alarmed a good many honest but uninformed Britons, and gave the Whiggish section of the Liberal Party a plausible pretext for separating themselves from what they nicknamed "Fenian Home Rule." With such levity was the campaign against the Bill conducted by those who prided in the name of "the Parnellite watchdogs" that on July 10, 1893, an amendment of Mr. Redmond's insisting that the Irish representation in the Imperial Parliament must remain 103, instead of 80, as proposed by the Bill, went within an ace of wrecking the Home Rule Bill and the Home Rule Government with it, the Government majority being brought down to 14 by the aid of united Unionist votes, whose sudden concern for the national dignity of Ireland was perhaps scarcely more creditable than the action of their allies of the extreme Irish left. The voting was : for Mr. Redmond's amendment, 266 ; against, 280. Whatever chance of life such a division left to the Bill in the House of Lords was disposed of by Mr. Redmond's parting shot on the third reading of the Home Rule Bill (30th August 1893) when he said : " This Bill, as it now stands, cannot under any conceivable circumstances

if it passes into law afford a full, a final, or a satisfactory settlement of this question."

Nor, unhappily, had we much title ourselves to cast the first stone. The Irish Party was split by this time, for most practical purposes, not into two parties, but into three. It was everybody's fault, and it was perhaps nobody's except Destiny's; for, with one or two minor exceptions, selfishness, greed or wilful evil-doing in their basest forms were not among the ingredients of the cauldron. The division in the majority party was perhaps all the more bitter that the two sections still nominally kept house together and were obliged to confine their incompatibilities to the secrecy of their domestic meetings. The party committee against which Parnell prophetically warned Mr. Dillon at Calais had been elected, and was now as active a source of interior disquiet as the point of a spear fixed in the corporeal body. I was foolish enough to seek some relief for my feelings by keeping an almost daily record of the squalid intrigues, the petty torments, the inconceivable smallnesses of these three or four miserable years. The time has already come when, with a very brief explanation, indeed, of the matter in dispute, these records can be dismissed to the oblivion in which the inmost history of all political parties (and of most, probably with more reason than our own) would find their most merciful resting-place. The *Freeman's Journal* was at the bottom of most of the mischief, as it has been since and was often before during the century and a quarter of its somewhat sinister existence. Mr. Healy, whose boldness in Committee Room 15 had constituted him the protagonist of the No Quarter School, with the title of "The Man in the Gap," and had the *National Press* for his organ, resented the conversion of the *Freeman* to our side more bitterly than he had attacked it when in opposition. He and his friends resisted with all the barbed weapons of his armoury the efforts of Mr. Dillon and myself to settle this particular trouble by a friendly amalgamation of the two papers on conditions which would leave Mr. Healy's friends in a majority on the common board of directors and which were financially better than those which had to be subsequently accepted. So long as the perilous task of pulling the chestnuts out of the fire

enkindled by Parnell's death depended upon us, the criticisms of our moderation and lack of fighting stomach were abated ; but as soon as the General Election had placed the predominance of the anti-Parnellites in Parliament out of danger, Mr. Healy's friends had no longer any hesitation in discovering in our attitude of conciliation a conspiracy to rob "the Man in the Gap" of the fruits of victory in order to make Mr. Dillon chairman of the party, and to place my ambitious self at the head of the amalgamated newspapers.¹ Hence the quarrel which for five years kept the majority party in a state of putrid fever and eventually reduced it to contempt and nothingness.

The one grain of comfort for me in the recollection of those odious years is that they were free from any pang of personal enmity on my own part ; for, while I never wavered in the belief that whatever faint hope remained for the party lay in the maintenance of a strict barrack-yard discipline in our own ranks, in strengthening the influence of Mr. Dillon and in keeping the door always open to reconciliation with the Parnellite minority, and in contending for these objects was constantly forced into the vanguard of a battle where hard blows were the indispensable preliminaries of peace, of personal rivalry or ill-will between Mr. Healy and myself there never was a trace.² Had he combined with his own splendid intellectual equipment the sobriety of judgment and calm far-sightedness of his less shining brother, Mr. Maurice Healy, I have often said when our wars were at their loudest that our personal relations would have made it a joy to me

¹ The fact that I had shortly before declined Mr. Healy's own offer of the managing directorship of the *National Press* and but a few months subsequently declined the managing directorship of the *Freeman* did not in the least shake them in this profound study of my psychology, nor, alas, teach Mr. Dillon himself to be any wiser or more generous in after years in diagnosing my ambitions.

² The late Judge Adams used to tell a story which, if it is only *ben trovato*, gives an unquestionably true revelation of Mr. Healy's own feeling on the point, even in the thickest press of the battle. He was one day asked by a chaffing circle of barristers around the Library fire at the Four Courts, "In Heaven's name, Healy, why are you for ever attacking unfortunate John Dillon?" "How can I help it?" he replied with an observation which it is not necessary to repeat here. "Well, but," somebody remarked, "you are attacking everybody else just the same—you are attacking Davitt and Blake and Sexton and T. P. O'Conuor and O'Brien." "No," he interrupted brusquely; "I deny that. I have never attacked William O'Brien *in private or except in the way of business.*" "In the way of business," no doubt, the attacks were passably lively.

to help to bear him to triumph as chairman of the party. Unluckily the good fairy which poured into his cradle so many enviable and fascinating gifts denied him a proportionate breadth of judgment or coherence and stability of purpose, and endowed him with a lawlessness of wit which, around our old camp-fires we used to tell him, would have a sharp and brilliant saying out if it cost him his immortal soul to utter it. And when that was coupled with the circumstances which had made him an object of special aversion to the Parnellites, it will perhaps be understood how little hope for Ireland I could see in the triumph of his "Policy of the Sweeping-brush," which coolly contemplated the extermination of one-third of the best Nationalists in the country, and with what vehemence I set myself to resist and defeat it.

In the committee of the party Mr. Healy stood alone (with a certain excentric support from Mr. Arthur O'Connor, now a County Court Judge in England); but whenever he transferred the fight, as he habitually did, to the party meetings, he commanded a support so considerable that the majority often depended upon three or four vacillating votes, and it may be readily understood that the vacillation was not likely to be steadied by the notorious fact that the mass of the Irish priests favoured Mr. Healy, and believed him to be unfairly dealt with.¹ Mr. Justin M'Carthy did his best to laugh Mr. Healy into reason with a jocose and friendly firmness. Mr. Sexton too often took the course of avoiding the pricks of his treader's spear, by absenting himself altogether from the meetings. Mr. Blake, who had forfeited a noble

¹ One member of the party who had long stood trembling on the brink met me in Whitehall in a state of high exhilaration one day after he had at long last cast in his fortunes with us. "Well," he cried, beaming with pride, "there won't be much doubt as to me for the future after yesterday." I replied with some decorous expressions of admiration of his heroism. Suddenly, a cloud of doubt came over his face, and he whispered me darkly, with a gravity that made me roar with laughter to the astonishment of the Cockney passers-by, "Tell me, William, are you quite sure that the Bishop is all right?" It was the same worthy fellow who, meeting Parnell in the cloak-room after he had just voted against him in Committee Room 15, almost wept on his shoulder, as he protested, "Mr. Parnell, it went like a knife through my heart to have to vote against you." "Never mind, —," was Parnell's genial reply, "you can vote with me the next time." It is significant of much that the hero of these two emotional passages was, in after years, although himself a Protestant, one of the steadiest supporters of the enemies of the policy of Conciliation. This time, at all events, there could be no doubt that "the Bishop was all right."

career in the great Dominion of which he had been Prime Minister, in the hope of assisting in extending the blessings of self-government to his native land, could but lay his head on the table covered by his clasped hands while he listened to the mean disputations in which he found himself immersed. Mr. Dillon replied with dignity, to the satisfaction of every reasonable mind, to every definite accusation made against him ; but one accusation was no sooner disposed of, than another was found by his agile tormentors, for whom the ignoble jousts which sickened the hearts and paralysed all the usefulness of the party seemed to possess a certain uncanny intellectual relish. I urged Mr. Dillon and the rest of our colleagues on the committee times without number that the only remedy was to take the party frankly into our confidence, tell them in unequivocal terms what we believed to be the best policy for the country, and if they declined to give us a decisive and unwavering support, then to adopt the proper constitutional solution of placing the government of the party in the hands of our assailants and reserve our own freedom of action until the results should have been fully and fairly tested. The one point of view in which Mr. Dillon and myself differed was that nothing could induce him to give up the tactical advantage of having a majority, even nominally, on our side, no matter how narrow or ineffective that majority might be, or what humiliating complaisances were necessary to keep on the right side the three or four trembling weaklings whose votes turned the balance. The committee continued to reign, but only by failing to govern.

One historic illustration will suffice to exhibit the results upon the fortunes of the Home Rule Bill. After a tedious struggle between Mr. Dillon and Mr. Healy for the possession of the amalgamated newspapers, and after my own refusal to accept the Managing Directorship, Mr. Sexton was appointed to that post, and in consequence of a report signed by Dr. O'Donnell, the young Bishop of Raphoe (who now began to make a large figure in national politics, not always with the most fortunate results), both Mr. Dillon and Mr. Healy were called upon to withdraw from the Board. It was on the night of the second reading of the Home Rule

Bill that a meeting of the Irish Party was held in Committee Room 15 upstairs to take action on Dr. O'Donnell's report. By one of his own ferocious applications of the *guillotine sèche*, Mr. Healy struck off head after head of his opponents until he had frightened three of the weaklings in the majority section into submission, and Mr. Sexton after his manner allowed his sword to be struck up by feebly announcing his withdrawal from the party in consequence of the defeat. Gladstone, who had been anxiously observing the Irish benches empty while he was making his own desperate stand in their cause, saw the party rushing in at the sound of the division bell only to hear that one of their foremost men had just severed his connection with them in the full presence of the Gaul at the gates. Nor was the spectacle a more dignified one the next night when the panic-stricken party held a fresh meeting to undo the mischief, and the three amiable deserters who had made Mr. Healy's majority of the previous night—Captain Donelan, Alderman Collery, and Dr. MacDonnell—promptly transferred themselves into a majority for the other side, and thus enabled Mr. Sexton to cancel his abdication. They were both scenes which Parnell's shade might have witnessed with a grim smile in the same historic Committee Room 15, where in a greater drama he had at least made a more heroic figure.

With an Irish Party in such a condition, Mr. Redmond assisting as a *tertius gaudens*, and the Liberal Party itself scarcely less mined with intrigues and discords, the passing of Home Rule from the stage could not be long delayed, and the taking off of Gladstone was an inevitable sequel. The part played by the majority party in reference to the Rosebery Ministry was hardly less bedevilled by misunderstandings and cross purposes than the action of the Irish Party when left in ignorance of the Gladstone letter. Had a plain intimation reached us that Gladstone's retirement was in his own despite, or at least without his own settled will, scarcely a voice would have been heard except for forcing an immediate dissolution, come what might. Considering that, in Mr. Justin M'Carthy's phrase, the Irish Party truly "held the Ministry in the hollow of their hands," it might be supposed that at least some means would be found of ascertaining

Lord Rosebery's exact position by personal and not necessarily unfriendly exchanges of views as to the practical prospects of Home Rule. Again it was everybody's fault, and nobody's, except an antic Destiny's. None of us had ever met Lord Rosebery, strange and indeed wholly improper as it may seem. Any attempt of ours to force relations with him would have been carried on under a cross fire of misrepresentations from Mr. Redmond's ranks, and indeed from the bosom of our own committee. The communications that reached us as to Lord Rosebery's reliability were of the nature of a Delphic oracle. How far his substitution for Gladstone commanded Gladstone's assent was left enveloped in Olympian cloud. Mr. Morley, who enjoyed the misery of being Chief Secretary throughout those wretched years, was depressed but (not perhaps without good reason) warily diplomatic. I remember vividly one passage in a letter of his as to the proposed change of offices under the new Prime Minister. "I have decided," he wrote, "to stick to the Irish office, although I dare say nobody greatly cares whether I do or not."¹ The submission to Lord Rosebery's Premiership, without any effective guarantee of the sufficiency, or even of the real nature, of his views on Home Rule, was not unnaturally accepted in Ireland as a confirmation of Parnell's forewarning of Liberal treachery, and was the signal for a new hail of perfidious criticisms from the factions in front and rear, on whose part one day of high-minded

¹ For a man of revolutionary boldness of view, Mr. Morley was of too fine a mental texture for the roughness of his Irish experiences. When the time came for communications with the committee of our party as to the details of the Home Rule Bill, he found his first difficulty to be that, in the morbid state of suspiciousness in Ireland, some of us shrank from going to Dublin Castle to meet him, although some more of us failed to discover the iniquity of going to the Castle for the one purpose of capturing it for Ireland. When he suggested Mr. Dillon's house as a quiet place for meeting, there was an alarm in one quarter, and when he genially suggested that the meetings might be held turn about in Mr. Dillon's house and in Mr. Healy's, a sense of humour made the arrangement impossible. We had finally to take refuge in a room of the Shelbourne Hotel, under the eye of a numerous company of waiters and Dublin jarveys; and other resources of civilization had to be resorted to for his meetings with Mr. Redmond and his watch-dogs. The result was that, as some of us remarked at the time, Mr. T. W. Russell, then a stout enemy of Home Rule, was the only man shrewd enough to secure an effective voice in the government of Ireland. Once we were pressing the appointment of the Evicted Tenants' Commission on Mr. Morley, emphasizing the fact that if it were delayed Heaven only knew what might happen. "Ah," remarked Mr. Morley, with a sigh heaved from the bottom of his soul, "everything has happened!"

and patriotic accord might have either established a definite arrangement with Lord Rosebery or ensured his fall.

Again, be it clearly marked, the reproach is to the politicians, and not at all to the Irish people. They began more and more to stand aloof from the organizations and recriminations of the three factions, more or less dimly conscious that things must be much worse with them all before they could be better for the country. Finally, it occurred to some of the least reputable of Mr. Healy's followers that the most brilliant form of reprisal against myself would be one which always marks the deepest depth of Irish political degradation—one, alas, the monopoly of which has not been left to that particular school of faction—for its only recommendation was the hope that it would wound the feelings of a woman. An enormous claim was brought against me personally for law costs, which were only incurred as part of the national resistance against the Coercionist régime, and the payment of which it was always the honourable understanding on all sides was a first charge on the Paris Funds—a charge in due time recognized and satisfied.¹ The example once set was followed by others, until (including a Bank Guarantee for £4000 signed by me jointly with Mr. Dillon and Mr. Harrington to save the evicted tenants from starvation pending the release of the Paris Funds) the public claims with which I stood saddled amounted to over £8000—the only debts of the value of a sixpence I had ever in my life incurred. In equity, the attempt to make me personally responsible for this mass of purely public debt would have been on a level with a proposal to take action against an individual member of the Cabinet for the National Debt of Britain. The real object was not for a moment doubtful, and had to be resisted to any necessary point of personal discomfort. The threat, and subsequently the execution of the threat, to make me a bankrupt gave the worthy politicians no satisfaction except that (and they were silly enough to

¹ "We will have his money or his bleed!" was the chaste avowal Mr. Gilhooly, M.P., heard one of the practitioners make as to the design. The merits of this claim were afterwards investigated before Baron Brompton in the libel action of *Chance v. The Freeman's Journal*, and the case was dropped by the plaintiff not a moment too soon for his own safety as well as repute. Had the discovery then made been made a little sooner, the claim against me must have been scouted out of court.

consider it a great one at the time) of driving me out of Parliament. I accepted the Chiltern Hundreds a couple of weeks before the Cordite Resolution which drove the Rosebery Ministry to their annihilation at the polls.¹

¹ As soon as the English Court of Bankruptcy learned the true character of the proceedings, it put an end to the bankruptcy, and the Hibernian Bank loyally disclaimed any intention of raising the question of personal liability in reference to the evicted tenants' overdraft for £4000, which was duly paid off on the release of the Paris Funds.

CHAPTER V

REBUILDING OUT OF RUINS

IT has happened more than twice and thrice in my life that those who seemed to be aiming their most expert blows at me have been amongst my best benefactors. For example, Mr. Balfour, who doubtless once persuaded himself he was saving the Empire by denying me pen and paper, enabled me to write a prison book which placed over £1800 in my pocket, and still after twenty years makes me a certain annual return. In the same way the honest gentlemen who drove me out of Parliament in the guileless faith that they were dealing me a death-stroke were the means of creating for me a home life, the very dream of which had disappeared for me since early youth, and of giving a first taste of health and tranquil affection to an existence in which the character of sadness impressed upon it by early circumstances had led me only to see the duty of unrepining suffering in a world where a death worth dying was one of the few prizes. Popularity had been mine to an excess only excusable in a people whose soldiers can hope for no other pay, but the only popularity worth having is obtained by suffering for others, and is in the nature of things a penalty rather than a luxury. Even our honeymoon was not yet over, when we were chased in a police-boat over the lakes of Killarney, and by a police transport car to Glengariff, surveyed in that lovely retreat through a field-glass by a police commandant who had at his service a boat on the bay and a car at the hotel gate, night and day, and finally one morning whirled away to Tipperary by a special train from Bantry, in which, peradventure by way of gentle official wedding gift, my wife was allowed to

accompany the prisoner at the Imperial expense. The next following twelve months were divided between a five-days' flight to France in a fishing-boat in the equinoctial season, three racking months in America and France during which the friendships of a lifetime and the edifice of victory built together almost to its coping-stone at such a price of suffering were going to pieces under our eyes, and six months more of separation, by prison walls, only to be followed by further dreary years in which the ruins widened and deepened, shock after shock. All this was now to be changed for a world in which it seemed actually possible to look forward to days undarkened by ill-health or by tumult, or torture of brain or spirit.

It happened queerly enough, and, like all the other cardinal events of my life, without much design of my own. We had gone down to the shores of Clew Bay for a six weeks' sojourn in order to become better acquainted with the scenes in which a novel commenced in Galway Jail (*A Queen of Men*) was pitched. It was with the malicious determination to be even with the local territorialists, who with splendid discipline met us with an universal boycott wherever we presented ourselves for a roof whereunder to lay our heads, that we first resolved to give them the advantage of our permanent company. To their horror, and with the serpent's guile, we succeeded in becoming the leaseholders of a pretty house in a sylvan nest between the mountains and the sea, which was once the dread abode of the agent of Lord Sligo's estate, and enjoyed the high-flown title of Altamount Villa. With something more than a Bayswater regard for the Italian conception of a villa, we caused our one-storied snuggerly to descend to the humble rank of "Mallow Cottage," and it was not without some thrill of wondering joy for how the old order was changing that the local mountainy men who, on rent-day, had so often ascended with trembling steps to the chamber of destiny, where the agent sat in state behind his pistols, beheld the tiger's den pass into friendlier native hands and its doors open to more hospitable uses.

It was years before our Mayo *pied à terre* became to us more than the brief alighting-ground of the sea-bird whose

home is amidst the ocean's cliffs and storms ; but now the discovery of all its charms came upon us with the rapturous surprise with which an explorer catches his first glimpse of a new continent. The bottom of the lawn touched the waters of Clew Bay, which spread out in a magnificent sheet of silvery green, decorated (according to the legendary calculation) with three hundred islands, and framed in both to north and south with ranges of blue mountains of every beautiful sculptural shape. The bay window of our sitting-room looked out upon a picture of never-ending joy—the cone of Croagh Patrick (the Holy Mountain from which Ireland's national Apostle banished the reptiles) rising full in front as symmetrical as a pyramid of Cheops, only six times higher, and soaring above the soft green bosom of the lawn and the tops of its chaplet of trees, with a completeness and harmony of composition as satisfying as if the beautiful mountain had been planted there by some heavenly landscape gardener as an ornament specially attached to the premises. There came to us with the cottage a garden as quaint as its own sun-dial, with a brook bubbling through its tangled labyrinth of ancient flowers and neglected fruit trees, and a farm of twenty Irish acres, which opened a boundless field for the gratification of our joint passion for experimenting, how much the Irish soil could be coaxed to yield—experiments, it must be owned, whose financial results were not as obviously satisfactory as all their other features.

Here was a rustic Garden of Eden *into* which we found ourselves driven with flaming swords by men who were all the time persuaded it was *out* of a more glittering Paradise in Westminster they were driving us. A life as wildly irregular and lawless as the habits of a journalistic night bird, a member of Parliament of the Obstructionist *noctes coenaeque*, and a semi-revolutionary agitator combined could make it began to take its course as tranquilly as a river which waters the woodlands. There was the exhilaration of a morning gallop through the fields ; a forenoon of literary work distracted by nought save the beauteous smiles or tears of the ever-varying mountain or the appealing voices of the birds ; an afternoon in my shirt-sleeves,

spade or pickaxe in hand, carrying on the war against weeds or the reclamation of rocky wildernesses in which I attained all the proficiency a highly-unskilled labourer could aspire to, or plotting with my wife and our faithful gardener steward what were to be the next season's experiments in tree-planting, in potato-culture, in proving to our incredulous neighbours how much money there was in asparagus and green peas, in snowdrops, daffodils, and narcissus; or, if the afternoon smiles and breezes were too tempting, a few hours together in the solitudes of mountain heather, or in our boat sailing by one of the noblest ramparts of coast-line in the world, spread out for sixty miles in every variety of peak and dizzy precipice, and romantic island, with an evening in the glow and homely incense of the turf-fire, in the company of book-friends who spoke of something better than the garbage of the newspapers in their Elysian abodes, or listening to the wild winds thundering over mountain and sea with the comforting knowledge that there was no shipping abroad in Clew Bay to suffer for the magnificent music. Truly, "the wicked one" who had brought us all this by way of punishment might well "be angry and gnash with his teeth and pine away." Such mysteries are we even to those most freely admitted to our inmost sanctuaries that Mr. Dillon, who thought he knew his Mayo, prophesied that before a month were past we would be in full flight from the boredom to the excitements of Dublin or London, while, in his indignation at our treatment, the citizen imagination of Mr. T. P. O'Connor pictured me as "eating my heart out by the lonely waters of Clew Bay."

It is no exaggeration to say that in the course of fifteen years' experience our only moments of discontent with our Tower of Ivory in the wild west were whenever fate dragged us away to less ethereal spheres. But that was often enough. Believing that in securing to Mr. Dillon a free field to prove his capacity for leadership lay the one hope of redemption for Parliamentaryism as it stood, I felt it a duty not to leave him alone to be buffeted between the Redmondites and Healyites and their respective newspapers, and continued with all my might and means to strengthen his hands in Ireland among the party and in the

Press not only until (in February 1896) he was successfully borne to the chairmanship, but until (in February 1899) he laid down his wand of office in not unnatural discouragement. Nobody who knows anything of the inner life of the movement is likely to dispute that wherever there was an ugly corner to be turned in Ireland or a hostile crowd to be apprehended Mr. Dillon's appeal to me to step into the breach was never made in vain; that I was seldom missing from any critical consultation either before a party conclave in London or at the no less hateful conflicts of the Council of the National Federation in Dublin; and that, if my financial aid was necessarily at an humble distance from the magnificent generosity of Mr. Blake, my influence was not without avail in many a crisis when the failure of the National Fund left Mr. Dillon face to face with the prospect of sheer bankruptcy for the party.¹ A very clear majority of the national masses were by instinct with us in the abstract; but they knew nothing of the merits of the hideous controversies raging in private rooms in Dublin and London; all they knew was that they detested the very thought of these discords to the marrow of their bones, and saw no more prospect of either party getting the better of the other than of any intelligent end to a street scrimmage among night brawlers in their cups.

Times out of number I urged our friends either to fight Mr. Healy openly once for all, or to let him alone and stick to the people's business. There were the recommendations neither of a policy of peace nor of a policy of war in the

¹ Some idea may be found of the condition to which Mr. Dillon's followers, like Mr. Redmond's followers and Mr. Healy's, were reduced by the utter collapse of Parliamentarianism from the fact that within a single fortnight in the year before the United Irish League was started I received letters from two of the most prominent of them and from the wife of a third; one of them to announce that the Sheriff was in possession of his house and that the furniture would be sold three days afterwards unless a considerable sum was forthcoming; another to tell me he saw no prospect before him except to sell his mill and emigrate to Chicago; while the third told a still more piteous story of actual privation for little children. The fact would not be in the smallest degree to their discredit only for the conduct of two out of the three in subsequent years of abundance when they were not content to follow the war-chest into the opposite camp, but turned upon my wife and myself with a brutality that, for the repute of Irish chivalry, had better remain unrelated. Another member of Parliament of the Redmondite group, who had been struck with paralysis, had actually applied for a steerage passage to the United States, where he must have died in an hospital, when the foundation of the United Irish League enabled him to preserve his life in comparative health and comfort to this day.

methods of feeble excitation actually practised. The General Election of 1895 surprised the majority party in a state of inconceivable confusion and indecision. Our Dublin headquarters was like the French Chamber on the day of an *émeute*. Mr. Healy and his friends seized the ground floor offices of the National Federation and held their own caucus meetings there; Mr Justin M'Carthy and his Cabinet held the rooms on the first floor, with such of the books and of the officials as fell to our side in the division of the spoils. If the principle of majority rule on which we took our stand was not to crumble under our feet, it was necessary that the majority opposed to Mr. Healy, which was generally not more than five to ten, and even these in a state of fluctuation as unstable as the tides, should be substantially increased at the General Election. Supported as Mr. Healy was in an almost unbroken square by the priests, and mystified and discouraged as were our own friends, it at one moment seemed more than likely that the party that came back would be one in which the wavering balance would have shifted to the other side. I remember vividly the final meeting, with Mr. M'Carthy in the chair, at which we deliberated how to avert the disaster by an appeal to the Conventions that had not yet selected their candidates. I pointed out that by the aid of the popular indignation at the foul play with which I had been ousted from Cork City, nothing would be easier even in a triangular battle with the Redmondites than to capture the second seat for that city, which was held by Mr. Maurice Healy. Mr. M'Carthy agreed, but unfolded a long telegram he had just received signed by the Bishop and priests of Cork intimating in the most unambiguous terms that they had met and would collectively with all their power resist any attempt to displace Mr. Healy. Our colleagues, bitterly though they resented the despotic order from the Bishop and priests, and urgently though they believed the collapse of the party to be at stake, shrank from this encounter, and not only bowed to the mandate but deputed to me of all men the duty of fighting the battle of those who had driven me out of Parliament, against the fierce hostility which awaited them from the Parnellites. By

way of a last effort to make sure even of a narrow majority in the party, it was at the same time resolved to send delegates to the pending Conventions for East Donegal, North Mayo, and East Kerry, to appeal for their verdict as between the Healyite candidates and our own. Mr. Dillon undertook to challenge Mr. Arthur O'Connor at the Donegal Convention, where the Bishop was a devoted friend of his own, and the duty of arraigning Mr. Daniel Crilly before the people of Mayo was assigned to Mr. Blake and myself.

It was a curious plan of campaign and one of melancholy ineffectiveness. It was not too difficult for me to overcome any personal soreness of my own so far as to go down and risk my limbs in battling Mr. Maurice Healy's way into Cork City, unconstitutional though I believed the method of his selection to be, and ill-deserved the excess of Christian charity I was called upon to extend to my persecutors. In the course of one Sunday I attended five public meetings in Mr. Healy's favour; on the way from one of them we were assailed with sticks and stones by a Parnellite crowd of many thousands, and my shin-bone all but broken through by a very brutal stroke from a cudgel, the wound from which lamed me for many a week. Disabled as I was, it was necessary to travel all through the night to Dublin, and with no other refreshment than a bath and breakfast to start off by the morning mail to the west in order to be in time for the Mayo Convention at Castlebar. Here a humiliation still more trying awaited me. The Bishop and priests of Killala had met and resolved to stand by Mr. Crilly's candidature, and commissioned Monsignor O'Hara, P.P., to announce their decision in curt and haughty terms to the Convention. I had no personal quarrel of any kind with Mr. Crilly. The Bishop and priests of Killala had just as much or as little right to endorse his candidature in that particular way as the Bishop and priests of Cork to endorse Mr. Healy's. But the order of our committee to Mr. Blake and myself was precise. It was to take the decision of the constituency as between Mr. Crilly and our own side we were there. The numbers were running so close that for all we knew to let Mr. Crilly pass unchallenged might mean putting Mr. Healy in a majority in the new party. Mr. Blake and I obeyed our instructions

in Mayo as I had done in Cork. It was a very painful scene, and one which was the means of creating some highly undeserved but lifelong enmities for me. But the people without hesitation rose to the appeal. Monsignor O'Hara and his brother priests with their candidate, after a long struggle to refuse me a hearing, quitted the hall, and Mr. John Roche was unanimously nominated in Mr. Crilly's stead. It was all labour lost. Our committee sitting in Dublin no sooner heard of the action of the Bishop and priests of Killala than word was despatched in a panic to the candidate unanimously selected on their appeal by the Convention to desist, and Mr. Crilly was re-elected unopposed.¹ The opposition to Mr. Arthur O'Connor in East Donegal proved equally abortive; and, if I returned to Mallow Cottage somewhat lamed in my confidence in our party leaders as well as by a festering shin-bone, the new party went back to Westminster in a much more seriously maimed condition of helpless inefficiency and loss of faith in themselves, in their leaders, and in the country.

It would take a hard crust of selfishness, indeed, to enable a man to settle down in the Mayo of that day without being shocked by its sorrows and incited to redress them. Every other year the turf harvest was ruined in June or the potato harvest in August, and wan faces presented themselves at the windows, and humiliating begging appeals had to be set going to prevent semi-starvation from going the whole length of its ravages amidst the swarming villages. It was impossible to live long in Mayo without seeing that the remedy was as luminously self-evident as the disease: that while the overcrowded villagers for whom the famine appeals were made lived on patches of heather hills or morasses on which the periodical failure of crops was a necessity of nature, these scenes of wretchedness were surrounded by wide-ranging pastures from which the villagers or their fathers had been evicted in

¹ So little did even this satisfaction appease the enmity aroused by the scene at that Convention, that fifteen years afterwards, when I revisited Monsignor O'Hara's parish of Crossmolina to address an All-for-Ireland demonstration, his curate was one of the principal personages in a mob, armed with batons, stones, and revolvers, who went within an ace of bringing the vendetta to a bloody conclusion.

the clearances following the Great Famine of 1847 in the interest of a Big Grazing Plantation which turned out as sorry a disaster for the Big Graziers as for the dispossessed children of the soil. To look over the fence of the famine-stricken village and see the rich green solitudes which might yield full and plenty spread out at the very doorsteps of the ragged and hungry peasants was to fill a stranger with a sacred rage and make it an unshirkable duty to strive towards undoing the unnatural divorce between the people and the land.

The peculiar conditions of the western problem were then as little known over three-fourths of Ireland, or even by five-sixths of the Irish Party, as the geography of mid-Africa. The people themselves, who were content to describe themselves resignedly as belonging to "the County Mayo, God help us!" had so completely lost heart in their own cause that it passed their comprehension how it could interest strangers. The peculiar western meaning of the shibboleth "The Land for the People" had for a moment blazed forth at the outset of the Land League movement; but, after the brief career of that organization, the county of Mayo had subsided for many years into a condition of listlessness for which the political struggle for a Parliament in Dublin had only a distant and somewhat ghastly interest.

Whatever the politician's aims or arts with which Mr. Balfour was induced to run the congested west against the Plan of Campaign and Home Rule phases of the Irish struggle,¹ it is certain that his establishment of the Congested

¹ Mr. Balfour fell a victim on more than one occasion to the over-zeal of his official stage-managers. When he visited Achill, to decide whether he was to give a free railway to that wild Paradise, the resident magistrate visited the parish priest with a draft of an address of welcome to the statesman, with an unmistakable hint that according to the warmth of the welcome would be the amount of Achill's good luck. It was a sore case of conscience for the poor parish priest, who was an incorrigible Nationalist, but there was nothing for it, and when Mr. Balfour arrived there was the dutiful crowd of Gaelic peasants awaiting him, with the resident magistrate's dutiful address, under a triumphal arch erected by the local police sergeant. All went famously, and Mr. Balfour was in his happiest mood. "Three cheers more for Mr. Balfour, boys!" cried Father —, waving his hat and adding in an aside to his Gaelic congregation, "Gidh go ní fhuil tré ghradh do 'n geaduighe!" (Although it is through no love for the thief!). The Gaelic peasants roared with delight at the joke, Mr. Balfour bowed his sweetest, and the Achill railway was won. Nor is it doubtful that Mr. Balfour would be the first to acknowledge that Father —'s pious fraud in the

Districts Board in 1891 was an event of happy omen for the West and for his own enduring fame. It seemed a matter of such infinite unimportance with what motives men woke up to the sorrows of this neglected province, so long as they really did wake up and kept awake, that from the first I lost no opportunity of placing whatever energy or assistance was at my command at the service of the Congested Districts Board in various projects of local development, such as establishing a permanent Fishery Loan Fund of £700 for the Murrisk fisher folk, opening up a road out of Connemara through the bewitching Dhuloch Pass which the common garden tourist had never trodden before, distributing and popularizing spraying machines among the peasants,¹ establishing a fish-curing station at Westport Quay, and the like. But every hour of my experience of the people's lives showed me more and more convincingly that all these minor reforms, however excellent, were but spoonfuls of jam in place of bread—were but “sending men ruffles who wanted a shirt.” A phrase of Archbishop Healy, in later years, “Give the people the meat—give them the land—and they will manage to do the cooking themselves,” expresses precisely what was cryingly called for and what the Congested Districts Board in the first years of their existence seemed to have steadily set their faces against supplying. Their First Annual Report for 1892, in enumerating their objects, only devoted six lines out of fifty-six pages to the subject of

interest of his poor parishioners was less inexcusable than the political proselytism of the resident magistrate and the police sergeant in the dispensation of State Funds. The special correspondent of the *Times* was actually beguiled by some local wag into recording that in token of gratitude for Mr. Balfour's benefactions as Apostle of the West he had christened a pig of an improved breed which was just born to him “Arthur James”!

¹ Our neighbours were at first persuaded that we should but poison ourselves with the sulphate of copper with which the potato stalks were sprinkled, and cautiously waited to ascertain our fate before trying any experiment upon themselves. “Are you going to teach the Man Up Above his own business?” scornfully asked an old friend in the wilds of Tirnacrúach, pointing to the over-arching heavens. But in this, as in all other matters, the Irish peasant, who has been the sufferer by so many experiments, has only to be persuaded out of his pessimism by actual demonstration that there are new ideas with money in them taught by men who don't intend to make him their prey, and before five years are over the *Bordelaise* mixture or any other really beneficial novelty is as firmly fixed an institution as the Holy Wells.

migration, while no less than eleven pages were dedicated to a report on the advantages of shipping the congested population out of the country altogether to Manitoba or Saskatchewan.

It was not until after several years of reasonings, appeals, and oburgations that I at length succeeded in cajoling the Congested Districts Board into making their first experiment in land purchase for the purpose of enlarging the people's holdings and making them the owners of their own fields. It was a small but excessively interesting experiment. The scene was Clare Island, the romantic dominion of Granya Uaile, the "Queen of Men," who for many years brought Elizabeth's best captains to grief among her wild islands. Her kingdom had long passed to a land-jobber with bowels of iron, who, having failed to get his price for it as a convict station, proceeded to extract his cent per cent from the unfortunate islanders by a series of police expeditions in a gunboat, with a crop of resulting evictions, bayonet charges, and imprisonments which had been among my first sickening experiences of the miseries of Mayo. The Congested Districts Board in their purchase paid more attention to the sauces and trimmings than to the meat of Archbishop Healy's parable. They took the island into their own keeping in the spirit of a Lord Bountiful beautifying a model estate, wasted six years before they handed it over in its decorated condition to the new peasant proprietors, and charged them £10,000 for a fee simple which they had themselves purchased for £5000. And before they would undertake the purchase at all they required the Archbishop of Tuam and myself to enter into a bond to guarantee the amount of the new proprietors' instalments of purchase money for the first seven years. But the guarantee, to the islanders' immortal credit, never cost the Archbishop or myself a farthing, and one never looked from the hill behind Mallow Cottage at Clare Island grandly guarding the mouth of the bay in its purple uniform without a heart brimful of gratitude for the regeneration that has brought gladness into every island cabin since the last day they saw a bailiff, or a policeman, or a gunboat within a cannon-shot of their shores. But if it took six years of benevolent fiddling to purchase out 3949 acres and make

ninety-five families happy, in how many centuries would the turn of the remaining 3,600,000 acres and 549,000 souls in Connaught come, if no rougher artillery than petitions to a Dublin Board and a guarantee of State debts by private individuals were brought into play? No political object entered into the first conceptions of our movement in the West. All-sufficient seemed to be the local programme of transplanting the people from their starvation plots to the abundant green patrimony around them. But a great accumulation of national strength could alone effect this; and not only had the official directors of the Congested Districts Board taken it into their heads that any great replantation of Connaught was hateful to the congested population themselves as well as impracticable, but the conditions and the very meaning of the movement were unintelligible to the people of the three other provinces. On the other hand, the approach of the centenary of the insurrection of 1798, with its inspiring memories of the United Irishmen, furnished not only the idea but the happy title for a new organization which, drawing an irresistible strength and reality from the conditions in the west, would also throw open to the free air of a new national spirit those caverns and tabernacles of faction in which good men of all political persuasions had been suffocating for the previous eight years. Accordingly the United Irish League was born into the world at a meeting in Westport on January 16, 1898, unknown to the country in general, and without the slightest foresight of what it portended on the part of the greater number of those who attended the meeting, or, indeed, of the speakers on the platform.

Mr. Dillon and Mr. Harrington had come down to Mallow Cottage to attend the meeting. Mr. Harrington had been all through, in defiance of bitter attack from his own side, the same unabashed apostle of national unity he had been from the earliest days of the Boulogne negotiations and cared little in what form a reconciliation of the factions came. Mr. Dillon, also, never wavered in the desire for national reconciliation as the first condition of effective progress in any direction, but with his usual slowness to understand an unfamiliar idea, and his tendency either to attach no importance to it at all or to make it the subject of some

strange misconception, he paid little attention to my exposition of the scope of the new organization. He regarded the meeting with satisfaction as a symptom of vitality that had been long missing from popular gatherings, but he plainly regarded the resolutions establishing the United Irish League as the rhetoric usual on such occasions, which would be heard of no more once the effervescence of the meeting fizzed away, and he made his own speech without any indication that any unusual results were expected to follow.

A hundred times over he confessed in our consultations that the Parliamentary movement was dying on its legs, and dying in disgrace. The average member of Parliament of any of the three sections enjoyed little or no respect in his own constituency and no influence at all outside it. The country left the three sections impartially without funds. These three organizations—the National Federation of the Dillonites, the National League of the Redmondites, and the People's Rights Association of the Healyites—were almost equally devoid of any life except that which expended itself in mutual recriminations. The only success of their three daily newspaper organs—the Dillonite *Freeman*, the Redmondite *Independent*, and the Healyite *Daily Nation*—was in hurting their own finances more than each other or the country. It can be asserted with confidence that at least £100,000 was lost to their shareholders in their newspaper wars. The worst symptom of all was that the masses of the people were not even strong partisans of any of them; they were indifferent to, and contemptuous of them all. From our own *Année Terrible* had grown up a young generation of pessimists as discouraged and soured as were begotten of the surrender at Sedan and the treason of Bazaine; and Irish scepticism is apt to be as unlovely as Irish faith is strong with the strength that moves mountains. The very completeness of the *débâcle* left the ground free for laying the foundations of a broad scheme of national renovation where there were now little but ruins. The prime condition of success must be a total disregard in the new movement of the 'ites and 'isms and rivalries of the old quarrels, and a door as wide open as the nation to all comers; but neither must

there be the smallest suspicion of any new candidacy for leadership, great part of my own success in propagating the United Irish League being due to the universal sense that under no conceivable circumstances could my own ambitions or desires tend in that direction. I had as little doubt then as I have now that had Mr. Dillon flung himself into this movement with the one simple-minded purpose of rebuilding the national strength without worrying as to which faction might prove most potent, or which leader come uppermost in the process, his very forgetfulness of his own leadership would have given him an incontestable title to a position of national dignity very different indeed in splendour from that he then occupied as the precarious chairman of an unreliable and impotent Parliamentary section.

But the invariable last word to all our consultations was the pathetic one, "Give me a fund, and I see my way to doing anything." And so we had travelled drearily for years in the vicious circle that there could be no creative energy in the party without funds, and there could be no possibility for funds for a party thus ingloriously inactive. Although myself removed from Parliament, my aid had been constantly invoked by Mr. Dillon on the eve of any important meeting of the party in London, or of the Council of the National Federation in Dublin, for there was not one of them that was not haunted by the anticipation of some surprise from Mr. Healy's fertile ingenuity. There is an unutterable discomfort in the recollection of the invariable course of procedure on these occasions—first, the dozens of beseeching letters to be written to our friends imploring their attendance at meetings at which, if Mr. Healy found us in full strength, all was uneventful, and they had an expensive journey for their pains; next, the consultations far into the night preceding every trial of strength; the painful ticking off, man by man, of the friends, foes, and doubtfuls on the party list; the careful collation of information as to the latest frame of mind of this or that man of the four or five waverers who might turn the scale; the resolution, after endless debates, to take strong action to force the party to a manful choice at long last between Mr. Dillon and his tormentors, and to give somebody or anybody authority enough to effect something;

and then almost invariably the next day, the discovery that all the labour had been wasted, and that the strong action resolved upon had been dropped in deference to some drivelling hesitation of some of the four or five doubtfuls, who had become *de facto* the real leaders of the party.

There was one occasion, and one only, from the split of 1890 to the reunion of 1900, when the Parliamentary factions, with a little restraint of temperament and the touch of a firm hand at the helm, might still have been reformed from within—if Archbishop Croke had been suffered to preside at the Irish Race Convention of 1896, and if Mr. Redmond and Mr. Healy had joined in recognizing the representative authority of that unique assembly. No Imperial Conference that has since aroused the pride of Britain for her children beyond the seas was more worthy of respect than this coming together from the world's ends of the picked men of the Irish race in Canada, Newfoundland, the United States, Victoria, New South Wales, Queensland, Western Australia, New Zealand, the Argentine Republic, and South Africa, as well as from every region of Great Britain—Ministers of State, Parliamentarians, jurists, industrial magnates, and divines—representatives of the finest intellectual flower and deepest yearnings of twenty millions of souls. Although the initiative of summoning the Convention was taken by our own section, the men who answered the call were men lifted high above the passions and rivalries of the immediate scene of conflict, and might have been trusted, if ever a tribunal of Conciliation deserved trust, to restore unity, cohesion, and self-respect to their race, not merely with the impartiality but with something of the sanctity of a sacred function.

On the other hand, Archbishop Croke was, of all Irishmen living, the man to crystallize and incarnate the longing of the race for peace. He had long withdrawn from participation in public affairs, in horror of the devastation the civil war had wrought in the social and religious life of the country, and doubtless was already beginning to falter under the first blows of the disease that was soon to bring his magnificent strength to the earth. To all our endeavours to rouse the old war-horse instinct in his breast, he would

answer, sadly shaking his head, "I have put up the shutters!" but once as he got out of the train at Thurles, after I had been giving him some inspiriting proof how sound and true the heart of the country still was, he repeated, "I have put up the shutters, but," he added with a gleam of roguish fun in his grey-blue eye, "but mind, I have never said I may not take them down again." *Evoe* for our purblind human gropings after one another's meanings! It seems certain now, little as we understood it then, that the great Archbishop had fixed upon the Race Convention as the day when, with a very little pressing, he might have "taken down the shutters." Had he only given us any clear and timely indication of how his thoughts were running, we should all have joyously acclaimed him as the ideal President of the Convention. "We are all sorry for Parnell," were the big hearty words with which he began the declaration against his continuance in the chairmanship wrung from him by a necessity which was to him a tragedy. There were no honest Parnellite hearts so seared that they would not have found a balm in words of peace from his lips. He was at the same time full of intellectual delight in the gifts and gratitude for the services of Mr. Healy, whom, under his favourite cognomen of "The Reverend Timothy," he would rally good-naturedly on his new-born fanaticism as a clerical champion. For Mr. Dillon as well he entertained a personal friendship, tempered indeed by increasing doubts of his capacity for leadership, and by a chilly sense of his lack of humour; ¹ while for myself, his own description of himself, in his letter to me to Boulogne, as "your staunchest and truest friend," was one that, to the last blessing he sent me from his deathbed, remained true unto the end. To men of Irish blood from abroad as well he would have spoken with a special fascination, for it was in the lusty air of the Colonies he had imbibed his robust faith in liberty and democracy.

But it had never once occurred to us that Dr. Croke could be roused from his lethargy to undertake a task of such pith and responsibility; and we had hailed with thank-

¹ "I asked John Dillon," he once told me, "to say a few inspiring words to the students of St. Patrick's College. He launched out into the platitudes of a Land League organizer hard up for adjectives to earn his week's pay. He chilled the boys and spoiled my dinner."

ful hearts the boldness of the young Bishop of Raphoe, in singling himself out as we believed from almost all his hierarchical brethren to place himself at our head at the Convention. What was my stupefaction, late on the evening before the Race Convention, to learn in the Imperial Hotel from one of Dr. Croke's dearest confidants among the priests of his archdiocese, the Rev. Michael Ryan (then, I think, Administrator at Murroe), that the Archbishop had come up to Dublin, and was staying at the house of his friend, the Archbishop of Dublin, at Drumcondra, and to receive from him an intimation that he desired to see me, and that in his opinion it would not be impossible to induce him to preside at the Convention? The subsequent story is told in the entry made in my diary at the time :

August 31, 1896.—A long consultation with Dr. O'D. An extraordinary piece of news reached me at the Imperial. Fr. Michael Ryan, of Murroe, told me Dr. C. was in town at the Archbishop's house, and intimated it would be well if Dr. O'D., D., and myself would visit him. It seems clear that it is the Convention that attracted him to Dublin. Father Michael hinted, more or less darkly, that it might be possible to induce him to preside. Dr. O'D. seemed to fear that, owing to the hostile influences at work, the only effect of our visit would be to convince him there was danger of the collapse of the Convention, which in his depressed frame of mind would only depress him further, whereas if all goes well it may cheer him up to his old vigour. I had a miserable doubt whether we were wise, but Dr. O'D. is our sheet-anchor, and his opinion is final.

The Race Convention the next day was an impressive success ; Bishop O'Donnell developed brave and charming qualities as a chairman and as an orator ; but the something consecrated was wanting which would have stirred the nation to its depths. Mr. Redmond and Mr. Healy resisted the entreaties of deputations of the American and Australian delegates to join the assembly, and even allowed their newspapers to bemire some of the most honoured of the strangers with imputations and suggestions worthy of the uncleanest days of the Kilkenny electioneering scenes. The Race Convention, nevertheless, conferred upon Mr. Dillon an authority and a mandate sufficiently matured and sufficiently overpowering to entitle him to act with indisputable warrant

as the nation's captain. Discouragement and disorganization had, perhaps, reached such a pitch that it was beyond the power of any man to inspire the country with new hope in the Parliamentary party, or even the Parliamentary party with any belief in itself. The issue of it all was that, beyond a few complimentary demonstrations in honour of our kindred from abroad, the Race Convention left no enduring traces in the public life of the country; the two minority sections and their newspapers fell to the old familiar work of general destruction and self-destruction; and even the majority gathered so little fresh confidence from their commission from the Convention that in a short while they sank once more submissively under the yoke of the four or five Messrs. Facing-both-ways who ruled their fate. It was still a long way to the foundation of the United Irish League; but from the inanity of the results of the Race Convention dated my conviction that salvation, if it was to come at all, must come from the people, and not from any of the three Parliamentary parties, and in fact could only come from ignoring their quarrels altogether and abandoning them to their own reflections, without, however, ever relinquishing my own belief that, if Mr. Dillon would only forget the character of partisan leader and throw himself with self-abnegation into the non-partisan struggle which was ready at his call for the poorest of his countrymen's most vital needs, he would be consulting most wisely for his own future, as well as for the country's.

When Mr. Gerald Balfour went to the Irish Office after the Home Rule overthrow of 1895, it was with a highly original programme, which, however he might disavow the description himself, was pithily summarized in the phrase, "Killing Home Rule with kindness." For the first time in the annals of Dublin Castle Government he determined to carry out great reforms notwithstanding that Ireland was free from agitation, and even because it was free from agitation. Some of us had sufficient faith in the indestructibility of the national sentiment to see in every fresh accession of popular power and prosperity, no matter whence it came, a new argument for completing the fabric of constitutional liberty. This was, indeed, so manifest to the

Irish enemies of Home Rule that they opposed Mr. Gerald Balfour's Land Act of 1896 and his County Government Act of 1898 with a hatred and fury which were soon turned upon the person of their author, and made the remainder of his stay in Ireland as disagreeable as the Nationalists had ever made the bed of a Coercionist Chief Secretary. Some of our friends, however, and notably Mr. Dillon, descried in Mr. Gerald Balfour's scheme for bestowing county government on the Irish people the same insidious plot against the national movement as they afterwards discovered in Mr. Wyndham's Act for the Abolition of Landlordism. The Land Bill of 1896 was sufficiently paltry to have justified a resolute Irish party in rejecting it without parley. Beyond a few trumpety modifications of the powers of the Congested Districts Board, the Bill contained no allusion whatever to the tremendous problem of "more land and better land for the people," which was soon to be the principal Irish concern of Governments and Parliaments, and it proposed to eternize the vicious landlord system instead of taking it up by the roots. Time proved the absurdity of Mr. Redmond's dictum that after the passing of that Bill "there was no longer an Irish Land question." But treading as he was among quicksands, Mr. Dillon was made to seem rather to dread the success of the Bill by attacking it as virulently as the Ulster Tories, while not feeling himself strong enough to declare for its rejection.

The same uncertainty and ambiguity attended his attitude to the Local Government Bill, and enabled Mr. Redmond to barb his own shafts against the majority party with the taunt that their policy had degenerated into one of making speeches on one side of every Irish Bill and voting on the opposite side.¹ Either he did not fully measure the power the Bill would throw into the national scale, or he apprehended that the people would be betrayed into giving their power tamely back into the hands of the landlords under the influence of the spirit of complacency towards the landlords displayed by Mr. Redmond and his friends throughout

¹ "The speech of the hon. member (Mr. Dillon) no doubt was an interesting one from one point of view, because it was another instance of the habit into which I am afraid the hon. gentleman is falling of speaking against a motion and voting for it."—(Mr. Redmond, March 21, 1898.)

those debates. Accordingly, while nobody could think of repudiating the Bill, Mr. Dillon inveighed against its provisions as "blackmail to the landlords," "a flagitious waste of public funds," because, following the unvarying tradition of Tory legislation, it bribed the landlords into the acceptance of the Bill by relieving them of half their payment for poor-rate with a correspondent relief of half the payment of the county cess to the tenants. He even committed himself to the somewhat thoughtless prediction that the tenants' portion of the rate relief would also be transferred to the landlords in the shape of increased rents. As a matter of fact, judicial rents as subsequently fixed for the second term, instead of being increased, were cut down by an average of 22 per cent.

Still less profitable to the national cause than Mr. Dillon's apparent jealousy of this great reform was Mr. Redmond's determination, proclaimed again and again amidst Unionist cheers, to preserve in the new County and Districts Councils the influence of the disfranchised landlord Grand Jurors and *ex-officio* Guardians.¹ Nor will it do for his apologists to suggest that, in his eloquent pleas for the admission of the landlords to a free share of the local government of their country, he was only anticipating by four years the happy union of classes made possible by the Land Conference of 1903. For the vivifying principle on which the landlords were welcomed under this latter instrument to good citizenship with all its privileges was that they should first cease to be landlords, and thus remove the

¹ Mr. Redmond's words were: "Whatever influence my friends and I have in Ireland will certainly be used to obtain for this scheme a fair and successful working. Our desire will be to work this Bill so that no man's politics or religion will be allowed to be a bar to him if he desires to serve his country on one of these new bodies." And again (February 21, 1898): "I have listened with the greatest possible sympathy to the appeal the right hon. gentleman (Mr. Gerald Balfour) made to the landlord class to assist in the proper working of this Bill; and more than that, I hope the appeal he has made to them will also be made by the friends and representatives of the people to the people to reciprocate that feeling. If this Bill is worked successfully I believe it will constitute an unanswerable argument for Home Rule, but I believe it cannot work successfully unless it is worked in a spirit of broadmindedness and toleration on both sides, and unless we have all classes working in perfect harmony, not upon narrow sectarian or political lines, but without any trace of political rancour for the good of Ireland." It was the All-for-Ireland programme, *minus* the abolition of landlordism, which alone makes the All-for-Ireland programme practicable.

central evil which made all common interest or affection among Irish classes impracticable, while under the Act of 1898 not only would the blight and fever of landlordism continue, but Mr. Redmond would give the landlords a new interest in retaining their territorial privileges since they would enjoy already and without any sacrifice the respect and influence in the government of the country which the Land Conference made the price of their consent to abolishing landlordism, with all its evil works and memories, altogether. Up to the time of his election to the chair of the reunited Irish Party in 1900, Mr. Redmond, in fact, consistently acted upon the absurd assumption that "there was no longer an Irish Land question," and openly advocated the re-establishment in power in the high places of the County Councils and District Councils of men who, by reason of that very bloodless victory, would lose one of the strongest of all motives for ceasing to be either landlords or anti-Nationalists.

What with the easy situation made for him in Parliament by the discordant war-whoops of the Irish factions, and the feeling beginning to spring up more and more widely among the young generation whose thoughts went to the revival of the Gaelic language and Gaelic pastimes, or the more material work of agricultural education, that the absence of political agitation and the helplessness of the political sectaries had its blessed side as well as its misfortunes for the country, Mr. Gerald Balfour's policy was shooting ahead with swelling sails when, as through the clefts of the mountains on Clew Bay without a warning cloud swoop down the squalls that dip the trembling top-sail in the waves, the whirlwind of the United Irish League burst out of the West athwart his craft. Like all men who strike out angrily, he both did too much and did too little. At a moment when outside three or four parishes the existence of the League was unknown, he sent down two special Resident Magistrates and the Assistant Inspector-General of Constabulary to Westport with a small army corps of special police, and by a panic-stricken speech of his own in Parliament and a still worse one of an over-zealous Crown solicitor in Westport, led to a ferocious police charge, in-

volving a tale of broken heads as well as merciless extra-police taxes. The result was to lay up a store of popular resentment against an utterly unwarranted injustice, and to give a monster advertisement to the new League.

He erred by omission as signally as he did by commission. Having been taunted in Parliament with letting me go unscathed while he punished my dupes, he had the indiscretion to say it was only because the Crown were unprovided with legal proof of the accuracy of the report of a speech of mine to which (as well as to an exhortation of Mr. Dillon to his hearers at the Westport meeting to "be ready at the call of their captains by day or night") he attributed the outbreak of the agitation. Had Mr. Balfour then and there followed up the campaign of his terrorists in Westport by removing me from the scene, it was not for a moment doubtful to me that he must have secured the extinction of the infant League. But the risk had to be run, and long experience of the fatuity of Coercionist Ministers had taught me that the surest way of determining them not to prosecute was to convince them that I courted and craved for a prosecution. Accordingly I announced straightway a meeting of the League at which I undertook to repeat *verbatim* for the convenience of the Government note-taker the speech on which Mr. Balfour had grounded his defence. It was one of those moments in which movements are made or marred. Mr. Dillon told me candidly he had made up his mind never to go to jail again, and tried with every argument of deep personal concern and affection to dissuade me from proceeding. "The country is too cowed," he urged. "They will, of course, put you in jail, and there will be an end of the whole thing. Nobody will mind and nobody will pity you." "All that," I replied, "is highly possible, but you and I know the best way of saving life or liberty in Ireland is not to be afraid to risk them. In any case, it is the last hope I can see of pulling things together, so here goes."

My trust in Mr. Balfour's knowledge of Ireland and myself was not belied. He made up his mind at any cost to disappoint my passion for martyrdom. In place of sending his reporter and securing his evidence, he proclaimed and suppressed the meeting *manu militari*. I sent

a formal intimation to Inspector-General Cameron that I intended to deliver the incriminated speech all the same at an indoor meeting of the League, and promised the police-reporter every accommodation in taking down my words. The Inspector-General sent me a courteous official acknowledgment but no reporter, and when we met in the hotel that evening, remarked with a knowing wink: "You did not think we were going to oblige you like that?" The baby League was saved from immolation. It was the official terrorists who marched off the field, humiliated and worsted. From that day forth they might as well have striven to suppress the incoming of a tidal wave.

CHAPTER VI

THE REUNIFICATION OF 1900

AS we touch, however lightly, upon the extension of the United Irish League from its native parish throughout the length and breadth of Ireland, it becomes increasingly difficult to avoid making the narrative a mainly personal one. If the truth is to be told, however, it cannot be otherwise. For the truth is that the organization which in a few years put an end to the split of 1890, created a new Irish party, obtained the assent of both English parties to the abolition of landlordism, the reinstatement of the evicted tenants and the affirmation of its programme of "more land and better land" for the congested population of the West, and which, by levelling the last barrier between Irish classes and sects, might long ago have solved the problem of domestic self-government only that those who originally opposed the new League afterwards did it the more evil turn of making it their own, was all but wholly the product of one man operating from a rural solitude in the remotest west, without any political party, without a newspaper, and without public funds. Month after month, while the League was struggling into life, fell upon his shoulders the formation of every branch, from parish to parish, and later on from county to county; his the duty of carrying on all the correspondence, of arranging for meetings in every minute detail, and of supplying the platform oratory himself, without the active aid of any politician of the first rank, or even of the second rank, in any of the three Parliamentary sections—nay, in face of the bitter hostility of two of them, and the scarcely less depressing neutrality of the third, as

well as under an incessant fire of shot and shell from a Coercion Government. As it turned out, it was this very detachment from the party factions and the fact that upon its head alone were directed the proclamations, baton charges, and prosecutions of Dublin Castle, which constituted the new League's surest passport to the popular heart. But it took many an aching and desperate hour before we could find a footing even in the adjoining Parliamentary constituency, not to speak of any neighbouring county or province, or indeed before we could make our voices heard at all from the depths of the well in which it appeared to be everybody's determination to smother our outcries.

At the very outset the life of the League was struck at by a police plot, by means of a forged letter purporting to come from the local head of the League to wile thoughtless country lads into an outrage, on the proposed scene of which, and at the hour named, two armed police patrols were lying in wait for them. The story of our attempts to drag the criminal to justice, and of how they were long foiled by the Crown officials' cynical device of taking his prosecution into their own hands, is one to thrill the most unimpressionable friend of Truth struggling to assert itself against terrific powers and engines ; nevertheless, in its terror of the law of libel, the *Freeman*, which in subsequent years of toy heroism found me to fall so lamentably short of its own revolutionary passion for "bloody noses and cracked crowns," carefully suppressed every speech or letter by which we strove to acquaint the country with the infamy, while every endeavour of mine to secure an exposure in the House of Commons proved equally unavailing, little though the Parliamentary sections could plead any more useful preoccupations, and by an odd irony, it was only in the House of Lords this disgraceful transaction was brought to light, thanks to the courageous initiative of Lord Coleridge, who had been horrified by an investigation of the facts on the spot.¹

¹ The silence in the House of Commons while we were making our solitary fight for our honour and lives as well as for the life of the League, is not the less painful by contrast with our Parliamentary friends' liberal activity subsequently in advertising the not more heinous crime of Sergeant Sheridan, who was detected and handed over to public execration by Mr. Wyndham himself, without any risk or initiative on the part of the Irish members.

After his first unlucky allusions to the exploits of League "captains" "by day or by night" (which were perhaps to some extent answerable for Mr. Gerald Balfour's fatal misconstruction of the objects and methods of the new movement), Mr. Dillon was not again seen on its platforms until it had overspread half a province. It began to be more and more painfully manifest that he regarded the extension of the United Irish League with dislike, and failed wholly to appreciate its potentialities in attracting Parnellites and anti-Parnellites once more to a common standard. My diary contains an entry of one of our innumerable consultations in Dublin, when he learned that the branches of the National Federation in the county of Sligo had with one voice resolved to constitute themselves branches of the United Irish League. "Another of our best counties lost!" he exclaimed, throwing up his arms despairfully in the air. "But," I said, "good heavens! what do you mean by lost? Have all those branches in the County Sligo contributed so much as £10 for the last twelve months or given the slightest evidence of real existence?" He confessed that the Federation was for all practical purposes non-existent, either in Sligo or elsewhere, yet could not be rallied out of his depression at the news that Sligo had shaken off its torpor to enter upon a career of fruitful activity with a definite and most noble object before it and in frank forgetfulness of all intestine divisions.¹

¹ The following is the entry in my diary :

"September 6, 1898.—Long consultation at D.'s with B. and Dt. as to the future of the movement. At first D. again threatened resignation, and, speaking of the resolution of the Sligo branches of the Federation to become branches of the United Irish League, threw up his hands and cried, 'Another of our best counties lost.' I asked had the Federation received £10 from County Sligo for the past twelve months. He admitted it had not, and that the Federation was in a state of total inanition. 'Then,' I asked, 'where is the misfortune of having it turned into a real and live organization?' Dt. strongly took this view, repeated his own feeling of contempt and aversion for 'the Party,' and agreed with me wholly that the United Irish League offers the only chance, such as it is, of arousing a spark of enthusiasm in Ireland or America. D. asked how far I proposed to extend the League. I said he need not be in the least alarmed—that I found it hard enough to get a footing in Mayo, and that in his own constituency not a single branch had yet been established although there was no trace of any live branch of the Federation there. He harked back upon the old cry that if he only had a fund the party would be all right. . . . Upon the whole, the result of the interview staves off any immediate resignation and creates a better feeling, but I left with a heart-breaking feeling of being alone to struggle against all the myriad difficulties of giving the League a chance, even in Mayo."

The only member of Parliament in the front rank (with the exception of Mr. Harrington) who extended a fatherly hand to the United Irish League in the first twelve months of its struggle for existence was Mr. Davitt. Horrified by the ravages made by the dissensions of the previous eight years in all that had given the national cause its charm for generous minds—perhaps not much less perturbed by the easy success of the priests at the country polls than by the insensate hootings and insults which were so often his own fate in the streets of Dublin—above all, filled with an inexpressible disgust at the scenes of personal demoralization he was forced to witness at close quarters in Westminster, the inevitable lees and dregs of a cup of Irish dissension, and seeing no remedy anywhere in bickering Parliamentary coteries or in a country that seemed to have lost all faith or hope in its destiny, he beheld with something of the child's simple wonder and delight the first stirrings of a new and vigorous life in his native Mayo, and as the first symptoms of dispersing darkness broke into an unmistakable colour and glow, hailed the dawn with an impulsive ardour all his own. With the candour of one whose views of national policy had seldom quite coincided with my own, he told me straightly that he saw in the new League the only hope of saving either the party or the country, and owned that he had expressed to Mr. Dillon his wonder that he had not seen his way to giving it more active assistance, adding, however, expressions of commiseration for Mr. Dillon's own innumerable discouragements, with an unmanageable party and an indifferent country. Observation of Mr. Dillon's aloofness was, indeed, beginning to attract popular comment to such a pitch that his most influential friend among the priests of his own constituency felt bound to make him aware that the people of East Mayo were beginning to remark that theirs was the only division of Mayo in which no branch of the new League was yet started, and unless he moved could not be much longer restrained from setting to work to start it themselves.

Proceeding from humble beginnings, we had so far confounded the prophecy that the League would never pass the bounds of Mayo that after eighteen months' labours we were in a position to summon a Provincial Convention at

Claremorris in the autumn of 1899 to settle the constitution of the organization for the province of Connaught. Two nights before the Convention Mr. Dillon and Mr. Davitt paid me a visit at Mallow Cottage to discuss my draft constitution and arrange the order of procedure. To my amazement Mr. Dillon took exception to the very first clause, defining our national claim to be "the largest measure of national self-government which circumstances may put it in our power to obtain," and declared flatly that, as the leader of a constitutional party, he could not accept a programme of separation. With that turn for misjudging any unfamiliar situation which was growing to be his settled habit, he had actually conceived the suspicion that the new League was designed by Mr. Davitt and myself with the view of abandoning constitutional Home Rule in the interests of the physical-force movement, as later on he, with hardly grosser absurdity, discovered my design to be to abandon it in the interest of the landlords! Throughout the prolonged discussions of that evening, Mr. Davitt exercised unweariedly those captivating powers of conciliation with which, in his best hours, nobody was more richly gifted, making no disguise of his own conviction that in the United Irish League lay the one hope of breathing life into the dead bones of the movement, and on the other hand full of the tenderest consideration for Mr. Dillon's perplexities and discouragements as leader of a Parliamentary party for whom Mr. Davitt's own contempt was unmeasured. It was largely due to his influence that Mr. Dillon did not persist in registering his dissent at the Convention on the following Monday. The compromise we arrived at upon his suggestion was the somewhat incoherent one of retaining the claim for "the largest measure of national self-government," omitting the qualifying words which would have made the acceptance of a moderate system of self-government proportioned to the practical necessities of the country a patriotic duty.¹

¹ Oddly enough, the *ipsissima verba* which Mr. Dillon contested so hotly on the eve of the Claremorris Convention were afterwards accepted by him and his colleagues as the first article of the terms on which Mr. Healy, Sir Thomas Esmonde, Mr. John O'Donnell, Mr. Sheehan, Mr. A. Roche, and myself were induced to rejoin the party in 1908, and which now form part of the Irish Party's official definition of the national claim.

The essential point in which the constitution of the United Irish League differed from that of all previous national organizations was that it made the people of each constituency autonomous and self-governing within their own bounds, while the invariable rule theretofore had been to make the central authorities in Dublin the sovereign power, and reduce local initiative or liberty to a shadow. Like a good many others bred to the old bureaucratic traditions, Mr. Dillon was vehemently opposed to the innovation and predicted that all sorts of clashings and chaotic rebellions on the part of the local governing bodies and the destruction of all national authority would be the inevitable result. Events totally belied these prognostications. The free play and wholesome vigour of local initiative turned out to be the chief secret of the amazing success of the League, and its decline dated from the day when the believers in the old traditions succeeded in reducing the robust power of the people on the Divisional Executives to their old condition of subjection to the Dublin wire-pullers and their organizers.

All these things, however, did not then nor for long after lead me to suspect how deep the line of division between us, politically much less personally, was beginning to be. My principal regret was for his failure to realize all that an active and cordial participation in the movement might mean in redeeming his own misfortunes as a leader, as well as in the revivification of the country's hopes, and old experience inspired me with a buoyant confidence that the League had only to go on for a while proving its true character in action to convert his first impressions of strangeness and mistrust into open-minded and ultimately enthusiastic acceptance. As a matter of fact he returned a changed man from a mass meeting which he attended with Mr. Davitt in Ballinrobe the following day, and at which he first realized the intensity and irresistible momentum of the new League ; and when, twenty-four hours later, we found ourselves face to face with the Provincial Convention in Claremorris, whose dimensions and character almost took my own breath away with wonder, all other feelings vanished from the minds of us all except one of thankfulness and rapture in presence of this incredible spectacle of the foes of ten years' bitter wars now

marching all one way, "in mutual and beseeching ranks," radiant with the life and hope of a national resurgence.

But Mr. Davitt was not to be with us long. In a transport of indignation at the iniquity of the Boer War, and still more at the shame brought on the Irish name by the depths of demoralization to which the more ill-balanced of his Parliamentary colleagues were sinking, he amazed the country by throwing up his seat for South Mayo, and at an hour's notice departing for the theatre of the South African War, as it was quaintly announced at the time "for the benefit of his health." His disappearance was a heavy blow both for Mr. Dillon at the head of his discredited followers in Westminster and for us in Mayo. It was the first test of the reality of the new League's grip on the country, and the ordeal of fire had to be gone through under circumstances of peculiar severity. We determined to offer to the electors Mr. John O'Donnell, the first and for several years the only efficacious organizer of the United Irish League, who was then lying in Castlebar Jail as the result of a Coercion prosecution.¹

The enemies of the new movement, too doubtful of themselves to challenge his election on the merits of their own factions, hit upon a much more formidable way of complicating the issue by an alliance with the physical-force men for the election of Major M'Bride, himself a Mayo man, who was at the moment fighting in the ranks of the Irish Brigade in the Boer service. We found ourselves con-

¹ Mr. O'Donnell, then a stripling barely out of his teens, was in his own person a living embodiment of the western peasant's claims. He was the son of a small farmer living on four acres of mountain land in the midst of a rich grass country stripped of its population for many miles around, and received no education except such as he could obtain by trudging daily to the nearest town through the winter rains and winds. His extraordinary success as a propagandist of the United Irish League was doubtless largely due to the reflection his unstudied eloquence and force of character must have inspired as to what might under happier circumstances be made of the congested population of whose privations as well as sterling qualities he was a sample. The peasant boy attained to the honourable position of Secretary of the United Irish League, which he had done more than any man to build up into one of Ireland's historic entrenched camps. He had the still rarer honour of freely resigning the office with its emoluments as soon as the policy of Conciliation had been repudiated by the new masters of the League. There are few things more discreditable, even in the mire ways of politics, than the avidity with which, even after this sacrifice, envious eyes pursued him, not only in his freedom of thought as a member of Parliament, but in the private business by which he earned his children's bread.

fronted with the odium of having to withstand what seemed an easy and popular way of giving expression to the all but delirious enthusiasm in the Boer cause which was then convulsing Ireland—even of giving a buffet to one who was actually in arms against the power of England—while arraying against the new League the mysterious and ever-dreaded forces of “the extreme men.” Major M’Bride’s candidature was at the same time one of those airy nothings of so little practical import as to enable every category of the enemies of the United Irish League—Lord Sligo’s bailiffs, and rent-office clerks, and the grazier monopolists of tens of thousands of acres of rich pastures, as well as the emissaries and the newspapers both of the Redmondites and Healyites—to join hands with “the extreme men” who despised their allies and whom their allies detested. The one member of Parliament who had openly joined the League allowed himself to be so daunted by the combination that, upon the evening of the day on which he was the principal speaker at a Convention in Claremorris which proclaimed Mr. O’Donnell’s candidature, having learned that the Dublin chiefs of the Physical Force Party had arrived to begin the campaign in favour of Major M’Bride, he departed for his home by the first train and could not be induced by any entreaties of mine to return to the field until the election was over.

It was a cruel dilemma, but luckily one in which there could be no faltering. While my hatred of the brutality of the attack upon the liberties of the Boers and my admiration for their heroism which cost England as dear as all her wars upon Napoleon were as strong as a still dearer duty to Ireland would allow, there was nothing in which I thought the example of the Boers better worth our imitation than the stubborn sense with which they concentrated all their strength upon their own country and the derision with which they would have received a suggestion to divert any portion of their commandos to a sentimental expedition in aid of the United Irish League. Nor did I doubt that, the veil of cloudy romance once torn aside, the honesty and good sense of the people, and not least of those who would as readily give their blood as their votes for Ireland, would be sufficiently

keen to appraise the sincerity of the combination which brought the rent-warners and the "bullock-men" of the grazing ranches and the discord-mongers of the Parliamentary factions flocking to the standard of physical force in their enthusiasm for the independence of South Africa. Never was confidence in the moral courage of the people better repaid. Without a member of Parliament or a newspaper, or, as it would seem, a man with a broad-cloth coat on our side, and without the expenditure of a sixpence upon mercenary assistance—with every apparent power and domination, political and territorial, open and occult, against us—a wave of passionate purpose and inspiration swept through the cabins of South Mayo, in the remotest mountain holds around Lough Mask. The polling day was one unbroken rain-pour from morning until dark, but when the ballot-boxes were opened it was found that South Mayo had, by an overpowering majority, chosen her representative from his cell in the jail of Castlebar, and to all the politicians whom it concerned, it was made plain that there had arisen a power for which the small smartnesses of Parliamentary combinations had no terrors and against which the old factionist shouts, Parnellite or anti-Parnellite, had wholly lost their spell.

One other stand was made by the Parliamentary factions against the rising tide. We have seen that Mr. Redmond, who, in the character of the extreme patriot, scoffed at the Gladstone Home Rule Bill and ranged himself under the flag of physical force in South Mayo, was at the same time in the House of Commons inviting the landlords to retake possession of the local government of Ireland, unconditionally, and under circumstances in which they would have everything to receive and nothing to give in return. As soon as the Local Government Act of 1898 came into force, he and his followers made a desperate attempt to give effect to the invitation. His *homo regius* (Mr. Patrick O'Brien) was despatched to Roscommon to express the hope that "the men of Roscommon had not been bitten by the Unity dog" and to muster them for the election to the County Council of the O'Connor Don—a Catholic of ancient Gaelic lineage, but a landlord who, like most of the Catholic Gaelic landlords, had earned for himself in Connaught a particularly odious reputation for the

hard-fistedness and hard-heartedness which made the expropriation of his class the first condition of happiness for the country. The O'Connor Don, with the aid of a strong menial retinue of his own and a not too scrupulous use of the name of Parnell in a particularly Parnellite district, succeeded in breaking up the meetings of the tenant-farmer candidate of the United Irish League and out-topping him at the polls; and it seemed hard to tell where the process of drenching the new representative bodies with landlord influence might end. Mr. Healy's newspaper and influence took the same bent. Mr. Dillon's majority party either felt themselves too irresolute or too uninfluential to promulgate any decided policy of their own. He himself took no part whatever in the eventful conflict. The country found itself without any firm guidance from its representatives on an issue profoundly affecting its hopes of Home Rule and the abolition of landlordism; for what was to become of the one or the other, if the County Councils and District Councils, scarcely if at all second in representative authority to the Parliamentary electorate, were to be neutralized if not actually dominated by anti-national territorial influences, admitted and welcomed by Ireland's own representatives, who, indeed, proclaimed that "there was no longer an Irish Land question," and claimed not the smallest guarantee for the territorialists ceasing to be anti-Nationalists or to be landlords?

For the new League there could be no room for balancings or for doubt. It was a question whether the new system of local government was to be made a powerful engine both for Home Rule and the abolition of landlordism, or a fatal barrier to the accomplishment of either the one or the other. Wherever the organization of the United Irish League was spread, we chose our own candidates from the sound, rough-hewn, local democratic quarries and made open war upon every attempt to open the citadels of local government to impenitent anti-Nationalists or landlords who were to be landlords still. Mr. Davitt and myself carried the fiery cross wherever the coalition for the denationalization of the County and District Councils showed its head, from Leitrim in the west to Cork in the south. We had not unfrequently to make head against scenes of rowdiness and demoralization

worthy of the most unlovely hours of the split, but by this time the Nationalists of the blood-stock, if I may so say, on both sides had recovered the mastery from the dissension-mongers whom the boiling passions of 1890 had brought to the top, and by the time the elections were over, the nationalization of local government in Ireland was all but universally and immutably decreed. The candidates of the United Irish League headed the polls in twenty-six out of the twenty-eight county divisions of Mayo, and in all the vast extent of the county of Cork not a single County Councillor who was not a Nationalist was returned.

The course of events might have been much and happily changed if a proposition made while the United Irish League was still in the main a Connaught organization aiming at a reform specially appertaining to Connaught had been accepted. The facts of the congestion problem, now on everybody's lips since the Report of the 'Dudley Royal Commission, were at that time not only point-blank denied by the Government, but, except by the dumb population immediately affected, were wholly unknown over the greater part of Ireland, and not much better known to Irish politicians in general. To most of those who will now rattle off as commonplaces the familiar litany of the western congestion question, I was then speaking in a strange language when I asserted that Connaught was not by nature a poor but a rich province, and put forward the recolonization of Connaught as a programme; they gazed on me with a lack-lustre eye even in my first efforts to bring to the public knowledge the evils of the monopoly of "the eleven months system." It was evident that by some striking method the ignorance of Governments and politicians must be dispelled. The governing body of our still provincial League proposed to do so by inviting a Committee of Inquiry, composed of all the members of Parliament for Connaught constituencies (who then included two landlord representatives, Hon. Martin Morris and Colonel Nolan), together with the members of the Congested Districts Board, to make a detailed public investigation on the spot under the presidency of Mr. Dillon, into the extent of the necessity for replacing or enlarging the existing holdings of the

congested cottier population and to ascertain the breadth of pasture lands within easy reach available for redistribution in the public interest. We, in fact, proposed to do in 1899 when the demands both of the poor "congests" and of the land-owners could have been satisfied with the minimum of State aid or of public disturbance what the Dudley Commission nobly strove to do eight years afterwards against a rising land market, and in a country lashed up to wilder expectations. As a Connaught member himself, and the head of a great party, nobody could have objected to Mr. Dillon's occupying the chair at the Committee's inquiries. The two landlord representatives were willing to do their part; Lord Dudley was the Lord-Lieutenant. There was substantial reason to know that Mr. Wyndham, who had come to the Chief Secretaryship full of inexperienced good-will, and possibly alive to Mr. Gerald Balfour's mistake in warring upon the new League and its programme as the incarnation of all mischief in a happy and contented land, was not at all averse to joining in the proposed investigation and would certainly have opposed no obstacle to unofficial members of the Congested Districts Board doing so on their own initiative. Whether indeed the Chief Secretary willed it or no, it is beyond doubt that the two members of the Congested Districts Board who commanded most public confidence—Most Rev. Dr. O'Donnell and Father Denis O'Hara, P.P.—would have felt it a duty to stand by Mr. Dillon in a Committee of Inquiry of which he would be the chairman.

Only one objection came from any side; but it was a fatal one, for it came from Mr. Dillon himself. He was as unaccountably alarmed by the new proposal as by every other development of the United Irish League. He apprehended that the sittings of the Committee would degenerate into a campaign of boycotting and outrage, that the Congested Districts Board would not dream of touching the Committee, and that before it had held many sittings it would be sure to be suppressed by an order under the Coercion Act and its members clapped into prison; and he point-blank declined to run such a risk or to make himself responsible for the proceedings of such a Committee. In vain I represented to him that his apprehensions were

founded on a total misconception of the nature of the proposed inquiry and of my object; that the presentation of the shocking truth as to the unnatural conditions of life in the west and the easy remedy, far from being intended to stir up turbulence for mere love of turbulence, was on the contrary suggested as the only means, short of going to all necessary extremities of violence, to hammer the realities of the situation into the official head; and I offered to undertake the responsibility of being the first witness before the Committee myself, in order to inculcate upon popular opinion the proper limitations of the inquiry. In vain, it was pointed out that, even if our news as to Mr. Wyndham's attitude was at fault, the friendliness of Bishop O'Donnell and Father O'Hara and possibly of more than one other independent member of the Congested Districts Board could be with certainty depended upon; and that even if Mr. Dillon's worst alarms were to be justified, the suppression with an armed hand of all attempts to establish in an ordered way the truth as to a national scandal of the first magnitude would be the best of all justifications for whatever ruder measures we might be driven to take in order to make the truth insuppressible. Mr. Dillon pleaded the pressure of other responsibilities, did not refuse to be an individual member of the Committee, if it should be formed, but was not to be convinced into going an inch further. A Committee of Connaught members lacking his cordial concurrence would have been, of course, congenitally doomed to failure. We had to abandon the project with heavy hearts and with it to adjourn for probably ten years at the least the regeneration of Ireland's most stricken province, and in the meantime to accumulate in the way of a settlement a bitter account of disappointments, turmoils, mutual wrongs and exasperations.¹

Our idyll in Mallow Cottage, as may be easily surmised, had long before been cut untimely short. We had fallen quite back into the old round of feverish days and sleepless nights, in which the only lucid intervals, so to say, were the

¹ Mr. Dillon's dread at that time of extreme measures which were never dreamed of is in singular contrast with his advocacy of "the old methods" of violence and passion in after years, when he alone stood between the country and a peaceful solution of all its troubles.

visits of a small but well-loved circle of Irish friends or of an occasional benighted English wayfarer, some comrade in the olden wars. The most notable of the former were the Archbishop of Cashel and Mr. Davitt. The life of the war-worn Felon and Tribune (he would have been prouder of the first title than of the latter) had been wonderfully sweetened of late years by domestic joys. He would often recall to me one dismal Christmas Eve when we were both lodgers in the same hotel in Dublin, and when meeting at our solitary dinner in the empty coffee-room, his brow dark with the thunderclouds now happily lifted, he vowed he would never see another Christmas as an unmarried man. In his sunnier hours Mr. Davitt was one of the most captivating of companions, combining many of the charms of a child with those of one of the most masculine of men. He witnessed the outgrowth of the new movement with the simple-hearted wonder of one who had long despaired of seeing the inward wars righting themselves in his own lifetime, and he regarded himself as having definitely passed, as he would put it, "from the fighting line into the reserves." After a day's sailing on our "wild bay of breakers," he would weave a day-dream of taking a house in our neighbourhood and settling down for life in a district which he dearly loved and where he was no less beloved.¹ He would admit, with a frankness affecting to the verge of painfulness, the mistakes of his public life, among them his revolt against Parnell's attempt to transfer the Irish vote in Britain to the Tories at the General Election in 1885, and his underestimate of that great man's usefulness to Ireland. He would own with a groan and an indulgent smile the cranky character of many of the friends he had the ill-fortune to attract to his doctrines of nationalization of the land; and would chaff himself unmercifully on the ill-luck sure to attend everything he was concerned in, observing that anybody with a grudge against England had only to transfer a sheaf of British Consols to his name to ensure the immediate downfall of Imperial credit. Anybody listening to the ex-

¹ "There is not a wave around this coast that would drown you, Mr. Davitt," cried one of the rowers in a canvas currach one day when the sea was running mountains high outside Killery Bay.

pressions of wonder with which he then beheld the United Irish League evolving order out of anarchy and protested that, even if he believed me to be wrong, he should keep his opinion to himself so long as my shoulders were able to bear the burden, would have found it difficult to anticipate a time when, under clearer skies, he would recover the old headstrong confidence in his own judgment. Mr. Davitt's mobility, if it had its provoking uncertainties, had its own irresistible charm, and was absolutely free from malice. As Troilus said of his heroic brother, "he had a vice of mercy in him," which, once when he had undergone the squalid horrors of "a suppressed meeting" to denounce a monopolist who held 5000 of the most bounteous acres of Mayo unpeopled save by his shepherd and his dog, led him to return to me the next day with the announcement that he was smitten with a certain pang for the sorrows of the boycotted "big bullock-man," and had wound up the day's campaign by joining him in a glass of punch at his own table—to the consternation of our own hard-pressed friends and, it must be admitted, to my own.¹ On his last visit to Mallow Cottage we climbed to the top of Croagh Patrick together, and, on the descent, in the schoolboy frolicsomeness of his heart, he would, in defiance of my warnings, insist upon bounding down the declivity of loose rocks and tangled scrub with the agility of a young mountain goat. We got to the bottom with unbroken necks, but for the next two days he lay in bed with aching bones. "That is the last time I will ever try to get to the top of Croagh Patrick," he said, with a compunctious groan. It was, indeed, the last time he ever saw the Holy Mountain.

A still more treasured guest, because one surrounded in my eyes with a halo almost from the first dawn of consciousness, without a moment's shadow or change throughout nearly half a century of the world's choppings and changings,

¹ He was so incapable of resisting any appeal of human wretchedness that as he told me he was once, while sitting on the terrace of a café on the Paris Boulevards, approached by the unhappy Oscar Wilde with the hesitating shyness of one who had grown not unaccustomed to be repulsed. Without hesitation Mr. Davitt put out his hand to the fallen man of genius, and had him to luncheon in the adjoining restaurant, and talked over old times with very much more cordiality than he would have shown if his guest were still in the height of his English glory. It was an act of charity which St. Francis of Assisi himself might have envied him.

was the Archbishop. He would come to us for the one pleasure of an unembarrassed chat, with so little care for the scenery that he would arrive by preference in the gloom of a boisterous winter, and needing so little in the way of entertainment that I remember a run of luck for his horse *Numéro quatre* at the *Petits Chevaux* board would work him into as high a delight as if he had broken the bank at Monte Carlo. He would sew on his own shirt-buttons or a patch on his soutane with a skill which he never failed to exhibit for the admiration of my wife, and he, the most prodigally generous of men, would proudly hand around his broad-brimmed episcopal hat which he had preserved shining, by occult arts of his own, since the year 1862 or thereabouts. He was the most unceremonious of mankind. Once when the hotel landau arrived at the door for a drive—an ancient fabric which drove the Judges of Assize in state a century before, with an ancient coachman, “Patsy,” who, it seemed, might well have been the driver of the dead Justices and Sheriffs in those distant days—Patsy, in striving, with a large stone, to open the roof of the carriage, as the day was fine, contrived to unhinge one of the doors. “Oh then! oh then! What in the world will we do with his Reverence now?” groaned Patsy, scratching his ancient poll. “Nothing easier, Patsy,” said the Archbishop, with one robust kick knocking out the remaining door of the landau. “There you have as pretty a victoria as you could wish for now.” He loved better to be a cause of wit in a passing tramp, or to “draw out” some primitive country priest, than to be witty himself; but at the fire, or at the dinner-table, little though he tasted its material enjoyments, he would bubble over with anecdotes and fun as naturally as a mountain brook must needs ripple down the valley;¹ often of droll episodes in his

¹ Mr. Harrington was once complaining to him of the incorrigible obstinacy of one of his priests, Father H——, a man of honesty and courage, but without eyes or ears for the existence of this practical world. “Is it H——?” cried the Archbishop. “Yerra, man, H—— would differ with God Almighty on a question of principle.” Dr. Croke, when a young priest, was one day dining with an excellent parishioner, after he had been delivering a powerful sermon on the torments of hell. “Why then, now, Doctor,” the host insinuatingly suggested, “were you really in earnest to-day? Surely hell is not altogether as bad as you told us!” “Indeed, then, it is, my friend,” was the reply, “and a good deal worse.” “Doctor,” declared the parishioner stoutly, “I don’t believe a word of it. No constitution could stand it.”

episcopal visitations, often of his escalading the walls of the Irish College in Paris to see how Liberty was faring at the barricades in '48, in the famous *journées de Février*, or of his Colonial days when he lent his cathedral pulpit to the Protestant Bishop, or the Protestant Bishop lent him his (I really forget which); often also—so often that he plainly intended me some day to tell the tale—of his historic visit to the Vatican *ad audiendum verbum*. In politics, His Grace still “kept up the shutters,” but he had from the first symptoms of vitality in the United Irish League sent me more than one public message of good cheer in the lonely struggle, and he loved to hear every detail of our reviving activities, much as the old King Priam would climb the watch-tower of Ilium to see the young men arm and go forth upon the battle-plain. The last year in which we got the joyful message promising a visit, the shadows were lengthening fast, and instead of receiving the bulk and big assemblance of the great Irishman himself, we received a photograph simply inscribed “✠ T. W. C., 1901,” which explained with tragic eloquence why we need expect him no more. The giant figure was still fairly erect, and an unconquerable gleam of the old drollery in the corners of the eyes, but it was the face of a man bravely but mournfully looking death in the face, and already beginning to totter under its blows.

Those angels' visits, however, were the only purple patches in an existence which was now fallen back into the old wasting round—the never-ending fever of brain and nerve—of the fights against the Castle powers of darkness under Mr. Foster from 1880 to 1883, under Earl Spencer from 1883 to 1885, and under Mr. Balfour from 1887 to 1890, with the additional element of perils from my own nation now thrown in. For, although the names or the quarrels of the rival Parliamentary factions were never mentioned from our platforms—perhaps, indeed, for that very reason—the hostility of some of them and their determination at all hazards to gall the newly-healed wounds of the country grew more desperate than ever. As a last device to draw our fire, Mr. Redmond's *Independent* actually charged that the first and indeed only considerable sub-

scription received by the United Irish League during the first two years of its agitated existence (one transmitted by the *Irish World* through Mr. Davitt) had been misappropriated. The *Daily Nation's* genial way of striking at me was to make insinuations (happily esteemed in Mayo of a character even more comical than detestable) as to the motives of my interest in a poor widow Sammon, whose heroic defence of her houseful of orphans and their mountain hut had given the immediate signal for the foundation of the League. The *Freeman*, indeed, gave fair publicity to our proceedings, subject to a censorship which ruthlessly "blacked out" every definite allusion to the police plot which had all but strangled the infant League in bloodshed and dishonour, and every allegation to the discomfort of landgrabbers or ranchers in which a sharp attorney might scent matter for an action for libel. I had actually to give written guarantees indemnifying the *Freeman* for defending an action in which the plaintiff counted himself only too happy to have time to fly from the indignation of a London judge and jury, and, in another instance, for publishing the undisputed facts relative to the grabbing by a rich Mayo foretaller of a tract of pasture-land which the Congested Districts Board were in course of purchasing for the enlargement of the tiny holdings on its borders. Even an excess of caution on the part of a great newspaper in such times and in conflict with such formidable interests would be rather commendable than culpable, were it not that the journal so sensitively cautious about exposing itself to the fire of the landgrabber, the bullock-man, or the Crown official then, when the future of the country depended upon men being found to stand up to them, eye to eye, took the lead in reproaching me with milky gentleness in later days under a friendly Liberal Government when to assail the landgrabber or the big grazier became one of the least costly forms of heroism.

If such was the Nationalist attitude in the House of Commons and the Press, it is not difficult to pardon Mr. Gerald Balfour for believing that he need not stop at trifles in affrighting the people of the west with bayonet charges and prosecutions and racking them with extra-police taxes, but might safely issue an order that the Congested Districts

Board must put "at the bottom of the list" every estate in which the United Irish League concerned themselves. At the outset, indeed, the chief officer of the Board informed one of the most influential clergymen in Mayo that the Board would do nothing whatever for any parish in which a branch of the United Irish League was allowed to be established. There was only one way of putting down official intimidation like this. It was by establishing a branch of the League in every parish throughout the province, and thus presenting the Board with the alternative either of eating its words or of ceasing to exist. It was not long before the remedy was applied, and the threat more or less gracelessly dropped. But, what with the desperation of a great grazing class fighting for their broad acres, the sullen dislike of the gombeen village shopkeepers who too often had fallen into the habit of recovering their usurious debts by appropriating the holdings of their poor debtors, the perfect frenzy of the section (it is of good omen to know a small one) of the Constabulary who sympathized, in good or ill faith, with the heroes of the Mulrany police plot, and the encouragement they received from the rigour of the Government repressive measures and the jibes and shafts directed against us in the Nationalist Press, while on the other side was arrayed no force except the sympathy of the poorest of the poor and the general national instinct that we were in the right, the odds did, indeed, seem depressing and the battle an uphill one. Threatening letters and post-cards of a character that in the *dossier* of a Coercionist Minister would make the flesh of the British public creep, became a regular contribution to my letter-bag, and even one fairly habituated to discount the value of black looks and of coffins in the decoration of private correspondence, may be forgiven some doubt whether the cowardly savagery which went thus far would not have gone further, only for a certain skill I was known to have acquired with the revolver and the reputation of the two faithful Mount St. Bernards which guarded our midnight rest. So, at all events, the long ordeal went forward, year after year; correspondence varied enough to occupy all the hours of a national Father Confessor; collisions, alarums, and surprises by night and day, on the hills and market-places and in the

law courts ; the anxieties of a season of bitter distress (one may proudly hope, the last in which the word Famine will have any practical meaning in Ireland) rendered all the more humiliating by the usual official persistency in denying it up to the last moment ; added to the rest, the cares of founding a weekly newspaper to supply the gaps made by the Press censorship,¹ open-air speeches here, there and everywhere, in the merciless rains and storms of the western winters, generally followed by a cold, and, as I persevered, by a pleuritic attack ending, whenever some special crisis was successfully over, with a complete breakdown and a flight for the pinewoods of Arcachon, or the breezy cliffs of Biarritz, or a bath of the golden Algerian sun ; after which a return to the fighting ring, with whatever stock of health could be stored up, and so *da capo*. The one comforting reply to the rebellious whisperings of flesh or spirit was, in a world of so much brave endeavour and inscrutable suffering, to be able to bear one's honest share of the buffets.

And now a curious thing happened. Without any ostensible cause and at a moment when the country least expected it, and indeed paid least attention to their proceedings, the three Parliamentary sections did what the country had done long before them and reunited their forces. I never doubted that, if safety was to come at all, it was the country that must save the party, rather than look for safety itself to a body of politicians in which all that was best was strengthless and all that was worst supreme. Nor was there ever any fear but that, once it was made clear on which side stood public favour and success, the bulk of the Parliamentary parties—good easy men, who only wanted their minds made

¹ *The Irish People* was established on September 16, 1899, on the urgent advice of Mr. T. P. O'Connor, and largely on his promise to become a contributor. Ironically enough, his only contribution was a violently libellous article which was made one of the principal subjects of my cross-examination by his allies of the *Freeman's Journal* in the Limerick action of 1906, it having for the moment escaped my recollection to whom my supposed delinquency was really due. After devoting myself with the usual excess for the first few months to setting the paper on its legs, I had to abandon it wholly to the control of a young journalist, of more fire than knowledge, for whom the two battle-cries "A fight to a finish!" and "Down with the grabber!" were the beginning (and end) of wisdom in Irish affairs. I scarcely half-a-dozen times afterwards entered the office, and seldom even read the contents of a paper from which almost every controversial weapon of any force against me was extracted by my young gentleman's latest employers in my Limerick cross-examination.

up for them—would follow by the sure instinct by which the swallows follow the summer. The country had made up their minds for them with a vengeance. So far as the disinterested masses on both sides were concerned, the bitterness of ten years before was washed with Lethe and forgotten. Mr. Redmond had been warned from the beginning by his only influential supporter in the West (Mr. John FitzGibbon of Castlereagh)¹ that he must either make the best of the new movement, or it would submerge and swallow him. He had received still more serious admonestation on his own platforms and in his own presence from the two most respected men in his Parliamentary following—Mr. James O'Kelly, M.P., who was one of the earliest to throw himself into the United Irish evangel, and Mr. Pierce O'Mahony, the only Protestant member who had stood fast by Parnell and in consequence had lost his seat in Meath. His daily organ had sunk into inextricable financial embarrassments. His organization, the National League, had ceased to meet at all. He was a general whose soldiers, officers, and even a good part of his staff had silently folded their tents. The result of his experiments at the South Mayo election and at the County Council elections had finally convinced him that almost every follower of his worth preserving had been "bitten by the Unity dog."

Mr. Redmond's eagerness for peace while terms were still debatable was quickened by the course of events among the followers of Mr. Dillon. Mr. Davitt's withdrawal from the majority party in despair and disgust was the final blow which made it impracticable for Mr. Dillon and would probably have made it impracticable for any man to continue long at the helm of a party without funds, without any appreciable influence in Parliamentary affairs, and so uninfluential as to be almost forgotten in Ireland. After his election to the chair at the opening of the session of 1900, he announced his resignation of the office and the majority party thereafter dragged along a leaderless existence. He had not communicated his determination to me, although we were in constant and most intimate

¹ Afterwards a ringleader in the cattle-driving campaign, and now a member of the Congested Districts Board.

correspondence ; but as I was not a member of Parliament his reserve was one of which I had perhaps no title to complain, if, indeed, anybody could be surprised that depression had at last asserted its influence after so unbroken a series of mischances and crosses within and without the party. He had with so much obstinacy turned his eyes away from the sun-bright prospect an active participation in the new movement would have opened for him, that his resignation created little surprise or effect in Ireland. He took another step, the effect of which, as it afterwards turned out, he had not very accurately measured. Mr. Dillon had never ceased to be sincerely solicitous for peace with the Parnellites, and, not yet fully realizing that the non-Parliamentary Parnellites had already cheerfully and without any formal pourparlers sunk their particularism in the rush and broad sweep of the new movement, made a further bid for peace by a resolution binding the majority party, in case of a reunion, to elect as their chairman a Parnellite member of Parliament ; that is to say, one of the minority of 9, who for ten years had resisted every overture to common action.

In these circumstances Mr. Redmond was not likely to hesitate any longer before closing with the good fortune which opened to him a triumphal road out of a position of entanglement and political isolation from which there was no other possible issue, while with Mr. Dillon's disappearance the Healyite intransigence disappeared as well. The three parties met and a pact for their reunification was signed and sealed. It is probable—nay certain—that the panic-stricken coalition of the Parliamentary factions, in view of the General Election, and without any settled programme, prevented the vigour and free public control which had regenerated the popular organization from working out a similar reformation of the Parliamentary party. Had the process of teaching the people their own strength and the use of it gone on for a while longer, the constituencies would have dispassionately and without opposition winnowed the national representation of its least worthy elements and returned a party as homogeneous and reinvigorated as the League itself, and would have thrown the doors open to

a fair proportion of new men fresh with enthusiasm and caring no jot for the rivalries or heart-burnings which had embittered all sections of the old party alike. The first condition of the new treaty of peace was the preservation of vested interests, and consequently a mere reshuffle of the cards as between men (myself, naturally, included) whose very names were a cause of animosity in others, even when they were least capable of indulging animosity themselves. The party was reunified, rather than reformed. But all other considerations gave way before the feeling of relief and delight at seeing the representatives of Ireland knit together again in amity on that Parliamentary scene where their divisions had given most anguish to her people and most comfort to her enemies. It became the first thought of every patriotic man to give the reunified party every possible encouragement to work out its destiny under every condition of generosity, of indulgence, and whole-hearted co-operation on the part of their countrymen.

The majority party having—wisely or rashly—pledged themselves to elect the new chairman from the small Parnellite minority, it seemed scarcely debatable that their choice must fall upon Mr. Redmond, if the experiment was to have any prospect of success—if, indeed, the self-denying ordinance was not to have something of the character of a farce. Whatever might be the severity with which, under other circumstances, his career since Parnell's death might be ethically sifted, he was beyond comparison the best fitted of his Parliamentary co-religionaries for the great duty devolving upon the leader of the new united party and need not indeed fear comparison with any existing Irishman for the dignity with which he would be sure to support a great position, the charm of his Parliamentary eloquence or the easy affability which is often the accompaniment of accommodating opinions, but which is perhaps of more practical value in the conduct of a Parliamentary party than intense conviction or the gifts for courageous action which electrify nations. Mr. Davitt, who had returned by this time from the Transvaal, was attending a United Irish League demonstration with me in Ireland when we learned, to our astonishment, that Mr.

Redmond's election to the chair of the Irish Party in London the next day was to be opposed by Mr. Dillon and his friends. We found ourselves in complete agreement that his selection was the only one that could give the leadership of the party under the new conditions anything better than a farcical character, and we despatched joint telegrams to our friends in the party earnestly submitting this view. One night during the debates on the Land Purchase Act two years afterwards I received convincing proof that this act of mine in urging and (as it was alleged) securing the election of Mr. Redmond was the real starting-point of a misunderstanding which eventually broke a friendship that had borne the strain of many years of evil fortune as well as faithful comradeship—a breach which unluckily was the cause of graver public misfortunes besides.¹

¹ There I intended the allusion to end. Since these pages were written, however, an incident has occurred which compels me to relate the conversation here referred to. Mr. Dillon, having publicly made an insinuation which was generally understood to mean that I had approached him with a view to displacing Mr. Redmond from the leadership, I addressed the following letter to the *Freeman's Journal*:

“Mr. Dillon is reported as having said in Dundalk yesterday: ‘Three months after the election of Mr. Redmond he (Mr. Dillon) was approached to throw him out of the chair again, but he said to the gentleman who approached him that he had taken a part in putting him in the chair and he would do nothing of the kind.’ I submit that if Mr. Dillon wants to preserve any character for veracity he is bound to name the person who ‘approached’ him with this base proposal. As I was most closely associated with Mr. Dillon at the time, some people may be led perhaps, not without design, to suppose that he meant me. If he will say so in plain English he will have an opportunity of having it ascertained by a jury of his countrymen whether or not this present statement is to be added to the list of six ‘false, defamatory, and malicious libels’ upon me with which he already stands branded. For the honour of public life I submit he is bound to name his man or accept a public verdict not more flattering than that of the Limerick jury.”

To this letter Mr. Dillon made no attempt to reply. Under these circumstances, nothing remains but to tell what actually took place. One night while Mr. Dillon was obstructing the Bill of 1903 in Committee, Mr. T. P. O'Connor and myself walked home together. “In Heaven's name, T. P.,” I said, “what does John Dillon mean by wasting our night over this wretched bribe to Trinity College? The only effect will be that the Congested Districts clauses will be rushed through without discussion.” “Ah! William,” was the answer, “you are a changed man.” “Not a jot, so far as I know, my dear T. P., but at least tell me in what way?” I asked. “Only for you,” Mr. O'Connor said, “John Redmond would never have been in the chair.” “Quite the contrary,” I rejoined—“only for John Dillon and you. Do you forget that without any knowledge of mine you pledged yourselves to elect a Parnellite chairman, and if the thing was to be a success at all, do you doubt that John Redmond was the

Mr. Redmond was in fact elected by a very considerable majority, and whatever notes of dissonance may have still remained as yet unsounded in the bosom of the reunified party, of the reality and universality of the national unity embodied in the United Irish League there was no longer the possibility of doubt. The three sectional organizations—the National Federation, the National League, and the People's Rights Association—never so much as met to pronounce their formal dissolution. They literally "died and made no sign." And, although there were not wanting signs disconcerting enough of the determination which finally succeeded in once more subjecting popular power to the party yoke, and in consequence once more crippling and demoralizing both the League and the party, nobody yet ventured to unmask the design. The first National Convention of the reunited country was summoned by a joint-committee consisting of representatives of the League and of the party, in equal numbers, and without a discordant voice gave the country a constitution bestowing the largest self-government on every constituency, and, save in questions of purely Parliamentary tactics at Westminster, gave the people, in the widest democratic sense of the word, a sovereign control over their representatives.

most competent man? Do you really think your own candidate — would have done better?" "Oh!" was the response, "— is an ass. He would have made himself impossible before three months, and the right man would have been put in his place." "And in Heaven's name," I cried, "who would have been the right man?" "Why, John Dillon of course!" Mr. O'Connor declared stoutly. "Well, T. P.," was my remark, "after that avowal, really the lights of Victoria Street seem to burn blue." And we remained walking up and down before the Westminster Palace Hotel until I went to bed with a heavy attack of influenza as well as a very sore heart indeed.

CHAPTER VII

CAPTAIN SHAWE-TAYLOR'S LETTER

THE sudden and unconditioned treaty of peace between the Parliamentary sections had one fatal flaw. It left the feud between the Dillonites and Healyites wholly uncured. A principal incentive to the treaty, it may, without unfairness, be surmised, was to tide over the General Election by a mutual assurance of seats; but when the General Election overtook us the hostility of Mr. Healy and his newspaper was as lively as ever, as against both the Dillonite members and the United Irish League; while the country for its own part positively declined to accept as sheep of the finest fleece some of the more tainted members of all the three Parliamentary flocks whom it was proposed to foist upon her. The one passionate interest felt by the people in Parliamentary contentions was to hear no more of them and elect a party with summary power to stamp them out.

My own attitude towards Mr. Healy never varied. For several years I had allowed his attacks upon the United Irish League and myself to pass wholly unreplied to; nor, after the party was relieved from the responsibility for those idiosyncrasies which are tolerable, if not inevitable, in a true child of genius, did I ever make an unfriendly reference to him. Had I been free to shape my own course, and remain out of Parliament in order to preserve and develop the disinterested popular power which would be to the party as well as the country the surest guarantee against internal disorder, the difficulty as to Mr. Healy's retention in the party, even with a very wide latitude, indeed, for the



Photo, Guy, Limerick.

THE EARL OF DUNRAVEN, K.P.

H.M. Lieutenant for Co. Limerick.

freedom of criticism he claimed would have been to my mind at an end. But Mr. Redmond intimated, for reasons that need not now be recalled, that it would not be possible for him to undertake the conduct of the movement unless I returned to Parliament, and Mr. Dillon was still more emphatic that a party of which Mr. Healy was a member could have no place for him unless with my co-operation. My reply was: "You can command me freely, either as to remaining out of Parliament or rejoining it; but, if the latter it is to be, you must not ask me to go back to the hell upon earth whose torments I endured for five years at Irish Party meetings. Make up your minds either to fight Healy manfully or to let him alone, and I am with you; as you know, I have never had a word of personal quarrel with him; but nothing will induce me ever again to spend my life nagging and being nagged at in a private room in the old detestable fashion."

Mr. Redmond's no doubt sincere rejoinder was that he did not want Mr. Healy fought at all. Even if he was not altogether superior to the philosophic consolations of a *tertius gaudens*, whose own difficulties as a minority leader were not likely to be aggravated by the Dillonites and Healyites being pitted against one another, no fair-minded man could fall out with his determination, in view of the late Parliamentary bargain, to hold himself aloof from aggression upon a Parliamentary candidate of any section.¹ But Mr. Dillon's frame of mind was marked by the same irresolutions which had all along made his attitude towards Mr. Healy one of so much hurtfulness to his own prospects as a leader, as well as to the country. He neither wanted to fight Mr. Healy nor to let him alone. He suggested that it would perhaps suffice to "cut off his tail," or in other words, to cut off the weaker of his followers in their constituencies. The Dissolution had been gazetted and the writs already sped, and we were still without any settled policy. "Well, what are you going to do about

¹ The merit of Mr. Redmond's judicial attitude on this occasion is somewhat attenuated by the fact that at the next General Election he had no hesitation in starting a candidate himself against Mr. Healy in North Louth, although he had the prudence promptly to withdraw him on a public remonstrance from Cardinal Logue.

Healy?" Mr. Dillon and Mr. Davitt asked me one night in the Imperial Hotel, when the half-past eleventh hour for action had come. "Rather, what are *you* going to do?" was my reply, "for I have told you a dozen times over where I stand. So long as Healy sits outside the Irish Party as an irresponsible individual force, his brilliancy will be an honour to Ireland, and even his extravagances cannot greatly trouble the councils of the party. But Redmond's fate in the chair will be as unhappy as our own miserable ten years unless you take this opportunity of appealing for a national command, in favour of party discipline, so stern and overpowering as to put an end to all danger of future rebellion. Now or never, you must either bid the country speak or let the new party follow the old one into the pit. I am willing to go into the fight, whenever and wherever you please; but it would be manifestly unfair to throw the whole burden upon me, whose one craving is to keep out of Parliament altogether, and my last word is this—either you both must openly identify yourselves with the fight or there will be none." Mr. Davitt promised to address one public meeting in Mr. Healy's constituency, and did so. Mr. Dillon undertook to deliver his impeachment (and it was a scathing one) of Mr. Healy at a meeting in the subsequently notorious venue of Swinford in East Mayo, a couple of hundred miles away from the scene of battle in North Louth. Those were the only contributions they could be induced to make to a most formidable electoral struggle on which the future cohesion of the party was to depend; but at least no doubt of their inner sympathies was left on the public mind, and I had long grown too accustomed to scant practical help to repine at being left to bear the remainder of the burden and the odium.¹

¹ On the previous Sunday Mr. Healy and myself had crossed swords at a meeting in the village of Louth, in the centre of his constituency, under highly characteristic circumstances. The crowd was two-thirds against him, but was prevented from approaching the waggonette from which he and I spoke by a triple circle of armed policemen. He hit upon the ingenious device of beginning to speak himself the moment I commenced my speech, and stopping whenever I stopped. In this way he continued to obstruct for five hours every attempt to address the crowd, the waggonette on which we stood side by side being in the meantime by some unknown orders (I presume from the police) moved

It was decided to be the best tactics that I should contest with Mr. Maurice Healy my old seat for Cork City, the election for which was sure to be one of the earliest to be decided, and with the *éclat* of a victory there that I should return to encounter Mr. T. M. Healy in North Louth, the polling for which was traditionally one of the latest in the country. By some singular accident (not to whisper design), the polling for North Louth was actually timed to come off before that for Cork City, with the result that I was perforce banished from the scene, and appeals by telegrams were lavished in vain to all sorts and conditions of men, either to offer themselves as candidates, or in any other capacity to venture themselves within the lash of Mr. Healy's tongue. The fact that he only won by a majority of 300 against a candidate wholly unknown in the constituency, only started at the last moment and unsupported by any prominent public man, gave perhaps a sufficiently broad hint of what the result might have been under a more fortunately constructed electoral time-table. In Cork City we were confronted with the same redoubtable phenomenon before which the Committee of the Irish Parliamentary Party had bowed at the previous General Election—an all but unanimous combination of the Catholic Bishop and priests to denounce and resist any attempt to displace Mr. Maurice Healy.¹ The telegrams that poured in on me from our own friends painted

on from time to time until it had thus made the whole circuit of the village and towards evening arrived at the point at which it started. "O'Brien's walking gallows" was his witty description of the perambulating machine. Once in the thick of the din, when the crowd beyond the police cordon were growing angrier and missiles began to fly, Mr. Healy suddenly ducked his head to avoid a rotten egg, and then turned to me with this comical touch of courtesy: "I beg your pardon, O'Brien; I hope I did not tread on your toe"; and five minutes later was addressing me again in the language of the Red Indian Wars. At long last he was outmanœuvred by our withdrawing the crowd to the opposite side of the wagonette, and leaving him quarantined in solitary majesty; and at a vast popular demonstration in Dundalk, later on the same night, his friends were hopelessly outnumbered.

¹ There were three notable exceptions. It is the courage and unerring national instinct of a few men like Father Richard Barrett, P.P., Father Denis O'Flynn, C.C., and Father James Murphy, C.C., that has time and again, in such emergencies, saved the political power of the clergy from being lost by the mistakes of their hierarchical chiefs. For inscrutable reasons, the Bishop and priests of Cork are now no less bitterly opposed to Mr. Maurice Healy, when he is a representative of the Policy of Conciliation, and are strenuous supporters of the politicians they detested for opposing Mr. Healy themselves.

the dangers in colours which, for one less successfully inoculated against the terrors of a Parliamentary defeat, would have been indeed alarming; but the Bishop of Cork, who journeyed down in the same train—a simple and saintly man, better fitted for the gentle shades of the cloister than for the bluster of the hustings—witnessed a scene as we stepped out on the railway platform in Cork which made the figures at the declaration of the poll a stale superfluity.¹ The truth is, the whole faculty of the nation was braced up for its own deliverance from the meannesses, paralysis, and shame of the previous ten years; and no power, however sacred in its own sanctuary, could bid the tide stand back and be obeyed.

Ireland is the only part of the king's dominions as to which the English public and their politicians seldom or never fail to go astray in their prognostications. They had scarcely heard of the existence of the United Irish League until it was in possession of Ireland, and the universal "tip" of the prophets of the lobbies was that "Healy and the priests" would sweep the country. How, indeed, were Englishmen bred in the old bad traditions to conjecture that there was anything serious in an Irish movement which was neither heralded by bloodshed in Ireland nor by disorder in the House of Commons? Great, accordingly, was the bewilderment on both front benches, when the new Parliament assembled, to see the three rancorous and impotent Irish factions of the late Parliament replaced by one solidly united body, eighty-three strong, fused and purified of the old evil alloy by the strong current of contact with the country, reinvigorated by a considerable transfusion of new blood, under a leader who was no longer a free-shooting guerilla captain, but the sage and sagacious spokesman of all his countrymen, with funds abundantly flowing in, and a popular organization at their back in the country more widespread and more firmly fixed than the Land League had ever been.² It was a moment of legitimate

¹ The figures were: Wm. O'Brien, 5812; J. F. X. O'Brien, 5513; J. C. Blake, 2235; Maurice Healy, 1985. In my speech at the declaration of the poll, I did not fail to express my personal sorrow for the fate which made me an opponent of Mr. Maurice Healy.

² With a touch of his own antic outspokenness, Mr. Healy (who had been excluded from the party by a vote of the National Convention) left the House of Commons from the first in no doubt as to the genuineness of the transforma-

pride for all Irishmen. Were Englishmen more sensitive to the finer chords of sympathy between nation and nation, the success with which the Irish people by a resolute but almost unnoticed effort of their own good sense had silenced every voice of faction, and emerged with almost unbroken strength from a civil conflict into which the vindication of their good faith towards their English allies alone had thrust them, would be in itself a crowning proof of their fitness for self-government, as well as an irresistible claim to gratitude for the nation that would concede it.

The pathological history, so to speak, of every intellectual strain I have ever undergone has been invariably the same—energy, devouring and incapable of relaxation so long as the issue of the struggle is in doubt, followed by exhaustion and collapse the moment it is successfully over. The old experience now repeated itself in an aggravated form. The frightful load of personal responsibility I had so long borne—the mountains of leaden discouragement that had to be removed, the enmities to be created, the personal cravings to be sacrificed, and then the consuming fever of the electoral crisis, and the very completeness of our incredible success at the General Election—were followed by a breakdown of health so apparently past repair, that after a few months spent in combating it as best I could at home, I was once more driven to exile myself for a long period from even the sight of an Irish newspaper. There is probably no surer proof of the havoc wrought by sleeplessness and all its

tion. When, on one of the first nights of the session, he got up to speak on an Amendment to the Address, moved by me, censuring the Irish Administration, the House immediately filled up, and Ministers settled themselves down on the Treasury Bench, with ears erect and beaming faces, to witness what they all took it for granted was going to be an incursion, terrific as that of a fireship, into the serried squadron of the new Irish Party. Mr. Healy began by saying, "I intend to vote for the amendment of the hon. member for Cork City, in the first place because I have not read it," and the first burst of gleeful laughter rang from the expectant Unionists, "and in the next place," he added, without moving a muscle, "because I agree with almost every word that has fallen from the member for Cork." Nor did the fallen jaws on the Ministerial Bench recover their joyous suppleness as he proceeded: "The Attorney-General has complimented the hon. member for Cork on having created a united Irish Party again in this House. He might have gone further. The hon. member for Cork has created two united Irish Parties—of which I am one." In a House always ready to crouch to the big battalions, the avowal of his isolation was more daring than judicious; but Mr. Healy was ever ready to lose a battle rather than lose his jest.

attendant miseries than that the one solitary attraction a voyage to the golden lands of Australia had for me was that it offered the largest possible respite from communication with any other world save that of the immeasurable ocean solitudes, and that the three weeks of my sojourn there were spent in concealment on the remote heights of the Blue Mountains, flying from the generous hospitalities which besiege strangers in these noble young communities, while awaiting the return from New Caledonia of the French steamer which had brought my wife and myself, and was to take us away. It was only after the lapse of several months spent in the more stimulating atmosphere of Greece and Rome that the lassitude on which even the slumbrous Indian seas had failed to exercise their spell, gave way at last on the field of Marathon, and by the waters of Salamis, and under the sublime inspirations of the Eternal City. The ever-present comfort in my wanderings was the knowledge that the movement I had left behind was flourishing like the bay-tree, in a state of unparalleled and unassailable prosperity, under a leader alive to his incomparable opportunity, with a country still throbbing with the joy of its deliverance from the devils of dissension, and a Parliamentary situation as favourable as had ever enabled Parnell, in his most fortunate hours, to assert the influence of a well-led and united Irish Party.

Mr. Wyndham's first Land Purchase Bill had been already for several months before the House of Commons when I returned to Ireland in the early summer of 1902. As it afterwards became a favourite cry in the mouths of the enemies of the great Land Settlement of 1903 that "the milk had been spilt" by the rejection of the Bill of 1902, it becomes important to investigate how it would have stood with Ireland if Mr. Wyndham's first measure had been submitted to. Fortunately the differences between the two Bills are sufficiently striking to be understood without difficulty by the most elementary student of the Irish Land question.

1. The Bill of 1902 did not even purport to abolish landlordism, but only to quicken the rate of purchase under previous Acts, which averaged little more than £1,000,000

per annum—roughly a delay of 100 years at the least before the extinguishment of the hateful system of dual ownership could be completed.¹—The Bill of 1903 undertook to provide for the complete abolition of landlordism, and, according to the estimate of its author, within fifteen years.

2. The Bill of 1902 made no mention of a State subsidy to tempt landlords to sell and facilitate tenants in buying.—The Bill of 1903 provided a State bonus of £12,000,000—or, roundly speaking, 12 per cent of the whole purchase-money for the purpose.

3. The Bill of 1902 was in substance a compulsory Purchase Bill as against the tenants, since it obliged them to accept whatever price was fixed by two Estates Commissioners, who, it was notorious, were to be men of landlord origin and traditions, or if the tenants declined they were to lose their priceless privilege of having a judicial fair rent fixed under the Gladstone Act of 1881. It, on the other hand, left the landlords free from compulsion of any kind to sell.—The Bill of 1903 left the tenants free to make their own bargain on the lowest terms the landlord could be induced to accept, and imposed upon them no penalty whatever, if they declined an unsatisfactory bargain.

4. Hints, it is true, were thrown out that Mr. Wyndham might be induced to drop the 36th clause, destroying the tenants' rights under the Gladstone Act if they refused to submit to the price dictated by landlord officials; but in dropping it he would have dropped the only serious inducement to the landowners to get rid of any estates that were not waterlogged and bankrupt, and consequently would have made the disappearance of landlordism a slower process than ever.

5. We were in possession of incontrovertible proof that the two Estates Commissioners, who, under the Bill of 1902, were to be invested substantially with the power of forcing the purchase of the soil of Ireland at their own price, were Mr. Frederick Wrench and the Hon. David FitzGerald—of

¹ Clause 11 of the Bill of 1902 limited the total outstanding advances of purchase-money to £3,000,000, at a time while under the Act of 1903 £80,000,000 worth of land were sold in four years.

whom it need only be said that no men could have been found in all the ranks of Irish officialdom to whom the Irish tenants would less readily entrust their fate.—Two of the three Estates Commissioners under the Bill of 1903 (whose intervention, in any case, could only be invoked by the tenants' own free will) were men so richly entitled to popular confidence, that students of their historic report of 1906 may rather be tempted to tax them with being "more Catholic than the Pope"—more revolutionary-minded than the Irish Party of 1903, or the National Convention of that year.

6. Tenant-purchasers under the Bill of 1902 were left absolutely at the mercy of the Treasury as to their annual instalment of interest and sinking fund, the terms hitherto laid down being 4 per cent.—Tenant-purchasers under the Bill of 1903 were only to pay an instalment of £3:5s. per cent interest and sinking fund combined, the interest being only $2\frac{3}{4}$ per cent.

7. Finally the Bill of 1902 contained only a perfunctory reference (Clause IV.) to the gigantic question of western congestion, which had been the mainspring of the agitation of the United Irish League, and it left the burning wrongs of the evicted tenants wholly untouched.—The Land Conference Report by which the Bill of 1903 was inspired declared the settlement of the evicted tenants question to be an indispensable condition of peace, and insisted that the congested counties, in the widest sense, "will require separate and exceptional treatment with a view to the better distribution of the population and of the land, as well as for the acceleration and extension of those projects for migration and enlargement of holdings which the Congested Districts Board, as at present constituted, and with its limited powers, has hitherto found it impossible to carry out upon an adequate scale."

It will thus be seen that Mr. Wyndham's first essay at land purchase, before the Land Conference made its enlarging and beneficently daring influence felt, must either have deprived the tenants of all free will and forced purchase upon them on the landlords' own terms, or restricted purchase transactions to insolvent estates and maintained landlordism

practically intact for generations to come, while it did not even pretend to find a remedy for the two crying national scandals of the western "congests" and the homeless evicted tenants. Had the Irish Party allowed the Bill of 1902 to be passed into law, at least ten years more must have elapsed before any more heroic legislation would be practicable, even if in the meantime a people disappointed in all their demands did not turn their indignation against the party that had led them to such a disillusionment. If ever there was a case where small reforms are the worst enemies of great and permanent ones, it was the case of Mr. Wyndham's first crude scheme; nevertheless, it is amazing how near it went to being submitted to without protest and indeed without heed, by the heroic haters of all compromise who a year or two afterwards rose up in rage against a land settlement as superior to the proposals of 1902 as the plays of Shakespeare are to the chap-books they were taken from.

The Irish Party, in all the freshness of its unity, weighed as little in determining the fate of the Purchase Bill of 1902 as it had done in the case of the Land Bill of 1896, while their inward wars were still raging. Mr. Redmond, fettered by his own declaration of five years before that "there was no longer an Irish Land question," contented himself with majestic but inconclusive generalities. Mr. Dillon, when we met, quite agreed that the Bill was a negation of our entire programme, not a concession of it, but pleaded that he was in a position of greater freedom and of less responsibility, and, like Cicero on an historic occasion, "spoke Greek." Mr. Davitt, who was in the heat of subsequent controversy betrayed into the silly saying that "the milk was spilt when the Bill of 1902 was rejected," confessed to me, with a *naïveté* that disarms reproof, that he had never even read the Bill of 1902 until he was in search of arguments against the Bill of 1903. The *Freeman* was so little alive to the fact that all the country's hopes for many years to come were in danger of being sold for a mess of pottage of the most beggarly ingredients that its protest was confined to one or two half-hearted depreciations of the Bill as a "Landlord's Relief Bill," which were in the language of the lawyers

“common form.” Within a few weeks after its introduction, the *Freeman* had advanced so far as to proclaim that “were Clause 36 thrown overboard, then the Bill should be considered with a view to amendment.”¹ It can be affirmed with certainty that Mr. Sexton neither wrote nor inspired a line in the *Freeman* on the subject of the Bill of 1902. He who twelve months afterwards was using all the power of his paper and all the resources of his remarkable intellect to assail, discredit, and thwart an Act which proposed to transfer the ownership of the entire soil of Ireland to its people within a few years on terms the most benignly revolutionary ever offered by a State, evinced no jot of interest in, not to say hostility towards, the Bill of 1902 which would have adjourned that splendid achievement over the present generation at the least.

The situation was saved in 1902, as in 1898, by calling the robust sense of the country into council. The National Directory of the League was still in the vigour of its original constitution, free as the air of the mountains and strong with the strength of the people's arm. They had not yet begun to feel the debilitating influence of the undemocratic contrivances of co-option and the encroachments of non-elective elements which ultimately placed all the substantial power of the League, political and financial, in the hands of half a dozen members of Parliament and their nominees in Dublin. When they assembled, there was not a trace among them of the uncertainties that had sicklied over the politicians. Their instinct was not for a moment at fault in proclaiming that to allow the Wyndham Bill to pass would be to abjure the abolition of landlordism, the redistribution of the Western grazing lands, and the rescue of the evicted tenants until the Greek Kalends. They were alarmed also at the condition of flaccidity into which the branches of the League had been suffered to lapse owing to the uncertain sounds which the trumpet from headquarters had given forth. It was then and there resolved to consign the Wyndham Bill to the waste-paper basket without more ado, and immediately to summon the people through their County Conventions to begin an uprising against rack-renters, grazing monopolists, and

¹ *Freeman's Journal*, April 5, 1902.

grabbers, and against the barbarous Coercion system which fostered them, such as would convince the Government in a single winter how monstrously their Bill had underestimated the requirements of the country.

It may be taken as an axiom of Irish public life that those who are most extreme when they ought to be moderate are sure to be found most moderate when they ought to be extreme. It was those who a year or two after would hear of nothing but "a really virile campaign," when the day was won and when true valour lay in allowing the country to reap the full harvest of its victory in peace and conciliation, who were most adverse to any uncomfortable activity now when our chance of making the agrarian revolution a complete one depended wholly upon our own determination and self-sacrifice. It is incredible with what repugnance every attempt of mine to rouse the country to a great effort was received, as soon as we came face to face with Coercion proclamations and the sentences of Removable Magistrates hungering to distinguish themselves. It was not without a certain compunction and sickness of heart one had to go on courting, entreating, and spurring into action under a daily drip-drip of warnings that we were flogging a dead horse, that there was no fight in the country, that some of our most conspicuous men had made up their minds to keep out of jail, and that their example was being pleaded by meaner men. At the first of the County Conventions, which was held in Limerick, Mr. Redmond was so alarmed at my speech that he predicted the immediate suppression of the League and the break up of the whole movement. I endeavoured to reassure him, by recalling my own invariable experience, that the surest way of dissuading Dublin Castle from extreme measures was to make it believe we rather courted them; that, if there was such weariness on our own side, neither the landlords nor a young Minister with a name to make were likely to under-colour the terrors of a new agrarian uprising in which they had most to lose, and had neither glory for the Minister nor gold for the landlords to gain; that, at the worst, the risk had to be taken, if we really wanted landlordism to be swept out of existence and the West to be regenerated; and that the fate of any parti-

cular political organization was but the trouble of an hour in comparison with those immeasurable blessings.

Still more disquieting was a communication I received from London from Mr. T. P. O'Connor, on my way down to a Convention in Galway, at which there was a sufficiently painful scene of blind and ignorant hostility to be encountered without this additional refrigeration from one's own brethren. The letter was in the nature of a round-robin on behalf of Messrs. Dillon, Davitt, and T. P. O'Connor, intimating that they had been in consultation as to the extreme character of my speeches and action, and pressing upon me, in terms of friendliest but also gravest remonstrance, that my arrest would be sure to follow, and that with my disappearance from the scene must come a general collapse. Little as I suspected it at the time, this letter was the first intimation of a concerted action by an inner confidential circle, which was afterwards to develop into the "determined campaign" of 1903 against the policy determined upon after open and authoritative consultation. I replied in terms of deep concern and of absolutely unsuspecting friendship that the difficulties of bracing the country to a great effort, already depressing enough, would be insupportable if men like Messrs. Dillon and Davitt did really believe my exertions to be inimical, rather than helpful, to the public cause; that, so far from my having any passion for rushing others into the flames or entering them myself, any plain intimation of their wishes would decide me only too gladly to cease any aggressive action of my own in favour of any definite alternative action they would take the responsibility of recommending to the country; but I reminded them also that the National Directory (the authorized exponents of national policy within the country) had resolved upon the organization of a system of passive resistance and exclusive dealing as the only available means of making the abolition of landlordism and the resettlement of the West practical politics, and that either that programme had to be frankly dropped or to be enforced without quailing and without counting the personal cost. Mr. O'Connor replied in a further letter, brimming over with personal goodwill, but wholly void of any concrete alternative suggestion.

As usual, however, all these doubts and questionings found no echo in the soul or conscience of the people. Intuition told them that the hour for the supreme charge in the long battle had come ; and volunteers for the post of danger were not lacking. Mr. Wyndham promptly realized that the hour for half-measures was past. On the 10th of June his Purchase Bill was formally withdrawn in the House of Commons and "buried without a tear," as the Chief Whip of the Irish Party remarked on the occasion. As the summer wore on, the Government found themselves locked in conflict with another fierce agitation and struck back with the old stupid barbarities. Proclamation followed proclamation, until two-thirds of the Irish counties and the great cities of Dublin, Cork, and Limerick were proclaimed under the Coercion Act and the ordinary tribunals of justice abolished ; public meetings were suppressed, and members of Parliament dragged from the platforms and physically beaten into silence while addressing their constituents ; the Removable Magistrates distributed their sentences of hard labour ruthlessly and in batches ; no less than ten members of Parliament (one or two of them with an exceeding ill grace) soon found themselves within prison walls ; and it was manifest to all men, and most manifest of all to Mr. Wyndham, that we were only at the beginning of the upheaval. The militant landlords, I shrewdly suspect, had a more ungrateful task than ourselves, in whipping their own weary legions to put their iron on ; but they organized a land trust with a capital of £100,000 to prosecute Messrs. Redmond, Davitt, Dillon, and myself for conspiracy, and it must be owned that considerable was the consternation of some of the warrior souls who afterwards would talk nothing but daggers when a Liberal Chief Secretary of their own naming was the master of the Law Officers and the Removables. The League, however, replied by starting a defence fund and arranging that Messrs. Redmond, Davitt, and Dillon should go to the United States to make an appeal in its support. All the familiar portents of an Irish social convulsion darkened the air.

In these circumstances the following letter appeared in the Irish newspapers on September 3 :

CASTLE TAYLOR, ARDRAHAN, CO. GALWAY,

September 2, 1902.

SIR—For the last 200 years the land war in this country has raged fiercely and continuously, bearing in its train stagnation of trade, paralysis of commercial business and enterprise, and producing hatred and bitterness between the various sections and classes of the community. To-day the United Irish League is confronted by the Irish Land Trust, and we see both combinations eager and ready to renew the unending conflict. I do not believe there is an Irishman, whatever his political feeling, creed, or position, who does not yearn to see a true settlement of the present chaotic, disastrous, and ruinous struggle. In the best interests, therefore, of Ireland and my countrymen, I beg most earnestly to invite the Duke of Abercorn, Mr. John Redmond, M.P., Lord Barrymore, Colonel Saunderson, M.P., the Lord Mayor of Dublin, the O'Conor Don, Mr. William O'Brien, M.P., and Mr. T. W. Russell, M.P., to a conference to be held in Dublin within one month from this date. An honest, simple, and practical suggestion will be submitted, and I am confident that a settlement on terms alike satisfactory to landlords and tenants will be arrived at.—I have the honour to be your most obedient servant,

JOHN SHAWE-TAYLOR, Captain.

Captain Shawe-Taylor's name suggested nothing to me. I had been unaware even of his existence. Needless, therefore, to add, I had been in no way taken into confidence, either as to the proposal launched in the letter, or as to the particular names selected for invitation. A more amazing thing still, it was afterwards made abundantly certain that nobody else, either in the landlord camp or in our own, had been approached for authority or advice. The suggestion which was to solve the tremendous problem that had been only rendered more acute by forty-two abortive Acts of the Imperial Parliament came from the head of a younger son of a Galway squire and was all his very own. Later on, the wonder only grew when the world came to know more of Captain Shawe-Taylor, who, from the hunting-field of the "Galway Blazers" and the camps of the South African War, had evolved into a gentle fanatic, with all the simple chivalry of a Don Quixote and some gleams of the divine mission of a Savonarola, and having begun to win over his own troopers to the ways of teetotalism and sanctification, soared away eventually into refulgent and wholly disinterested dreams for

the regeneration of his country. Whether he was, as it became the amiable fashion of the enemies of national reconciliation to describe him, a "black-blooded Cromwellian"—a serpent of satanic landlord guile—or only a generous-hearted young Irishman, having no land or interest in land himself, but consumed with a passion to bring all ranks and sects of his countrymen together in a spirit of patriotism as enthusiastic and ennobling as his own, it is certain that he prosecuted his mission with a good-humour which no repulse, however brutal, could ruffle, and with a persistency that forced its way alike into the "camps" of the American Clan-na-Gael and even beyond the antechambers of royalty. It is one of the strangest chances of history that, where generations of statesmen and Parliaments had failed before him, a newspaper letter of twenty lines from an unknown army officer should be the solvent which, like the gush of living water somewhere in the recesses of the immemorial ice, determined the breaking up of an Alpine glacier.

The idea of solving the agrarian problem by an amicable conference between Irishmen themselves had occurred to Archbishop Walsh fifteen years before, and had been broached again, although in a more indefinite form, by Mr. Lindsay Talbot Crosbie, only a few weeks before Captain Shawe-Taylor wrote his letter. Captain Shawe-Taylor's invitation would indeed have been forgotten as quickly as the day's newspaper that contained it, only that it was followed two days afterwards by a public communication from Mr. Wyndham, giving the project a not ambiguous official consecration.

No Government can settle the Irish Land question. It must be settled by the parties interested. The extent of useful action on the part of any Government is limited to providing facilities, in so far as that may be possible, for giving effect to any settlement arrived at by the parties. It is not for the Government to express an opinion either on the opportuneness of the moment chosen for holding a Conference or on the selection of the persons invited to attend. Those who come together will do so on their own initiative and responsibility. Any Conference is a step in the right direction, if it brings the prospect of a settlement between the parties near, and as far as it enlarges the probable scope of operations under such a settlement.

Here was a declaration which lifted Captain Shawe-Taylor's proposal from the insignificance of an irresponsible newspaper squib to the proportions of a national event of the first magnitude. The confession that "no Government can settle the Irish Land question" was a scarcely less startling recognition of the Irish national standpoint on the part of the Unionist Party than Gladstone's first proclamation of his conversion to Home Rule had been on behalf of the Liberals. It was the first faint but unmistakable dawn of that agreement between both English parties to which Gladstone had looked in 1885 as the easy and only means of reconciling the national claims of Ireland with the Imperial connection. But that was not all. Not only were Irishmen invited, on behalf of a powerless English legislature, to settle their own affairs among themselves, but Mr. Wyndham's message could not be read honestly otherwise than as an official pledge that the Unionist Government would, within the limits of reason, give legislative effect to any settlement the representatives of Ireland might be fortunate enough to agree upon. Here was an invitation to Ireland from the only remaining English opponents of Home Rule to prove her capacity for self-government, on a question indeed bristling with difficulties, but as to which, for that very reason, success would mean success in all things and in the eyes of all men. What could the consequence be of shrinking from such a challenge except to convince the world either that Irish good sense was too thick-sighted to see the opportunity or Irish capacity too undeveloped to avail of it with credit?

CHAPTER VIII

“SIR ANTONY”

IT was at once the strength and the danger of Captain Shawe-Taylor's proposal that he had named his men. It was inevitable, with only three Nationalists to select, that there should be some painfully glaring omissions. The names of Mr. Davitt and Mr. Dillon would have sprung to the lips of all Nationalists as indispensable members of the Conference. A smaller number, thinking only of his reputation in finance, would have insisted upon Mr. Sexton, although he had now been for eight years wholly silent in Irish affairs. All who knew them intimately knew for certain that none of the three would have accepted the terrific responsibility of, for the first time, reducing to definite figures the tenants' claims upon the soil of Ireland. None the less the fact that they were not even asked to the Conference was one of those malicious freaks of fate that seem to be Ireland's portion in every brightening hour; although it must be owned that none of us at the time anticipated the full extent of the misfortune, or the Land Conference would possibly never have come off. Nobody would have done men of their stamp the wrong of supposing them capable of consciously allowing their judgment in an affair of supreme moment to their country to be warped by personal considerations too trivial for words in such a connection. But we did not sufficiently bear in mind those unsearchable relations between our highest parts and our earthiest which are among the taxes we must all pay for being men. Both Mr. Dillon and Mr. Davitt had fallen so much into the habit of shrinking from offering definite advice or initiating

action themselves that Mr. Redmond, Mr. Harrington, and myself took it, perhaps, too readily for granted that they would be rather thankful for being relieved from any personal responsibility in an enterprise so perilous and thankless. Mr. Dillon shook his head over the business with an indulgent scepticism as a transparent landlord dodge when we talked it over, and had no doubt at all that the Conference was foredoomed to failure. His suspicion of the landlord origin of the plot was disposed of promptly enough by the fact that Captain Shawe-Taylor's letter, while it was enthusiastically welcomed by the *Freeman*, was denounced up hill and down dale by Lord Ardilaun's *Daily Express*, the organ of the unbending territorialists; that, as soon as they learned that Mr. Redmond, the Lord Mayor, Mr. T. W. Russell, and myself were willing to join the Conference, the Duke of Abercorn, Lord Barrymore, the O'Connor Don, and Colonel Saunderson wrote to Captain Shawe-Taylor somewhat haughtily declining to meet us; and that when the Landowners' Convention met they scouted "the transparent landlord dodge" by a majority of 77 to 14, and, with a ragged insolence worthy of their most infatuated days, waved off all parley with the representatives of the tenants.

Nobody in the country after this doubted that, in facing all the risks of the Peace Conference, we had already strengthened ourselves with an unanswerable justification for whatever warlike operations might be now before us, as well as exhibited the landlords to Mr. Wyndham as the incorrigible obstructives of the conciliatory policy he was now known to be meditating. The *Freeman*, of whose editorial management Mr. Sexton had not yet commenced his control, did not allow its enthusiasm for Captain Shawe-Taylor's proposal to be damped either by the refusal of the Duke of Abercorn and his brother nominees or even by the veto of the Landowners' Convention. It wrote (September 23):

It is to be hoped that the surprising letter of Lord Barrymore, to which the Duke of Abercorn has said "ditto," does not wholly preclude the hope that the Conference suggested by Captain Shawe-Taylor may still be held. . . . There is no denial that the men whom they are invited to meet represent the great mass of the tenants of Ireland.

And again on October 1 the *Freeman* published an article under the heading "Peace or War," declaring that "the Irish landlords can have peace or war, whichever they choose, but their choice must be made quickly"; and again on October 3, repudiating the reproach that the Irish tenants were irreconcilable, the *Freeman* insisted that "the tenants are disposed to be just and even generous in their terms"; and once more on October 6 there is a vehement exhortation to "the rational landlords"

. . . to rescue their party from ruin before it is too late by the one way open, a full friendly Conference with the genuine representatives of the tenants, who have already made public their willingness to co-operate.

At the same time two other pronouncements of the utmost weight were published, giving a new emphasis to the longing of all sensible Irishmen that the Peace Conference should be persisted in as well as placing beyond dispute the confidence of the country in the men suggested as the tenants' representatives. The first was from the Archbishop of Dublin (October 4), recalling a somewhat similar proposal for a Conference made by himself fourteen years previously, the only result of which was

. . . the addition of one more to the lamentable long list of what Mr. William O'Brien described at the time as the "lost opportunities of the Irish gentry." Just now a not dissimilar proposal has come from the landlords' side and has been received in a spirit of true statesmanship by Mr. Redmond and others of our public men, accredited representatives of the interests of the tenants.

The other was a resolution of the Irish Catholic Hierarchy come to on October 8 at a meeting at Maynooth, attended by three Archbishops and twenty-four Bishops, with Cardinal Logue in the chair.

The project of a Conference on the Land question between representative men, recognized exponents of the interests of the tenants on the one side and of the landlords on the other, commands our earnest sympathy. For the sake not only of tenant and landlord, but of every section of our people, we rejoice to see that at length a combined effort is being made to solve a problem which in its unsettled condition necessarily provokes social strife, puts a premium on careless cultivation, involves the parties concerned in

costly litigations, and places a barrier in the way of every large effort for the good of the country. We earnestly trust that all those on whose co-operation the success of this most important movement depends may approach the consideration of it in the spirit of conciliation in which it has been initiated.

Mr. Dillon himself was so far carried away by the feeling that a signal advantage had been already won that at the meeting of the Irish Party in Dublin, on the day before the departure of Messrs. Redmond and Davitt and himself for America, he proposed the following resolution which the party carried without a dissenting voice :

That while the party approves of the action taken by Messrs. Redmond, O'Brien, and Harrington, expressing their willingness to meet the authorized leaders of the Landowners' Convention in conference on the subject of the abolition of dual ownership in Ireland, we entirely agree with them in declaring that any conference with unacknowledged or unrepresentative persons must either prove wholly abortive, or be aimed against the unity and interests of the people's organization.¹

A prospect of national deliverance such as this, hailed with honest joy by the universal voice of the Irish people—their leaders, their Parliamentary party, their Bishops and County Councils—fortified by the written pledge of the Chief Secretary and the glowing encouragements of the Lord-Lieutenant,² and coming with the ineffable relief of an Avatar to the mass of the poor landlords harried with debts and worn with ever-losing wars, was not to be disposed of by the veto of the magnificoes of a Landowners' Convention, who were not dependent upon their Irish rents for

¹ The latter member of the sentence refers to rumours then prevailing that attempts were being made to engineer a Conference behind the backs of the Irish Party and in a spirit of hostility to them—attempts which were heard of no further. The comment of the *Freeman* is: "Mr. Dillon's resolution is a cordial and unanimous acceptance of the men named as the representatives of the tenants."

² "I have read with much interest the opinions which have been expressed in the Press and elsewhere as to the possibility of a Conference between landlords and tenants. Now I know that there are great difficulties in the way of such a Conference, but if those difficulties could be in any way overcome and some *rapprochement* effected between the representatives on both sides, considerable benefit and good might result."—(Lord Dudley at Belfast, Nov. 24.) Upon which the comment of the *Freeman* was: "The Lord-Lieutenant, like Mr. Redmond, expressed himself strongly in favour of a Conference. The Lord-Lieutenant sees no unsurmountable obstacles in the way of a Conference, given moderation and common sense. There are none."

their revenues, and were still rigid in the arrogant pretensions of another day. A number of enlightened men, of a station that made them superior to the frowns of their own peers, and sufficiently wealthy to encourage their poorer brethren to follow them without the fear of reproach—the Earl of Dunraven, Lord Castletown of Upper Ossory, the Earl of Meath, Lord Powerscourt, the Earl of Mayo, Colonel Hutcheson Poë, and Mr. Lindsay Talbot Crosbie—were among the first to affront the subtle reprisals of their class in order to save them. They formed a Conciliation Committee of their own for the purpose of putting the landlords to the test over the heads of the Landowners' Convention. And, in view of the extraordinary vehemence with which the *Freeman*, from the day Mr. Sexton took the editorial command, devoted itself day by day for years to wrecking the work of the Land Conference and reviling those landlords whose public spirit made it possible, it becomes of importance to mark that, even after the vote of the Landowners' Convention had disposed most of us to think that enough had been done in the way of generous advances on our own part, the *Freeman* persistently stirred up "the rational landlords" not to let the project drop, and had no words too ardent to glorify the Dunravens, Mayos and Shawe-Taylors, who were appealing to their class to awaken to the greatness of the emergency, for themselves and for their country.¹

¹ "It is, of course, possible that the smaller landlords throughout the country whom the Ardilauns, the Abercorns, the Londonderrys, and the Clonbrocks regard merely as pawns in the game, to be sacrificed freely when the political move demands it, should elect new delegates to force a Conference."—(*Freeman*, Oct. 11.) "It is not likely, we fancy, that the Irish landlords who are in favour of an amicable settlement by Conference with the tenants' accredited representatives will tamely accept the veto of the managing committee of the Convention. . . . Many of the ablest and more representative landlords who took no part in the Convention are known to be in favour of such a Conference. In addition to Lord Mayo, who moved the resolution in its favour, Lord Dunraven and Lord Castletown are known to support the same view. The only way to test the real view of the Irish landlords would seem to be an appeal to them on the specific and distinct issue—'Conference or no Conference.'"—(*Freeman*, Oct. 14.) "The circular which we publish elsewhere signed by Lords Dunraven, Meath, Mayo, Powerscourt and Castletown, Sir Algernon Coote, H.M.L., Col. Hutcheson Poë, C.B., Mr. Lindsay Talbot Crosbie, D.L., Mr. A. More O'Ferrall, D.L., Mr. George Taaffe, D.L., and Captain Shawe-Taylor, Hon. Sec., proves that there are at least many influential men of common sense in the ranks of the Irish landlords. . . . The fourteen members who had the

As a matter of fact, the plebiscite of the landlords resulted in a vote of 1128 in favour of a Conference as against 578 of the contrary opinion; and the Conciliation Committee were now so confident they represented the main strength and solid sense of their class that, when the Landowners' Convention declared themselves still intractable, they straightway took another poll of the landlord body for the selection of their four delegates to the Land Conference.

Popular imagination had accustomed itself so long to picture me as a fanatical and headlong fighter, that the only apprehensions inspired by my own name among the wise men of both camps was not that I would lack the unbending mettle of my subsequent critics but that my intransigence would render any rational accommodation at the Conference impracticable. The sounder theory on which the Land Conference was conceived and brought to such an astonishing triumph was the contrary one, that, not only are the hardest fighters the most ardent peacemakers, but that the hard fight is the unavoidable preliminary to the lasting treaty of peace. The truth is that eight years of minute daily experience of the inmost life of the people had impressed me with an overmastering desire for an immediate settlement of a question which Legislature after Legislature had left at all points maimed and raw like a succession of clumsy surgeons opening fresh wounds with every attempt to close previous gashes, and had no less strongly forced

manliness to stand up against the domination of the Executive Committee of the Convention have issued a circular which is intended to test the feeling of the landlords, county by county, on the subject of holding a Conference. . . . The circular offers the Irish landlords an opportunity of securing peace with honour and profit if they are so disposed."—(*Freeman*, Oct. 18.) "It is worth while noticing that while an influential section of the landlords are in protest against their elected representatives, no tenant has uttered a word of protest against the representatives nominated in Captain Shawe-Taylor's proposal (Mr. Redmond, Mr. William O'Brien, and Mr. Harrington)."—(*Freeman*, Oct. 20.) "The result of the poll by the Conciliation Committee of the landlords shows an overwhelming majority in favour of a Conference with the tenants' representatives. . . . It now remains for the Committee to give practical effect to the opinion they have elicited. They have made it plain that on this question, on which a direct issue was taken and decided, they, and not the Landowners' Convention, represent the views of the Irish landlords. If the Landowners' Convention refuse to accept the inevitable it must, we suppose, be superseded by some really representative body, however selected. The tenants' representatives, we are certain, will stand on no technical points or difficulties."—(*Freeman*, Oct. 19.)

upon me the conviction that, manifold as were the difficulties from Parliamentary ignorance, and from age-long native traditions of wrong and mutual hate, the substantial materials for a permanent pacification were nevertheless to be found with a facility which would startle political practitioners of the old Sangrado school. The possibility of being called upon to table definite proposals in conference with the landlords had set me to work to give precision to suggestions with which for years my thoughts had been incessantly busy ; and as a first rough basis for consultation and emendation among our own friends I drew up a Memorandum on the subject.

The seemingly insoluble riddle : what was to be the price of the land of Ireland ? had in reality been largely answered by the logic of events. No landowner of sense expected more than to be secured in an income based upon what was left of his rental after the *second* judicial reductions, less the outgoings for collection ; and few responsible men on our own side expected the British Legislature to compel him to part with his property for less. On the other hand, in any confidential assembly of sober-minded farmers, you would be sure to find a general consensus that they would be willing cheerfully to pay annual instalments to the amount of what the rental of Ireland would be after it had been reduced for a *third* judicial term—in other words, on the basis of a reduction of some 20 per cent upon such *second* judicial rents as had been already fixed, or of 35 to 40 per cent upon first judicial rents, or upon such rents as had been legislatively excluded from coming under any judicial revision—but that most assuredly they could neither be cajoled nor bullied into paying more. Broadly speaking, therefore, the kernel of the difficulty was whence was to come the 20 per cent of the rental of Ireland which was needed to bridge the gap between the price that the prudent landowner must insist upon and the price which was the unincreasable maximum of the prudent tenant-purchaser ? My own conclusion was that it must come from the coffers of the State, and that the subsidy would be the State's equitable contribution towards the peaceable extinction of Irish landlordism, which had been forced upon

Ireland and fostered throughout all its career of wrong and crime, from motives of Imperial policy, and, on the other hand, would reimburse the Imperial Exchequer tenfold by cutting up from the roots the discontent and turbulence which alone rendered the monstrous charges for the government of Ireland excusable. Five years before, in a speech of mine at Dromore, County Tyrone,¹ the doctrine had been launched—so far as I know for the first time—that in a liberal State bonus for this most fruitful of State benefactions, not to say restitutions, lay the one hope of rescuing either landlords or tenants from an everlasting welter of misery and insecurity. As with all unfamiliar suggestions, neither my listeners, nor my colleagues, nor the newspapers could be got to give the idea any serious attention at the

¹ At Dromore, County Tyrone (November 23, 1896), I specified the exact operation which is now legalized by the new Land Act, viz. that the State should pay the difference between the price the tenant could afford to give and the price the landlord could afford to take. I was referring to the £2,500,000 of Irish over-taxation reported by the Financial Relations Commission—the £2,500,000 a year which remained then and remains still a standing monument of the impotence of those brilliant financial calculations to which we are at present again being so liberally treated. I suggested that the one way of turning the Financial Relations Report to any practical account was to earmark a portion of the money for the settlement of the Land question, and so give the landlords and tenants an interest in making a real fight for it:

“Just think of all that two millions and a half each year would do for Ireland if it remained at home. Take the Land question alone as one of the ways in which it might be utilized. Now, what is the difficulty, the real difficulty, as to land purchase? I am not speaking about the fair rent clauses, because the lawyers have fairly bedevilled the fair rent clauses between them; but what is the real difficulty as to working the purchase clauses upon a large scale? It is that you are dealing with a pack of half-ruined landlords, who are loaded with incumbrances and family charges, and who cannot afford to part with their estates for such a number of years' purchase as the tenants could afford to pay, without landing themselves in far more serious troubles with their mortgagees. . . . Therefore, the whole difficulty is summed up in a difference of about three or four years' purchase. Well, if the landlords would only join in a really united national movement to wrest this two and a half millions a year from England—I am now only expressing my own opinion as an individual; holding no representative position whatever, I can only speak for myself,—but for the sake of once for all settling this great Land question and of uniting all classes of Irishmen hereafter in a great national movement, I cannot say that it would not be money well expended if the difference between the number of years' purchase that would give the landlords a decent margin and the number of years' purchase the small farmer can afford was made up out of this great national fund within certain limitations. That is not so great or so extreme an operation as it may be supposed to be. . . . I have not worked out the exact figures, but even if it took one million a year to cover the annual instalments of this which I may call national quit-rent for the abolition of landlordism, . . . I do not mention that for the purpose of pressing any nostrum of my own.”

time. Even down to the day it was broached at the Land Conference, it was received by the landlords with a sigh as a counsel of perfection, and was scoffed at by some of the most eminent of our own colleagues as a demand in which "no schoolboy of thirteen" would seriously expect the English House of Commons to acquiesce. Sir Antony MacDonnell was the first man of weight who lent an indulgent ear to the proposal. It nevertheless grew not only to be the pivot of the Land Conference Report and of the subsequent Purchase Bill, but became a matter of such manifest common sense and Imperial wisdom that that which was imputed for foolishness to "the schoolboy of thirteen" was written on the statute-book by the consenting votes of both English parties and of both Houses of Parliament.

But could the landlords be induced at one wave of the pen to sign the death-warrant of landlordism in all its length and breadth? That amazing feat came to be spoken of afterwards as though it were a commonplace matter of course, but it would have been regarded by the most daring land reformer in the country on the night before the Land Conference as about as likely as that the King should lay down his crown and invite us to proclaim an Irish Republic. Above all, with what face would a Unionist Government, just presented with the tremendous bill for the guilty Boer War, receive a demand to burden the Imperial credit at a single stroke with a loan of £120,000,000 to £150,000,000 and a free gift of £20,000,000 into the bargain for, as it might well seem, the abolition of "the English garrison" in Ireland? It was deemed wise, at all events, to be prepared with proposals which would break the inevitable issue with discretion both to the landlords and to the Government. As my Memorandum was not submitted to the Land Conference—the tenants' representatives having, by that time, made up their minds to restrict their programme to a few broad and uncomplicated requirements—it is not necessary to encumber the narrative with any detail of its proposals. They were an adaptation on a larger scale of a settlement proposed by Parnell in 1885. The scheme contemplated the immediate conversion into tenant-proprietors of all tenants under £50 valuation (who comprised 445,000 out of the 480,000

agricultural tenants in Ireland), preserving to the remainder of the tenants unimpaired their rights to the judicial rent revisions pending the completion of Land Purchase in their own cases. The essence of the scheme was the provision of a State bonus of four years' purchase, by the aid of which, assuming the average market price to be eighteen years' purchase of first term rents, the tenant-purchaser would only have to pay sixteen years' purchase, while the landowners would receive twenty years' purchase, in addition to the relief proposed to be given to them by consolidating their mortgages by means of a guaranteed 3 per cent loan—thus at once solving the difficulty of compelling sales without the ruin of the impoverished landowners of the west.

The rough draft of these proposals had no sooner been made than it was communicated to Messrs. Redmond, Davitt, Dillon and Sexton, with an urgent entreaty to them to give me their freest criticism or to replace or supplement them with any suggestions of their own. Considering that we were on the eve of a Conference when for the first time the tenants' demands must for good or ill be specified with precision, it is melancholy to have to record that not a single contribution was made, either towards discovering the weak points of the Memorandum or substituting for it any wiser or more maturely considered scheme, by any one of the men to whom the nation might reasonably have looked to share the responsibilities of the decision that had to be taken; and who, the moment the die was cast, became indefatigable in the criticisms of which they had been so parsimonious at the opportune hour. When we read hereafter of the heavy responsibility Mr. Sexton took in wrecking the Land Settlement of 1903 on the strength of his financial prestidigitation, it will be well to remember that I went out of my way, the moment I could reduce my first rough suggestions to writing, to lay them before him, to invoke his assistance, and to beg for his unfettered and critical skill in laying bare their flaws. Almost every suggestion of the Memorandum submitted to him is marked by intercalations such as "[would be specially glad to receive suggestions as to details of such an arrangement]," "[as to these figures, should be glad to be more accurately instructed]," and "[on this point also I invite

elucidation and criticism].” In his evidence at the Limerick trial, Mr. Sexton actually attributed his return to an interest in Irish affairs, and his taking the editorial campaign of the *Freeman* against the Land Settlement of 1903 under his own control, to this visit of mine to implore his friendly assistance in drawing up the tenants’ case for the Land Conference! The one object of the visit, of course, was to elicit his observations as a financial expert on a definite series of proposals in order to strengthen the hands of the tenants’ representatives whom the *Freeman* had in a dozen leading articles lauded to the skies at a Land Conference, which the *Freeman* had done more than any other power to encourage and to force into existence. How my prayer was heard will be seen in a moment. Nearly a fortnight (at a crisis when the grains in the hour-glass were golden) having passed without my receiving any reply from Mr. Sexton, I wrote him for the return of the manuscript in order to show it to Mr. Dillon, renewing my entreaty for his promised observations. The following was the reply :

Memo. enclosed.

DUBLIN, 8th Oct. 1902.

MY DEAR O'BRIEN—I have read the Memo. carefully two or three times, and now return it to you as you want to use it and have no other copy. It will take some time to look into your proposals with anything like sufficient care. You will hear from me as soon as I think I can say anything that may possibly be of use.—Yours faithfully,

T. SEXTON.

W. O'BRIEN, Esq., M.P.

Nothing had as yet occurred to suggest the faintest suspicion that Mr. Sexton was personally out of harmony with the *Freeman's* almost daily panegyric of the Land Conference and the tenants’ representatives, and I was too well accustomed to his congenital reluctance to commit himself to any definite responsibility to be surprised at the unsuccess of my visit. Assuredly, a man of his phenomenal luminosity of intellect who had “read the Memo. carefully two or three times” was not likely to be altogether barren of suggestion after a fortnight’s deliberation; but there was still the possibility that I would “hear from him” to some profit “as soon as I think I can say anything that may possibly be of use.” As a matter of fact I never heard

another word, orally or in writing, from him on the subject. When I did "hear from him" it was to hear that he had taken possession of the editorial columns of the *Freeman* in order to wage an implacable war against the Report of the Land Conference and to begin a series of inspired writings that would go far to stock a small library on a subject on which he could not find "anything to say that might possibly be of use" when it was a question of arming the Conference with his counsel and loyal assistance.

But when Mr. Redmond, Mr. Davitt, Mr. Dillon and myself met in the Gresham Hotel on the evening before the meeting of the party on October 8, we had news which enlarged the outlook beyond the solution of the agrarian problem, vast and absorbing as that was, and opened to us at last some distant Pisgah vision of the settlement of the entire national question, by the party which had only to wish it in order to be in a position to make its will law. The late Dr. Mark Antony MacDonnell, one of the Nationalist members for the Queen's County, had just come to Dublin to let us know that his brother, Sir Antony MacDonnell, the late Governor of Bengal, had been offered the Under-Secretaryship for Ireland by Mr. Wyndham. He was hesitating much as to his decision. His terms of retirement secured him a seat on the Indian Council, with an opulent salary and abundant leisure, and he was suffering from a malady which he then apprehended would prove incurable, and which rendered the tranquillity and ease of the great post in London as seductive as the sordid anxieties of Dublin Castle government were repulsive. His brother brought us the message that in the last resort his decision would depend upon our own. His only remaining ambition was to do something great for his native country before he died, and with the altered ideas of government indicated by Mr. Wyndham's offer, he thought he could see his way to vast possibilities of usefulness to Ireland. The doctor informed us that Sir Antony had told Mr. Wyndham frankly that he detested coercion and could not think of going to Ireland as its Minister, and that the reply was that that was no difficulty inasmuch as Mr. Wyndham intended to drop Coercion and work for a complete settlement of the Land question by mutual agreement; that

he told him no less plainly that he was an Irish Nationalist and a believer in self-government, and that Mr. Wyndham replied that that question did not arise for the moment, and that there was no reason why it should stand in the way of his acceptance ; that on the question of a bold and generous settlement of the University difficulty he found their accord still more satisfactory ; and finally, that he declared to Mr. Wyndham and desired the message now to be conveyed to us, that he would not accept the post against the will of the Irish leaders, or without a certain measure of at least benevolent toleration on their part.

Here was an event the magnitude of which did not need, in order to increase it, the hints of which the air was soon full, that the office was pressed on Sir Antony with earnestness by Lord Lansdowne, whose intimate and trusted adviser he had been throughout his Indian Viceroyalty, and that the new departure in Ireland was made under still more august auspices. We were for the first time presented with that Unionist initiative in which Gladstone in 1885 had discerned the easy means of reconciling the immutable psychic forces of Irish nationality with the material blessings and necessities of the Imperial connection. We were not, of course, then made aware of the still only hazily revealed confidential interchanges between Ministers to which the somewhat sudden transformation in the government of Ireland gave rise. Indeed the famous correspondence over which the House of Commons afterwards smacked its lips with its usual readiness to start off upon the boyish game of hare and hounds, and the still undivulged " cypher message " which would reveal the inner mind of Mr. Balfour and Lord Salisbury as to Sir Antony's true business in Ireland, had not yet taken place. Nor, interesting as these documents will be to the statesmen as well as to the scandal-mongers of the next generation, have I ever regarded their production as in the least necessary to prove the magnificent vista opened up to Ireland by the coming of Sir Antony MacDonnell, or their non-production as involving any great discredit upon a Government, who, if they weakly stopped short in the magnanimous Irish policy they had marked out for themselves, could at least, unhappily, plead that Irish Nationalists

themselves had been the first to make its abandonment an imperious necessity of Unionist Party policy. Enough for us and for all time that a Government which had just been placing two-thirds of Ireland outside the law, and putting one-eighth of the Irish representatives in prison as common criminals, now invited to the head of its Irish council board an Irishman of notoriously Liberal and Nationalist convictions—the brother of an unflinching member of the Irish Nationalist Party—an empire-builder of the first rank and talent and of the most generous traditions—a man, in fine, whom Mr. Wyndham himself avowed, without fencing, to the House of Commons, he invited to Ireland not as a subordinate, but as a respected colleague in the great business of government. The rest was for the wisdom and capacity of Ireland's own representatives.

I think we all even then understood, without overrating, the greatness of the event. There was, indeed, a moment's exultant cry that Mr. Wyndham's action only argued how completely the Coercionists and landlords had been beaten to the ropes by the spirited action of the country. It was not easy to repress the temptation to recall the prognostications of the exulters, only a few months before, that our endeavours to kindle the country into action would only end in our prompt arrests, and in the suppression of the United Irish League by an ironclad executive. There had been, of course, a certain amount of bluff on both sides to mask the deadly lassitude which had fastened upon landlords, tenants, and Ministers alike; and if a little more happy audacity on our side had done its work, assuredly it was an occasion of deep contentment, and not for somewhat vapid boasts. Mr. Redmond from the first discerned clearly the blessings of a policy of national appeasement which harmonized with all his own inborn sympathies and tastes, and throughout the next following twelve months, until the exigencies of his personal situation obscured his political judgment, adhered to it with a loyalty, a broad-mindedness, a caution, and yet a courage which brought out all his finest qualities as a national spokesman. Mr. Davitt, who never let the sun go down on his political anger, was already building the most sumptuous castles in the air under the generous influence of

the new developments, and genially took Mr. Redmond and myself to task for moderating his transports. But we were, of course, still dealing with the visionary and the hypothetical. Sir Antony had not even been appointed; the Land Conference had not yet been determined upon. Sir Antony MacDonnell himself had intimated to us that he did not seek to elicit from us any expression beyond a confidential one of friendly toleration pending the evolution of events; Dr. MacDonnell, indeed, broadly hinted (and it was the elementary wisdom of the case) that, if the pending negotiations were to have a happy issue, it was more necessary than ever that Ireland's determination and readiness for self-sacrifice should remain unrelaxed.

At the meeting of the Irish Party the next day it was resolved that we should begin the autumn session with a protest against Coercion, as resounding as we could possibly make it, and, having done so, that the party should withdraw from Westminster altogether, and devote ourselves for the winter to carrying on the conflict in the country more resolutely than ever. Upon the morning following the party meeting, Messrs. Redmond, Davitt, and Dillon left on their American mission. Messrs. Redmond and Davitt were able to return to Ireland after an absence of six weeks. Mr. Dillon, most unfortunately, fell seriously ill, and lay in an hospital in Chicago for several months, during which events in Ireland were hurrying to their momentous issue. Had he been able personally to assist at those events as they developed, and understood the difficulties which complicated the task of the delegates of the Irish Party and the magnificent possibilities for the Irish cause which disclosed themselves in the course of their labours, it is scarcely possible to believe that his normal sound sense and appreciation of the tremendous gains for the country which were at stake would not have saved us from the fatal misconceptions and suspicions in his mind which were destined to rob Ireland of so rich a dividend of her conquests. For, as will be seen, it was his name and influence alone which could have made mischief-makers worth much serious notice. Mr. Davitt would have been content to place his individual views upon record, and all

his countrymen would have fondly accorded him that liberty without stint.

Parliament met for the autumn session on October 16. Our demand for a day to debate the administration of Ireland was met in the gay Torero manner of Mr. Balfour's apprentice days with the reply that a day would be given if the demand came from the official Liberal Opposition—that is to say, if we sued as a group of dependents upon Liberal patrons. When we fell back on a motion for the adjournment of the House, in order to force a discussion, we found that two Irish Unionists had been put up to block us with notices of omnibus resolutions on the state of Ireland. Whether the affront was intended to mask the contemplated change of front in Irish policy, or to test how far our hostility was worth disarming, the sittings of the House of Commons for the following week gave the Government proofs such as had not been witnessed since the early obstruction crises of the Parnell and Biggar days, of what a resolute Irish Party at bay can do to pay back maltreatment and shock the self-esteem of England in her shrine of shrines. By one of those impulses by which the untaught peasants of Spain worried Napoleon's marshals out of the Peninsula, the whole party rose out, night after night, in an insurrection of lawless questions, interruptions, and taunts, which, at question time alone, kept the House hour after hour the pained witnesses of scenes of protest and disorder, coming from too many quarters and inspired with too manifest a recklessness of personal consequences for any printed rules or any Speaker, however stern, to put them down. Still the Government relented not, and the notices of motion of the two Unionist blockers held their place on the Order Book.

Everybody—and most of all Mr. Speaker Gully, who sat horrified in the midst of the orgy of the unloosed winds like a Neptune whose voice had failed him and his trident drifted away into the surges—felt that it must end badly, and that before many nights. It was one of those occasions—not too rare in the history of a country whose rulers have never learned wisdom except by violent shocks—when apparent recklessness is the truest moderation. A week of Parlia-

mentary anarchy had brought exasperation to its highest pitch, and a few of us determined that, unless our incontestable constitutional right to discuss the laying of two-thirds of a country under a Coercion interdict was conceded by the following Monday, we should then and there attempt an enterprise which, whatever its issue, would write a page in the history of Parliament not altogether banal, even beside the lively records of the rush of "the six members" to hold down Mr. Speaker Lenthal in the chair, or of Cromwell's disrespectful behaviour to the Mace. The fact is not without its significance that, in picking out a dozen of the most trusty of our colleagues for physique and pluck to whom to communicate the project and prepare to lead the way, our choice lighted only on one out of all the men who were in later days the most ostentatious in misplaced valour after peace had been achieved, and when the truly valiant were those who proposed to garner its harvest for the country with peaceful and thankful hearts.

Mr. T. P. O'Connor, whom we felt bound to acquaint with our design, was, as we anticipated, frankly horrified, and, as honourably befitted his traditions, without involving the slightest taint of personal pusillanimity, declared he could have nothing to do with it, and would absent himself altogether from the House on the occasion. He, however, so fully shared our view that the situation could have no possible outcome except either the withdrawal of the blocks to a discussion of the state of Ireland, or a memorable explosion of Ireland's indignation, that he waited on Mr. Speaker Gully himself to press upon him the seriousness of the situation, without, of course, disclosing the nature of the impending danger. The Speaker had never been wanting in sternness or nerve in moments of emergency, but avowed himself to be to some extent paralysed by the fact that, while with the deepest pain he foresaw that some collision that would deeply wound the character of Parliament was at hand, he recognized that the Government, however technically within the letter of the law, had put themselves constitutionally in the wrong in burking discussion upon a subject of such gravity. There can be no harm in mentioning now, that Mr. Gully promised to send for Mr. Balfour

and convey his own views to him in plain terms, and as a matter of fact, when the House met on Monday, the two Unionist blockers had been instructed to withdraw their notices from the paper, and we were free to enter upon the debate the Government had spent a scandalous and scandal-rousing week in endeavouring to forbid.¹

Our resistance had been so little an affair of blind passion that, freedom of discussion was no sooner restored, than we were back again in the conciliatory temper which not our will but the last mutterings of Unionist arrogance had interrupted. The contest of the good angels and the evil ones for Mr. Wyndham's soul was still going on. In his speech in the debate of that night he made to the address of crusted old Toryism some sounding protestations of his determination "not to purchase peace by receding even an inch from the position that it is the duty of the Government to protect those who are exposed to intimidation," and to prosecute all and sundry who should break the law. But he made some pregnant allusions to the statement of Mr. T. P. O'Connor and myself that we were at the parting of the ways, making an observation which has a profound meaning in the affairs of Ireland :

Whether in respect of actual warfare or of civil contention, I have always found that those who have had most personal experience of such contention are the slowest to begin warfare.

He added this curious and somewhat cryptic declaration :

There is room for diplomacy before the outbreak of war ; there is room for sentiment after the conclusion of peace ; but between these two epochs there is, I deeply regret to say, room only for fighting. The fighting must go on—if that is the proper term—until the question at issue has been determined one way or the other.

Rightly or wrongly, we read the speech as an intimation that the contest in the Unionist Party and in the landlord camp between the new methods and the old was still in the

¹ To a Radical statesman of distinction who remonstrated with me on our violent methods in emergencies such as this, I replied : "Do you suppose it is all fine fun for us? If we are forced into extreme means, it is for very moderate ends." "I, on the contrary," he observed, with a smile, "prefer to go for extreme ends by very moderate means." It was not too easy to repress the comment that rose to my lips : "Yes, but we reach our ends and you don't."

balance, and further, that the declaration that "the fighting must go on," after Parliament had just had a week's vivid lesson of what "fighting" meant and of what the result invariably is, was intended to be not altogether without its effect upon the Unionists who were already crying "treason" against the policy of Conciliation and upon those irreconcilable landlords who could not yet bend their necks to the idea of a Land Conference.

The cypher negotiations were still in progress when I received a letter from Mr. T. P. O'Connor strongly urging me to meet Sir Antony MacDonnell at an informal gathering at luncheon in a London restaurant, at which he himself and Dr. Mark MacDonnell were to be the only other persons present. It was an interesting, and, so to say, exotic experience. The great Indian administrator somehow suggested a resemblance to an Indian curry such as they serve in all the pride of its four courses at the Gollfaas Hotel in Colombo to wayfarers from the mail-boats—a dish of startling richness and variety, but of a distinctly peppery flavour. The only part of the stooped and meagre figure to attract attention was the head—the head with, perhaps, the provoking note of interrogation of the eyeglass. It was in every sense of the term a *tête carrée*, such as it would seem nothing less penetrating than a bullet could move from its base; the head of a Bismarck, but of a Bismarck whose heart was softer than his head: a head that would suggest the jaw of a bulldog, only that it was more suggestive still of the kindly, indomitable, constant Irish terrier. The voice was that of one who never required to raise it to be effectively heard, and there was once in a way the slight peremptory gesture which was not accustomed to be disobeyed. Even in two or three not too lengthy interviews it was not difficult to see traces of the imperious temper of one who had ruled over more settled millions than the dynasty of the Moguls—a temper, doubtless, not improved by a painful malady which has, happily, since passed away; but the temper, quite manifestly, of a man with whom the happiness of his forty millions was the uppermost thought, and who never feared to make their oppressors feel its edge. And for all this impatience of contradiction, there was a ready reserve of self-control, and a

modesty and simplicity and unspoiled idealism redolent of his Irish country breeding. It required little penetration to see already the quiet immovability and undaunted nerve that for five years stood up against the secret machinations of a horde of Castle lawyers and officials, met and vanquished the experts of a miserly Treasury on their own ground, and, by two or three silent master-strokes, put down the rebellion of the Royal Irish Constabulary in Belfast without firing a shot. It was not so easy to foresee the insensate folly of our own which could only discern in an Irish Nationalist with capacities such as his an enemy to be girded at, and baffled at every step, and finally driven out of the country when scarcely half his work had been done and even that part maimed of half its virtue and effectiveness.

Mr. O'Connor and Sir Antony had been brother-dreamers long ago in the Queen's College in Galway, and one might well have loved to listen while these two Irishmen compared notes as to how far the glowing visions of these distant days had survived the disenchantments of life—for the brooding Galway lad who has managed to make his initials "T. P." as sufficient a description in England as "Jean Jacques" is over Europe, had perhaps his fairy hours not unworthy to be recounted with those of the young Conquistador from the brown bogs of Mayo, whose word had given law to as many millions of subjects as most European sovereigns. But "T. P.'s" excursions into the school-day realms were, benevolently but firmly, cut short. Sir Antony had no ears for anything except the Ireland of the present. He made it plain that it was his last thought to ask us to modify any article of our programme, or to abandon the vigorous methods which he admitted could alone have led to the present advantageous posture of affairs. His desire was to meet and gather the views of leading Irishmen, especially as to the possibility of a genuine land settlement, which he regarded as the foundation of all else. He was still in communication with Mr. Wyndham, but had not yet accepted the Under-Secretaryship, and, not obscurely hinted, would not do so if the Nationalist leaders put a veto upon his enterprise; but, little selfish inducement as he had to quit the Indian

Council for more irksome duties and smaller emoluments in Ireland, the hope of leaving his mark upon the work of giving his native country a happier future was the only ambition remaining to him in life, and he thought he saw his way to doing so upon a scale that would surprise most people, if he had any confidence that the representatives of the Irish people would extend to him, at all events, a certain amount of benevolent neutrality until he was in a position to estimate how much it would be possible for him to effect under the three great heads of the land, education, and self-government.

I told him frankly he was a brave man to make the trial after the fate of Drummond and all who had gone before him on the same mission; that, in entering Dublin Castle as a reformer, he had about as desperate a task as Daniel in entering the lions' den, but that Daniel managed to come out alive, and Irishmen would be the last to admit that the days of miracles were over. At all events, there was no difficulty in reassuring him that, although our party would, of course, pin themselves to nothing that was not definitely before us in black and white, he might count upon any amount of good-will from us personally; moreover, that the Irish people were not irreconcilable or impracticable in their demands; but all they had ever won had been won by fight, and we could not afford to repeat Grattan's generous mistake of disarming before peace was well assured, but that he would find that it was just the men who were willing to risk most in fight, so long as fight there had to be, who would run all risks still more readily to stand by their word, in a spirit of reasonableness and good-will, if the landlords and the Government met them in the same spirit, and that the Unionist Government had the tremendous advantage over the Liberals in carrying out a compact with Ireland, that whatever they resolved to do was already as good as law.

He asked me did I see any practical basis on which the parties to a Land Conference were likely to agree. My reply was that I could at present only speak for myself; that doubtless various proposals would be forthcoming; but that, even from my own study of the question for many

years, I had no doubt that, given some reasonable restitution from the State, which had been at the bottom of all the mischief, it would be found perfectly possible to settle the most burning part of the difficulty by general consent, with the certainty that the rest would follow. I then explained to him in detail the scheme sketched in my Memorandum, and was questioned by him closely as to the financial outcome of my calculations. He took it all in with a better appetite than he did the sumptuous *plats* of the Café Florence.

"That would mean a free gift of ten or twelve millions. That ought not to be impossible," he observed with the tranquil decisiveness of one accustomed to proceed to rapid judgment and as rapid action in great affairs. After asking to be furnished with a copy of the Memorandum, he intimated his desire to meet all the principal leaders of Nationalist opinion, naming Messrs. Redmond, Dillon, Davitt, Healy, and Sexton. I told him the first three were in America, but, on their return, would, no doubt, be happy to meet him in the same spirit of personal good-will and political non-committal as myself; that Mr. Healy and I were in opposite camps, and that he had better approach him through his brother, who had always remained on better than talking terms with Mr. Healy. As to Mr. Sexton, he was difficult of access, and I mentioned the result of my recent attempt to elicit his assistance in drawing up proposals for the Conference as an illustration of the hopelessness of expecting him to assume any definite personal responsibility, but I promised to mention Sir Antony's wish to him on my return to Dublin, and could not conceive that there should be any difficulty about his giving him a courteous interview.

I did call to the *Freeman* office after reaching Dublin a few days afterwards, and conveyed Sir Antony's request. Mr. Sexton rapped out, "What does he want to see me for?" with a testiness which, knowing his almost invincible repugnance to meeting strangers, did not at all surprise me. I replied, "I presume, for the same purpose for which he met myself, and desires to meet Redmond and all the rest of us—namely, to pick up the views of influential

Nationalists for his own information in the very desperate experiment he is about trying, just as I came to solicit a helping hand from you myself." He rejoined in a tone of some irritation that he did not want to see anybody. I represented that the refusal of an informal interview would seem a rather cruel proceeding towards a man who, if he came over, would come for the complete reversal of the Coercion régime, and who was at the least taking his life in his hands on a brave adventure. Mr. Sexton seemed to soften, but would give no definite answer. I left, saying I had only been anxious to carry out my promise to Sir Antony, and had no right or desire to press him further.

I had no further communication of any kind either from Mr. Sexton or from Sir Antony MacDonnell until the Land Conference was over. It is important to note the fact, inasmuch as I was astounded to learn three or four months afterwards from Mr. T. P. O'Connor in London that Mr. Sexton considered that the Land Conference and myself had treated him badly in reference to some negotiations of his own with Sir Antony MacDonnell. On the eve of the National Convention at which the fate of the Purchase Bill of 1903 was to be decided, Father O'Hara even brought me word that Mr. Sexton's grievance against the Land Conference and myself was to be brought up by his friends the next day and the Convention challenged to decide between us. It was a pity that his friends thought better of their intention, for if they had disclosed their private complaints, whatever they might be, freely to the Irish people, the puzzle in the public mind as to the attitude of the *Freeman* would have been at once cleared up. The fact that the *Freeman's* sudden and implacable campaign against the Land Conference and all that sprang from it had its origin in an imagined private grievance of Mr. Sexton's would have been made known to all the world, and the utterly unjustifiable and baseless character of that grievance would have been so easily shown that all further hostilities on the part of the *Freeman* would have been estimated at their proper worth.

Whether there ever was any interview between Mr. Sexton and Sir Antony MacDonnell, or what was its

character, if it took place, I am to this hour wholly uninformed. So far from desiring to exclude Mr. Sexton from a potent voice in the negotiations, it will be remembered that he was the first to whom I went, with the fullest disclosure of my every thought and plan, to implore him for the most candid criticism and for any more sagacious suggestions of his own. He promised in reply to "let me hear" from him "as soon as I think I can say anything that may possibly be of use." That promise he never kept. I quite took it for granted that the interview with Sir Antony Mac-Donnell, if it ever took place, had the same futile result as my own approaches to him. If the interview ever came off, and if it led to any negotiations or developments of any kind on the Land question, it was obviously Mr. Sexton's first duty to apprise his old colleagues of what had happened. He was aware that a Conference of supreme importance to the country's future—a Conference advocated and insisted upon by the *Freeman* more vehemently than by any other journal—was about to come off, and he knew that the authority of the tenants' representatives (including the chairman of the Irish Party) had been confirmed by the Irish Party, by the Hierarchy, by the County Councils, and in dozens of glowing leading articles by the *Freeman's Journal* itself. Under these circumstances to engage in negotiations of his own (if negotiations there were) without a vestige of authority from any representative body in the country, and above all to withhold all knowledge of his proceedings from the authorized representatives of the tenants, and allow them to go into the Conference wholly unaware of another set of proposals as between other unknown authorities going on behind their backs, was a course which may safely be left to the judgment of fair-minded men without comment. There was a still stranger aberration, however, of great talents, and that was that my failure to divine the existence of these extraordinary pour-parlers of which my colleagues and myself were kept in total ignorance, and remain in total ignorance to this hour, should be constructed into a grievance against them and me, and made the justification for an occult, insidious, and ruthless war upon a policy in its initiative and in all its developments

submitted to and enthusiastically approved by every open and advised national authority in the country.

Assuredly, whenever Sir Antony MacDonnell and Mr. Sexton choose to let us know what (if anything) took place between them, it is not the tenants' representatives at the Land Conference whose withers will be wrung.

CHAPTER IX

THE LAND CONFERENCE

THE Land Conference at long last assembled in the Mansion House, Dublin, on December 20, 1902. Mr. Redmond submitted the final selection of the tenants' representatives to a vote of the Irish Party, and with the exception of one not very influential member who declined to vote, the choice fell unanimously upon those first named in Captain Shawe-Taylor's letter. Whatever depreciation of the personnel of the Conference the acrimony of subsequent controversies gave birth to, it is certain that, after nearly three months for deliberation, not a single expression of objection to their character or competence came from any part of the country, and least of all from the *Freeman*, whose columns up to the very eve of the Conference were glowing with their praises. Mr. Redmond was the undisputed National leader, and they would be but censuring the competency of the Irish Party itself and indeed the country's own fitness for self-government, who should suggest that their foremost representative was a man without a sufficient grasp of the question which comprises five-sixths of the material interests of Ireland, or any adequate sense of his responsibilities for the decisions of the Conference. The Lord Mayor of Dublin, Mr. Harrington, if he had figured less in the more showy parts of politics, had been for ten years the true Chief Secretary for Ireland, the long-headed and strong-armed organizer of the popular forces, alive to every defect of the Land Laws, having the grievances of almost every parish in the country at his fingers' ends, and as indomitable a fighter against the people's oppressors as he was prompt to put down popular excesses



Photo, Hallen, New York.

JOHN E. REDMOND, M.P.



with a firm hand. Mr. T. W. Russell, whose title to speak for the Protestant and Presbyterian farmers of Ulster nobody on any side would dream of contesting, was a match for the shrewdest of these hard-headed people in clear-cut business ability, and in the most active of his Unionist days had never wavered in his adhesion to the most radical doctrines of Irish Land Reform.¹ Of the fourth delegate it need only be remarked that oddity could not well have taken a more eccentric form at the time than to suggest that he required lessons, either in knowledge of the tenants' case or in fortitude of purpose, from any of his subsequent critics.

The representatives of the landlords were no less fortunately chosen. The refusal of the Pontiffs of the Landowners' Convention to participate had the advantage that it emboldened those landlords who were really desirous of peace to let their choice of representatives run rather in the direction of conciliatory temper and freedom from the old ossified prejudices than of phenomenal intellectual weight of metal. All four were curiously enough soldiers, and of the type of Irish country gentlemen with whom we more generally associate a gallant generosity and geniality than the more lawyer-like qualities of subtlety and pugnacity. They were assuredly themselves the first to laugh at the suggestion which came to be one of the commonplaces of the meaner kind of Nationalists that the four tenants' representatives could not come in contact with them without being dazzled by their social superiority and hypnotized by their genius.

The Earl of Dunraven was the soul and inspiration of the new patriotism stirring in his class, and he undoubtedly was a man who in any company must have made his mark for

¹ The only defeat I ever had at the polls was at the hands of Mr. T. W. Russell. I had carried South Tyrone in 1885 against the Orange landlord nominee, the Hon. Somerset Maxwell (afterwards Lord Farnham). One of the electors (probably whipped to the poll under the landlord lash) spoiled his ballot paper by writing opposite the name of Mr. Somerset Maxwell, "No landlord!" and opposite my own, "No Pope!" It was a perfect picture of the mentality of the Ulster Presbyterian farmer. In the high tide of the anti-Home Rule reaction of 1886, Mr. Russell came along, free from all taint either of the Rent Office or the Vatican, and by a narrow majority of 99 succeeded where the Hon. Somerset Maxwell had failed.

broadness of view and solidity of understanding, as he has since shown that rarest form of mental and moral strength which enabled him to bear up as cheerfully against the ingratitude of his own peers as against the ferocity of a good many disgruntled Nationalist politicians. In his descent a happy blend of the two races, in which, however, the ancient Gaelic blood of the O'Quins—one of the historic clans of Thomond—very decidedly predominates over the more recent and less potent English strain, he combines the reserve, the cool judgment, and dogged tenacity he derives from Britain, with the warmth and, to a surprising degree, the romanticism of his Irish instincts, and with a passionate interest in the happiness and dignity of his own country which none but the least generous minds will deny him.¹ The Earl of Mayo, who had heretofore been known chiefly as the moving spirit in the Irish Arts and Crafts Exhibitions and by an enthusiasm for the development of Irish industries, which has cost him dear, was rather the fiery Hotspur than the plotting Worcester of the council board of his class, but he was a less conceited Hotspur, and a very Irish one, in whom some trace of the blood of Grace O'Malley, the famous sea-queen of the west, who lorded it over Elizabeth in her own palace, very perceptibly survived.² Colonel Hutcheson Poë, who had lost a leg in Kitchener's Sudan campaign, came as well from one of those families of never-ending generals and admirals of which the fighting Anglo-Irish race is so prolific; and was himself one of the most modest and conciliatory elements of the Land Conference as well as one of the best-informed contributors to its debates. Finally, Colonel Nugent Everard, the representative of one of the oldest Anglo-Irish families of the Pale, was the Lord-Lieutenant of his own county, and has no

¹ He was further prepared for sympathetic intercourse with his countrymen by the circumstance that he was the son of a Catholic nobleman of high attainments in Irish history and archaeology, and by his stout democratic training as a working journalist and a rancher in the American Far West.

² When the Lord Mayor introduced Lord Mayo and myself in the hall of the Mansion House, we were amused to observe with what widely-opened eyes Lord Mayo watched me, as though he were making acquaintance with some strange wild creature which he was not quite sure might not make a spring. "Would you believe it, Mr. O'Brien, I never saw you before?" he exclaimed. "That is a pretty handsome compliment to yourself as a landlord, Lord Mayo," was my reply. "If you had been a bad one, I am afraid you would have seen more than enough of me."

dearer interest in life than in the great tobacco-growing industry he has set going and a dozen the like generous projects for the prosperity and happiness of his neighbours. Not an altogether overwhelming intellectual combination, perhaps; but assuredly such a revelation as they made of reasonable spirit, common interest, and awakening national ambition amongst men who were types of the Protestant minority, even if particularly favourable ones, might well cause a larger patriotism to hesitate twice and thrice before driving them back to the position of permanent enemies and aliens in their native land.

Mr. Justice Ross, a Land Judge of not particularly happy renown in agrarian history, considered it befitting his judicial reputation, when the Conference was about to sit, to describe it, with withering scorn, as a parcel of "gay amateurs" proceeding to settle the Land question. As a matter of fact, the sneer indicated the real strength of the Conference and the key to its success. For the first time in the history of England's blunder-headed Irish legislation it was taken out of the hands of official "experts" and hair-splitting lawyers, and left to be rough-hewn by common men, with a thorough knowledge of where the shoe pinched on both sides, and a force of public opinion at their backs to give certain effect to their decisions.

It had been intimated to Mr. Redmond that there had been a desire expressed in the highest quarters that Lord James of Hereford should preside over the deliberations of the Conference, if not as an umpire, in the character of a dispassionate *amicus curiae*. While not at all insensible to the enormous significance of the interest thus betrayed in our proceedings, the tenants' representatives, considering that the special virtue and charm of the Conference lay in its coming together in order to settle among Irishmen themselves an historic difficulty which the Imperial Parliament was confessed to be incapable of solving, had no difficulty in making up their minds that this advantage would be lost if its deliberations were to be under the guidance of an Englishman, however fair-minded. Inasmuch as if the Conference failed to come to a decision without an actual division, it might as well break up at once, and any question of voting-

power was consequently of no importance, the difficulty was met by our unanimously tendering the chairmanship to Lord Dunraven, whose tenacious public spirit was mainly to be thanked for making it possible for us to assemble, and who was generally understood to be a person not wholly *ingrata* in the quarter from which the suggestion of the name of Lord James of Hereford had come.

The Conference held its sittings on December 20, December 22, December 23, December 24, December 31, 1902, and January 3, 1903. As we anticipated that, according to Parliamentary precedent, the chairman would bring up a draft Report himself, the tenants' representatives determined to content themselves with a concise list of their own essential requirements, which was accordingly drawn up by me and approved by my colleagues. It was as follows :

BASIS—ABOLITION OF DUAL OWNERSHIP.

1. For landlords, nett second term income, less all outgoings.
2. For occupiers, reduction of not less than 20 per cent on second term rents, or first term correspondingly reduced. Decennial reductions to be retained.
3. Difference between landlords' terms and occupiers' terms to be made up by State bonus and reduced interest, with, in addition, purchase-money in cash and increased value for re-sale of mansion and demesne.
4. Complete settlement of evicted tenants question an indispensable condition.
5. Special and drastic treatment for all congested districts in the country (as defined by the Bill of 1902).
6. Sales to be between parties or through official commissioners as parties may prefer.
7. Non-judicial and future tenants to be admitted.
8. (Query.) Sporting rights to be a matter of agreement.

The Report of the Land Conference will be found in full in an Appendix ; but it will be more convenient for the clear understanding of a highly technical subject to furnish the reader at once with a bird's-eye view of how far the points from the outset specified by the tenants' representatives as the vital ones were conceded in the Report as finally agreed to :

REQUIREMENTS.

RESULTS.

Basis—Abolition of dual ownership.

Basis—Agreed to.

1. For landlords, nett second term income, less all outgoings.

1. Agreed to, with the limitation of 10 per cent for outgoings.

2. For occupiers, reduction of not less than 20 per cent on second term rents, or first term correspondingly reduced. Decennial reductions to be retained.

2. On this point the Conference was only saved from breaking up by the compromise that 20 per cent reduction on second term rents, or their fair equivalent, was to be the average instead of the minimum, the purchasers being still entitled to the decennial reductions in addition.

3. Difference between landlords' terms and occupiers' terms to be made up by State bonus and reduced interest, with, in addition, purchase-money in cash and increased value for re-sale of mansion and demesne.

3. Agreed to.

4. Complete settlement of evicted tenants question an indispensable condition.

4. Agreed to, the word "should" being accepted by us in place of "must."

5. Special and drastic treatment for all congested districts in the country (as defined by Bill of 1902).

5. Agreed to, in the amplest terms.

6. Sales to be between parties or through official commissioners as parties may prefer.

6. Agreed to.

7. Non-judicial and future tenants to be admitted.

7. Agreed that purchase must be universal, non-judicial tenants being claimed by us to stand in the category of first term judicial leaseholders.

8. (Query.) Sporting rights to be matter of agreement.

8. Agreed to be left matter of bargain, as heretofore.

It will thus be seen that seven out of our eight requirements were plenary conceded, and the eighth covered by a compromise which would still have enabled every tenant in the country to become the proprietor of his holding for a smaller annual payment than he could reach if he were to wait for forty years (as the great bulk of them would have been obliged to do) until his judicial rent could be fixed for the third time, remaining all the time a mere tenant in a state of lifelong litigation.

Our success did not end there. With the single exception of the second term rental as the basis of income, Lord Dunraven's draft Report, as he submitted it originally to the Land Conference, did not contain one of the eight provisions we considered vital to a settlement, except, indeed, a recommendation on the question of sporting rights, on which he was finally induced to give way. The draft Report did not contemplate the entire abolition of landlordism at all, but only proposed to lay down in the preamble the general principle that a wide extension and acceleration of the system of occupying ownership was desirable. It took considerable debate to convince the landlord delegates that three-fourths of the value of the reform to the peace and happiness of the country consisted in its immediacy and its universality. The most extreme of those who afterwards made so light of the achievement would as soon have credited the day before the Conference assembled that a rain of gold was about to fall from the heavens as that we were about to witness the historic scene of the death-warrant of Irish landlordism, signed by the landlords' own official representatives. The first clause and foundation-stone of the Land Conference Agreement in its final shape was this :

1. That the only satisfactory settlement of the Land question is to be effected by the substitution of an occupying proprietary in lieu of the existing system of dual ownership. †

To the Evicted Tenants clause, by virtue of which some 3000 families, then reduced to a condition of the darkest distress and despair, have since been restored to the possession of happy homes, Lord Dunraven's draft Report made no reference at all. Even Mr. T. W. Russell had his searchings of the heart whether the relief ought to extend beyond the four or five hundred Plan of Campaign evictions then remaining outstanding. There was, however, nowhere any disposition to shirk the proposition that the large measure of forgiveness of innumerable wrongs demanded of the Irish tenantry must be accompanied with an amnesty no less large and generous on the other side. The Conference was brought to accept the following as one of the main props of its platform :

That any project for the solution of the Irish Land question should be accompanied by a settlement of the Evicted Tenants question upon an equitable basis.

The only alteration in the paragraph, as I originally proposed it, was the substitution of the gentle but no less effective "should" for the brusquer "must." But nobody has ever ventured to dispute that by this clause the landlords, who as a class accepted the Report, and the Government, who made it the basis of their legislation, contracted an obligation of honour to settle in all its extent a difficulty which had been for twenty years the source of three-fourths of the country's turbulence and bad blood—a point of honour as to which the landlords had vowed with an especial virulence to be unyielding, and for which both Unionist and Home Rule Governments in the Acts of 1881, of 1889, of 1890, and of 1896, and in Mr. Morley's Bill of 1894, and Mr. Wyndham's of 1902 had without avail endeavoured to find a remedy.¹

Another of the vital topics which the draft Report of Lord Dunraven left wholly untouched (he doubtless anticipated it was one which the tenants' representatives might be safely trusted not to overlook) was the great question of the redistribution of the population and the pasture-lands of the West. Here again we obtained a unanimous declaration which contains the germs of every leading recommendation (with the single exception of popular representation on the Congested Districts Board) embodied in the Report of Lord Dudley's Royal Commission five years after. The necessity

¹ One of the most acrid of Mr. Dillon's Parliamentary friends in his war upon the policy of Conciliation was an evicted tenant, who, when the Land Conference met, had been convicted by a jury of his native county for a wildly incoherent speech inciting to murder, the real defence for which would have been too painful to make, and sentenced to a long term of imprisonment. He shared in the amnesty which followed the Land Conference Report, and under its provisions became the proprietor of a mansion-house and rich grazing farm which the Estates Commissioners officially returned as worth only £5000, but which would probably now fetch a price little short of £10,000 in the market. He was also provided with a free grant of £300 with which to stock his new property. It is certain that the week before the Land Conference met he could not have received £50 for his hopes of reinstatement. Lord Palmerston once remarked of one who had bitterly attacked him: "I don't know why — should turn on me. *I never did him a favour in my life.*" The members of the Land Conference were left in no such perplexity as to the reasons for the indignation of Mr. —, M.P., against the authors of the Act that made his fortune.

for "separate and exceptional treatment" apart from the ordinary mechanism of land purchase was in clear terms insisted upon, and all candid readers will interpret the clause as calling for any compulsory powers that might be found necessary to carry out vast migration and enlargement schemes over an area comprising practically the entire western half of Ireland.

Here were concessions as revolutionary as they were unexpected. The fault-finders could only depreciate them by ignoring them. In their despair of finding any tenable ground of quarrel with the Report, they stumbled from one depth of fatuity to another. For several months their only concrete objection to the Report was that it recommended the continuance of the decadal reductions to the tenant-purchasers. The amazing discovery was suddenly made that these reductions were a subtle Treasury trick, the effect of which really was to increase the tenants' purchase-price by 25 per cent. But when the Treasury took them at their word and induced the Government to drop the decadal reductions from their new Bill, those who had been demonstrating with all the pomp of actuarial infallibility the heartless swindle upon the tenant-purchasers effected by the decadal reduction system made an immediate change of front, and made it one of the inexpiable faults of the new Purchase Bill that it dropped the heartless Treasury swindle on their advice. Their absurdity and incoherence did not even stop there. They positively mistook for Machiavellian devices of the landlord representatives, guilelessly accepted by Mr. Redmond and his "hypnotized" and incompetent brother-delegates, the demand for the bonus, the specification of a statutable minimum of reduction for the tenant-purchaser, and the reservation to him of the choice between direct and indirect purchase, every one of which originated with the representatives of the tenants—which indeed constituted the essence of the value to them of the Report, and in opposition to one of which the landlord representatives went within an ace of dissolving the Conference.

"So far as I have been able to see," wrote one very distinguished correspondent of the *Freeman*, "there never was the faintest vestige of reason to suppose that those

millions" (the bonus) "would be forthcoming. The prospect of them was a bait skilfully dangled before the tenants' representatives in the Conference by the far more competent, because better informed, representatives of the landlord interest, who met them there." Never was rash judgment more signally confounded. Not only did "those millions which there never was the faintest vestige of reason to suppose would be forthcoming" duly turn up with the approval of both parties and both Houses of the Parliament of Britain, but this "far more competent because better informed" personage was ludicrously astray in his history of the bonus. So far from its being "a bait skilfully dangled" before the imbecile leader of the Irish people and his colleagues by landlord craft, Lord Dunraven's suggested Report contained no allusion whatever to the subject. When we pressed a State subsidy as the indispensable condition of any practical outcome of the Conference, the landlord representatives, while they to the full acknowledged the equity of the claim for a State bonus, as well as its merits as a certain solvent of the difficulty, were at first as sceptical as the eminent correspondent of the *Freeman* himself as to whether "those millions would be forthcoming." As a matter of fact, their doubts on the subject, and consequently their anxiety to leave some loophole for the consideration of the recommendations of the Conference, in case the bonus should be denied to us, were alone responsible for any ambiguity in the language of the report upon the subject. But with us the State bonus was from the beginning and continued to be to the end the corner-stone of the whole settlement.

The inner history of what occurred is curiously instructive. At our second sitting, Lord Dunraven announced with a grave face that he had been in communication with persons in authority, and was convinced that a bonus such as we proposed was out of the question—that the Treasury would not hear of it in the present state of their finances. This portentous "never" of the Treasury did not much overawe us Irish members. We answered that we had heard the answer often before, and had known how to change it into a prompt and civil compliance with irrefutably

just demands. If our unaided strength had succeeded so often, we pointed out how irresistible the combined force of every party, class, and creed in Ireland must prove now in compelling the payment of a reasonable Imperial price for the best Imperial work ever done in Ireland. Lord Dunraven pressed us as to how much would be required. We replied that it was impossible to name a precise figure, as nobody except the Government (if even they) could do more than make a guess as to the actual rental of Ireland, but that our demand would probably be covered by £20,000,000 or thereabouts.¹ I added: "Say five weeks' supplies for the Boer War for the permanent pacification of Ireland." Our landlord colleagues could not quite conquer their awe of the British Treasury, but in the course of the debates became more and more convinced of the practicability, as they had been all along of the justice and necessity, of our demand, pressed as it would be with the united strength of a Conference to whose adjudication Mr. Wyndham had largely pledged himself to defer and with the full knowledge on all sides that, if the State subsidy were missing, our whole agreement must fall to pieces, and the agrarian war recommence. Eventually we agreed upon paragraphs plainly indicating the necessity as well as justice of State aid to meet "any reasonable difference" between the strict market price which alone the tenant-purchaser could be called upon to give and the "fancy price"—the bounty-fed price—which was essential to save sellers from sacrifices that would in many cases involve ruin.

Unscrupulous use was afterwards made by critics of our own household of our consenting to substitute the word "may" for our proposed word "must" in par. xii., in specifying the necessity for assistance from the State over and above the use of its credit, in order to satisfy the still lurking doubts of the squeezeability of the Treasury in the landlord mind. But not many fair readers of the paragraph, taken in connection with the subsequent distinct statement that "a settlement which will satisfy the just claims both of owners and occupiers can only be effected by the assistance of

¹ Mr. John Morley later placed his estimate at £22,000,000 and said as much Imperial money had never been better invested.

the State," and that "such assistance should be given, and can be given, without undue cost to the Treasury so as to cover any reasonable difference arising between the sum advanced by the State and the sum ultimately repaid to it," and taken in connection with the whole framework of the Report, will be left in any doubt that the demand for a State bonus was an organic and indispensable condition of the agreement. The only doubt indeed ever suggested was suggested by Nationalist critics; so far as the Government, the landlords, and the country were concerned, every possibility of doubt was dispelled by the repeated public declarations of Mr. Redmond, Mr. T. W. Russell, Mr. Harrington and myself (never, of course, challenged by any of our landlord colleagues) that the State bonus was the beginning and end, the marrow and the breath of life of the Land Conference agreement. But it is highly characteristic of the methods by which the work of the Land Conference was so disastrously marred that we should have the *Freeman* school of fault-finders making it one of the capital charges against the tenants' representatives that they had not insisted upon the bonus with sufficient pertinacity a month or two after the charge in the same columns had been that the bonus was an absurd chimera, a "bait skilfully dangled before" our foolish eyes by past masters in landlord chicanery.

Another of the *Freeman's* lynx-eyed discoveries of landlord guile was that the clause in the Report leaving the tenants free either to make their bargains directly with the landlords or indirectly through the agency of the Estates Commissioners was a cunning Dunravenesque device to evade inspection by the Estates Commissioners and thus secure extravagant prices for the landlords. Again the wise men went worlds astray from the truth. Lord Dunraven's draft Report proposed (as the Wyndham Bill of 1902 had done) to carry on all sales through the medium of the Estates Commissioners, and would have made direct sales between landlords and tenants impossible. The tenants' representatives, on the contrary, refused point-blank to entrust the fate of the tenant-purchasers to a trio of Estates Commissioners, of whom we only knew that the two to be appointed under the Bill of the previous session were enemies, and that it would be too

large a draft on human nature to expect a landlord Government to nominate any trio less to be depended on, if the price of the land of Ireland was to be left to their fixing. They considered it wiser (and who will dispute it now?) to leave any intelligent and organized body of tenants at liberty to make their own bargains direct with their landlord, if they saw fit, while on the other hand retaining the alternative of recourse to the Estates Commissioners, should they turn out to be men commanding public confidence, for the protection of tenants of the more helpless class, and especially of the poor people of the congested counties. And as for the newly invented enthusiasm for official inspection, which soon became one of the battle-cries of the enemies of land purchase, all the world knows that the country resounded for years with complaints of the interminable delays and obstruction caused by the performances of the official inspectors under the Ashbourne Acts. But the critics who saw in our recommendation that the tenants should be left free to bargain directly with the owners if they saw fit—a landlord conspiracy to get rid of State inspection—were confuted by the words of the very Clause II. they objected to. The clause made every direct bargain, as well as every indirect one, “subject to the necessary investigation by the State as to the title, rental, and security,” and that proviso, so far from being objected to by Lord Dunraven, was his suggestion, and was accepted, not without some hesitation, by us. For it is certain that if the old cumbrous forms of inspection were retained in the Act of 1903, not a fifth part of the 250,000 Irish tenants who are now the freehold owners of their fields would have up to the present date escaped from the trammels of the Castle officials. That result might have been welcome enough to the sworn foes of the Act of 1903, but would have been viewed with very different feelings by the Irish agricultural population, who almost to a man saw their salvation in the Act, and who quietly lit their pipes with the gloomy vaticinations of its foes, and one of the most valuable liberties gained for the Irish tenantry under the Conference Report would have been lost.

The point above all others, however, in which the inspired writers in the *Freeman* discovered the cloven hoof

of landlordism and the helpless servility of Mr. Redmond and his colleagues, was the invention of "the zones." Let us see once more how deep their penetration went. "The zones" were never mentioned, planned, nor even contemplated by either of the parties to the Land Conference, and least of the two by the landlord representatives. The question of price was, of course, the central knot to be untangled. The price to be given by the landlords—the second term rental, less outgoings—was a matter of general agreement in principle, although of long and anxious debate as to the deduction for outgoings and the rate of investment of the purchase-money. But then came the crux, what price the tenant-purchaser was to be called upon to give? and it was probably one of the most momentous eight men around a table ever set themselves to solve. Lord Dunraven's draft made no attempt to deal with it. He proposed to confine himself to a general proviso that the tenant-purchasers' annuities should involve "a substantial reduction" on their existing rents. The tenants' representatives made answer: "No. If we are to agree to the precise terms the landlords are to get, we must be equally definite as to the terms the tenants are to give. Otherwise, it might appear that the handsome and undoubtedly extra-commercial price conceded to the landlords is to come wholly out of the pockets of the tenants, and it would be the landlords' interest that the tenants should be put under pressure to submit, whereas in our view no agreement is possible at all unless the State steps in to supply the margin between the price we recognize it to be the national interest the landlords should get, and the price beyond which it would be injustice and probably ruin to ask the tenant-purchasers to go. Therefore our obvious duty is to safeguard the respective rights of the landlords and the tenants, so to say, in separate water-tight compartments, independent of one another, and make it our common interest to combine in pressing the State, in a no less substantial interest of its own, to reconcile the two sets of terms, of course within rational and moderate limits." Will any Irishman professing to speak in the tenants' interest now suggest that we were wrong?

Thereupon came the crisis of our debates. Our land-

lord colleagues were not unwilling that the tenants should receive as magnanimous treatment as they gave ; but, being still haunted by the fear that the Treasury would prove incoercible, they dreaded that if they assented to a minimum of 20 per cent further reduction on second term rents, the tenants' share of the harvest would be inevitably taken out of the provision for the landlords to any conceivable extent, or sales would become wholly unnegotiable. As we were no less resolved that the tenants' side of the bargain must be as specifically set forth as that of the landlords', we arrived at a deadlock, and it was agreed on both sides that, if the Conference was to issue in nothing better than vague pious opinions, it had better be ended here and now.

Before shaking hands, however, and returning to the country with this heavy news of failure, we all felt there ought to be an interval for deliberation, at separate sittings, in order to discuss the possibility of the only compromise suggested, viz. that the 20 per cent reduction on second term rents should be an average and not a minimum. During the two hours of the recess, Mr. Redmond, the Lord Mayor, Mr. Russell, and myself held our anxious council in the Portrait-Room of the Mansion House, while the landlord representatives betook them to their own headquarters. We were at one in taking the responsibility, grievous as it was, of breaking off the Conference, unless the limitation of the tenants' liability was as distinctly laid down as the generous provision for the landlords. On the other hand, to secure the ownership of the entire soil of Ireland for the people at an annual payment reduced by 20 per cent under the first judicial lease, reduced again by 22 per cent¹ under the second judicial lease, and to be reduced for the third time by an average 20 per cent more by the compromise now proposed, seemed to us an achievement so splendid that to reject it for a paltry higglers' quarrel over 5 per cent one way or the other was a responsibility too awful to be lightly taken, and an accountability to the country immeasurably more serious than any that could accrue from any ignorant or mischievous misrepresentation of our action. When the Conference reassembled we found our landlord colleagues equally concerned for the consequences of a dissolution of the Conference

and equally ready to set it forth in black and white that the tenant-purchasers must be guaranteed an annuity from 15 to 25 per cent less than second term rents reduced by 22 per cent, or their fair equivalent. There is the whole history of the transaction on the strength of which the readers of the *Freeman* have been for the last seven years nursed in the belief that "the zones" were the creation of Lord Dunraven's satanic brain, and were by him foisted on Mr. Redmond and his "hypnotized" and invertebrate brother-delegates.

To the joy and amazement of the country a unanimous Report was published on January 4, 1903. Mr. Wyndham's challenge to the patriotism and intelligence of Irishmen was thus victoriously answered. Where the Imperial Parliament had confessedly failed, and was bound to fail, the protagonists of the two warring hosts that had divided Ireland for twenty-five years had come together, and in the course of a few weeks' sittings blocked out the main lines of a permanent settlement, to the advantage of both classes and of the two countries. In the young days of the Irish farmers now grown to middle age, they would have mocked at any promise of overthrowing the power of landlordism as bitterly as if the promise were to rid them of the dominion of death. The one, like the other, seemed to them as unchangeable as a law of nature. They were now to obtain the ownership of their entire ancient fatherland, not only without the cost of a penny, but with an immediate saving of at least £1,500,000 a year in their existing payments, and they were to obtain the purchase-money—the poorest peasant in his mountain eyrie—on cheaper terms than any of the great Powers of Europe, except England, could borrow for themselves. All this has to be remembered when dealing with the conscienceless insinuations that the landlords gained everything and the tenants next to nothing by the decree of the Land Conference.

But, immeasurable as were the gains of the Irish tenantry, it is not a matter to be concealed, but to be proclaimed, that the blessings it conferred upon the landlord class were more striking still, because they had most to lose and least to hope for. It is furthermore the glory and not the reproach of the Land Conference that the landlords owed this historic

measure of relief and security to the magnanimity of their own countrymen, who were in nothing in heartier agreement with the tenants' representatives than in their view that, be the memories of the past never so black, the landed class were to be treated, not as conquered aliens overtaken by just reprisals, but as a powerful body of brother-Irishmen, whose misfortunes, as well as their evil powers, were a consequence of English policy, and whose unpopularity would cease with the surrender of those powers. For the Conference was not content with guaranteeing to the landowners a living income, as secure as the dividends of the Bank of England, in place of a precarious one, collected with odious discomforts and at the peril of periodical diminutions; it offered them every inducement to stay at home, with their capital, in their own mansion-houses, honouring and honoured by their fellow-countrymen, and leading the most fascinating country life in all the world.¹

The class war between the Irish majority and the Irish minority, which had raged without ceasing ever since O'Connell's Clare Election, was at a stroke deprived of the only material pretext for its continuance, which the Disestablishment of the Church and the Local Government Act of 1898 had left existing. For the first time since the Volunteers' Convention of 1782 Ireland had met and settled her affairs as a united nation; but with this most blessed difference to Irish pride and Irish interests, that this time the majority and the minority had met on perfectly equal terms, and that it was the majority and not the minority who had most to give, and with a steady gaze into the horizons of the country's future, gave it with a liberal hand.²

¹ It was in reference to the clause laying it down as one of the principal objects of the Conference to retain the landlord class in the country that one of the ablest (although, alas, one of the most timid) members of the Irish Party remarked to me, "I regard that as the most valuable part of the Report. We want these men—we want their independence of mind even more than their money." So true is it that "independence of mind" is one of our most grievous national wants, that the speaker afterwards allowed himself to be made one of the tamest instruments in the hands of those who proclaimed irreconcilable war against "our hereditary enemies."

² To the petty critics who are so much in love with the ignorant sneer that landlords and tenants only agreed in robbing the British Treasury, it is sufficient to reply that Ireland at her own sole charges bore the whole expense of financing the Act of 1903 for the first five years (caused though it was by the failure of

It is one of the enigmas of the human mind beyond any comprehension of mine by what process any Irishman, with a reputation for intelligence and patriotism at stake, could see in the treaty, which thus accomplished one of the two objects of our lives and placed us on the high-road to the accomplishment of the other, nothing better than "a landlord swindle," a truckling to "our hereditary enemies," and a "mortgaging the future of the country in a moment of weakness." We can only bow our heads before the mystery, as before so many others. Those of us who began life with an infinite faith in human nature will be wise to finish it with an infinite indulgence for the inborn blemishes which are the badge of all our tribe—the great and the simple, the rich and the poor, the good and the bad and the indifferent.

Imperial credit), and the sole cost to the Imperial (including Irish) taxpayer of this pacific revolution in Ireland, was a yearly bonus instalment of less amount than had been the Imperial payment for extra-police and eviction campaigns any year during the previous quarter of a century.

CHAPTER X

THE FIRST SYMPTOMS OF REVOLT

AND now begins a record of facts which, for more reasons than one, I should gladly let die, only that the story carries a moral which must needs be taken to heart in Ireland, if the national cause is to have any chance of reaching its full fructification in our day, and in England, if the hope of contenting Ireland, or even of understanding her, is not to be given over in despair.

Mr. Davitt, having returned from America, was kind enough to come up from Dalkey to dine with me every evening of the sittings of the Land Conference. I communicated to him without reserve all that passed there—our difficulties, our compromises, and our successes. He listened, as it seemed, with satisfaction and amazement, to the unreserved concessions of the landlords, in throwing landlordism once for all overboard, and burying the hatchet so long shaken over the heads of the evicted tenants, and adopting, in all essentials, our programme for the regeneration of the West; but he could not be induced to make any suggestion or even criticism of his own. I had taken care also to keep fully informed of the progress of our deliberations the gentleman who for many years had been entrusted with the writing of the *Freeman* leading articles on the Land question.

The first suggestion of a suspicion that the *Freeman* was about suddenly to turn from the most fervid friendship for the Land Conference and its members into its and their most dangerous enemy, came from the singular manner in which the official announcements of our sittings were dealt

with in its columns. These announcements, for which the eyes of almost every man in Ireland, whatever his political colour, were straining, as for one of the most fateful crises in the life of the country, were, by a knack of typographical and sub-editorial sleight-of-hand which was afterwards reduced to a fine art (or rather to a very foul one), buried away in remote corners of the paper under insignificant headings and in "unleaded" type. But these pin-pricks we took to be the vengeance in a small feline way of the managing editor (a Mr. Brayden), whose dignity had been ruffled by his not having been taken into the confidence of the Irish Party on quite a different subject (their action on the English Education Bill). The possibility never crossed our minds that a paper whose directors had got possession of it in order to make it the official organ of the Irish Party—a paper which no later than a fortnight before (December 13) enthusiastically proclaimed: "Never did the Irish Land question seem so near a reasonable, amicable, final settling. The Irish National Party, Lord Dunraven and his Committee, and indeed the Irish Chief Secretary and the entire Cabinet, want the question settled"—would, without a word of warning to the Irish leader or to any of us, take this infinitely small-minded way of proclaiming war against the accredited representatives of the Irish Party, and against every principle of National policy which it had been itself insisting upon with vehemence in almost daily leading articles for the previous three months. Indeed, so little had any such suspicion occurred to the editorial writer who had been for years the *Freeman's* trusted spokesman on the Land question, that he and I dined together on the night before the Report of the Conference was to be given to the public, and discussed in all its details and in a spirit of joyous hopefulness the totally unlooked-for national triumph enshrined in the Report.

He left at a late hour that evening to write his leading article on the subject. On reaching the *Freeman* office, he was informed, without a word of explanation, that he need not trouble himself about it—that the leading article on the Land Conference Report was already

written.¹ From that night forth, I believe, he was never invited again to be the expounder of *Freeman* policy on the Land question.

The meaning of the new departure was made evident enough in the first leading article of the *Freeman* the following morning (4th January 1903). The article was a fatal misconstruction—I hesitate to say misrepresentation—of the Land Conference Report in its most vital point—the question of price—to the advantage of the landlords and to the detriment of the tenants, with an effect which has never since been quite effaced from the minds either of the landlords or of the tenants. If its writer or inspirer had made his article a straightforward denunciation of the Report as an act of treason to the tenants and the country, the remedy would have been easy and would have been instantly effective. Did the country only get any plain warning that the *Freeman's* views of the Report covered a bitter hostility to the Land Conference and to all who took part in it, such as was afterwards gradually developed, the facts had only to be explained to the first public meeting, and in the state of Irish public opinion at the time the sting would have been without difficulty drawn—and indeed the hostility dropped in a panic. But the new pen in the *Freeman* was more adroit. The acid was injected in one or two sentences in the tail of a long and somewhat maudlin panegyric of every other portion of the Report except the vital one. Here was the one damning suggestion slipped into the midst of an intolerable deal of laudation :

The terms of purchase suggested will be generally recognized as generous to the landlords in the extreme, if they be not regarded as extravagant in their generosity. The price of the estates, it is suggested, should be based, not upon a valuation of them, or upon the security they afford for the purchase price, but upon the income derived by the landlords from them. . . . Until these principles are embodied in a financial plan, it will be impossible to judge of their probable operation. But it is clear that the landlord who could avail of them would get out extremely well. The price he would receive from the State would be from 28 to 33 years' purchase,

¹ It was written, as were all the subsequent attacks on the Land Conference, on instructions given by Mr. Sexton, by a Mr. Robert Donovan, who has since subsided into a snug University office, whose salary comes from the British Consolidated Fund.

while the price to be paid by the tenants, which would vary according to the stock, would not be less than from 20 to 23 years' purchase.

The writer confessed that eight individuals around a Conference table had no power to lay down what was to be the exact amount of the State bonus, what was to be the Treasury rate of interest or sinking fund, or the increased powers of trustees in the investment of the purchase-money — all essential factors in determining what would be the number of years' purchase payable either to the landlord or by the tenants ; and consequently that "until these principles are embodied in a financial plan, it will be impossible to judge of their probable operation." Nevertheless he does not fear to take the responsibility of taking every recommendation of the Conference at its best for the landlords and at its worst for the tenants, and of pronouncing that the Conference had awarded to the landlords a price of "from 28 to 33 years' purchase for the land of Ireland," and imposed upon the tenants a *minimum* of "from 20 to 23 years' purchase." The writer, for the first time in the history of the subject, took the line which has never since been dropped, of ignoring the difference between first term rents and second term rents reduced for the second time by 22 per cent, and parading the higher price to be paid naturally for the lower rents as if it were the price insisted upon by us as the price of the whole land of Ireland. The delusiveness of this device may be appreciated from the fact that at the time only a small fraction of the rents of Ireland were second term rents (only 80,000 in all, and only 12,000 outside the province of Ulster), while the first term and non-judicial tenants numbered 350,000, and as to these the tenants' representatives never wavered in their contention that "the fair equivalent" of the Report would have entitled them to reductions of just double the amounts stipulated for in the case of second term tenants.

In defiance of these manifest facts the *Freeman* pontifically declared that the Report bound the Irish tenantry to pay a minimum of 20 to 23 years' purchase, and declared the landlords entitled to a price of 28 to 33 years' purchase ; and as the columns of the *Freeman* within the next two following months were bristling with denunciations of the State

bonus and prophecies that it would never be forthcoming, the astounding falsehood ultimately came to be rooted in ignorant minds on the high financial authority of Mr. Sexton that the whole burden would fall on the tenants, and that the Conference had pledged them to pay 28 to 33 years' purchase for their holdings! The falsehood was all the more easily credited because it came from the official organ of the party and in the midst of what might well seem to the unpractised rustic eye a gush of affectionate admiration for the Land Conference. Graver still was the effect upon the landlord mind. All the most unreasonable of the class greedily lapped up the admission of the official national organ that 28 to 33 years' purchase was the landlords' equitable due, by the confession of the tenants' own representatives. It is not too much to say that this initial misrepresentation of the Land Conference Report in its very centre had a more evil influence than all besides in implanting in the landlord and the tenant mind, and in the mind of Mr. Wyndham as well, a false impression which was never quite eradicated, and had more to do than anything else (except possibly the price the Irish leader authorized to be announced for his own estate) in raising the price of land under the Act of 1903 by about 2 to 3 years' purchase beyond the figures contemplated by the Land Conference.

The morning the article appeared I went straightway to Mr. Sexton to bring it under his notice. Even then I had no suspicion that he was personally concerned in its writing or inspiration. It must be borne in mind that for more than seven years he had held himself strictly aloof from national affairs, that he had publicly pledged himself not to interfere in the political direction of the *Freeman* and had up to that time observed his promise, and that he had not ventured upon a word of comment or advice in reply to my invitation to give us his assistance in view of the Land Conference; taking it for granted that we were dealing only with some stroke of malice on the part of a subordinate, which had only to be pointed out to be set right. I spoke with freedom and with the heat of one who was overwrought with many weeks of anxieties all but past

endurance, and now when the difficulties had been victoriously overcome was confronted by the shipwreck of our work by our own party organ in the Press. I pointed out the endless mischief that must follow if once the utterly false impression crept into the minds of landlords and tenants that, on the *Freeman's* own official authority, the Land Conference proposed to pay the landlords 28 to 33 years' purchase and to compel the tenants to pay a minimum of 20 to 23 years' purchase of their existing rents.

To my amazement Mr. Sexton broke out into one of those fits of ungovernable excitement which upon at least three notable occasions have done his public usefulness an injury, such as all his fine qualities of eloquence and wizardry in the manipulation of figures have scarcely repaired.¹ He stamped up and down the room, declared he thought the article a very complimentary one, that it had dealt very mildly with the Report, that except the paragraph as to the West he could not see that the tenants had gained anything, and finally that if I wanted to boss the *Freeman* he would quit the place and let me do what I liked. It was now only too plain that by any complaint as to the article it was Mr. Sexton who was wounded, and that we were face to face with a national peril of some gravity—a rift between the authorized representatives of the Irish Party (including their leader) and an Irishman of the first intellectual rank without any representative authority of his own, but in command of the official organ of the party. I applied myself with all the good feeling of which I was capable to discover, and if possible remove, the mysterious cause of misunderstanding which it was plain was lurking somewhere in the background. Nobody, of course, knew better than he that, far from

¹ The public memory is still fresh of Mr. Sexton's allusion to Mr. John Bright's failing powers and his comparison of his conscience to "a whited sepulchre," to which (as the correspondence between Mr. H. Labouchere, M.P., and Mr. W. S. Caine, M.P., proves) Mr. Bright himself attributed his definite determination to oppose Home Rule. Hardly less painful was the circumstance that Mr. Sexton was the only man in the Parliament of 1892-95 who was suspended in a House of Commons of Home Rulers and by the mildest Chairman of Committee on record (Mr. Mellor) on a very trumpery occasion; or again his retort upon his Liberal suspenders when upon a not very epoch-making amendment as to whether the future Irish police was to be a county or a national force he dragged his reluctant colleagues into a division which went within an ace of wrecking the Home Rule Government and their Bill.

nourishing any ambition to "boss" the *Freeman*, it was my point-blank refusal to have anything to do with it which led to his own appointment as Managing Director, but that was a topic I took care not to touch upon. I did remind him gently that I had given the best proof of my personal feeling in his regard by making him the first person I appealed to for the priceless intellectual assistance he could give us in the tremendous ordeal before the representatives of the people at the Land Conference, abstaining carefully from any allusion to the result of my appeal. I added that if he wanted any assurance, that in any careless words of heat of mine the last thought in my mind was that I was offering him any personal offence, he need only recall the fact that he was the first man to whom I hastened to draw his attention to the grievous national consequences of the fallacy contained in the article.

He grew gradually mollified, and resumed his seat and asked me what I wanted him to do. My reply was to remove, so far as it was now possible, the impression that the Conference Report contemplated any such monstrous terms of purchase. He asked, Did not the Report deal with second term rents alone, and would not a second term income invested at 3 per cent mean 28 to 33 years' purchase? I answered, firstly, that to assume a 3 per cent investment was to go further than the landlord representatives themselves, who had loosely stated their highest claim as "3 or $3\frac{1}{4}$ per cent," and had joined us in demanding enlarged powers for trustees which would almost certainly raise the rate of investment to 4 per cent and so completely demolish the *Freeman* figures; and, secondly, that in leading the public to believe that the whole Irish tenantry were to pay second term rates, the writer of the article ignored "the fair equivalent" stipulated for in the Report, and ignored the further fact that the second term tenants were only about a fifth of the Irish tenantry, and a mere handful outside Ulster, and that the remaining four-fifths would be in our view entitled to an additional 20 per cent reduction (or 40 per cent in all) as their "fair equivalent," that thus the landlords were led by the *Freeman* figures to expect a price monstrously beyond Conference terms, and the tenants

to dread being compelled to pay prices no less monstrously in conflict with our recommendations.

He then more or less vaguely broached for the first time the theory, which afterwards became the battle-cry in the war against the Act of 1903, viz. that so far as the landlords were concerned, they ought not to get a larger price for second term rents reduced for the second time by 22 per cent than if their rents had only been once, or had never been, reduced. I asked him was he really serious in expecting the abolition of landlordism on the footing that landlords were only to get 17 to 18 years' purchase of a rental already diminished by 20 per cent for the first term and 22 per cent more for the second? If the tenants' representatives had tabled such a demand at the Land Conference, it could only have meant the break-up of the proceedings in derision, too fierce to allow of a moment's debate. As tenderly as it was possible to do it, I put it to him would any critic of the Report have committed himself to such a demand had he been in our place? I told him bluntly that I would myself welcome any imaginable torrent of misrepresentation rather than have faced the country if I had been the means of shipwrecking the most glorious opportunity ever offered to her of getting rid of landlordism root and branch, and making national self-government the inevitable sequel, by putting forward a claim so preposterous that, a month before the Conference, no sane man in the island would have put it in words.

Our interview mellowed down into a tone of completely restored friendliness, and we parted with Mr. Sexton's promise to make it clear to the public mind, in the next day's paper, that the Land Conference Report was in no sense to be held answerable for the extravagant figures suggested, either as to the lavish price to be given to the landlords, or the no less unjustly lavish price to be exacted from the tenant-purchasers.

In fulfilment of Mr. Sexton's promise, a sub-leader did appear in the following morning's *Freeman*, which indirectly, indeed, acknowledged the unjustifiableness of the sensational figures of the previous day, but made no adequate effort to remove the impression they had created :

Doubt has been expressed by some of our contemporaries as to the number of years' purchase which the tenants would have to pay on the terms suggested by the Report of the Land Conference. As the Report makes clear, and as our article yesterday stated, the basis of purchase would be second term judicial rents or their "fair equivalent." Mr. T. W. Russell, in the article which we quote from the *Manchester Guardian*, points out the necessity for the alternative phrase. Only about 80,000 second term applications have been heard by the Land Commission, though there are 260,000 judicial tenants entitled to make application. On those cases heard, the average reduction has been 22 per cent on first term rents—though the percentage varies greatly, being highest in Ulster and lowest in Munster and Connaught. Mr. Russell explains that the Conference resolved not to deal in questions of years of purchase, but to approach the problem from the point of view of the initial reduction on the second term rents to be secured to the tenant. A 15 per cent reduction on the second term rent would, on the conditions proposed in Mr. Wyndham's last Land Bill, mean $22\frac{2}{3}$ years' purchase in land stock of the second term rents. A 25 per cent reduction would, on the same conditions, be equivalent to 20 years' purchase of the second term rents in land stock. These terms, allowing for the 22 per cent average reduction on the first term rents, would mean from about $16\frac{1}{2}$ to 19 years' purchase of the first judicial rents. But the estimates would vary with any modification of the financial scheme of Mr. Wyndham's Bill. Until the financial plan is before the public such estimates must be merely provisional.

Here, it will be observed, the writer is coerced to admit that the highest terms contemplated by the Land Conference in the cases of five-sixths of the tenantry of Ireland were "about $16\frac{1}{2}$ to 19 years' purchase of the first judicial rents," in place of "not less than from 20 to 23 years' purchase." Even the *Freeman's* new figure was only made out on the plan of always assuming the worst against the tenants, and taking it for granted (as, of course, it turned out untrue) that the Treasury terms of Mr. Wyndham's previous Bill would not be improved upon. No man of sense will now dispute that the terms thus acknowledged to be the Conference terms as to the vast bulk of the Irish tenantry would be wholly satisfactory—nay that, even as to the handful of second term tenants outside Ulster, 20 to $22\frac{2}{3}$ years' purchase would be no less substantially welcome. By the *Freeman's* own confession, therefore, the tenant's right to

purchase at an unimpeachably fair price was safeguarded from all danger in the Conference Report; and that being so, the more generous the terms obtained for the landlords the better for the tenants, because the greater the inducement to sell on the strength of the State subsidy, and excepting the small school of politicians who regarded any peaceful settlement of the land war as ruinous to the Home Rule cause, every motive of patriotism ought to have concentrated the national strength in one united endeavour to press upon the Government the legislative enactment of a compact which, according to Mr. Sexton's revised figures as well as our own, had struck the golden mean of fair play and generosity to all sides.

Far different counsels prevailed in the *Freeman* office. The gingerly words of modification in an obscure sub-leader attracted no attention. The original official announcement that, according to the Land Conference decree, the landlords were to have "from 28 to 33 years' purchase," and the tenantry of Ireland to pay "not less than from 20 to 23 years' purchase," remained firmly embedded in the landlords' mind, and to a large extent in the popular mind as well, and lest there should be any fear of its being uprooted, the *Freeman* from that day forth opened its columns to every ignorant or malicious correspondent who had caught up the initial cry, and now repeated it in every variety of misleading or bother-headed confusion of the figures.

Unluckily, one or two correspondents of a different stamp were induced to lend their influence to the outcry, and by the alchemy of their countenance did a good deal "to turn to virtue and to worthiness" a newspaper warfare which would otherwise have done little injury except to its promoters. Mr. Davitt began on January 12 a series of eight letters under the heading "The Dunraven Scheme," disregarding altogether Mr. Sexton's admission on second thoughts that five-sixths of the Irish tenants were to obtain the ownership of their farms at "about 16½ to 19 years' purchase of the first judicial rents," and denouncing the Report in the most unmeasured terms as a villainous landlord conspiracy to raise the price of land by "10 years' purchase" (as he declared in his letter of January 12)

or "by 12 years' purchase" (which was his figure on January 24). The recklessness of his figures may be judged, not merely by this advance of 2 years' purchase in his estimate within a fortnight, but by the fact that, while in the first letter he gives at £40,000,000 the addition to the selling value of the landlords' property under "The Dunraven Scheme," the figure had advanced in the second letter to £54,000,000—a trifle of £14,000,000 difference—and while on January 12 he scoffs at any reliance upon "the highly improbable willingness of the British Parliament or Treasury to give a bonus," he on January 24 informed the British Parliament and Treasury, as the result of his financial study of the question, that "a bonus not of twenty but of fifty millions" would be required to give effect to the Land Conference Report. The violence of his language may be judged by such turns of phrase, in reference to the landlord representatives at the Conference, as "their final spoliation of the country," with an "anti-Irish feeling" and "a wolfish greed worthy of their record." Here is his summary of the work of a Conference which the country by its every representative voice had called for as an unparalleled opportunity for national reconciliation, and half the members of which (including the leader of the Irish people) were the duly delegated representatives of the Irish Party :

There was absolutely no spirit on the one hand but of a grasping, sordid kind worthy of a Shylock ; while on the other everything was staked—the life of the Land Movement, which has made landlordism impossible, the All Ireland Compulsory Purchase Movement and the Land Act of 1881—along with a bonus not of twenty, but of fifty millions, for peace and for Ireland.

This was one of his mildest descriptions of an agreement for the total abolition of landlordism at a figure "about 16½ to 19 years' purchase of first judicial rents," which every farmer in the country would jump at, the salvation of thousands of starving evicted tenants, the regeneration of the West, and the removal of the last material obstacle to Home Rule !

It is one of the consolations of those later years of forced estrangement from old and valued associates that I never allowed myself to be tempted to make any reply to

Mr. Davitt's numerous letters and speeches of the above character. It is doing no injustice to his memory to suggest that his advice in the practical affairs of life was not exactly the most valuable of the gifts for which his countrymen loved and revered him. He was well known to be a life-long apostle of the nationalization of the land. Any scheme of land purchase which would confer the ownership of the land of Ireland, so long as grass grows or water runs, upon a peasantry the most tenacious in the world in their passion for the soil, would be the death-blow of his cherished ideal. That he should give expression to his misgivings and disappointment, even with some unconscious injustice of language, was a natural right which, in his case, Irishmen of all schools and ranks would not only concede, but insist upon with a special pride. Lamartine, when he was elected to the French Chamber, and was trying to make up his mind in what part of the House he was to sit, said he was afraid he would have "siéger au plafond"—to take his seat on the ceiling. Mr. Davitt occupied some such seat of ideal honour in the public life of Ireland. Besides, nobody who knew him would be afraid that he would long retain the tone of bitterness evident in his denunciations of the fabled "Dunraven Scheme," once his own protest was made, and the decision of the country duly registered. The misfortune was that his adoption of the preposterous figures first propounded by the *Freeman* (although the next day more or less furtively recanted) gave the aid of a great and respected personality to a division of the national strength planned at a most critical hour with a less single-minded purpose.

Under the ægis of his name it was not difficult to recruit a band of letter-writers to whom the *Freeman* promised the agreeable surprise of finding enthroned, in its choicest page and in all its "leaded" pomp, lucubrations which, under any other circumstances, would have been left to waste their sweetness in the waste-paper basket, or to be coughed down at some village cross-roads. Mr. Wyndham scarcely exaggerated when he afterwards told the House of Commons: "Ever since the Report of the Conference was published every leading article and from two to four columns of correspondence *per diem* have been devoted to this document and to the

question whether their suggestions should be adopted or not." It may be imagined with what confusion the public mind was filled by this flood of criticisms from half-informed and irresponsible writers, arguing from the wildly erroneous figures of the *Freeman* and Mr. Davitt upon a most delicate matter of State, as to which the *Freeman* itself admitted that "until these principles are embodied in a financial plan it will be impossible to judge of their probable operation." The danger was all the greater because Mr. Redmond, Mr. Harrington, and myself felt it necessary to leave the *Freeman* corps of critics almost undisturbed at their work pending the pronouncements of the responsible national authorities. It became only too plain that the design was to goad us into a wrangle on controversial details which the Conference had deliberately agreed to be beyond their immediate scope, at the risk of provoking some counter-statement from the landlord side, and destroying the agreement with so much patience and labour arrived at.

Both Mr. Redmond and I did, indeed, find ourselves compelled to repudiate the grotesque legend, now everywhere afloat, as to the prices the Conference Report proposed to exact from the tenants—he in a letter to the Limerick County Council and I in a letter to the Carrick-on-Shannon District Council. Mr. Redmond wrote (January 24):

I notice that there has been in some quarters a strange misunderstanding upon certain points (of the Report). For example, some people seem to imagine that we recommended that the tenants should pay 33 years' purchase for the land. Need I say that this is an absurd mistake? Under our proposals the tenants would not pay for the land more than about the average amount which has willingly been paid by tenant-purchasers for some years past.

The *Freeman's* comment was characteristic. It did not attempt to controvert Mr. Redmond's statement, in view of its own revised estimate that "about 16½ to 19 years' purchase of the first judicial rents" would in an overwhelming majority of cases be the figure; but it added a Mark Antony-like comment which gave new wings to the misrepresentations:

To buy out the landlords on a 3 per cent basis, with a maximum reduction of 10 per cent for outgoings, means, it is true, the payment of from 30 to 33 years' purchase to the landlord. But that

price is conditioned by a substantial bonus from the State, and by a proviso that the annuities of the tenants cannot be more than 85 per cent of the second term rent.

In this manner, under cover of a seeming defence of Mr. Redmond, the original misrepresentation is adroitly reinsinuated by assuming that the investment of the purchase-money would be at 3 per cent, although the landlords themselves suggested $3\frac{1}{4}$, or such higher rates as the enlarged powers of trustees called for by the Conference Report might legalize. And while the *Freeman*, indeed, graciously conceded that the tenants might be saved by a State bonus from paying the entire 30 to 33 years' purchase themselves, it took the shrewdest means of putting a bonus out of the question by publishing a daily stream of letters insisting that the bonus was another swindling invention of the landlords, and in the next breath assuring the Treasury that the bonus was a chimera which no Irish schoolboy was credulous enough to believe in, and which would cost the Treasury £50,000,000, if it were insane enough to listen to the demand.

It became later the fashion to pretend that the outcry was never directed against the Land Conference Report, but only began when Mr. Wyndham's Bill was produced, and because that Bill fell short of the Conference recommendations. It would be hard to find an allegation more daringly untrue. Every issue of the *Freeman*, from the night when Mr. Sexton first took command, bears unmistakable evidence of the hostility which threw off all disguise as soon as it could be nominally directed against Mr. Wyndham's Bill. Furthermore, it can be proved to demonstration that in the main particulars in which Mr. Wyndham's Bill rejected the recommendations of the Land Conference, the responsibility lies principally with those who spent several months in convincing the Treasury that these recommendations were laughed at, if not regarded as a positive grievance, in Ireland.

One of the most valued boons conferred on tenant-purchasers was the series of decennial reductions in their annuities allowed to them under Mr. Balfour's Act of 1891. The Land Conference made the continuance of these decadal reductions (as they were called) an essential element of their stipulations as to price. Mr. Wyndham was induced to

make a Treasury saving by dropping the decadal reductions from his Bill. Immediately, in the mouth of the *Freeman* and of all its host of letter-writers and speech-makers, the discontinuance of this priceless privilege of the tenant-purchasers became one of the most unforgivable crimes of the Wyndham Bill. But Mr. Wyndham and the Treasury had only to turn to the *Freeman's* own columns for their justification. Possibly for want of some grievance against the Conference Report more substantial than the hypothesis of a visionary finance, Mr. Sexton, in an unlucky hour, fell on the decadal reductions and proceeded to demonstrate, with all his genius for air-blown actuarial theories, that, far from being an advantage to the tenant-purchasers, they were a Treasury swindle of the most outrageous character. Week after week, by a device that afterwards became one of the most notorious instruments for befuddling, by seeming to instruct, the public mind, he published a two-column table, in black letters of doom, setting forth irresistible evidence, according to Cocker, that under the decadal reduction system "the tenant-purchaser goes on paying for 72 years instead of 42, and on every £100 he pays in all (about) £215 instead of £170, or, say, approximately one-fourth more." The black mourning table was, indeed, silently dropped as soon as it was found that practically every tenant-purchaser in the country, having been given a choice between the two systems, had opted for the system of decadal reductions, being taught by their own rude rustic sense that the use of the cheap money more than counterbalanced the excess at compound interest in the second next generation. The mischief, however, had been already done. The Treasury gladly relieved themselves of the imputation of embezzlement levelled at them by the official organ of the Irish Party, and the decadal reductions disappeared from the new Bill.

It seems beyond belief, yet it is the undisputed truth, that no sooner had Mr. Wyndham, improving on the *Freeman's* own teaching, rejected the Land Conference recommendation than the decadal reductions, which had been a principal reproach of the Land Conference so long as they seemed likely to be carried, became a cardinal point in the indict-

ment against the Wyndham Bill the moment they were dropped. Such is the shortness of public memory upon which the partisan code of ethics seldom calculates in vain. Such is the value of those elaborate actuarial calculations—pedantically faultless, but with little or no contact with the practical realities of the Irish farmer's life—which Mr. Sexton, undeterred by the results of his decadal reduction theories, continued to pour forth to the immeasurable injury of the fortunes of Ireland.

A more serious matter was the war waged against the bonus. While the subject was treated with a prudent ambiguity in its editorial columns, the *Freeman* was almost daily aflame with letters in one breath deriding the idea of making such a call upon the Treasury as too silly to enter the brain of "a schoolboy of thirteen," and in the next striving to work up the prejudices and suspicions of the Irish peasant mind into the belief that the bonus, even if granted, was a base invention of the landlords still further to swell their spoils at the expense of the Irish people. The impression was deepened by the news that Mr. Dillon, on his return from America, declined to give any opinion of the Land Conference Report, and could be got to say nothing less ominous than that he "found the country a wholly different country from what he had left it." Mr. Redmond and myself took pains, by every species of confidential explanation, to make it clear to him that the only change was that the representatives of the party, whose willingness to join a Conference he had himself approved, had since succeeded in bringing the Conference to a conclusion transcending the most sanguine hopes of three months ago. We reminded him also that if there were still any doubts of the wisdom of the agreement in the minds of serious men, there would be full and free opportunity for debating them at the meetings of the Irish Party and of the National Directory of the United Irish League which had been summoned to consider the report. He listened, but in a silence which, even in our most intimate consultations, he could not be induced to break.

Such an attitude in what might well be supposed to be official Nationalist circles was not lost upon the

vigilance of a Treasury at its wits' end for money. It became known—as a hundred oaths cannot prevent Cabinet secrets of any consequence from becoming known—that the question of a bonus was trembling in the Ministerial balance, if the adverse scale had not already proved the heavier. On February 11 the *Freeman* was able to publish in a Stop-Press Edition, with sensational trappings, not altogether unsuggestive of exultation, a *communiqué* from one of the London papers announcing that “the Government have decided to ignore the principal suggestions of the Land Conference, and that the Bill which Mr. Wyndham will introduce will be framed, in the main, on the lines of the previous year's Purchase Bill.” Two days later in another paper came the definite and, as it seemed, official announcement that the Cabinet had considered and had actually resolved to reject the demand for a bonus.

On the morning on which this grave announcement was made, at Mr. Redmond's request I joined him at an interview with Sir Antony MacDonnell to discuss the provisions of the contemplated Bill. Mr. Redmond informed me that Sir Antony had expressed a desire to have an informal consultation with Mr. Redmond, Mr. Dillon, Mr. Davitt, and myself on the subject, and that, having been apprised of his anxiety to meet them, Mr. Dillon and Mr. Davitt had declined to join us. Mr. Davitt's refusal was consistent with his lifelong rule to hold himself free from any personal contact with the Ministers of any party or from any responsibility for their projects. Mr. Dillon never shared that doctrine, holding, as most men still think wisely, that the personal intercourse which would be treason in the case of hostile English Ministers became a patriotic necessity as soon as they had been converted into doing Ireland's work. He had, as a matter of fact, met English Ministers and officials hundreds of times for every one occasion on which I had felt bound to meet them myself. In the case of Sir Antony MacDonnell there was only question of an avowed Irish Nationalist, who had come over, with some self-abnegation, for the purpose of ending the régime of coercion and aiding in the accomplishment of practically every aim of the national programme. There was a question, moreover, of

exercising what might easily be a vital influence in giving legislative shape to the recommendations of a Conference to which we had been parties, on an official commission from the Irish Party and by the indisputable desire of the Irish nation. It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that Mr. Dillon's refusal to join his colleagues on this occasion in moulding the character of the future Bill was the first of the long train of mistakes by which he gradually isolated himself from the official representatives of his party, refused them his counsels, and eventually set himself to overthrow their plans.

Sir Antony MacDonnell began his interview with Mr. Redmond and myself by mentioning that he was anxious to have our suggestions as to various critical points in the Bill, and asked: "Where had we better begin?" I said: "I am afraid we had better begin by having it made quite clear whether there is any truth in the specific announcement made in to-day's paper that the Cabinet have made up their minds to give no bonus, for if so it will shorten our work. For us, our agreement to the Conference Report depended absolutely upon the bonus, and if there is to be none, we would be merely wasting your time and our own by carrying the conversation any further." It was a declaration made at some risk; but it seemed the only way left of counteracting the effect on the Ministerial mind of the recent warfare in Ireland against the bonus, and there is every reason to believe that, at that particular moment, the risk was most richly rewarded. Sir Antony was a bit staggered, and had to throw up his eye-glass as a sort of shelter-trench before he replied: "I am not a member of the Cabinet; but this much I can tell you, that the statement that the Cabinet have made up their minds to refuse the bonus is untrue." He said no more on the point; but he had said enough to convey to us the suspicion that the Cabinet still badly wanted some making up their mind, and to give us also a comfortable confidence that something had been done to make it up for them.

It need only be added, as a pendant to the *Freeman's* treatment of the decadal reduction question, that, as soon as it seemed to be certain largely as the result of its own work

that the Government would refuse the bonus, the *Freeman's* leading articles for the first time discovered the priceless virtues of the bonus and out-conferenced the Conference in insisting upon its indispensability; but the moment Mr. Wyndham's Bill was found to concede it to the respectable figure of £12,000,000 the ready letter-writers were set loose again to cry "Ichabod!" and in place of complaining of its insufficiency, to denounce the bonus as a shameless bribe to the landlords and an invention of the devil.

CHAPTER XI

A GROUP *VERSUS* A COUNTRY

COUNTRIES have had their fate decided before now both by palace intrigues and by an armed populace ; but there is no precedent in history to my knowledge for the phenomenon that now presented itself in Ireland of a group of not more than a dozen men—three or four of them of much personal consideration, but not one with a scrap of constitutional authority from any body of men in the country—applying themselves, by more or less underground means, to reverse a national policy again and again ratified by the people through every organ of authority, in Parliament, in self-governing councils, and in the popular organization ; and most astounding development of all, ultimately effecting their purpose in the name of national unity and majority rule. That such a reversal of every principle of constitutional freedom should have been tamely submitted to, might seem at first sight a proof of debility in the people or their leaders such as would be fatal to their claim for the liberty of strong and self-respecting men. As this narrative goes on, however, it will be made plain that the destruction of the national policy was accomplished by methods for which the masses of the Irish people were so little responsible that these pages will be for them the first clear revelation of what those methods were, and that if the combination against the will of the country was not promptly denounced and resisted by those who knew, it was for reasons probably not altogether to the discredit of Irishmen who, in a situation of extraordinary complexity, thought the shipwreck of a national policy, however fruitful, preferable to a new agony of national dissension.

The mischief wrought by the *Freeman's* campaign against the Land Conference Report, had it been confined to its influence upon the people, would have been easily dealt with, if indeed it required any corrective except time and the course of events. The evil was that, as we have just seen, at the moment when the Government was making up its mind how far the Conference Report represented the honest concurrence of the Nationalists, and consequently how far it must be deferred to, the outburst in the National Press almost decided the Cabinet against the bonus and consequently against the whole scheme, and, even after that difficulty had been overcome, was the cause of most of the weaknesses in the Government Bill as well as in its subsequent administration. There was an evil, perhaps, still more pregnant with misfortune in Ireland, and it was that from the first hour the belief got firmly rooted in the landlord mind that, by the confession of the official Nationalist organ, of whose orthodoxy nobody outside the Nationalist camp and few within it could have had a moment's suspicion, the Land Conference had awarded them 30 to 33 years' purchase as the equitable price of their interest. Hence the exorbitant pretensions which the enemies of the policy of Conciliation who first excited them afterwards used in order to give new venom to the class-war all but extinguished by the signature of the Conference Report.

The verdict of the country itself, in every constitutional acceptation of the term, was cordial, steadfast, and as near to unanimity as agreement in human affairs will ever reach. The contrast between the naggings and sullen humours of the *Freeman* and the deep content and high and chivalric public spirit displayed by all classes, the most reflecting and the most hot-blooded alike, through all their representative voices, could scarcely have been more striking if the newspaper and the country lived in different times and spoke different languages. The Standing Committee of the Catholic Hierarchy on January 20 came to the following resolution :

The holding on a recent occasion of a Conference between representatives of the tenant-farmers and of the landowners of Ireland the Bishops consider to be an event of the best augury for

the future welfare of both classes ; and they earnestly hope that the unanimity of the Conference will result without further delay in legislation that will settle the Land question once for all, and give the Irish people of every class a fair opportunity to live and serve their native land.

The fancied solidarity of the Irish Bishops *perinde ac cadaver* is one of the most effective bugbears to affright Protestant England at the mention of Home Rule ; but assuredly on this occasion England had as good reason as Ireland to deplore that the body from whom this declaration of noble and peace-breathing patriotism proceeded should afterwards have allowed their ranks to be broken and their judgment reversed, and not by those of the maturest wisdom, in their own councils. How vast a horizon was opened up for the national hopes, even beyond the blessings of the agrarian revolution, a man in the high station of the King's representative, Lord Dudley, had no hesitation in disclosing. Speaking on February 11 the Viceroy said :

In years to come our successors will look on Lord Dunraven's Conference as setting an example in the treatment of Irish affairs. Regarding the Land Conference, it was a Conference of toleration, moderation, and co-operation, and as long as Ireland proceeds on those principles there is nothing in the world which she cannot do—no height to which she cannot attain. But so long as she ignores them, so long will the experience of the past be repeated, and she will sink back into a state of helpless impotence, and waste all the energies and abilities of her manhood in fruitless internecine strife.

The instinct and good sense of the elective local governing bodies—Borough Corporations, County Councils, District Councils, and the rest—brought all their debates on the subject to the same conclusion. The Tuam Board of Guardians had the unique distinction, such as it is, of being the only representative body in the country that pronounced adversely to the Land Conference Report.¹

¹ In the report of the meeting of the National Directory held on February 16, 1903, it was stated : "Of the many public bodies which have adopted resolutions approving of the Report of the Land Conference, the following are recorded at the League offices : Westmeath County Council, Dungarvan Board of Guardians, Limerick Board of Guardians, Drogheda (South) Rural Council, Mullingar Board of Guardians, Westport Board of Guardians, Newbridge Town Commissioners, Limerick (No. 2) District Council, Strokestown District Council, Castlereagh District Council, Westport Branch U.I.L., Boyle District Council, Limerick

But the two bodies invested with the sovereign authority to speak for the National Party in Parliament and outside it—the Irish Parliamentary Party and the National Directory of the United Irish League—had yet to be consulted. Until they met and made up their minds, everybody was at liberty to arraign and even revile the Conference Report without any other restraint than national decency. Both bodies were summoned to meet in Dublin on February 16. Mr. Dillon was a member of them both. Mr. Davitt was a member of the National Directory. If they entertained doubts of the wisdom of the Land Conference settlement (and that is a mild description of the deep and bitter hostility which afterwards made itself manifest) here was the opportunity to disclose their state of mind frankly to their colleagues, with the certainty that they would be listened to with a scrupulous respect for their motives and character. They might have exchanged confidences, and even cham-

Chamber of Commerce, Dublin Joint Executive U.I.L., Barndarrig Branch U.I.L., Ballinrobe District Council, Cashel Land and Labour Association, Queen's County County Council, Castlecomer Board of Guardians, Loughrea District Council, Clarenorris Board of Guardians, Swinford District Council, Mayo County Council, Castletown (Queen's County) Branch U.I.L., Lacken Branch U.I.L., West Limerick Executive U.I.L., Castlebar Board of Guardians, Cork County Council, Limerick County Council, Queen's County Branch Irish Landowners' Convention, Ballina Board of Guardians, Standing Committee, Irish Hierarchy, Urlingford (No. 1) Rural District Council, North Louth Executive U.I.L., Mid Tipperary U.I.L., Tuam Branch U.I.L., Thurles Board of Guardians and Rural District Council, Glenhesk Branch U.I.L., West Clare Executive U.I.L., Athy Board of Guardians, West Cork Executive U.I.L., Carlow Divisional Executive, Mid Cork Executive U.I.L., Carlow Board of Guardians, Carrick-on-Shannon Board of Guardians, Middleton Branch U.I.L., St. Finbar's (Cork City) Branch U.I.L., North-East Cork Executive U.I.L., Tipperary Branch U.I.L., Roscommon Branch U.I.L., Moynalty and Newcastle Branch U.I.L., East Limerick Executive U.I.L., West Waterford Executive U.I.L., Crossmaglen Branch U.I.L., Rosenallis Branch U.I.L., Ennis Board of Guardians, Mountmellick Branch U.I.L., Cork Branch U.I.L., Cloghran Rural District Council, Dungourney Branch U.I.L., North-West Farmers' Association, Derry; Carrick-on-Shannon (No. 1) Rural District Council, Curra, Ballynoe and Glengoura Branch U.I.L., Oulart Branch (Wexford) U.I.L., East Kerry Executive U.I.L., North Kerry Executive U.I.L., Macroom Board of Guardians, Carrick-on-Suir Board of Guardians, Ballinasloe Rural District Council, Cavan Rural District Council, Carlow Rural District Council, Kinvara Branch (County Galway) U.I.L., South Leitrim Executive U.I.L., Stradbally Branch (Queen's County) U.I.L., Roscommon County Council, Knocknagree Branch U.I.L., East Waterford Executive U.I.L., Killeely Branch U.I.L., Glencastle Branch U.I.L., Adrigola Branch U.I.L., Mullaghbawn Branch U.I.L., Kildare County Council, Bailieboro District Council, Dungarvan Branch U.I.L., Killarney Urban Council, Drangan Branch U.I.L., Drumcliffe Branch U.I.L."

pioned their views with any necessary vigour, without any danger of scandalizing the weaker brethren, since both bodies carried on their deliberations in private. For the second time, unhappily, they took the course of absenting themselves from both meetings and leaving their colleagues without the slightest inkling of their views on the vital business of the day. Mr. Dillon quitted Dublin on the morning of the day for which the meetings were summoned.

At the meeting of the Irish Parliamentary Party there was but one feeling—it seemed inconceivable to almost every man in the City Hall how there could be any other in the minds of Nationalists who had been struggling all their lives for the abolition of landlordism and the unification of all Ireland in the demand for national self-government—a feeling of profound thankfulness and wonder. The only member of the party present (Mr. P. White) who disapproved of the Land Conference Report and who was afterwards one of the derided minority who at the National Convention with courageous candour proposed to reject, without more to do, the Bill that sprang from it, was so impressed with the intensity of feeling among the party that he left the room rather than mar their unanimity. The upshot of the meeting was the following unanimous resolution proposed by Captain Donelan, M.P., and seconded by Mr. W. Landon, M.P. :

That we return our best thanks to Messrs. John E. Redmond (our chairman), Wm. O'Brien, and T. C. Harrington (Lord Mayor), the delegates duly appointed by us to represent the Irish Party at the Land Conference, and endorse in the fullest manner the agreement arrived at by our representatives as the basis for a satisfactory settlement of the Irish Land question.

A still more reliable mirror of the mind of the militant country Nationalist was the National Directory. The original free democratic constitution of the League had not yet been enfeebled and crippled by the pistons and pulleys of the political "machine." The delegates from the different constituencies came up vibrating with the vital heat of the popular heart. A political wire-puller might as well ask them to open their veins and bleed to death in concert as to pledge themselves to any policy that did not commend itself

to the sense and instinct of the country with a force as unmistakable as the proposition that the journeyings of the sun go from east to west. No less than twelve members of the Directory from as many constituencies (more than one of whom later played a melancholy part in wrecking their own work) had sent up notices of motion endorsing the findings of the Land Conference with manful directness, and without the smallest tincture of the ungracious spirit of the *Freeman* controversialists. The resolution which the National Directory finally and unanimously arrived at was proposed by Rev. James Clancy, C.C., Kilkee, and seconded by Rev. J. Cannon, Adm., Letterkenny, and was in the following terms :

That we thank the tenants' representatives on the Land Conference for their signal service to the movement for peasant proprietary in Ireland ; that we recognize in the Report of the Land Conference a basis for legislation which, if promptly availed of by the British Government, will afford a satisfactory solution of the agrarian difficulty in this country ; that we note with pleasure that the terms of settlement agreed to by the Land Conference have been received as satisfactory by the Nationalists of Ireland ; and that we trust that no apprehensions as to the state of Irish Nationalist feeling, which can accept frank peace as well as wage frank war, will prevent those responsible for the government of Ireland from taking advantage of their present unique and auspicious opportunity of bringing about agrarian peace in the country by giving prompt and complete effect to the Land Conference terms. That in view of the statements which have appeared in certain newspapers to the effect that the Government have decided that no State aid will be provided to carry out the proposed settlement, we feel bound to assert that any such proposal would be a violation of the conditions laid down by the Conference, and would, in our opinion, prevent the possibility of any Bill based upon such a scheme providing a settlement of the Land question.

Thus, after six weeks for deliberation, the two authoritative exponents of the national will—the people's Parliamentary representatives and the local plenipotentiaries from their own ranks—accepted the spirit as well as the letter of the Land Conference in the name of the Irish nation, not merely by a majority, but with unanimity ; and those whose duty it was, then if ever, to submit their own counter-plan of national policy and have it passed upon, abstained from

giving either the Irish Party or the National Directory any indication of how their minds were working.

For the understanding of all that will follow, it becomes important here to set forth the definition of the Irish Party pledge on the strength of which the party was reunited in 1908 and to which Mr. Dillon was a consenting party :

The party pledge binds members of the Irish Party to support in or out of Parliament any decision come to by a majority of the party.

The meeting of the Irish Party was adjourned to Westminster in order to settle the Parliamentary programme of the session. Mr. Dillon, who had not been able to see his way to remaining in Dublin for the discussion of the Land Conference Report, found no difficulty in attending the adjourned meeting in London the next day, when the proceedings seemed likely to be of a routine character. It was felt that not a moment should be lost in pressing on the attention of Parliament the extraordinary events that had been taking place in Ireland. It was especially necessary to bring it home to any waverers in the Cabinet that the State subsidy was of the essence of the treaty of pacification which now only awaited their hand and seal. Accordingly, it was proposed that Mr. Redmond should move the following amendment to the Address :

Humbly to represent to your Majesty that it is in the highest interest of the State that advantage should be taken of the unexampled opportunity created by the Land Conference Agreement for putting an end to agrarian troubles and conflicts between classes in Ireland, by giving the fullest and most generous effect to the Land Conference Report in the land purchase proposals announced in the Speech from the Throne.

To the stupefaction of every man in the room, Mr. Dillon stood up to object to any reference being made in the Amendment or in the debate to the Land Conference. It would, he said, only give rise to controversy, and could have no effect upon the action of the Government. The party could scarcely believe their ears. For the preceding three or four months the whole attention of the party and the country had hung upon the Conference. The party

had officially nominated half its members (including the leader of the party). Its recommendations, hailed with universal joy by the country, had only the previous day received the crowning sanction of unanimous votes from the Irish Party and the governing body of the national organization. That now, when the hour was come for giving practical legislative effect to its labours, an individual member of the party should get up to ask his colleagues to stultify their unanimous vote of the previous day and put the Land Conference and its Report under interdict as though there was question of some guilty thing whose very name could not be whispered without a shudder, was a phenomenon so painful and unlooked for that it is difficult to describe the tension of horrified silence with which the suggestion was listened to.

Mr. Redmond was roused into a prompt and dignified protest, not altogether exempt from indignation. He said it was ten thousand pities Mr. Dillon had been away in America when the Conference was formed, or his colleagues would, of course, have insisted upon his being one of their delegates. In his absence, they had done their best, and, whatever the merits or demerits of the Report, the previous day was Mr. Dillon's proper opportunity for submitting any objections of his to his colleagues of the party and of the National Directory. He had not seen proper to do so, and the effect, whatever the intention, of what he proposed to do now was to reverse the unanimous judgment of the two national authorities on the previous day, to avow before the House of Commons that the Land Conference Report was regarded askance by the Irish Party itself, and consequently need receive no attention from the Cabinet—in a word, to cover the entire work of the party and of the country for all those last months with contempt and ridicule.

No member of the party uttered a word in support of Mr. Dillon. The unutterable pain visible on the faces of his colleagues must have impressed him more than the bitterest reproaches. He disclaimed with some heat the suggestion of any personal grievance in reference to the Conference, and protested that he should have declined under any circumstances to take part in its proceedings. But

he sat down without attempting any reply to the rest of Mr. Redmond's protest, and the incident terminated with some such sense of general relief as attends the breaking up of a company in which an honoured guest has been suddenly stricken ill. A few days afterwards Mr. Dillon went abroad for a voyage of some months, his health being still not quite restored.

Never was prophecy more signally confuted than Mr. Dillon's as to the futility of the debate on the Amendment. It was attended with more solid advantage for the Irish cause than perhaps any other debate that ever took place within the same walls. It accomplished one object scarcely less valuable than the Land Conference Agreement itself: it elicited from almost all the men of power in the Liberal Party—Mr. Morley, Sir H. Campbell-Bannerman, Sir E. Grey, Mr. Haldane, and Mr. John Burns—expressions of cordial adhesion to the policy of pacification adumbrated by Mr. Wyndham and put in concrete form by the Land Conference, and consequently effected that obliteration of all English party distinctions desiderated by Gladstone in 1885 as the harbinger of certain deliverance for Ireland. The spirit of large and unpedantic statesmanship with which the Liberal chiefs of that day welcomed in the special circumstances of Ireland the inevitableness of peasant proprietary as the only cure for the Irish agrarian canker, and the imperious obligation of the State to contribute ungrudgingly to the undoing of its own misdeeds for centuries in Ireland, deserves to live among the proudest traditions of the Liberal Party. The credit of their having in that night's debate and throughout that eventful session consistently and unselfishly co-operated with the Unionist conciliators in their Irish policy in the spirit of their great Liberal master, cannot fortunately be taken away from them by those Liberals of a less generous hour who, in 1908, when the antagonistic doctrines of land nationalization began to permeate their party, and when it seemed a more popular Liberal policy to devote the £160,000,000 a year of Imperial expenditure to any purpose rather than completing the work of land purchase in Ireland, would fain have repudiated Liberal responsibility for the Land

Settlement of 1903, and for all that might have flowed from it.¹

But the fact that it secured the accord of the Liberal Party was not the only success of the debate on Mr. Redmond's Amendment to the Address. It placed the concession of the State bonus beyond peril in the minds of the most dubious Didymus in the Cabinet, and it did what can very rarely indeed be quoted to the utilitarian credit of Parliamentary debates—it increased what seemed to be the utmost limit of liberality to be wrung from a hard-pressed Treasury by two millions of sovereigns. Mr. Wyndham told Mr. Redmond a day or two afterwards that £10,000,000 was Mr. Ritchie's last word, but that he and everybody in the Cabinet were so swept off their legs by the extraordinary unanimity of the debate and by the generosity with which the Liberals—the commissioned archangels of retrenchment and economy—had thrown in their fortunes with the great enterprise in Ireland, that the bonus stood at £12,000,000 before the night was over.

Profoundly gratified with their success, the Irish Party held a further meeting on February 27, and unanimously came to the following resolutions, believing that, now that the apprehensions of Mr. Sexton and his correspondents had proved to be without foundation, they might reasonably be

¹ Mr. T. W. Russell, speaking to Mr. Redmond's Amendment to the Address on February 25, 1903, "confessed that he went from his own residence to the Mansion House convinced that they should probably agree on a series of general resolutions, but that they should agree on something like a score of propositions which covered the essence of the whole question was a thing he never conceived of when he entered the door of the Mansion House, and which very few people in Ireland believed possible. He must say this—that he thought they owed a great deal of the success of that Conference to the hon. gentleman the member for the city of Cork. That hon. member and he had fought many a battle in and outside this House. That hon. member held the seat which he now held and took from him, and they had scarcely ever sheathed the sword since that day, and but for the moderation shown by the man who had the hardest row to hoe in the whole business—but for his moderation they never could have achieved that success which had not only impressed that House and Ireland, but had impressed the Irish people wherever they were to-day. . . . Why, the peace of Ireland was worth many millions to this country and to the Empire; and when he found the member for Cork putting his hand to a document which pointed out the unexampled opportunity that there is now of reconciling classes and of securing an agrarian peace in a country that had been torn for centuries with agrarian feud—and standing up and pleading in that House for reconciliation and peace between all classes in Ireland, the peace of Ireland was worth many millions of pounds to this country, and to that House and to the world at large."

asked to cease their war of pin-pricks upon what was incontestably the authorized national policy during the critical weeks, while the details of the Government Bill were in course of gestation :

That we heartily congratulate the Irish people upon the result of the recent debate upon the Irish Land Conference, and upon the general recognition that the settlement proposed by the Conference depends absolutely on a generous measure of State aid being supplied by the Treasury ; and we note, with the utmost satisfaction, the remarkable unanimity of opinion in Parliament and the British Press in support of the Report of the Land Conference, and of the necessity for a Treasury grant to carry out its recommendations.

That we have observed with concern the reference in Mr. Wyndham's speech to recent newspaper controversies in Ireland, and their effect in England ; and in view of the fact that these controversies were largely based upon the idea that no Treasury grant would be forthcoming, we would earnestly appeal to the patriotism of Nationalist journalists and public men, to abstain as far as possible from further public controversies pending the introduction of the Government Land Bill.

The appeal was disregarded. During the four weeks that followed before the introduction of the Bill, the *Freeman*, entrusted to Mr. Sexton's charge in order to support the policy of the majority of the Irish Party, continued to defy the unanimous request of the party. In incendiary correspondence columns, and in leading articles phrased with a more feline art, it proceeded to open its parallels against the bonus, now that it was to be granted, as a new and intolerable burden on the Irish tenants, and by a hundred ingenious devices suggested to Mr. Wyndham that he was dealing with a divided party and country.

On March 25, Mr. Wyndham introduced his Bill. It adopted without reserve the fundamental principle of the Land Conference Report. It undertook to find Imperial funds for the complete extinction of the Irish landlord system, within a period which Mr. Wyndham estimated at fifteen years. The tenant-purchasers were to obtain the Imperial loans on cheaper terms than private borrowers had ever been able to command before—cheaper than the rate of interest of any State loan in the world except the Goschen Consols—viz. an interest of $2\frac{3}{4}$ per cent and a sinking

fund of $\frac{1}{2}$ per cent, or a total diminution in the tenants' annuity from £4 to £3:5s. as compared with the best of the previous Purchase Acts. In addition, a State grant-in-aid to the present amount of £12,000,000—or, roughly speaking, three years' purchase on all estimated transactions—was provided, in order to enable the mass of the landlords to sell upon substantially the same terms for the tenants as only a small minority of either very opulent or very embarrassed landlords had hitherto consented or been forced to part with their property. Here was probably the most colossal scheme of Imperial expenditure for a benign social object to be found in the history of any country—one before which the projects of Stein and Hardenberg in Prussia, or the financial operations in connection with the emancipation of the Russian serfs, were of very moderate proportions indeed.

It became in after years a favourite reproach in Nationalist mouths that the finance of Mr. Wyndham's Bill was smashed. It was smashed in the sense in which every other calculation of British Imperial expenditure at the time was smashed as well, but in no other sense. The miscalculation was due wholly to a collapse of Imperial credit such as probably no man in England, however keen his foresight, would have discounted when the Bill was framed. Had Imperial stocks continued to range as high, or within a dozen points of the same height, as they had maintained for many years while the Ashbourne Purchase Acts were operating, Mr. Wyndham's whole scheme might have been completed without the loss of a sixpence to any Irish ratepayer, and with a lesser burden to the Empire than the Irish Land war has been costing the British taxpayer year in year out for the past half-century. It is not, perhaps, Irishmen who should be foremost in proclaiming as a crime against Ireland the excess of confidence in the elasticity of British credit which moved him to pledge the Imperial Treasury to this tremendous transaction in Ireland. But Mr. Wyndham made another miscalculation as to which the consciences of some Irishmen might well feel uncomfortably pricked. He calculated, in introducing his Bill, upon a reduction of £250,000 a year as a minimum in the Irish establishment

charges for the Royal Irish Constabulary and for the rent-fixing Land Commission, as a result of the pacification foreshadowed in the Land Conference Report. Had his anticipation been fulfilled these yearly savings would have gone far to finance the entire Land Loan required, in spite of all the shakiness of the Stock Exchange, without a penny of further cost either to Ireland or to Britain. If his estimate was not justified and far exceeded, the fault lies unhappily neither with his actuarial advisers nor with the depression of Imperial credit, but with the group of Irish politicians and publicists who, as we shall see presently, succeeded in despoiling the policy of national reconciliation of half its virtue, and in place of diminishing the endowments of Dublin Castle, imposed increased charges both on Ireland and on Britain for a swollen extra-police establishment and a redoubled Land Commission expenditure due to "the determined campaign" against the success of land purchase.

The main points in which Mr. Wyndham's Bill fell short of the requirements of the Land Conference Report may be briefly summarized:—(1) The three decennial reductions to the tenant-purchasers were discontinued. (2) The bonus fell short by £10,000,000, or (roughly) two years' purchase, of Mr. Morley's estimate and our own, and consequently left the missing two years' purchase to be fought for with tooth and claw between landlords and tenants. (3) Judicial tenants were bound fast in the Bill within the maximum limits of reduction laid down by "the zones." (4) The Bill proposed not to sell the entire fee-simple to the tenant-purchaser, but to retain in perpetuity a State lien of one-eighth of the purchase money—in other words, to substitute a mild form of nationalization of the land for peasant proprietary. (5) The clauses dealing with the Evicted Tenants and Congestion questions were vague and inadequate.

The latter defect was one to be cured by friendly negotiation and development in Committee, since the germs of the Land Conference recommendations, both as to the reintegration of the evicted tenants and the redistribution of the depopulated grass-lands of the West, were incontestably to be found in the Bill, however imperfectly developed.

The proposal to withhold one-eighth of the freehold from

the tenant-purchasers, by way of experiment in nationalization, would, of course, have destroyed the sense of ownership to which we looked as the sovereign incentive to the exploitation of the agricultural resources of Ireland, and was dropped in Committee the moment the strength of our objection was realized.

"The zones" became from that time forth the grand *cheval de bataille* of the enemies of the policy of national reconciliation. The moment it became known that the Bill proposed to sanction mechanically all bargains in which the tenant-purchasers' reduction did not exceed 30 per cent on second term rents and 40 per cent on first term rents, the *Freeman* school of critics discovered this rapid and automatic completion of sales without the *placet* of the official inspector to be an intolerable grievance, as I am afraid it is certain they would have found the grievance infinitely more insupportable if the Bill had proposed to continue the existing system of strangling sales with the red tape of a regiment of Dublin Castle Inspectors. On the other hand, that the parties should be fastened to the Nessus shirt of "the zones," if they chose to go outside them, was a violation of the voluntary principle which was the core of the Land Conference Report; but, as we shall see, both the landlord and tenant delegates to the Land Conference joined in forcing the Government to leave tenant-purchasers at absolute freedom to go outside "the zones" as far as vendors and purchasers might be able to agree to go, with the additional advantage in the eyes of the enemies of the Act of 1903 that their bargains would thus become subject to the official "Inspections" to which the *Freeman* theoreticians now began to attach an extravagant importance.

Three of the five principal defects of the Bill were thus proved to be capable of easy remedy by conciliatory methods. If the other two defects were past curing, it scarcely admits of doubt that it was because Mr. Wyndham and the Treasury had listened to the clamour of the *Freeman* and its correspondents, and had gladly taken their advice to economize both as to the proportions of the bonus and the discontinuance of the decadal reductions. "The schoolboy of thirteen" had indeed succeeded to a large extent in carrying the intelli-

gence of both parties in the State, in spite of the patriotic derision of his wise countrymen; but the wise men had so far prevailed that the Treasury resolved to retain in its coffers the additional £10,000,000 that would have enabled them to prescribe the price of the land of Ireland in the statute without any genuine voice of discontent from any practical farmer or landlord in the island. Even this deference to its views on the part of the Treasury did not prevent the *Freeman* in the first sentence of its comment on the new Bill from betraying its disappointment at the considerable State subsidy still remaining by the remark that "in bridging the gulf" between landlord and tenant the Bill considerably increases the burdens which the purchase system hitherto existing imposed.

The dropping of the three decennial reductions was undeniably a grievous *diminutio capitis* to the tenants' side of the bargain; but surely impudence has seldom taken a more unblushing form than in taxing Mr. Wyndham with the abrogation of the decadal reduction system as a wrong to Ireland and a despicable parsimonious trick in the same columns which a few weeks before were placarded with sensational tables proving that the decadal reductions were a paltry Treasury juggle to cheat the innocent tenant-purchaser of "approximately one-fourth more" in his purchase price.

The Bill was, from the first, subjected in technically guarded language to the same system of assuming the worst as against the tenants and the best in favour of the landlords, by which a profoundly false version of the Land Conference terms had been insinuated into the landlord and tenant mind. The bonus was discovered to be a burden on the tenants, the decrease of the tenants' annuity from £4 to £3:5s. per cent was elaborately argued to be rather a disadvantage, and the following was the estimate of prices placed before the country, as though they were compulsorily imposed by the Bill: "Whereas the actual price for the whole rent which is redeemed under the existing system was 17 years' purchase, the mean price payable by first term tenants under the new Bill for the part of their rent redeemed is 24 years' purchase; and the main price payable by second term tenants

or tenants who have had no judicial rent fixed will be 28 years' purchase of the portions of the rent extinguished."

While the landlords were once more encouraged to believe that, with the addition of the bonus, the Bill secured them a maximum of 29 years' purchase of second term rents and of $32\frac{3}{4}$ years' purchase for first term rents, the inference constantly suggested was that, in some mysterious way, the Bill would universally compel the tenant to pay and the landlord to receive the maximum. How grossly misleading those figures were for the practical instruction of the Irish farmers is sufficiently manifest from the figures of actual sales under the Act, in the great county of Cork, where alone the tenants were enabled to submit the Act to an organized test, and where 17,995 holdings were purchased at 22.5 to 23.2 years' purchase of second term rents, 19.8 to 21.1 years' purchase of first term rents, and 20.6 to 20.7 years' purchase of non-judicial rents—or roughly nine years' purchase less than Mr. Sexton's maximum estimate.¹ There was not a line in the Act of 1903 to forbid the remainder of the Irish tenants making equally good or better bargains except that they and the landlords had been from the beginning led to accept Mr. Sexton's extravagant prices as a decree of fate, and that (a far more serious matter) the conspiracy against the Act succeeded in frustrating our plans for making throughout Ireland a firmer stand for rational prices than even that which had to be made in Cork under every possible discouragement.

As a matter of fact, the Wyndham Act left the tenantry as free as under the Ashbourne Acts to settle their own standard of prices under the inspiration of their own legitimate Trade Union; but when the tenants were daily presented with a table under screaming "captions" proving on Mr. Sexton's high authority that as compared with 17 years' purchase and only £2890 gross purchase money under the Ashbourne Acts the £100 tenant-purchasers were now to pay 22 years' purchase or £4795 gross for first term rents and $25\frac{1}{2}$ or £5480 gross for second term and non-judicial rents, and when Mr. Sexton's more adroit calculations were

¹ Estates Commissioners' Report to March 31, 1909.

repeated in every form of reckless ignorance by his half-informed or quarter-informed correspondents, what was the unsophisticated country reader to conclude but that there must be something in the Wyndham Bill to compel the tenants to submit to this wholesale spoliation? For the three weeks preceding the National Convention a stranger reading only the *Freeman's Journal* would suppose that the new Bill was a sort of Attila Scourge to end the Golden Age the country had hitherto been all unconsciously living under the Ashbourne Acts, and that there was scarcely a voice of public opinion to be heard anywhere in its favour.

The mischief made by the *Freeman* was almost wholly due to the absence of any suspicion in the popular mind that it was not still the trusted and loyal mouthpiece of the Irish Party. Had Mr. Redmond, Mr. Harrington, and myself chosen to summon the people together and lift a corner of the curtain, the reaction would have been immediate and irresistible. But, wisely or unwisely, we made up our minds that in a country where the first flicker of dissension has so ready a tendency to burst into a conflagration, it would be more conducive to national harmony to avoid any recourse to public meetings pending the assembling of the Supreme National Convention, confident as we were that the newspaper effervescence was, in relation to the country, the thin froth at some angle of a steadily flowing river, and that the moment we were face to face with the representative men of the country, the incomparable national triumph crystallized in the Bill would without difficulty assert itself, and the air-drawn pedantries of the theoreticians and the misrepresentations of their more ignorant disciples would be recognized to be in truth the only obstacle to the amendment of the real shortcomings of the Bill.

The event proved that we did not underrate the intelligence and fidelity of the people. Unhappily, and, as will be seen hereafter, not for the last time, our eagerness to spare the country from any revelation of the occult forces at work to baffle the national policy was, according to the habit of petulant and ungenerous minds, mistaken for weakness on our part. The powers behind the *Freeman* were actually led by our silence and that of the responsible public bodies to

believe that their own columns were a true representation of the country's will, and, little as we suspected it at the time, the evidence is now such as cannot be resisted that they not only expected the National Convention to join them in what would have been the virtual rejection of the Bill, but took elaborate pains to obtain organized expression for their views.

The National Convention assembled on April 16 in the Round Room of the Mansion House. Early in the afternoon of the previous day Father Denis O'Hara, P.P.—an honest and devoted Mayo priest, who was and is Mr. Dillon's mainstay in his own constituency, and who had done him not the least of his friendly services when he warned him against his fatal error in holding himself aloof from the United Irish League—called upon me in a state of alarm at my private lodgings in Dublin to inform me that there was trouble brewing for the Convention. He had met a great number of priests who told him that Mr. Sexton's friends intended to assail Mr. Redmond and myself fiercely for our treatment of him. I asked him in Heaven's name what treatment? Father O'Hara said he could not learn any particulars, but that Mr. Sexton complained that he had the whole question settled with Sir Antony MacDonnell when the Land Conference met and ruined his work. I said, "I got some inkling of that vague sort of talk before from T. P. O'Connor. My dear Father O'Hara, I should be sorry to have any trouble on such an occasion, but if a row there is to be, that is above all other questions the one I want raised and thrashed out. If Mr. Sexton blurts out his grievance we will have the air cleared at once, for every man in the country will understand what is at the bottom of the *Freeman's* sudden change of attitude. But trust me, he is too shrewd a gentleman for that. He will be only too happy that we should not raise the whole question of his conduct ourselves, for he knows that we went out of our way to beseech his assistance and could never extract a word of advice or suggestion from him, and if he has carried on any secret negotiations of his own since, it must have been behind the backs of the leader and delegates of the Irish Party and without the smallest communication with them. He will be

doing a real national service if he clears up the mystery as to his war on the Land Conference." Father O'Hara returned to me late that night, radiant with satisfaction. He had been moving about among the country delegates as they arrived by the evening trains and found the strength of popular feeling so intense that Mr. Sexton's friends had abandoned all notion of attempting any frontal attack at the Convention.

But a far more dangerous game was afoot. During the evening Mr. T. P. O'Connor called on me with an extraordinary letter from Mr. Sexton, which in the first place gave clear evidence of concerted action between the principal adversaries of the Land Conference, unknown to the leader of the Irish Party, or to more than one or two of its members. It began by saying :

I received in due time your letter on the Land Bill. From what you said about Davitt, I waited for the fuller information he would be able to give. But as I have not seen him yet, I write to you without waiting any longer.

Mr. T. P. O'Connor, who had lived himself all his life in London, ever ardent in sympathy with the Irish cause, but incredibly uninformed as to its details, would be the first to smile at the suggestion that he plunged into the discussion of a complicated Irish Land Bill on his own initiative. He had consistently and unquestioningly for many years given the key of his conscience on Irish affairs to Mr. Dillon, and it is assuredly doing no injustice to either of them to surmise that the stimulus to Mr. O'Connor's action came from Mr. Dillon, who had seen fit to absent himself from the deliberations of the National Convention, but, as will be further seen in the next chapter, was in communication during his trip to Egypt and Greece with the three influential Irishmen who shared his antipathy to the Land Conference. From Mr. Sexton's letter it is evident that, from whatever quarter prompted, Mr. O'Connor had been engaged in negotiations of his own with Mr. Wyndham and Sir Antony MacDonnell, as well as with Mr. Sexton and Mr. Davitt.

"I cannot find," Mr. Sexton wrote, "anything in what MacDonnell said to you to help you to get rid of your alarm at the 25

years' average in the Bill for second term tenants; neither is there in Wyndham's remarks, as you report them, anything to relieve you from the dissatisfaction excited by MacDonnell."

It is thus beyond dispute that, in a vital crisis of the fate of the Bill, eminent members of a party pledged to give a loyal support "in or out of Parliament" to the decisions of a majority of the party were carrying on official communications of their own, without the privity of Mr. Redmond or the other official delegates to the Land Conference, and in a sense hostile to the national policy laid down by the unanimous vote of the party, and that these unauthorized communications were not only carried on with the Minister in charge of the Bill, but with the newspaper which, in defiance of the remonstrance of the party, had spent the three previous months in heaping discredit upon the Land Conference and the Bill that sprang from it.

Mr. Sexton's letter proceeded to disclose the plan of campaign for the Convention of which Mr. O'Connor had made himself the medium. "You are manifestly right," he remarked, "in your judgment that the Land Conference should not be brought up at the Convention." Cautiously-worded but insignificant hints were added that "anything like an open rupture would be exceedingly unfortunate. If the Conference were raised in one sense, bitter retort would be provoked; if in the other, personal susceptibilities would be wounded and such passions excited as would render careful debate impossible." Finally, the letter urged: "It is to be hoped, not only that the Conference will be allowed to rest, but that leading men will not betray weak alarm and encourage the Government to act overbearingly by publicly setting themselves to silence any one who happens to know anything of the question." The remainder of the programme for making the Convention abortive was frankly divulged in the *Freeman's* leading article of that morning:

There will be many at the Convention who would regard the unamended Bill as worse than worthless. . . . But their hands will be greatly weakened if the party is bound to an unconditional acceptance of the Bill, or if the Convention of the Irish people is to lose its grip on the fate of the measure at the conclusion of its

present meeting. The Bill should again come before the people in its final form.

In less diplomatic words, the Convention must be forced to adjourn without doing anything except anathematizing the Bill and declaring that the Irish Party and its leader could not be trusted to see it amended. The wisdom of the views of Mr. Sexton and his confederates is not now the point in discussion; it is that members of a pledge-bound party and the party's official organ should seek to promote those views clandestinely by private communications with English Ministers and elaborating plans of their own for the National Convention, without an atom of authority from the party or its leader, and in direct antagonism to their unanimous decisions.

Mr. T. P. O'Connor was far too good-natured a man, and too little acquainted with the intricacies of the tremendous problem at stake, to be able to realize at the time the gravity of the proceedings he had been engaged in. Of ill-will towards myself personally he was so wholly free that he seriously and with the utmost good faith proceeded to press upon me the two points of what may for convenience be called the ultimatum of the Opposition—viz. that no mention must be made of the Land Conference, and that the Convention must be allowed to adjourn without any final decision as to the Bill. I was lost in wonder at the coolness of the proposals, which could only have come from one confident that the country would be found to be the obedient echo of the *Freeman*.

With the utmost friendliness, I pointed out that the proposal to drop all reference to the Land Conference at the Convention was but a repetition on a larger scale of Mr. Dillon's demand on the eve of the Parliamentary debate, which was repelled without a dissenting voice by the Irish Party. To rule out, on an occasion for free national discussion, any reference to a topic that for the previous five months had never been absent for a day from the preoccupation of every rural home in Ireland, would be a stroke of tyranny too grotesque for words. One might as well invite the speakers to confine their remarks to conic sections. Besides, was it really already forgotten that the one sub-

stantial hope of amendments from the Government was Mr. Wyndham's pledge to give legislative effect to the agreement of the Land Conference to the utmost practical limit? Were we to be ourselves the first to throw that agreement to the winds, as something to be shuddered at and not even spoken of, after the Irish Party and every representative authority in the country had been hailing it for months as one of two or three instances of the greatest conquests for popular liberty in all our history?

Still more impudent was the demand that the Convention should be forbidden to come to any decisive judgment as to the Bill—a result which would be in itself the worst of all forms of condemnation. Mr. T. P. O'Connor himself was aware that Mr. Wyndham told Mr. Redmond and Mr. Blake that unless it was made clear that the Convention heartily accepted the Bill in its main principles it would not be possible for the Government to proceed with it further. If the National Convention were to separate with nothing but churlish words for the first great step in the policy of national reconciliation, and with an unmistakable vote of distrust in the accredited representatives of the Irish Party, including their leader, the certain consequence of the procedure would be, not to amend the Bill, but to kill it. As to the required amendments, which the *Freeman* habitually treated as amendments of its own invention, forced upon invertebrate and incompetent "leading men," I reminded Mr. O'Connor that, in his own presence, the morning the outlines of the Bill were disclosed to us, we, without difficulty, laid our fingers upon every one of the defects afterwards harped upon by the *Freeman*; that they were one and all set forth by Mr. Redmond, with his usual conciseness and lucidity, in his speech on the introduction of the Bill; and that the one assured way of carrying these amendments was to convince Mr. Wyndham that Mr. Redmond spoke with unreserved authority for Ireland. I summed up the situation for Mr. O'Connor by saying that if the country was of the *Freeman's* opinion as to the policy of Conciliation, the sooner they said so and released us from any further responsibility the better; but that if, as was my firm persuasion, our antagonists, however individually important, did not number a

dozen men in the island of a feather's weight in public estimation, to-morrow's Convention must recall them to their duty of discipline, in place of committing suicide at their bidding.

When I arrived at the Mansion House the next morning Mr. Redmond wore an anxious face and said, "I am afraid we are going to have a row." Mr. Davitt, he told me, had taken his seat at the front of the platform with a brow of thunder, and had declined to join the usual procession of prominent personages in a body to the platform. It must be remarked that in happy contrast with a later Convention of infamous memory, when the doors were held by an armed secret society imported by special train from Belfast, and the hired stewards within the hall provided with two sackfuls of policemen's batons to regulate the debates, no arrangement of any kind had been made on this occasion to dictate any official opinions to the delegates, or by the smallest show of organized manipulation to fetter the free play of opinion among the three thousand representative men who packed the hall. If ever there was a popular assembly free to think, say, and do what it willed, it was the one before us. Before the proceedings were an hour in progress, it was known to all men that the assembly was alive in every fibre to the magnificent possibilities opened up by the policy of national reconciliation, had no feeling except one of good-humoured ridicule for the half a dozen visionaries or bores who had the courage to stand forth as its opponents, and would have opened their eyes with sheer horror if they could have suspected that men of a very different order and by far more insidious methods had made it the business of their lives to undermine and destroy it.

There are special reasons why it is not possible for me to dwell in any detail upon the incidents of that day, thrilling though the retrospect is in my memory. It will be sufficient to say that neither in the resolution I submitted to the Convention nor in the speech that accompanied it was there any quailing as to the issue placed before the Convention. They were invited to pledge the faith of the nation to the acceptance of the broad principles of the Bill, subject to the necessary amendments, and they were invited to put an

end to all cavil as to the plenipotentiary powers of the Irish Party by conferring upon them, and upon them alone, "the power and responsibility of deciding the attitude to be adopted towards the measure in its subsequent stages."¹ Here was an issue knit before the supreme and final authority in Irish national affairs, as to which, according to every rule of honour and national discipline, the *Freeman* confederates ought surely either to have spoken then and there, or been for ever silent.

Mr. Davitt made no sign; the Rev. Father Humphreys, P.P.—a man with the fanatical intractability of the old Ironsides trooper of whom it used to be said that "if there was nobody else left in the world except John Lilburn, John would fall out with Lilburn and Lilburn with John"—had the superb courage, absolutely impervious to the enthusiasm with which the assembly was ringing, to stand up and propose with innocent frankness, what astute sappers and miners had been for many months engineering by more devious ways, the defeat of the Bill and the rejection of the policy of Conciliation. The Convention was in a sufficiently good humour to chaff him gently on his own statesmanlike proposals, and to roar with laughter at his tragic prophecies. Mr. P. White, M.P., distinguished, if by not much besides, by the fact that he was the only member of the Irish Party to take up manfully from the beginning the position in which the majority of his colleagues who now shouted their derision

¹ Mr. T. W. Russell, M.P., describing the Convention in the *Manchester Guardian* (April 17, 1903), remarked: "The Nationalist Convention which opened in Dublin this morning (April 16) may some day be known in the history of Ireland as the Dublin Peace Convention. Again and again it almost seemed as if we were drawing up the peace terms of one of the parties to a war. Mr. O'Brien alluded to the precedent of the French indemnity to Germany as an argument for buying off the occupation of Ireland by the landlords at the price demanded in the Bill, and Mr. Davitt declared that he had heard the fluttering of the wings of the angel of peace all through Mr. O'Brien's address. 'How blessed a thing it is for brethren to dwell together.' . . . Most of the speeches from the platform were directed to inducing the Irish people to make peace with the landlords and with England upon the principle of the terms contained within the Land Bill, and this had such a good effect that, though the delegates had in the morning been inclined to be critical, they unanimously carried Mr. O'Brien's pacific resolution at five o'clock in the afternoon. Mr. Wyndham's olive branch has been received in a remarkably cordial spirit. . . . All the stages by which this end was reached, to say nothing of the formal unanimity of the vote, illustrated in the most emphatic manner the complete harmony of Nationalist Ireland. . . ."

afterwards humbly joined him, dauntlessly seconded the amendment for the rejection of the Bill, and there was the beginning and the end of the support, obtained in as free a representative assembly of the Irish nation as ever came together, for the criticisms and backbitings of the national policy with which the country had been plied ever since the morning the Land Conference reported.

As soon as this grotesque episode had been good-humouredly disposed of, Mr. Davitt stood up to make the proposal which had been concerted between Mr. Sexton, Mr. T. P. O'Connor, and himself, viz. that the Convention should not come to any final decision as to the Bill, but should suspend judgment until it was brought in its amended Third Reading form before an adjourned seating of the Convention. Mr. Davitt was beyond question deeply affected by the convinced and, it may truly be said, majestic unanimity of the Convention. It was one of the traits of his lovable nature on more than one such great occasion to be able to forget any predispositions or even resentments of his own in the genial warmth of a wave of national emotion such as was now throbbing around him. He spoke in subdued but charmingly cordial terms; his heart was no longer in the proposition which he had come to the Convention to support. He gave his own reasons for the belief that the adjournment of the Convention would not imply any vote of want of confidence in the Irish Party, but intimated that if Mr. Redmond and myself would say that in our opinion it would be so construed he would not press his proposal further. Mr. Redmond and I expressed our view in a spirit of corresponding cordiality, and amidst a scene of delirious enthusiasm Mr. Davitt's amendment was withdrawn, and the great assembly "with practical unanimity," as the *Freeman* owned the next day, pledged the troth of the Irish nation, as unequivocally as the faith of a nation was ever pledged, to the vital principles of the policy of national reconciliation, and without reserve or qualification conferred upon the men responsible for its initiation authority to complete their work.

CHAPTER XII

THE BILL PASSES INTO LAW

WHEN I called on Mr. Redmond at the Gresham Hotel on the day after the National Convention, he told me Mr. Davitt had just been with him, in a state of considerable irritation at the result of the Convention, and had announced to him : " I have had a wire from Dillon to-day from the Piræus to say he is starting by the first boat for home, and from this day forth O'Brien and yourself will have Dillon, T. P., and myself on your track." On Mr. Davitt's part his candour at every stage of the war on the Land Conference policy was fearless and complete. A less charming trait for those who had witnessed his conduct under the spell of the Convention was his boast to Mr. Redmond that if he had put his amendment to the vote, half the Convention would have been with him and against us. It is scarcely necessary to insist how mournfully he misread the affectionate gratitude with which the Convention repaid his deference to the passionate determination of at least nine out of every ten men in the hall and in the country. If the decision which the *Freeman* itself owned to have been arrived at "with practical unanimity" was not to be accepted as genuine and final, what respect would remain for the deliberative power of an Irish National Assembly, or what reliance upon its good faith?

It will be seen later that in the article in the *Independent Review* in which Mr. Davitt manfully avowed to the public that he and his friends "launched a determined campaign" against the national policy signed and sealed by the Irish Party and its leader and by the United Irish League and



Photo, D. C. Lathrop, Boston.

THE EARL OF MAYO, K.P.

by the National Convention, he dated "the determined campaign" from a resolution of the National Directory which was not passed until after the Bill had become law. It is abundantly clear, however, from Mr. Sexton's letter, that he was by this time in confidential communication with Mr. Davitt and with Mr. T. P. O'Connor, who had in turn opened up communications with Mr. Wyndham and Sir Antony MacDonnell, without the knowledge of Mr. Redmond or his colleagues; that Mr. O'Connor had come over to Dublin (it may be safely assumed on a hint from Mr. Dillon) to arrange, in concert with Mr. Davitt and Mr. Sexton, for the defeat of what was known to be Mr. Redmond's resolution no less than mine, claiming the confidence of the country; and that, upon the failure of the attempt to induce the Convention to adjourn, Mr. Davitt, Mr. Sexton, and Mr. O'Connor must have been privy to the telegraphic communications which determined Mr. Dillon's departure for the scene himself the next day, since Mr. Davitt's disclosure of Mr. Dillon's plans to Mr. Redmond was confirmed by an official announcement to the same effect in the *Freeman*, and by the fact that Mr. Dillon did actually depart from Greece by the first boat. We have thus the four men who were the Alpha and Omega of the revolt against the policy of national reconciliation brought closely into intercommunication as early as April 1903; and thanks to a frankness which was always engaging if not always discreet, we have from the highest quarter a confession of their joint determination to overturn the decision of the National Convention on the very day after it had been "with practical unanimity" come to.¹

It will not be easy, I am afraid, to defend Mr. Dillon's procedure in this matter according to the ordinary canons of party loyalty, not to speak of any more intimate obligations of ancient friendship. That he was in a poor state of health is no more than can be said for some of us who none the less considered it one of those moments in which the doctor cannot be the supreme adviser. It will be remembered

¹ It will be shown later on, under Mr. Dillon's own hand, that he dated his alienation from Mr. Redmond and the party policy to December 1902, which was the time at which the Land Conference was nominated.

that ill-health prevented him from attending the meeting of February 6, at which the Irish Party was, for weal or woe, to pronounce its judgment upon the Land Conference Report, but did not prevent him from attending their meeting in London the next day and calmly proposing to ignore the unanimous judgment they had come to in his absence. It is not possible to shut one's eyes to the recurrence of precisely the same coincidence in the present instance; nor can any stretch of charity attribute too much importance to an illness which exiled him to Greece when his country was about to be called upon to make its final choice between the policy of national reconciliation and its assailants, but left him free to set off from the Piræus by the first boat on a telegram from Messrs. Davitt, Sexton, and O'Connor, and to set off, as events amply proved, for the purpose of leading them in the frustration of the policy the National Convention had "with practical unanimity" approved.

The Convention, as he knew, was the ultimate national authority from whose decree there could be no appeal, except that of schism. Nothing but good could have come from his frank revelation of whatever objections were fermenting within him to a policy which beyond dispute was a revolutionary departure from old landmarks. That he would have been listened to with the deepest respect nobody could doubt. He might have found a considerable body of honest Nationalist opinion in sympathy with his theory that an effective settlement of the Land question would strike a fatal blow at the Home Rule movement. It is much more likely that a man of his wide knowledge of the men who composed the National Convention would have been impressed to the soul with their universal conviction that a way had been found, not to the abolition merely of landlordism, but of alien misgovernment by the practical demonstration of the capacity of Irishmen to settle their most intricate affairs with reciprocal generosity and good sense, and would have bowed to the judgment of the Convention with absolute loyalty, with whatever interior reserves. As mischance would have it, he deprived himself of the only effective way of measuring the intensity of the national consensus; he withheld his own counsels from his

party and his countrymen, while, it can scarcely be doubted, joining their critics in occult measures for rendering the Convention abortive; he left the country, consequently, in the deepest ignorance as to his real attitude; he returned home probably with his head stuffed with the delusion of Mr. Davitt, who was a much less astute judge of men, that half the Convention was willing to have joined him and the *Freeman* in throwing over the Land Conference; and, in placing himself at the head of the still unavowed but all the more dangerous campaign against the authorized national policy when he came home, he supplied the Parliamentary motive power and the influence in the country as a practical politician which alone could have emboldened the *Freeman* to persevere for a month in its career of havoc.

The Convention was followed by an event of the happiest augury. On the day after the Conference had agreed upon its seventeen amendments, Lord Dunraven and his colleagues (at this time, be it remembered, the undisputed representatives of the entire landlord body) met in Dublin, and resolved to support sixteen out of the seventeen Nationalist amendments. Even as to the seventeenth—the abolition of the zones—while they did not see their way to dispensing with them altogether, believing that (as it turned out) the automatic action of the zones would in most cases immensely expedite operations to the advantage of vendors and purchasers alike, they agreed to co-operate in widening the limitations within which sales must be sanctioned, and they suggested an amendment by which all tenant-purchasers and vendors would be left free to bargain outside the zone limitations altogether whenever they might mutually find that arrangement to be the most convenient. The amendment thus promulgated by them for the first time was, in fact, the solution ultimately incorporated in the Bill with the cordial assent of the Nationalists. Lord Dunraven's Committee furthermore sent a message to Mr. Redmond offering to co-operate with the representatives of the Irish Party actively throughout the Committee stage of the Bill.

Here was an offer, as it seemed to me, which every consideration connected with the success of our amendments, as well as the perpetuation of the new force crystallized in

the Land Conference, urged us to accept. The Land Conference, at their final sitting, had expressly resolved not to dissolve, but only to adjourn, owing to their feeling that the body to whose agreement Mr. Wyndham had pledged himself to give all practicable effect would be naturally the best adapted to enforce the promise, if they could still speak with the united authority of the majority and of the minority in Ireland. Now that we had it publicly proven that on sixteen out of our seventeen amendments the representatives of the landlords and ourselves were absolutely at one, and that even as to the seventeenth a friendly compromise could without any serious difficulty be effected, it seemed a folly to throw away so powerful a means of securing the amendment of the Bill in every necessary particular. From the wider point of view, it seemed even more unwise not to close with the opportunity of preserving and strengthening the new national unity, which had already wrought something little short of a miracle, and developing it to still grander patriotic purpose.

Mr. Redmond agreed wholly as to the wisdom of giving a friendly reception to the overtures of Lord Dunraven and his friends, but was daunted by the menace of Mr. Dillon's return to give organized force to the outcries of the *Freeman*. I reminded him how promptly the two former attempts to repudiate the Land Conference were put down when we appealed to the party and to the National Convention. If he called the party together again, armed as they now were with plenipotentiary powers from a National Convention which had cheered the Land Conference to the echo, who could doubt their decision in a matter so plainly involving our success in amending the Bill as well as in still vaster national successes hereafter? Who that knew Mr. Dillon could apprehend that he would deliberately fly in the face of a national policy thus firmly pursued, but would not rather in due time patriotically acquiesce, as he had done in the case of the United Irish League and in the case of Mr. Redmond's election to the chair? On the other hand, what was more certain to encourage him to commit himself openly than if he were brought to think that, on the bare threat of his joining forces with the *Freeman*, the party and its leader

yielded to the manœuvre which had been already tried in vain both in the party and at the National Convention, and were prepared to hide away, as though it were some guilty thing, the Land Conference Agreement, which had just received the sovereign national sanction, and to hide it away at the moment when it promised to be the most useful of all instruments in doing a new instalment of the nation's work?

The absurdity of rejecting such a proffer was illustrated by the fact that, at a later stage, Mr. Redmond was driven to have recourse to Lord Dunraven's friends to save the Bill from being shipwrecked. Mr. Redmond unfortunately both overrated and underrated Mr. Dillon's influence. The latter's repeated declarations to his leader after his return from Greece that he "would take the field" if the *Freeman* was grappled with, inspired Mr. Redmond with an exaggerated apprehension both as to the likelihood of such an eventuality and as to its effect on the country. At the same time, he was so completely confident of the hold of the policy of national reconciliation upon the party and upon the Irish people, that he too easily took it for granted that Mr. Dillon had only to be indulged in occasional explosions of his dislike of the policy and he would find the force of events strong enough either to win him over or to induce him to return to his retirement. Throughout the whole of those transactions Mr. Redmond displayed an unflinching loyalty to the policy of reconciliation of class with class to which he had set his hand—to which, indeed, all his natural associations had given him a predisposition far stronger than my own,—and in his relations with the Government and with the landlords gave evidence of a tact which, if it were not weakened by perils from his own nominal followers, might have, to an indefinite extent, improved even upon our astonishing success in transforming the Bill for the better in Committee. It was necessary to make the utmost allowance for his difficulties. Accordingly, I pressed no further the suggestion that the party should be called together to consider the offer of continued co-operation from Lord Dunraven's friends, and, through deference to critics who did not very worthily interpret the compliment, Ireland was deprived of a power which, in the state of English feeling produced at the time by

the bewildering success of the Land Conference, would have enabled us, in all essential things, almost to dictate our own terms to both British parties.

How accurately Mr. Davitt forecasted the spirit in which Mr. Dillon was returning from Greece will be sufficiently illustrated by his action in Committee on the first clause of the Bill—that which automatically sanctioned all agreements between landlords and judicial tenants within the limitations of the zones. The greater part of the clamour against the zones was of the same factitious character as that against the decadal reductions, which was now changed into a more furious clamour against their withdrawal. Some battle-cry had to be found against the Bill, and “Away with the zones” seemed the most promising, since it was that on which half-informed minds would be most easily mystified. The zones had no operation in the case of non-judicial tenancies (one-third of the whole) nor of purchases effected through the Estates Commissioners (which, if the judicial tenants chose, might be the case of almost every estate in the country). Consequently, if the dispensing with official inspection for security under the zone system proved objectionable, the tenant-purchasers had a double remedy. They could make their bargains through the Estates Commissioners, and so reduce the zones to a nullity, or under Mr. Duke’s amendment, carried by the joint action of landlords and tenants, they could, in purchasing direct from the landlords, go outside the zone limitation to any extent agreed upon between the parties, and enjoy all the dubious blessings of official inspection with as perfect freedom from compulsion as under all previous Purchase Acts. It may well seem incredible that a voluntary proviso like this, applicable only to two categories of tenants, and which even these two categories of tenants might dispense with if they pleased, should have been made the principal pretext for making shipwreck of an agrarian revolution beyond the most daring dreams of ten years before. Yet so it has been. Nay, the men who, as we shall see presently, alone are responsible for raising prices against the tenants by destroying the plans for bringing the tenants’ legitimate rights of combination to bear to keep the market price within a reasonable limit, succeeded for years in making

many unreflecting people in Ireland, as well as the whole Liberal Party in England, believe that the increased prices were really due to some cabalistic operation of the zones.

In one respect, indeed, the zones were the occasion of immeasurable mischief; but that was by reason of the light in which they were presented both to the landlords and the tenants in the columns of the *Freeman*, which, it must always be borne in mind, was unsuspectingly accepted by the country as the loyal mouthpiece of the Irish Party. On June 13, two days before the Bill went into Committee, the *Freeman* published a black-letter table, extending across three columns of its principal page, under the significant heading:

The Minimum Price in the Land Bill—how far it exceeds the prices paid in each county since 1885.

Assuming that the perpetual rent-charge was to be maintained, the tenants were solemnly informed that "the lowest price of the rent to be paid off may be taken at 24 years' purchase, the highest at 32, and the average at 28." And inasmuch as the country was further instructed that "under a Bill which purports to be 'voluntary,' the tenants' freedom of action is destroyed, and the price of land is compulsorily inflated," what was the unsophisticated rural reader to conclude, except what he did conclude, that Mr. Sexton's monstrous "minimum price" (more than six years' purchase higher than the actual sales under the Act in Cork) was compulsorily decreed by some demoniacal action of the zones in a Bill which left the tenants free as air to make any bargain they chose or to make none? What better process, as well, could have been taken to induce ignorant or malevolent landlords to attach some superstitious importance to the zones, which, the organ of the Irish Party assured them, were contrived for the purpose of wringing these extortionate prices from the tenants?

Under these circumstances, and as a last effort to disarm the enmity of the *Freeman* and its confederates, we made a desperate effort to strike the zones out of the Bill altogether. The whole financial scheme of the Bill, however, was based upon the clause, and it was found to be now too late in the session to reconstruct it. Besides, although, as we have seen,

the landlord representatives were not in the remotest degree the authors of the zones, the high and dry section of the landlord leaders had been by this time worked up by the *Freeman* into the belief that in the zones they possessed some Oriental talisman for realizing the 30 to 33 years' purchase which the organ of the tenants assured them the Bill had provided for them. We debated the point with all the might of the party, and even went the precarious length of going into the division lobby against the Government, and thus, for the first time, breaking the comity of parties which was the chief dependence of the Bill.

When the House was about to sit on the day after the division, Mr. Redmond came to me in a state of considerable alarm and called me into the inner Opposition lobby, where I found Mr. Dillon, Mr. Blake, and (I think, but am not sure) Mr. T. P. O'Connor were awaiting us, while prayers were going on inside. Mr. Dillon then renewed a proposal he had already made to Mr. Redmond, that, as soon as Committee on the Bill was resumed, Mr. Redmond should get up and move the adjournment of the debate. Some of us were really stricken dumb by a proposition of such moment made within half an hour of the resumption of the debate, and without any notice to the special committee appointed by the party to supervise the arrangements in Committee. Mr. Redmond acted in the emergency with an admirable decisiveness, not altogether exempt from indignation. "Why," he said, "if our action is not to be a sham, Wyndham will immediately get up and agree, and announce the withdrawal of the Bill." Mr. Dillon muttered something to the effect that it would be small loss. Mr. Redmond at once replied, "Dillon, I'll do nothing of the kind. If you want to move the adjournment and lose the Bill, you will have to do it on your own responsibility." The members who were rushing past us into the House where our group was standing little suspected how near we were to having all the high hopes of Ireland for the previous six months blown to fragments in one rash minute. Mr. Redmond's firmness had its effect. Mr. Dillon shrank from the terrific responsibility of carrying out his own suggestion, and the debates proceeded.

Little though Mr. Redmond and the rest of us were dis-

posed to sympathize with proceedings quite obviously directed towards the destruction of the Bill, rather than to its amendment, there was one point which our minds were made up from the outset to insist upon at least as resolutely as Mr. Dillon, and, as it turned out, with more success. That was, that if the zone system were to be retained, every tenant in the country must be made free to bargain outside it if he so opted, so as to remove every reasonable possibility of a compulsory statutable price. Thereupon arose a crisis which for several days gravely threatened the life of the Bill. The danger was only averted, and could only have been averted, by the intervention of Lord Dunraven's Landlord Committee, whose assistance Mr. Redmond had at first felt himself compelled by his apprehension of domestic discontents and disorders to decline. Lord Dunraven and his friends, it may be recollected, were so little impressed with the mythical advantages for the landlords discerned by the *Freeman* in the zones, that, although they felt bound so far to defer to their less enlightened brethren as to support the retention of the zones, they offered the day after the National Convention to join the Irish Party in insisting that the zones must be made optional and not compulsory. In concert with them, Mr. Duke, K.C., who was then member for Plymouth, put on the paper an amendment enabling the judicial tenants, like all the rest, to make their bargains without limit, either above or below the zone prices, and in such cases necessitating an official inspection by the Estates Commissioners as to the moderation of the price and the sufficiency of the security for the purchase-money. This proposal quite took the sting out of the zones for all who honestly believed they fettered the tenants' freedom or honestly valued official inspection.

But the Landowners' Convention, who originally scoffed at the Land Conference and its conciliatory spirit, had by this time been blooded by the *Freeman* into the belief that the zones must contain some hidden magic for the realization of the exorbitant prices which they were assured the tenants' representatives as well as the Bill proclaimed to be the landlords' due. They had reasserted their power by establishing a Standing Committee in London to watch the progress of

the Bill, and they swore by all their gods there must be no interference with the zones.

Which side was to yield? Mr. Redmond and I were placed in the cruel dilemma that we had to make the irrevocable choice without the assistance of colleagues, whose convictions, it was only too plain, led them to regard the opportunity as one for the providential overthrow of the Bill, and to repel instead of encouraging every conciliatory method of effectuating our object. The following Memorandum, drafted by myself and despatched by Mr. Redmond to Mr. Wyndham under circumstances that gave it all the seriousness of an ultimatum, will perhaps serve to show how little we recoiled at need from a peril which had none of the stimulation of a showy and irresponsible publicity :

19th June 1903.

If the Bill is to be saved, the Government ought to realize at once that the acceptance of Mr. Duke's amendment is the very least that, in the opinion of its best friends in our party, can avert a disaster. If the present attitude of obstinate insistence on the zone limits is persisted in, nothing can prevent a series of angry debates which will make it impossible to proceed with the Bill. Mr. Wyndham will make a fatal mistake if he thinks that the Irish hostility to Clause 1 is a game of bluff. The opposition to the Bill is intense, and is rapidly growing uncontrollable. Some of us have been straining our influence to prevent its showing itself in a much more dangerous form than anything that has occurred yet. But we must really be met in a fairer spirit if we are to have any justification for restraining the feeling of the party any further. . . . It is quite certain that if the Government were to resist the united forces of the Land Conference, which are represented by Mr. Duke's amendment, we would no longer be in a position to answer for the consequence. If the amendment were accepted in a frank spirit, it would enable us to remove any element of bitterness from the public discussion of the clause ; but it cannot be too urgently brought to the knowledge of those in charge of the Bill that nothing short of this can make the position a tenable one for any of us.

For two days the issue trembled in the balance. The magnates of the Landowners' Convention were unbending. Both in the Liberal and in the Unionist parties the latent opposition excited by the financial magnitude of the Bill (and perhaps by less avowable party motives besides) began

openly to show its head. Mr. Dillon and Mr. T. P. O'Connor were the members of the Irish Party who had always claimed most kinship with the Liberal Party, and enjoyed most of their confidence. The rumour of their hostility to the Bill, and the belief that it represented a considerable division of opinion in the Irish Party, began to make themselves felt in the altered tone of speeches from the Liberal benches. Over and above this, it was notorious that a powerful section of the Cabinet, headed by no less a personage than Mr. Chamberlain, were secretly averse to the Bill, and would not have been inconsolable for its withdrawal, if its defeat could be attributed to the repudiation by Irishmen of their own bargain.¹ Mr. Wyndham did all that a young statesman, seeing the whole splendid edifice of his ambition ready to crumble about his ears, could do. I believe it is but justice to the late Lord Ritchie (then Chancellor of the Exchequer) to say that he also stood firm throughout, easily though his own thickening difficulties at the Treasury might have seemed to reconcile him to disowning the heavy financial obligations imposed by the Irish Bill. It may safely be inferred from an incident to be related in a moment that there was not wanting a still higher influence in the emergency to save Ireland and the Empire from the impending crash.

The Landowners' Convention met in the Westminster Palace Hotel on the night after our ultimatum to decide upon their reply. The least reasonable elements of the landlord body were represented in strength; both the haughty and unyielding ancients who wrapped their ragged

¹ It is an amusing reminder with what hobgoblins the adversaries of the policy of national reconciliation frightened themselves that in one of his public letters Mr. Davitt portentously warned the Irish people that there was an even deeper plot than that of the Land Conference in the background—that the Purchase Act and the Devolution Scheme were the consideration for which Mr. Redmond and his guilty co-conspirators had secretly covenanted to sell the support of the Irish Party and of the Irish vote in Britain to Mr. Chamberlain in his campaign for Tariff Reform. How much foundation there was for the story may be judged by the reception which Captain Shawe-Taylor received from Mr. Chamberlain when that most daring of interviewers succeeded in obtaining audience of the Minister for the Colonies before the Land Conference had yet met. The great man, who was smoking a long cigar, met his interlocutor with the brusque inquiry, "Well, what did you desire to see me about?" "Well," stammered the visitor, a bit taken aback, "about Ireland." "Ireland?" said Mr. Chamberlain, coolly tipping the ashes from the end of his cigar. "Ireland I regard as I do my gout. They are both very detestable, and they are both absolutely incurable."

dignity around them, and the younger militant hot-heads and the iron-bowelled land agents, who saw their profession doomed to disappear, and hated "the wretched, rotten, sickening policy of Conciliation" more consumedly than Mr. Dillon himself. Lord Dunraven, who was not a member of the Landowners' Convention, had the courage to present himself at the meeting, and if the reports which reached me (not through himself) are to be trusted, delivered a speech of extraordinary power and passion, warning the territorialists that they had received from the generosity as well as good sense of their fellow-countrymen such a chance of financial security, prosperity, and honour in their own country as no minority with such a history had ever before been fortunate enough to emerge from a social revolution withal. If I am truly informed, he gave them plain notice as well that, if they proved unworthy of their opportunity, he would be found among the first to denounce their wicked folly from the house-tops. His appeal was to little purpose. It is one of the characteristic notes of those times that, while the silent masses of the landlords as well as of the tenants hailed the new dispensation with thankful hearts, most of the official champions of landlordism regarded Lord Dunraven, who had saved their sinking class, with the same distrust and grudge with which a few of our own foremost men viewed the work of the Land Conference in exorcising Irish landlordism and solidifying Irish classes by the bond of a common national interest.

The situation was saved in a more unexpected way. As Lord Dunraven sat down, the Duke of Abercorn, who was President of the Landowners' Convention, arrived in court dress, having just quitted the Drawing-room at Buckingham Palace. He immediately stood up and made a moving appeal to the meeting to accept Mr. Duke's amendment, and wound up with a diplomatic intimation to which his Windsor uniform and the knowledge whence he had just come gave an unmistakable meaning that, all other considerations apart, a class whose boast and mission in life had ever been their loyalty ought to be the first to strengthen the hands of their king in his well-

known desire for the happy pacification of Ireland. The effect was instant and conclusive. A message was despatched to Mr. Wyndham with the happy tidings that the opposition to Mr. Duke's amendment was at an end. The Chief Secretary told Mr. Redmond a day or two after that he had spent the night before the Westminster Palace Hotel meeting in the throes of a familiar nightmare in which a man is creeping along a ledge of rock "as narrow as the edge of a razor," with one bottomless abyss to the right of him and another to the left.

The acceptance of Mr. Duke's amendment by general consent, it might have been hoped, would have stopped all further outcry against the zones since the Bill now empowered the tenants to dismiss the zones wholly from their consideration, whenever they might find it in their power by their own lawful Trade Union pressure to exact better terms. No attempt has ever been made to dispute that this is so. It has been proved in practice by thousands of actual purchasers under the Act. None the less—if it must not be said, all the more—our success in engrafting the amendment on the clause proved to be only a new source of grievance and resentment on the part of the adversaries of the Bill. At a meeting of the special committee of the party charged with the supervision of the progress of the Bill, Mr. Dillon actually proposed that the party should go into the division lobby against the first clause, even as amended, being added to the Bill. The first clause was, of course, the sum and substance of the whole measure. To divide against it would have been to repudiate the understanding on which Mr. Duke's amendment had been just accepted, as well as to throw over the whole Land Conference Agreement. It would have been tantamount to an announcement by the Irish Party that they rejected and would do their worst to baffle the grand operative clause of the Bill, and would thus have cut away the fundamental security on which the entire measure rested, namely, the loyal concurrence of the two parties to the Land Conference. The proposal was, in fact, a renewal of that made after our division against the zones, and defeated by Mr. Redmond's firmness—a proposal inexorably leading,

if not of set purpose intended to lead, to the withdrawal of the Bill which the National Convention had just been celebrating as a measure of unparalleled national advantage. The whole sorrowful proceeding is sufficiently commented upon by the circumstance that in a special committee of some fifteen picked men of the Irish Party not one was found to utter a word in support of Mr. Dillon's extraordinary proposal.¹ It was rejected, with a pained unanimity, and in silence, precisely as was his first attempt to induce the party to throw over the Land Conference Report. The fact may be usefully borne in mind as a comment no less sharp upon his claim in after years to speak with plenary inspiration for the majority of the Irish Party in their attitude towards the policy of national reconciliation and land purchase.

This one illustration will suffice without troubling the reader with the wearisome details of the proceedings in committee. From start to finish Mr. Dillon pursued the tactics of a free-shooter on the flank of an enemy in every doubtful pass. Did Colonel Saunderson or Mr. G. J. Butcher (as unregenerate anti-Conciliationists as himself) lapse into some expression barbed with the old anti-Nationalist rancour, he was immediately on the pounce to "rub it in" and insist upon the incorrigibility of "our hereditary enemies." Lord Dunraven, in a speech at the Constitutional Club (of which he was then the President), made some sore allusion to the inroads made upon the Irish landlords' income by the Gladstone Land Act of 1881. Mr. Dillon took the first opportunity in the House of Commons to rate Lord Dunraven in bitter terms upon his antipathy to the great Gladstone Act, as though it obliterated all his recent services in the abolition of landlordism, forgetful (as we may hope he was really forgetful) of the fact that he had himself publicly boasted that the great Gladstone Land Act would never have become law if he could have prevented it.² His speeches were couched

¹ I cannot remember whether Mr. T. P. O'Connor was among those present, but I know if he was he did not make himself heard.

² Mr. Dillon's speech at the Rotunda banquet, September 1881: "I will recall your attention to the fact that when the Land Bill was first made public, I immediately adopted an attitude of uncompromising hostility towards it, and

habitually in a tone sharply in contrast with those of his leader and party. He indeed came to refer to Mr. Redmond by the dry technical description of "the Chairman" in lieu of the "my hon. friend and leader" of ordinary Parliamentary courtesy. This temper of debate was all the less comprehensible that not only he and we but we and the Conciliationist wing of the landlords were in absolute agreement as to every amendment from the Nationalist side, that out of the 17 amendments authorized by the National Convention we succeeded in getting 14 more or less substantially incorporated in the Bill, and that our success—a feat wholly without precedent in the history of Irish attempts to amend English-born legislation—was due to the very concordance and mutual forbearance he inveighed against.¹ Mr. Redmond and I, in our perplexed attempts to explain it to ourselves at the time, did our best to persuade ourselves that it was due to Mr. Dillon's slow

up to the time of my arrest I used whatever influence I had with the people of this country to secure that this Bill should be rejected with contempt, as a measure entirely inadequate to meet the necessities of the hour and to satisfy the just demands of the people. . . . But I had another and even stronger motive in asking the Irish people to reject this Bill and to trust entirely to the enormous power developed by the Land League movement in this country. From the moment the Bill was published, I believed, and I still believe, that upon its becoming law an entirely new situation would arise in this country . . . in which it would be infinitely more difficult, if not impossible, for the League to carry on a fighting policy. . . . Because I say here, speaking on behalf of the organization—I may be wrong, and I shall be glad if I prove to be so—I believe that if this Bill passes into law, more especially if it passes into law tolerated or countenanced by the League, it will in the course of a few months take all the power out of the arm of the Land League." In a later speech, in October 1881, he once more frankly avowed that if he could have prevented it Gladstone's Act would never have been passed; that "his only trouble was that he had not succeeded in standing between the country and the Act so far."

¹ For example, the greater part of one precious night was wasted (that the word is not excessive, events have proved) by Mr. Dillon and Mr. T. P. O'Connor in an excited and sensational denunciation of a Government Amendment to provide Trinity College with a compensation of £5000 a year to cover any loss on the sale of its estates. The "deal" was not a creditable one, and was only submitted to by Mr. Wyndham in order to propitiate Sir Edward Carson, who could be (and was) a dangerous enemy of the whole Bill. But, while a due protest there had to be, the folly of spending so many golden hours in prolonging it in every fierce and hysteric tone, while every moment was lessening the great Congestion problem's chance of adequate discussion, may be estimated by the practical result that, as a matter of fact, Trinity College has not yet sold its estates at all, and the proviso has in consequence remained a dead letter.

habit of mind which had not yet grasped the reflection that the exasperating intransigence which was good tactics as well as true patriotism when we were bound to the stake to fight our course against all the powers of darkness, and when the simple *consigne* was "wherever you see a head, hit it," was, in the new order of things, little better than the play of wanton boys to deprive our people of the very blessings we had consecrated our lives to winning for them.

The effect, at all events, was disastrous for the effective amendment of the Bill in several of its vital clauses. In accordance with the usual vile habit as to Irish legislation, the Committee stage was deferred to the last weeks of the session, when every hour was of gold, and we were forced to debate under the incessant threat that, unless the Bill reached the House of Lords by a brief date named, it must be lost. By insisting upon debating and re-debating the early clauses in every detail, important or of minor importance, Mr. Dillon exhausted so large a portion of the allotted time that the financial clauses (of which the world has heard so much since) were scarcely discussed at all, and the Congested Districts clauses, which were among the very latest in the Bill, had to be hurried through without any adequate attempt by amendment to develop the sound principles in the Bill which undoubtedly might have been made to germinate in a great and blessed settlement of the western problem. This line of tactics is, I am afraid, chiefly to be blamed if the Bill, wondrously though it was improved in Committee in the few hours available for friendly and business-like conversation, was not very much more radically amended in those points in which its imperfections were afterwards exploited.

I have often anxiously asked myself how far any fault of my own may have contributed to alienate Mr. Dillon from the spirit of the policy which was beyond dispute that of his party and his country, as well as from a personal friendship which it had taken twenty-five years of mutual trust and common suffering to build up. Could my conscience even now charge me with any considerable portion of the blame, these pages would have remained

unwritten, and any allusion to his own share of responsibility for the errors they record would have been penitently blotted out. My self-examination makes me no such reproach. It is true that I regarded the unexpected turn of events which opened up to us the effacement of the landlord system with all its abominations, the permanent cessation of evictions and coercion, the removal of the last material obstacle to the reunion of the Irish majority and of the Irish minority upon a national platform, and the amazing movement in our direction of the last of the Coercion Governments and the last of the Coercion Parties, as an event of such incomparable national advantage, and, it might almost be said, glory, that my comprehension simply staggered in the attempt to realize the frame of mind which could see in such a transformation nothing better than misfortune for the national cause, if not betrayal. I knew, of course, that Mr. Dillon had consistently held to the theory that Home Rule must precede the settlement of the Land question and of any other Irish question, and looked to some system of perpetual popular unrest which he vaguely described as "keeping the pot boiling" as sufficient eventually to convert England to Home Rule; but I knew also that again and again in his political career he had reconciled himself without difficulty in practice to changed conditions which, in their first unfamiliar novelty, he had either suspected or imperfectly understood. It is possible that, in my confidence that similar results would now follow, I did not pay sufficient attention to the influence upon human nature at its best of the unlucky fatalities which excluded a veteran Nationalist leader not only from the Land Conference but from Ireland during its deliberations.

It is most likely also that, in spite of my best exertions, my own temper of mind, which I am quite sure rather errs by an excess of toleration and longanimity when at a distance from scenes of irritation, may have sometimes been warmed into impatience and into seeming intolerance in the immediate clash of contradictions. Whenever it has been my fortune to deal with a leader apt for responsibility and master of his own clear purpose, no man has ever had less temptation than I to press any counsel of

my own, or been readier to give him a faithful and unquestioning service in the second, third, or thousandth place. Fate had so willed it that for years my dealings had been with men enfeebled by many crosses and disappointments, distrustful of themselves and of the future, willing enough to leave the responsibility for bold designs upon the shoulders of one to whom, since he kept a reasonably firm front to adversity, they attributed a sanguineness which knew no bounds. To the experience thus gained, that prompt decision and free acceptance of responsibility was the easiest way of putting an end to irresolutions and objections generally arising from a faintness of confidence only too willing to be reassured by the event, was doubtless due a certain seeming impetuosity on my part in hurrying consultations to a point which, in the prosperous circumstances that had now supervened, was less readily borne.

It must of course be owned that, profoundly convinced as I was of the potentialities of the new turn in national affairs, and alive to all the difficulties in bringing things thus far to success, it was a sorrow, not far removed from tragedy, to find that the only formidable obstacles left to the amendment and safe administration of the Bill, and the forward march of a united Irish nation, whose interests would henceforth be indissolubly fused together, were men of our own household, who had no intelligible counter-policy of their own, and who only twelve months before were tugging me by the skirts in alarm at those weapons of offence which they were now to furbish up, after their purpose had been accomplished and when their point could only be turned against ourselves. In addition to all this, the long strain had told, as usual, in a physical breakdown, which made my attendance during the debates in Committee so many acts of rebellion against the doctor,¹ and which no doubt left its impression in moments of irritation at sight of the mischief that was being wrought.

With all this, I cannot recollect a single instance in which, throughout these trying months, any word of anger passed

¹ Both my wife and myself were grievously ill all the time in a London hotel, and it was with some difficulty I held out until the day after the third reading before being operated upon for a distressing throat affection.

between Mr. Dillon and myself, or any incident of our consultations that threatened any more serious breach of our ancient friendship than had been successfully sealed up in relation to his initial hostility to the United Irish League. The thought never for a moment visited my mind that there was any ingredient of enmity to myself at work in the trouble. The only arrangement of our making which might possibly have been wished otherwise was that by which the party or the special committee of the party (I am not certain which) entrusted me with charge of the important party amendments on the Evicted Tenants question and the Congested Districts question. Mr. Dillon's special interest in these two subjects, as well as his superior dexterity as a Parliamentarian, would have clearly designated him for the duty, and viewing the matter now by the dry light of experience, his assumption of the responsibility might have done much to soften asperities connected with the early history of the Bill. Perfect foresight, however, is not given to mortals. It was with a heavy sense of my own poverty in the dialectical small change which is the medium for effecting "transactions" and compromises across the floor of the House in Committee that I undertook the charge; but it cannot be forgotten that some regard had to be paid to Mr. Dillon's mental attitude of undisguised dislike to the Bill, stock, lock, and barrel. Nobody of decent mind could have for a moment suspected him of the improbity of consciously doing injustice to amendments fraught with such momentous issues for two classes of his countrymen in whom indubitably his interest was as intense as our own; but we had to choose what seemed (and turned out to be) the most efficacious means available for not merely debating but gaining the acceptance of our proposals, which was by appealing to the friendly consensus of landlords and tenants enshrined in the Land Conference Report, while no means seemed more certain to defeat our object than the spirit of exasperation and scorn for conciliation in which he approached every topic connected with the Bill.

Incline as it may the balance of advantages on this particular point, it may perhaps be claimed with some pride that Ireland's responsible men were able to conduct these

organic differences of opinion touching the very life-centre of the Irish cause for many months without a word of ungoverned passion in their most secret councils, without a single scene of scandal in their Parliamentary interchanges, with scarcely a suspicion in the House of Commons, even in the mass of the Irish Party, and least of all among the Irish people, of the depth and gravity of the division. When, on the day of the third reading, the symphony of congratulation and non-partisan accord flowed in from both the front benches, from men of all parties, classes, and temper—British and Irish—not omitting a wholly unjarring note from Mr. Dillon himself,¹ the hope might be forgiven that, now that the best or the worst in the process of gestation was over, every patriotic Irish heart would dismiss all thought save that of applying the same high principles of conciliation and mutual forbearance by which the Act was won, in order to extract the utmost possible harvest of blessings for Ireland from a measure which did not indeed affect, as some silly people prated, to create a new heaven and a new earth in Ireland,—which was still disfigured by defects that would necessitate amendment,—but which for the first time out of the mouth of a unanimous British Parliament proclaimed the potency of a union among Irishmen in unravelling the most difficult of all Irish entanglements, and in unravelling those that remained with far more ease by the same methods. We shall see in the next chapter how far events justified the hope.

¹ The more or less cheerful tone of his speech in the House was not indeed repeated in his observations in the lobby on the same day to a distinguished American statesman, who had been for many years an intimate friend of Mr. Dillon, and to whom I had only the honour of being introduced a day or two before. "What on earth," he said as we met in the lobby after the third reading, "what on earth is the matter with John Dillon?" "Let me take," I said, "our Irish way of answering—why do you ask?" "Why," he said, "he has just been telling me that if this Act is allowed to work, there will be an end of the national movement before twelve months are over." "It is a bad business that he should say so," I replied, "but it may comfort you to know that he publicly predicted that if the Gladstone Act of 1881 were allowed to be tested, the national movement would be dead in a still shorter period—six months; and here we are two-and-twenty years after."

CHAPTER XIII

THE SWINFORD REVOLT

IN Ireland the administration of an Act has ever been of greater import than its text. This is in a special manner true of the Land Purchase Act of 1903. Its administration lay in the hands of three Estates Commissioners, two of whom could scarcely have commanded a wider public confidence if they had been elected to their offices by the Irish Party. The clause in which they were nominated—nominated, too, by a Unionist Government—was in itself one of two or three of the most precious in the Act. The Estates Commissioners' discretion was solely limited by such rules as the Lord-Lieutenant might from time to time prescribe. There again we possessed the key to great things. The Lord-Lieutenant was Lord Dudley, of whose whole-hearted sympathy with Irish aspirations nobody now needs (or indeed needed then) to be informed. The principal Irish Law Officer, it is true,¹ was, for some reason that has hitherto remained obscure, a bitter, not to say virulent enemy of Mr. Wyndham's Irish policy, and, as soon as he was encouraged by the sudden revulsion of the Nationalist Party against Mr. Wyndham, left his mark on the rules for the administration of the Act with even more than the Irish Law Officer's hereditary talent for turning Ireland's legislative blessings into curses. But Mr. Atkinson was, at that moment, a by no means indispensable subordinate of a Chief Secretary who had made the success of the Act the touchstone of his career—who had, in Sir Antony MacDonnell, an Under Secretary not to be daunted by the frowns of Dublin Castle officials—and

¹ The present Lord Atkinson, then Attorney-General for Ireland.

whom the amazing Parliamentary success of the Bill had raised to a position of almost unequalled promise among his colleagues in a Cabinet that had fallen on evil days in everything except its Irish policy of pacification.

We had but to will it in order to retain (needless to say, not by overbearing means or for unstatesmanlike ends) a predominant influence in the administration of the Act. The clauses dealing with congestion and with the reintegration of the evicted tenants had remained, as we have seen, the worst developed in Committee and were the cause of substantially almost all the discontent that arose in the working of the Act. But the principles of a generous settlement on both heads were firmly embedded in the Act, and it lay entirely in the power of the Lord-Lieutenant by his rules, and of the Estates Commissioners by their interpretation of them, to give what is called in theology doctrinal development to the deposit of sound principles entrusted to them. Had we been suffered to stimulate in place of thwarting Mr. Wyndham and his advisers in the exercise of these powers, nothing can now be much clearer than that the country and Parliament would have been spared the miseries of the subsequent five years' chaotic struggle for the resettlement of the West and the restoration of the evicted tenants, and that any defect of power proved to exist in the wording of the Act would have been cured without difficulty by general consent in the next following session of Parliament.

We had another advantage of the first magnitude at our disposal in the deep and enduring division made in the hitherto unbreakable phalanx of the Irish territorial magnates by the courageous stand of the Conciliationist landlords who had made the Land Conference possible. Lord Dunraven's friends had given evidence, which no sincere mind could resist, that they had not come into their enterprise for the purpose of driving a hard selfish bargain for their class, but were even more ready now than ever to perpetuate the *entente* so that the Purchase Act might be to the end interpreted in the same liberal spirit in which it had been first conceived, and might be only the beginning of still wider national agreements and realizations. Owing to the promptness with which the folly of half-a-dozen Nationalist

conspirators put an end to their movement, Englishmen, and indeed Irishmen, have no idea of the extent to which the Conciliationist landlords represented the most ancient traditions as well as the highest intelligence and patriotism of the Irish territorial class.¹ Nobody who knows Ireland is likely to doubt that such a body (and with every sign of popular encouragement their numbers would have increased and multiplied), corresponding cordially with the Nationalists upon principles on which with scarcely an exception they were unreservedly in agreement, would have enabled Ireland to exercise as potent a voice in the administration of the Act as, by the same means, she had been able to exercise in its enactment. Even on the one burning question of price, how few people are aware that all the excitement subsequently worked up about the price of the land of Ireland resolves itself for all practical purposes into a question of only two years' purchase here or there! The Bill cut down by two years' purchase the amount of the bonus which the Land Conference (and Mr. Morley) estimated to be requisite for a smooth adjustment between landlords and tenants. Had these additional two years' purchase been forthcoming to diminish the prices which have been actually paid by the tenant-purchasers, there is scarcely a body of tenants in the island who would not welcome the actual transactions under the Act (thus modified) as in every substantial sense of the word satisfactory; these diminished prices might even have been fixed by common consent in the

¹ The following list of the Land Conference Committee at the time of the passing of the Act will give some indication of its character:—The Marquis of Ely, Earl of Dunraven, Earl of Meath, Earl of Mayo, Earl of Donoughmore, Earl of Fingal, Earl of Granard, Viscount Southwell, Lord Castletown of Upper Ossory (Hon. Treasurer), Lord Monteagle, Lord Dunboyne, Lord Louth, Sir Henry Bellingham, Bart.; Sir Algernon Coote, Bart.; Sir Josslyn Gore-Booth, Bart.; Sir Kildare Borrowes, Bart.; Sir David Roche, Bart.; Sir Antony Weldon, Bart.; Rear-Admiral U. S. Singleton, C.B.; Major the Hon. George Bryan, D.L.; Lieut.-Colonel Dunham Massey, C.B.; Colonel W. Hutcheson Poë, C.B. (Hon. Treasurer); Colonel Nugent Everard, D.L.; Colonel C. Villiers Stuart, D.L.; Colonel Bemmis, C.M.G.; Colonel Buchanan, C.B.; Major R. W. Hillas; Edward Archdale, D.L.; P. D. Atkinson; Lindsay Talbot-Crosbie, D.L.; Wm. Daly, D.L.; Walter Kavanagh, D.L.; W. H. Persse; James O'Grady Delmege, D.L.; A. More O'Ferrall, D.L.; H. R. Prior Wandersforde, D.L.; George Taafe, D.L.; M. V. Blacker-Douglas, D.L.; Captain Loftus Bryan, D.L.; W. O'Reilly, D.L.; R. Ker, D.L.; J. Stewart-Moore, D.L.; J. Butler Trevers, D.L.; Thomas Tighe, D.L.; Antony Parker, D.L.; Moreton Frewen, D.L.; George F. Trench, Captain Shawe-Taylor, Ambrose Lane (Hon. Secretary).

Act itself, and the British (and Irish) taxpayer would have been cheerfully reconciled to the cost by experience of the bloodless revolution that would have transformed Ireland. The organic vice of the Act of 1903 is that, for the sake of the saving, it left the two missing years' purchase to be quarrelled over between landlords and tenants, and consequently gave the apostles of strife and disquiet their chance. It need not be insisted upon how largely even the work of mischief caused by this bone of two years' purchase, thrown into our midst by a blundering official parsimony, might have been prevented if the enlightenment and common sense of brother-Irishmen which had brought us thus far upon a triumphal road were allowed to be called into play again.

Whatever the excuse for criticism—even acrid criticism—in the amending process, it would seem rudimentary wisdom, now that the law was about to come into operation, to improve our legitimate hold upon those who could make or mar it in its administration, to strengthen the hands of the Chief Secretary, Lord-Lieutenant, and Under Secretary, of whose friendly dispositions we had even better indications than met the eye, and to encourage the new spirit and the new formations among the landlord class by making them feel that they would experience the same broad-mindedness and open dealing from their countrymen in the working of the Act as they had found at its conception. That was undoubtedly the spirit in which the Irish Party and the national organization in overpowering numbers desired to approach the subject. We have now to trace the extraordinary course of events by which the force of Ireland was diverted on the contrary into a mad campaign against those who might have ensured a generous administration of the Act, the substitution for Mr. Wyndham and Sir Antony MacDonnell of a Chief Secretary and Law Officers whose rules were the cause of a narrow and illiberal construction of the Act in several of its most vital particulars, and a ruthless determination to reward with special contumely and odium those of the landlords who distinguished themselves by the conversion of their class to the abolition of landlordism and the cultivation of Irish national ideals. It will be found that this strange result was brought about by

a small though influential knot of men, without a shred of authority either from the party or the country, by threats of disunion if their insubordination was resisted, and that—most discreditable circumstance of all—these men for years secured their ascendancy by appeals to those principles of national unity and majority rule by whose violation they had themselves risen to power.

The constitution of the United Irish League made its governing body—the National Directory—the supreme authority on all questions of national policy within the country, the Irish Party being entrusted with the like power within the Parliamentary sphere. The Act was no sooner law than the National Directory was summoned to meet in Dublin, on September 8, to define the national attitude towards the Act, and to devise practical plans for its working. Here was the tribunal for which a responsible Irishman might well have reserved his counsel in a moment requiring singular prudence, delicacy, and loyalty to his brother-counsellors. Mr. Redmond, Mr. Harrington and myself made up our minds not to forestall the decisions of the National Directory by attending any public meeting pending its deliberations. It was a time for deep recollectedness and not for wild and whirling words—least of all for words of passion and injustice. A different view of his duty unhappily recommended itself to Mr. Dillon. Shortly before the Directory were to meet, he went down—without any consultation with Mr. Redmond or myself, and without any intelligible purpose except to get hold of the ear of the country, in view of the meeting of the Directory—to address a meeting of his constituents on August 25 in the Board Room of the Swinford Workhouse—a venue which came to have a notoriety, in the reversal of the policy of national reconciliation, not much more enviable though unbloody than that of the ex-Church of the Jacobins in the history of the Girondins. In what a temper of mind he handled the policy to which the national faith had been pledged time and again by the all but unanimous voice of his party and his country—to which the Purchase Act was due, and on an honest adhesion to which still more would depend in its working—will be sufficiently obvious from one of the first passages of his speech :

We hear a great deal about conciliation. To the amazement of some of us old campaigners we hear Irish landlords talking of conciliation, and of intention to go into conferences with the leaders of the Irish Party. That is the new feature, and some men are asked to believe it is due to what the Methodists describe as a new birth or infusion of grace into the landlord party. I don't believe a word of it. I believe the origin and source of it was the fact that the landlords of Ireland were behind the scenes, and they knew that the Government was on its last legs, and that the whole policy of coercion was going to topple down about their ears. That was what made them think of conciliation and that another great slice would be cut off their rents. . . . When the landlords talk of conciliation, what do they want? They want 25 years' purchase of their land.

The spirit which governs this passage pervades every sentence of the speech—a spirit of implacable dislike of the Land Conference and of all that sprang from it—of almost personal resentment against every landlord who held out a brotherly hand to his countrymen; and an appeal, sometimes in distressingly coarse language, to the least generous instincts of the Irish peasantry from those in which Irish nationality finds its noblest sustenance. He could not let pass a declaration of Lord Dudley, the previous week, that the Act was the first Land Bill drafted by representative Irishmen themselves—an admission of priceless value to the Irish argument for Home Rule—without crying out: “It is not true. I say he was making a statement which has no foundation in fact.” He propounded for the first time the cruel fallacy, which was afterwards dinned into the popular ear, that until this traitorous Act came to disturb their happiness, the people of Mayo could purchase their farms for 15 years' purchase in the Congested Districts and for $18\frac{1}{2}$ years' purchase on the richest plains of Mayo. The tragic truth of course was that those figures referred to an infinitesimally small number of transactions, and that in the entire vast divisions of North Mayo and West Mayo—the most oppressed and poverty-stricken of all—not a single acre of land had been purchased under any of the Purchase Acts for the previous twenty-five years.¹ And he concluded with a violent harangue against

¹ In a speech at Arklow, September 15, Mr. Redmond disposed of this fallacy by a story that ought to have made honest men ashamed ever to propagate it again. He said:

“We read from time to time criticisms to this effect: ‘Oh, the people could

those who would "in a moment of weakness mortgage the future of Ireland to an intolerable extent." The fearful imputation against his leader and his party of "mortgaging the future of Ireland in a moment of weakness" was founded upon the fact that in one "moment of weakness" we had won the property in the entire soil of Ireland for our people by a mortgage for $68\frac{1}{2}$ years to pay from 20 to 40 per cent less than their existing rents, they having been hitherto mortgaged, not for $68\frac{1}{2}$ years, but for all time to pay from 20 to 40 per cent more, not as freeholders, but as tenants whose obligations had to be settled by a lawsuit, renewable every fifteen years!

Mr. Dillon was still within the strict letter of his rights. If believing the country was threatened with calamity by the feebleness, to put it charitably, of its leaders, he had followed up his Swinford speech by laying his arguments in a specific and responsible form before the National Directory, where they might be answered without public scandal, and, having thus cleared his conscience, bowed to the decision of his colleagues, no great harm need have followed, but perhaps some good, from having first let his discontent evaporate in public, rather than let the wound bleed inwards. The mournful thing was that he proceeded to put himself irretrievably in the wrong by absenting himself from the meeting of the National Directory, as he had absented himself before from the meetings of the Irish Party and the National Directory at the beginning of the session, and absented himself again from the National Convention, and in the present case, as in the case of the Convention, set himself to counterminc and upset the decision of his colleagues the moment it was arrived at. His apologists will look in vain for any justification in the code of party discipline, or, I am afraid, of honour among close associates and old friends, for his fatal course. He has since, I am aware, suggested in excuse for his absence from the meeting of the Directory, that he was not

have purchased their holdings under the Ashbourne Acts for 17 years' purchase.' Could they? If they could, then there was no need for this Bill. I was talking the other day to a County Wicklow farmer, and he said this very thing to me. He said, 'But, sir, we could have purchased our holdings under the old Bill for 17 years' purchase.' And I said to him, 'Why didn't you?' And he answered, 'Oh, the landlord would not sell.' That is the whole question in a nutshell."

taken into consultation by Mr. Redmond as to the resolutions to be proposed there.¹ The grievance was put forward in strange forgetfulness of his own omission to consult his leader or any of the rest of us in the remotest degree, before going down to lay before the public a savage *ex parte* indictment of the policy to which he knew his leader and his party by every tie of honour to be pledged. He had surely only himself to blame if Mr. Redmond and the rest of us read his Swinford speech as the carrying out of his old threat of "taking the field," and took it for granted that, far from looking to him for friendly counsel on one of the tenderest matters and in a most ticklish time, we had to be prepared to meet him at the Directory meeting as an adversary, ready to make good in sober argument the accusations and wild extravagances broached in Swinford, where there was nobody to sift them and nobody to answer them.

¹ The complaint is made in the following, which Mr. Dillon addressed to Mr. Redmond from "Ridge Hall, Ballybrack, 2nd Oct. 1903," and which contains a full revelation of his hostility to the Land Conference policy from the date of its inception (which was the "last December" referred to in the letter):

"I cannot throw any light on the situation in respect of the University question. I have not had any communication from any of the Bishops in the matter. And until I had your letter I knew nothing of the Maynooth resolutions referred to by Sir A. MacDonnell.

"I know nothing of what is going on behind the scenes, except what I heard from Shawe-Taylor, who called here last week. He told me that the Castle people had sent for him and urged him to go on with his Conference project, and hold the Conference as soon as possible, as the Government were determined to introduce a Bill next session and wished an agreement adopted by a Conference to aid him in drafting the Bill.

"I, as you know, have all along been opposed to the policy of allowing the initiative on, and the direction of, large Irish questions to be taken out of the hands of the Irish Party and handed over to Conferences summoned by outsiders. But after what has happened in connection with the Land question, I fancy that if the Bishops fall in with Shawe-Taylor's proposal the Irish Party will find it difficult to oppose.

"I say nothing now as to the prospects of next session referred to in your letter, or on the general political situation. I shall be glad to talk the matter over with you fully and frankly whenever we meet.

"Referring to your letter of 25th Sept. and what you say in it about the Directory resolutions, I make no complaint whatever on the ground of personal discourtesy. But in view of what has occurred, and the reason given in your letter for not letting me see the resolutions, it must be plain to you that the same political relations cannot exist between us in the future as those which existed up to December last, when you were anxious to give my views on any question of importance a fair hearing and reasonable weight.

"While I shall, of course, so long as I remain a member of the party, abide by party discipline and accept the decision of the majority, I cannot now accept the same share of responsibility for the policy of the party as I was glad to do up to December last."

As a matter of fact Mr. Dillon and Mr. Davitt, who were both in Dublin when the National Directory met, neither attended the meeting nor sent any intimation of their views. We had the usual experience whenever the wholesome country air of real Irish life blew through the close conventicles of the politicians and the newspaper babblers. The Directory—comprising, with the exception of Mr. Dillon and Mr. T. P. O'Connor, every man of mark in the Irish Party and the pick of the Russet Captains who, each of them, spoke for tens of thousands of the rough-and-ready Nationalists of the country—simply shook their heads in regretful silence at the question what had come over Mr. Dillon, spoke of the *Freeman's* performances with anger, but perhaps still more with contempt, and were firmer than ever for perseverance in the policy which had already yielded such rich results. The two or three persons of more courage than importance, who gave more or less coherent expression to Mr. Dillon's views, only served as measures to show how high the tide was running. The series of resolutions arrived at, it may be affirmed with confidence, will stand the test of time as a grave and moderate statement of the position of the Irish nation at the time, clear as crystal in its endorsement of the principles of national reconciliation embodied in the Purchase Act, in its determination to stand fast by them, against all waves and weathers, and in its liberal recognition of the varied auxiliary forces, no matter of what party or class, which had contributed to the first great advance upon our route, and at the same time careful not to let sentimentality run away with the practical interests of the country since it provided the Irish tenantry with an elaborate machinery for testing the new Act, in loyal accord with Land Conference principles, but also so as to guard them securely against any danger of exorbitant demands from the landlords or improvident bargains on their own part.

The Act of 1903, as it has been pointed out, left a disputed ground of, roughly speaking, two years' purchase to be still wrestled over between landlords and tenants—by no means an irreconcilable field of contention, but one to be stoutly battled for by the tenants, considering the many other favours heaped upon the landlords by the tenants' aid.

The resolutions of the Directory laid down as the criterion of an equitable price "the substantial equivalent of prices under the Ashbourne Acts"—with, of course, the State bonus of 12 per cent added. No responsible landlord authority has ever contested the equity of the standard, and no body of tenants will now deny that "the substantial equivalent," interpreted by their own practical experience and not by newspaper theories, would have settled the price of the land of Ireland with an universal content.¹ But the Directory was not content with enunciating this general principle. They proposed to provide the tenantry with machinery of a kind there could be no defeating to ascertain what "the substantial equivalent of Ashbourne prices" on each estate would be, and to enforce it.

The fact that the detailed plans of the Directory for testing the Act were ordered not to be published with the rest of their resolutions, and that they never were allowed to be practically put in force, prevented the great mass of the Irish tenantry from ever learning that such plans had been in existence, and enabled the enemies of the Act to suggest that the Conciliationists had handed the Irish tenantry over, bound hand and foot, to the mercy of the landlords. Never was there a fouler abuse of popular credulity. Far otherwise, finding that the greediest and most arrogant of the landlords, puffed up by the *Freeman's* assurances that the Act ensured them anything from 25 to 33 years' purchase, were formulating impossible demands, we determined to withstand them with all the might of the popular organization, and inasmuch as they were notoriously concocting their plans in secret, the Directory resolved to be equally discreet in not lavishing their own confidences on possible enemies. Hence the non-

¹ In view of Mr. Redmond's own subsequent action and of the gloss put upon the phrase "substantial equivalent," it is important to know that in the first draft of the resolution on the subject I used the expression "prices equivalent to those secured by sales under the previous Land Purchase Acts." Mr. Redmond pointed out that the enemies of peace might construe this as meaning in all cases precisely the same number of years' purchase as the Ashbourne average, and that it would be an obvious absurdity to expect landlords to accept the same number of years' purchase for rents reduced for the second time by 22 per cent, as had been accepted under the Ashbourne Acts for first term rents 22 per cent higher. It was at Mr. Redmond's suggestion, and in entire agreement with his view, that the expression "substantial equivalent" was substituted in the resolution as passed by the Directory.

publication of the plans which those who destroyed them had afterwards the hardihood to insinuate never existed.

The National Directory resolved to summon Conventions in every county forthwith, and after the public proceedings were over to resolve them into committee to arrange, in the absence of the Press, for a systematic test of the new Act according to the following method: In every parish in the country a special meeting was to be convened, at which the circumstances of the different estates in the parish were to be confidentially discussed. Some one or two estates were to be singled out where either the friendly disposition of the landlord or his necessities gave most promise of an immediate sale upon favourable conditions. The selected landlords were to be immediately approached in the amicable spirit of the resolutions of the Directory. Pending the result of these test applications, the tenantry of all other estates in the parish were to be exhorted to make no overture to their own landlords and to submit to the parochial committee the terms of any approaches made to them before committing themselves to any reply. By this method a moderate standard of price would be established from the outset, and the danger would be avoided, which we foresaw with an apprehension lamentably justified by events, of bodies of tenants on the richest estates rushing in to make their own selfish bargains on the most reckless terms to the prejudice of their poorer brethren. Here was in brief to be the working machinery of what I called the policy of Conciliation *plus* Business.

In order to bring these testing methods into operation, the private resolution of the Directory nominated a special committee of 22 members of Parliament to attend the County Conventions, and after the public proceedings indoctrinate them in detail with the plans of the National Directory. Telegrams were despatched to such of the 22 members of Parliament as were not present, summoning them to Dublin to a meeting of the special committee which was ordered to be held the next day to perfect their arrangements. They came up during the night, and for more than five hours, with Mr. Redmond again in the chair, these 22 members of the Irish Party debated in every

minutest particular the policy they were to recommend to the County Conventions. The critical question of what was to be regarded as "the substantial equivalent of Ashbourne prices" was discussed freely both by the members of Parliament and by the general body of the Directory on the previous day. Each locality was to be left at liberty to settle the exact figure for itself, according to its special environment as to quality of soil, nearness of markets, etc.; but among all the skilled agriculturists and men with expert knowledge of the people's condition who were heard on those two days upon the subject, there was no difficulty found in agreeing upon what would be a satisfactory common-sense average. We all realized at these momentous meetings what the innumerable victims of the *Freeman* finance would now acknowledge with a groan to have been both sound sense and practical politics, that, broadly speaking, the "substantial equivalent of Ashbourne prices" would be obtained by a reduction of 25 per cent, or $22\frac{1}{2}$ years' purchase, on such second term rents as had been reduced for the second time by 22 per cent, and by a reduction of 40 per cent, or $18\frac{1}{2}$ years' purchase, on first term and non-judicial rents (which were three-fourths of the whole number),—special and of course very much lower terms being essential in the congested counties. Had these plans been suffered to proceed, they would have effectuated the purchase of the land of Ireland upon terms at an average increased reduction of ten per cent, and an average decrease of three in the number of years' purchase, as compared with the averages actually paid under the Act. In round numbers they would have achieved a saving of £20,000,000 to the Irish tenant-purchasers. That our proposed terms, temperately and systematically urged with all the energy of a then irresistible agrarian combination, would have generally prevailed, and with substantial satisfaction to both sides, is, I think, conclusively established by the fact that in the county of Cork, where alone the policy of Conciliation *plus* Business was adhered to, although only late in the day, and under every possible disheartenment from the new masters of the national organization, the purchasers were not only the most numerous and the cheapest in all Ireland, but were cheaper by two

years' purchase than the average prices for the rest of the country outside Munster. There is no reason why at least twenty-five other Irish counties should not have done as well as Cork, or why Cork should not have done still better, only that the plans thus laid down by the competent national authority under Mr. Redmond's presidency were flouted and nullified under the circumstances I have now to enumerate.

Here was a clear and definite plan of campaign for testing the Act. Two essentials only were wanting to its success: loyal co-operation, or at least neutrality, on the part of responsible representative Irishmen while the experiment was being tried out, and firmness on the part of those who were fortified with all the authority the Irish nation could give them to see that the experiment had fair play. The time was come for putting to the proof the self-abnegation of one set of national leaders and the steadfastness of another. It seemed to me as manifest then as it is now that Mr. Dillon's speech at Swinford (hailed exultantly by the *Freeman* as "the keynote of the autumn campaign"), followed by his deliberate avoidance of the Directory meeting, portended a movement by three or four of the foremost men in Ireland, inspired not merely by suspicion, but by positive detestation of the policy on which the nation had set its heart, and certain, if it remained unchecked, to make all plans for testing the Act in the spirit of the resolutions of the Directory impracticable. On the other hand, nothing could be more certain than that if the country was once clearly given to understand the work that was on foot in the heart of our own camp at such an hour, no personal consideration, however tender, would for an instant stand against the universality and irresistibility of its condemnation. I knew Mr. Dillon well enough to be quite sure that a very subdued hint, indeed, of popular disfavour would be sufficient to induce him to draw back before he had yet committed himself to open defiance of the authorized programme of the Directory; and Mr. Dillon's countenance once withdrawn, the hostility of the *Freeman* would quickly betake itself to covert generalities which would have lost their sting.

In this order of ideas, I proposed to Mr. Redmond to

submit to the National Directory the following resolution, as a hint to the country as well as to those more immediately concerned, of the necessity for that rudimentary respect for national unity and authority, without which the rest of their resolutions would be as empty as a bellyful of the east wind :

That as the National Directory is the body authorized by the constitution of the United Irish League to decide upon all matters of national policy within the country, we invite those newspapers which claim to represent the Irish Party and the United Irish League and the interests of national unity to give a loyal and cordial support to the above resolutions which the National Directory have adopted, with the object of giving effect to the policy of conciliation which has been solemnly endorsed by the National Convention, by the Irish Parliamentary Party, and by the almost unanimous voice of the elective Nationalist bodies of the country.

Mr. Redmond staggered at the suggestion. He saw the danger, but shrank from coming to close quarters with it until a more opportune time. In his own words: "The more I think of it, the more I am inclined to disagree with the policy of openly attacking at this moment." I recalled the fact that the "open attack" had not come from us, that for many months we had, without making any sign either to the party or the country, borne with a persistent daily attempt by the supposed organ of the party to create an atmosphere of suspicion and calumny around the national policy, and that all it was proposed to do now, in launching a programme of the utmost nicety for the testing of the Act, was to remind the *Freeman* that it was launched by the only national authority in existence, and if the warning was disregarded, at least to put the country on their guard against its suggestions. Mr. Redmond said, "If we had a daily paper we could rely on the situation would be different," but he was convinced, from what Mr. Dillon had more than once said to him, that "he would feel bound in honour to come out openly to defend Mr. Sexton, and would, he was sure, say he approved of all the *Freeman* had said and done. This," he added, "I should regard as a most disastrous thing. It would be taken by the whole country, friends and

foes alike, as an end of unity in the party, as it would really be." I agreed as to the gravity of the danger, but its gravity was that the danger was there. Was it likely to be conjured down by a silence which would be interpreted as a sign that the National Directory dared not grapple with what he owned to be an all but direct attack on the unity of the party—an attack for which not a shred of national authority could be pleaded? What man or newspaper could hold its ground against public reprobation, if once the people realized that such plots against the declared will of the country and the existence of the party were in the air? It need not and would not even come to that; for the moment the *Freeman* and its friends realized that they were dealing with a national authority not to be overawed by menaces, they would be heard of no more in anything like flagrant warfare against the programme of the Directory. On the other hand, if, after the Swinford warning, following upon a hundred others, we gave the country no hint that they had to choose between the policy of testing the Purchase Act in a spirit of business-like prudence, and the policy of testing it with drawn knives, how could we afterwards blame the people if they gave ear to the doctrines with which they were being daily infiltrated, and came to see nothing but heroic patriotism in the cheap denunciations of "our hereditary foes" and the cheaper promises of "prairie value" with which it was being sought to undo the work of the last twelve months? Danger of division there was; but, in the words of the old adage, "if you fear infections, you do but call them upon you."

Mr. Redmond reverted to the other, and in my judgment still less reliable string to his bow—that of over-confidence. "When the Directory speaks," was his way of putting it, "and when we take the platform, all misunderstanding of the situation will speedily disappear in the country, and if the *Freeman* attack us—a most unlikely thing—we can deal with it then." And he laughed the danger off with some jaunty anticipations that, after having his lamentations out in one or two speeches, Mr. Dillon would be found again retiring to Greece or Colorado. From a somewhat closer insight into Mr. Dillon's mentality, I ventured to assure him that he was taking the best means of ensuring the very opposite result,

by hesitating to assert the intangibility of the national policy moderately but without flinching, before more extreme remedies were needed. It was the first shadow of difference of opinion between Mr. Redmond and myself since the assembling of the Land Conference. His judgment always led him to a sensible conclusion in public affairs, so long as he had nothing to fear for his own position; but as to what really and in the broader sense constituted the danger to his position, his tendency to sacrifice to the bad gods on the calculation that the good ones would not hurt him, had more than once led him into errors which turned awry some of the best opportunities of his life. However, in the face of his decided opposition, it was not possible to press the matter further, and the Directory heard nothing of the proposed addendum to their resolutions.

The eventuality which Mr. Redmond regarded as "a most unlikely thing" happened in the very next morning's *Freeman*. By one of the tricks of typographical "window-dressing" now practised daily upon a simpleton public, "the Sligo Police Tax" luridly displayed was made to appear to have been the grand business of the Directory meeting at which the plans for testing the Purchase Act, and consequently the fortunes of 400,000 Irish householders, were at stake, and the leading article was a scarcely veiled rebellion against the Directory's standard of "the substantial equivalent of Ashbourne prices"—a rebellion which grew bolder and bolder until, before a few weeks were over, the *Freeman* placed before the country its own counter-programme of 17 years' purchase for second term rents, and consequently $13\frac{1}{2}$ years' purchase for the remainder of the country. The figures were so preposterous that upon no estate in the country did the tenants even put them forward as their demand. They were preached, not with the object of working the Act, but with the object of making it a dead letter and giving the *coup de grâce* to the Land Conference Agreement.

The "determined campaign" which, Mr. Davitt afterwards publicly confessed, was "launched" against Mr. Redmond's leadership and the authority of the National Directory was dated by him from the appearance of one of the resolutions passed on this occasion. That worst of conspirators, because

most open-souled of men, wrote an article in an English magazine of advanced thought (the *Independent Review* of April 1905), picturing the proceedings of the Irish Parliament which he predicted would be sitting in 1910 (alack the day!), and after the further prophecy that Mr. Redmond and myself would figure in that assembly as title-hunters and placemen under the playful homonyms of "Sir John O'Waterford" and "Sir William O'Westport," proceeded to make a clean breast of the proceedings of his friends and himself against the Purchase Act in the autumn of 1903, in the following terms :

At this stage in the development of the new Castle policy, a resolution thanking Mr. George Wyndham and Sir Anthony Mac-Donnell for their services in relation to the Land Act was passed at a meeting of the League Directory, thereby registering for the first and only time in the history of the Nationalist struggle what was equivalent to a vote of confidence in Dublin Castle by popular Irish leaders. Against this dangerous new departure a determined campaign was at once launched. A sensational resignation from the Irish Party followed. Much confusion in Nationalist circles resulted from these occurrences.—(*Independent Review*, April 1905.)

It will be of assistance towards the understanding on what a flimsy (and, in the case of any man with less capacity for honest self-deception it would have to be added, untruthful) pretext the revolt against national unity and majority rule was founded, to set forth here the terms of the resolution which Mr. Davitt quoted as its only justification :

That we welcome in the new Land Act the most substantial victory gained for centuries by the Irish race for the reconquest of the soil of Ireland by the people and the disbandment of the alien garrison which has hitherto been employed by England for the maintenance of an irresponsible and pernicious class ascendancy. And we look to the successful working of the new measure for the creation of a state of things in which all Irish-born men, irrespective of class or creed, will have a common interest in labouring unitedly for the national rights and happiness of our country.

That the credit of this great national achievement is due primarily to the unity, discipline, and self-sacrifice with which the people's organization forced the question of the abolition of landlordism to the front, despite the terrors of coercion and other manifold discouragements, and is no less emphatically due to the moderation, magnanimity, and splendid capacity for self-government displayed by the representatives of the people in the National Convention, in

the Divisional Executives, and in the 1200 branches of the United Irish League, as well as in the Nationalist County Councils, District and Urban Councils, and other elective bodies of the country throughout the controversies connected with the origin and passing of the Act.

That while the Act, as passed on the Statute Book, falls short in various important particulars of the recommendations of the Land Conference and the requirements of the National Convention, and cannot without amendment effect the entire extinction of landlordism within a reasonable time, we cordially recognize that the amendments demanded by the National Convention have been conceded in Committee to an extent to which no great Government measure in relation to Ireland has been ever before modified in deference to the demands of Irish public opinion, and we think it a duty to make free acknowledgment that, next to the exertions of a United Irish Parliamentary Party under the leadership of Mr. Redmond and of Mr. T. W. Russell's Ulster Tenant-Righters, that happy result is to be traced to the wisdom and active good-will displayed by the section of the landlord leaders who made the Land Conference possible, and to the loyalty with which Mr. Wyndham and his associates in the Government of Ireland endeavoured to make good his pledge to give legislative effect to the recommendations of that Conference, as well as to the high public spirit with which the Liberal Party resisted the temptation to extract any advantage from the situation.

That wherever a readiness may be found on the part of landowners to sell their estates on terms which will confer upon the tenant-purchasers advantages substantially equivalent to those secured by sales under the previous Land Purchase Acts, having regard to the immense addition to the market price of the landlords' interest to be made out of the Land Purchase Aid Fund, through the cheerful co-operation of the tenants' representatives, we believe it to be in the highest interests of the tenants and of our country that negotiations for purchase in all such cases should be conducted by the tenantry in a spirit of the utmost friendliness, acting in a body unitedly and without undue haste under careful and prudent advice, but with an earnest desire to give the widest possible extension to the operations of the Act, so that any failure in its working may not be justly attributable to the attitude of the people or their organization, and that any amendments that may be found necessary may be brought about with the concurrence of all fair-minded men.

That wherever landlords may evince a determination either not to sell or to exact an exorbitant price in disregard of the principle laid down by the Land Conference, that the price must be such as will "start the occupiers on their new career as owners on a fair and favourable basis, ensuring reasonable chances of success,"

we advise the tenantry not to allow themselves to be hurried into any precipitate or imprudent action, but to consult cautiously and loyally together, with the advice of those in whose judgment they have reason to trust, in order to avoid the danger of being betrayed either into any premature action in the case of recalcitrant landlords on the one hand, or on the other hand into agreements which might prove ruinous to themselves and hurtful to the interests of the tenantry in general and of the country.

Finally, that we have never concealed our conviction that the great reform, now in a fair way towards accomplishment, whereby the Irish people will be constituted the owners of the soil, far from diminishing the passion for national self-government or its necessity will render the satisfaction of that undying national aspiration inevitable, as well as enormously facilitate the concession ; that the present condition of English political parties and the approach of a General Election which, whatever may be its results for English political parties, will give Ireland a Parliamentary representation more harmonious and better disciplined than ever, offers an unexampled opportunity for successfully pressing forward with our demand for Home Rule in the near future. And we desire to impress upon the Irish race, for the safe guidance of their future action, that in our judgment the happiest circumstance connected with the present situation is that, with continued good feeling and good faith on all sides, there seems no reason why the problem of Irish national self-government should not be solved by the united efforts of Irishmen themselves, by some such happy agreement as that by which the more intricate and apparently insoluble difficulties connected with the abolition of landlordism have been successfully overcome, or why such a settlement should not be assented to with equal readiness by both the great English parties.

The resolution which is allusively held up as though it were a betrayal of the national cause to Dublin Castle such as to justify an insurrectionary resistance by honest Irishmen may be allowed to stand as an epitome of the far-sighted and magnanimous national spirit which prevailed at the time, and which, had it been allowed to grow, would long since have transferred "Dublin Castle" to the obedient service of the Irish nation. But that is by the way.

When he dated the outbreak of "the determined campaign" from the autumn meeting of the Directory, Mr. Davitt must have forgotten his own warning to Mr. Redmond on the day after the meeting of the National Convention five months before, that "from that day forth, Dillon, T. P. O'Connor, and myself would be on our track"—a warning

justified by all that had happened in the meantime, from Mr. Dillon's attempt to shipwreck the Bill on the first clause to the appalling incident of his Swinford speech while the Directory meeting was still pending. From this date forth, at all events, it will be known to all time, on the public avowal of the most chivalrous of the "determined campaigners," that a secret confederation was formed by three or four of the most powerful men in Ireland, one of whom held the supposed organ of the Irish Party in his keeping, to overthrow the programme unanimously decided upon by the properly constituted national authority, and with it to overthrow Mr. Redmond and his colleagues as being, if not knaves enough to be the conscious agents of Dublin Castle, at least fools enough to be its unconscious tools. The latter is, indeed, a stretch of charitable construction hard to be applied to suggestions to ignorant and suspicious minds such as the following apocalyptic announcement prominently published in the *Freeman* on September 26 (little more than a fortnight after the meeting of the Directory):

If rumour speaks truly, as she sometimes does, we may be nearing a time when Celtic trustfulness and over-confidence in the affected professions of good-will for Ireland and its future, on the part of the deadliest foes any just cause ever had, may again make the national movement an object of pity to a not over-charitable world.

The first Swinford speech was an exercise, however unfair to his colleagues, of Mr Dillon's undoubted right of free speech. The second speech in Swinford, which he made a few weeks after the publication of the above disquieting warning, was as clear an act of defiance of the unanimous will of his leader and colleagues, and as indefensible a violation of his party pledge, in its spirit and quintessence, as it would be possible to cite. The occasion was the East Mayo Convention. The usual mode of procedure was to begin by submitting to the Convention the resolutions of the National Directory for their consideration. In every other Convention throughout Ireland these resolutions were enthusiastically adopted, without the alteration of a word, thereby adding a new and tremendous sanction to the force of the National Directory's programme. At Mr. Dillon's Con-

vention, for the first time and for the last in all Ireland, the resolutions of the Directory were of set purpose laid aside, and on the vital principle as to the working of the Act there was substituted a resolution in direct conflict with the Directory's standard of "the substantial equivalent of Ashbourne prices":

That we can see nothing in the provisions of the new Act, nor in the present condition or prospects of the agricultural industry, to justify any increase in the price of land to the occupiers as compared with the prices prevailing during the last ten years; and we strongly advise the tenants of this country, while giving the Land Act a fair and friendly trial, not to be induced to consent to any increase in the price of their holdings over the average price prevailing in the county of Mayo during the last ten years.

By this resolution Mr. Dillon openly incited the country to reject all consideration of the wholly different conditions of purchase under the new Act, either as to the reduction of the annuity from £4 to £3 : 5s., or the reductions of 22 per cent made on second term rents, and "not to be induced to consent to any increase in the price of their holdings over the average price prevailing in the county of Mayo during the last ten years." As we have before seen, the old Purchase Acts had been almost wholly and hopelessly inoperative in Mayo, as, thanks largely to the sinister movement launched in Swinford, the Act of 1903 has been all but equally abortive. But not merely as to Mayo, but as to the whole country, there was now proclaimed with Mr. Dillon's authority a programme diametrically opposed to the Directory's plans for the friendly testing of the Act, and from this time forth interpreted by the *Freeman* and all his disciples to mean, in practical figures, 17 years' purchase for second term rents and 13½ for all the remainder.

He, indeed, executed with a vengeance his threat to "take the field" in the prosecution of the *Freeman's* revolt against the national policy. He expressed, in emphatic terms, his own gratitude to the *Freeman*, adding: "It so happens that I agree with nearly every word that has appeared in the editorials of the *Freeman*." He adverted to the fact that "as the result of this Act the landlords expect to receive

7 or 8 years' purchase more from the tenants in addition to the State bonus than they received under the previous Acts," oblivious of the fact that it had been the *Freeman's* almost daily work for many months to stuff the landlords' heads with these inflated figures, by assuring them that they were the terms conceded by the Land Conference, and wholly regardless of the fact that the National Directory had just made arrangements to throw the whole organized strength of the country into a programme that would have meant only $18\frac{1}{2}$ years' purchase for three-fourths of the land of the country, and only $22\frac{1}{2}$ years' purchase of a rental reduced by 22 per cent from the rentals dealt with in the old Purchase Acts. The speech reeked with somewhat ribald abuse of the policy of Conciliation, to which he gave the statesmanlike nickname of the "Policy of Swindling," and with personalities of the grossest character directed against every man of the landlord class who had distinguished himself in making the abolition of landlordism practicable. In his attack upon the policy of "Conciliation *plus* Business," just framed by the National Directory with the assent of every divisional convention in the country except his own, he gave as little quarter to "Business" as to "Conciliation." No counter-programme of any practical kind was hinted at beyond vague allusions to "the old fighting policy," as to which he was strangely forgetful of his own misgivings and declarations that "he meant never to go to jail himself again," twelve months before, when some of us were struggling against sore discouragements to revive "the old fighting policy" in order to save the movement from crumbling to pieces.

Once Mr. Dillon had openly taken sides the *Freeman* no longer hesitated. Its columns were every day filled with attempts to stir up a national panic and to spread the impression that the new Purchase Act was a public calamity, leading straight to national bankruptcy — that the tenants were the prey of unwise and incompetent advisers, to put it no worse, and that the country could only be saved by the honesty of Mr. Dillon and the profound financial calculations of Mr. Sexton. The programme of "the determined campaigners" and their organ began to crystallize into two

very distinct designs :—first, by putting forward obviously un-negotiable terms to prevent the Purchase Act from working, and secondly, to substitute for it a general recourse by the tenants to the rent-fixing courts, whose working had kept Irish agriculture in a perpetually semi-comatose condition, and which it was one of the most blessed aims of the Purchase Act to put an end to.

Far worse than its editorial naggings was the system now beginning to be deliberately practised of giving short shrift in the columns of the *Freeman* to all who advocated the policy of the National Directory (excepting “the tall poppies” who were for the moment spared) and lavishing praise and prominence on all who assailed it. One prominent member of the party, who felt bound at a meeting in Portarlinton to reply in respectful terms to Mr. Davitt’s strictures on the national policy, began by some generous compliments to Mr. Davitt’s services, and thus far he was reported *verbatim*, with a punctuation of “loud and prolonged cheering”; but there the report stopped—not a word was given of Mr. ——’s firm reminders of the obligations of national unity and majority rule even upon a man of Mr. Davitt’s stature, if the Directory’s plans for testing the Purchase Act were to have fair play—observations which were received by the meeting with at least as “loud and prolonged cheering.” Another of the Special Committee of twenty-two M.P.’s who was delegated to explain the plans of the Directory to one of the northern conventions had his speech suppressed bodily at a stroke of the sub-editorial pencil. “Mr. So-and-so, M.P., also spoke,” was the *Freeman’s* impartial record. What wonder if men of the meaner sort in the party allowed such treatment in the nominally official party organ to intimidate them into becoming abject instruments (as both the M.P.’s above referred to became) in the hands of the wreckers of the Act, and if others, knowing little or nothing of what was passing behind the scenes, began to think that wild and aggressive language towards “the policy of swindling” and “our hereditary enemies” had become the patriotic as well as very much easier word of order? By this time, indeed, three or four members of the party—men of narrow understanding, but honestly

fanatical in their devotion to Mr. Dillon, had been actively set to work in the campaign of dislocation. One of them instigated the Birr Board of Guardians to pass a resolution of enthusiastic thanks to Mr. Dillon for his "splendid and most opportune speech at Swinford on the Land Purchase Act," and to send it around to all the representative bodies of Ireland for endorsement. A large number of those representative bodies, little suspecting that the "snowball resolution" was anything more than a personal compliment to an eminent Irishman, adopted it without hesitation, and their action was recorded from day to day in flaming characters in the *Freeman* as though the country were in open revolt against Mr. Redmond and his colleagues.

The panic-mongers were aided by the selfishness of the wealthy tenantry of the Duke of Leinster, who had always held aloof from the national organization and were the first to rush into a precipitate bargain on extravagant terms and thus absorb nearly £1,000,000 straightway on a single estate that perhaps least of all in the country needed State money.¹ The *Freeman* gleefully despatched a special commissioner to the spot, reported the people as crying out: "Only for the *Freeman* the tenants of Ireland were ruined," and by every ingenious device sought to propagate the panic-fear that the farmers had been left defenceless. No suggestion could well be falser than that prices could have been ruled by the isolated example of the Leinster estate, if purchases had been carried on experimentally and under the aegis of the League's whole Trade Union strength, as the Directory proposed. As a matter of fact, one of the most powerful of the conciliationist landlords, Mr. Talbot Crosbie, had at once closed with our standard of 18½ years' purchase for first term, judicial, and non-judicial rents, and had his example been only emphasized as noisily as the evil precedent on the Leinster estate, "Talbot Crosbie prices" would have become an irresistible watchword through the

¹ It is a fact characteristic of the times that the estate on which this blow was struck at the prospects of the poorer Irish tenants lay in the constituency of one of the most ferocious Parliamentary enemies of the Purchase Act; who preached to all (except his constituents of the Leinster estate) that it would be treason to pay more than 17½ years' purchase of second term rents, and who himself derived a larger benefit from the Act than perhaps any other tenant in the country. *Tantis auxiliis* the Act was stripped of half its virtue!

country. With a taste as deplorable as its unwisdom, great part of Mr. Dillon's speech at Swinford was devoted to offensive personal vituperation of Mr. Talbot Crosbie, and the only Dillonite meeting held in Kerry was occupied in the denunciation of one landlord exclusively, and he the only landlord in the country who was selling on completely satisfactory terms and was beginning to display a chivalrous national spirit as well. Lord Dunraven's fate was the same. When the *Freeman* found fault with the terms he was discussing directly with his tenants, he offered to sell instead through the Estates Commissioners on whatever terms they might appoint, and thus bestow upon the tenants all the advantages of "official inspection" to which the *Freeman* school attached such weight. Here was an alternative example to be published aloud with joy by everybody desirous of seeing Land Purchase operate on the happiest terms both for the tenantry and for the national cause. Lord Dunraven was only attacked with more fury than ever as the most crafty of Machiavels. The "determined campaigners" had conscientiously made up their minds that the policy of the National Directory was a ruinous, if not a traitorous, one, and accordingly the landlords to be pursued with an unrelenting hate were not those who made unscrupulous use of the Purchase Act, but those who risked something to make it work with smoothness and success.

CHAPTER XIV

MY WITHDRAWAL

WHEN the reader by and by hears "the determined campaigners" filling the air with shouts of "Dissension!" and "Majority Rule!"—and directed, of all men in the island, against me—he will do well to remember the position occupied by my adversaries and myself respectively from the standpoint of national unity and of straight dealing with our colleagues. Throughout the whole of these transactions I took no step without consultation with Mr. Redmond and with his authority. As has been shown, I did whatever was possible also to keep in friendly touch with Mr. Davitt, Mr. Dillon, and Mr. Sexton, and abate the edge of their hostility, and the withholding of confidence began with them and not with Mr. Redmond or myself. Furthermore, at every successive stage of our proceedings—the choice of delegates to the Land Conference, the acceptance or rejection of the Report of the Conference, the acceptance or rejection of the Wyndham Bill, the arrangements for amending it, and the methods of testing it when the law was about to come into operation—we submitted ourselves unreservedly to the Irish Party, to the National Directory, or to the National Convention, according as each or all of them possessed the competent constitutional jurisdiction, and none of our projects could have advanced an inch without their authorisation. In giving effect, therefore, to the national policy by so many accumulated sanctions formulated, we represented the undivided authority of the Irish Party, of the United Irish League, of the National Convention, and of an unprecedented concordance of the



Photo, Lafayette, Dublin.

F. C. HARRINGTON, M.P.
Lord Mayor of Dublin.

local governing bodies in the country in addition. That is to say, Mr. Redmond and his advisers were the executive organ of every settled national authority which stood between the country and anarchy in its counsels and contempt for its word.

Consider now the position, from the constitutional point of view, of the only two men of consequence who set their private judgments up against this unbroken array of national authorities.¹

Mr. Sexton had withdrawn from the Irish Party seven years before in despair of its fortunes. He had never since given any material token of interest in the national cause in the many crises of its struggle for existence. His only connection with public life was his office as commercial director of the *Freeman's Journal*. He obtained the control of that paper, as we have already seen, only because I declined the office when it was first pressed upon me, and he obtained it on his public as well as private pledge not to interfere himself in its editorial management, beyond seeing that it was conducted in harmony with the views of the majority of the Irish Party.² As a matter of fact, up to the date of the Land Conference Report he observed his promise and was never heard of in the editorial management of the *Freeman*. The year before Mr. Wyndham had introduced a Land Bill not to be mentioned in the same breath with the Act of 1903—a Bill which would have ended all hope of the completion of the abolition of landlordism during the present generation—and the danger to the Irish tenantry did not move Mr. Sexton out of his Olympian indifference.

Why did he all of a sudden change from complete insensibility to devouring activity in Irish affairs, and in contravention of his public engagement proceed to "exercise political direction," not merely once or twice, but as the business of his life? It is a still unsolved mystery, which the Irish nation has a right to demand shall be cleared up. The

¹ Mr. Davitt's privileged position and peculiarity as an apostle of nationalization of the land has been already explained.

² "If a statement from me can mollify the situation, I make it to this effect—that I have not as chairman, nor will I, as chairman, attempt to exercise political direction. I will not personally interfere with the editor of the *Freeman*." (Statement of Mr. Sexton on publicly taking control.)

only key to it at present imaginable is that some unknown something must have irritated that peculiarity of temper which is the malignant fairy's contribution to the cradle of Mr. Sexton's fine talents—that occasional obstinacy which, once aroused, will persist all the more peevishly the more it feels itself to be in the wrong, and which, in the present instance above all others, illustrates the distinction a great Frenchman has drawn between a reasoner and a reasonable man. Had he, by some means of his own, discovered some deadly national danger in the Land Conference or in the proposals that sprang from it, friendship, and indeed a commoner feeling, might well have impelled him to open his mind to myself, for example, who had solicited his counsel and assistance. If, for any reason, he thought fit to regard me with as much distrust as he did Mr. Redmond,¹ he might have had himself nominated with the utmost ease as a member of the Irish Party, or of the National Directory, or as a delegate of the National Convention, and there unfolded his own doubts and counter-projects under the sense of his proper responsibility. The course he actually took was, without consulting or in any way communicating with the leader of the Irish Party, or, so far as I know, with any human being connected with the Irish Party or with the United Irish League (with the possible exception of Mr. Dillon or Mr. Davitt, although it seems likely that that was only at a later date), to “exercise the political direction” of the *Freeman*, which he had pledged himself to renounce, and to exercise it, not in harmony with the views of the Irish Party, but first in stealthy and afterwards in open defiance of the repeated and unanimous decisions of the Irish Party and of its leader, and of every other body with a pretence to national authority. If we have not here the definition of an autocracy, almost approaching the pretensions of a theocracy, where shall we find it? None the less we shall presently hear the Gracchus of this extraordinary revolt discourse most virtuously of unity and majority rule from the special sanctuary of these sacred principles in the *Freeman* office—nay, turn them into weapons against the

¹ Mr. Sexton admitted on cross-examination in Limerick that he had not spoken to Mr. Redmond since the date of the Parnell Split.

policy which at this moment spoke the deepest convictions of every representative national authority in the country, save the *Freeman* and its half a dozen allies of the occult "determined campaign!"

The *Freeman*, however, would neither have had the folly to persevere, nor the weight in the country to do much appreciable mischief, only for the unhappy fatality which led Mr. Dillon first to give a more or less cautious patronage to its incitements, and finally to become its principal general in the field of action. But Mr. Dillon's own position was still less defensible, according to every canon of party discipline. During the negotiations for the reunion of the party in 1907, I gave him his choice between two definitions of the party pledge—one which he had laid down himself making a member's own conscience the measure of how far he might publicly dissent from a decision of the majority of the party, and the other compelling strict adherence in or out of Parliament to a decision once come to. He threw over his own looser interpretation of the party pledge, and accepted the following, which is now the organic law of the party :

The party pledge binds members of the Irish Party to support in and out of Parliament any decision come to by a majority of the party.

Judged by this criterion, the friendliest partisanship can suggest no defence of Mr. Dillon's unlucky courses. The Land Conference Report was not only approved by a majority of the Irish Party, but by the unanimous voice of the party at a meeting to which he was duly invited, and which he of set purpose abstained from attending. That endorsement was repeated by the National Directory, of which he was a member, and from whose meeting he also absented himself. It was repeated in a more concrete form by the National Convention, which found him in Greece, but ready to start for Ireland by the next boat to overthrow its judgments. Finally, when it came to be a question of hiving the honey of the national policy for the Irish people, he was once more bidden to consultation by the National Directory, once more withheld his counsels from his colleagues, and then in cold blood, and after some weeks for reflection, took the public

platform to tear in shreds the resolutions of the National Directory, and to "launch a determined campaign" against the plans solemnly drawn up by his leader and his colleagues. It would be too painful in the case of such a man to dwell upon such a conception of his pledged obligation to "support in and out of Parliament any decision come to by a majority of the party," to say nothing of the more reproachful calls to openness of dealing with comrades of ancient standing. But, incomprehensible as may be to the plain mind the course of reasoning which, without a doubt, brought him to see a patriotic duty in his line of action thus far, in declining contact in counsel with his colleagues in order afterwards the more effectually to cross and overbear them, it is only later on, when Mr. Dillon takes the lead in trying to drown my voice with every odious imputation of dissension-mongering and revolt against majority rule, that his friends of a better day will be put to the severest test of all to discover any better clue than sheer cynicism to his conduct. For the present it is sufficient to note that Mr. Dillon was as bereft as Mr. Sexton himself of any constitutional authority from the Irish Party, or from the national organization for his desperate resolve to split the country at the very moment when the fate of the Land Purchase Act was trembling in the balance.

It will be said, "But here were only two men; what of the rest of the party and of its governing authority? Was there no force left in the decrees of Venice?" The obstacles thus raised, formidable though they were, would have been worn down without much difficulty only for a still more formidable obstacle from a wholly unexpected quarter. On October 13 the country was astounded by an announcement in the *Freeman* that Mr. Redmond had sold his own estate in Wexford on terms which were summarized in these words: "The sale at 20 per cent on second term rents means $24\frac{1}{2}$ years' purchase, whilst that at 25 per cent on the first term rents means 23 years' purchase." The *Freeman* subsequently announced that these terms were published on the authority of Mr. Redmond himself. The prices thus fixed by the leader of the Irish Party in his own case were 2 years' purchase

higher in the case of second term rents, and $4\frac{1}{2}$ years' purchase higher in the case of first term rents, than the prices which, it will be remembered, the National Directory, with Mr. Redmond himself in the chair, had only five weeks before resolved to contend for as a fair average with all the might of the tenants' organization. Later on Mr. Redmond strove for absolution on the plea that these were not the terms finally agreed upon between his tenants and himself, and that the actual terms of sale were such as to leave him no profit of his own on the transaction. This is quite true. The outcry immediately raised was such that very different and moderate prices were substituted for the original ones, and the estate being waterlogged in the Land Court, the landlord was not even entitled to the bonus. But what mattered to the country was not the ultimate reduced price or the financial result, regrettable though it was, to Mr. Redmond himself, so much as the terms originally published by the Irish leader's own authority, and these terms left their mark on the price of the land of Ireland with a force which was never afterwards counteracted.

Mr. Redmond had the indelicacy to make it a reproach to me later on that I made the best of his explanation of the transaction, and did whatever it was possible to do in my paper to attenuate the effect of the Irish leader's example, and to defend him against the ungenerous personal enmities for which his ill-advised announcement immediately made him the target. It would have been perhaps more creditable if he had remembered, that in coming to his rescue, I had to overlook an injustice done to myself, as well as to the country, in the matter; for, at a time when we were on the closest confidential terms, and when assuredly I took no step of the slightest moment without his knowledge and approval, the publication in the *Freeman* was the first announcement vouchsafed to me of a sale which deeply compromised the success of the plans to which he and I were principal parties for extracting the utmost measure of justice for the Irish tenantry from the Purchase Act. It is not too difficult to bear the reproach that in such circumstances I thought only of how he himself, as well as the country, could be

best saved from the evil consequences of his error, instead of dissevering myself from the responsibility, and joining in the ready rush to bear him down. Had he done me the honour to consult me as to what was, in the circumstances, a public and not a private interest, knowing the quality of the land and its nearness to a prosperous market town, I should certainly have raised no objection to the prices eventually agreed upon, and perhaps not very much even to those first announced; but I should have implored Mr. Redmond, in his public character, to defer all negotiations, or at least all newspaper mention of the matter, for a few months, until we should have succeeded in establishing a more moderate standard of prices in the less opulent parts of the country by the methods the Directory and he had just set in motion. The Irish nation would only have too gladly made good to him whatever money sacrifices his self-denying ordinance might impose on him.

The mischief was, however, done. A great shout went up from every rent-office in the country. For years afterwards, the first reply made to almost every body of tenants who broached the question of purchase to their landlords was: "I will accept the same terms as your own leader, Mr. Redmond," and, needless to say, the terms they fastened upon were the "24½ years' purchase" of the first announcement, and not the reduced terms which limped along very much later. The landlord mind had been prepared for extravagant demands by the *Freeman's* pertinacious misrepresentation of the Land Conference terms. The example now set them by the leader of the Irish Party, before the Act was yet in operation, confirmed them in the belief that the inflated figures which the *Freeman* assured them represented their admitted rights under the Land Conference Report and the Purchase Act were no exaggeration; while the treatment meted out to the Dunravens and Talbot Crosbies reminded them how little but thorns and ingratitude awaited those who took any more altruistic view of the interests of their class and country. The effect in staggering the confidence of the tenants, and even of a section of the Irish Party, was no less pernicious. What were they to conclude but that there was some smouldering truth in

the warnings of Mr. Dillon and the *Freeman*? How were simple minds to credit that Mr. Redmond, who had authorized the amount of $24\frac{1}{2}$ and 23 years' purchase respectively as his own prices, had only a few weeks before presided at a meeting at which the Irish tenantry were provided with a complete and irresistible machinery for establishing $22\frac{1}{2}$ and $18\frac{1}{2}$ years' purchase respectively as the standard national prices?

One remedy remained, and one only—to make it clear at once that the machinery was there by putting it in motion, and to make it no less clear to the country at the same time that if the Directory's programme was to be successfully tested, there must be no tolerating the insertion of obstructive spokes and grits amidst its delicate wheels. But the worst effect of all upon the public cause of Mr. Redmond's Wexford sale was that the alarm it aroused made him shrink with an all too visible nervousness from that firmness which was now essential for the restoration of discipline in the national ranks. It is significant of much that Mr. Dillon, who seems to have hesitated for four weeks after the Directory meeting, chose the second next day after the announcement of Mr. Redmond's Wexford sale for finally burning his boats by his second speech at Swinford. A number of the Special Committee of twenty-two M.P.'s, seduced by his example, or intimidated by the *Freeman* boycott, or honestly dismayed at the Wexford figures, availed themselves of their authority as delegates of the National Directory at the County Conventions to curse the Act they were delegated to submit to an organized test. It was with the utmost difficulty a public meeting at Killarney could be got to listen with a decent patience while Mr. Redmond was making his explanation. Assured information reached me that organized preparations were being made to refuse him a hearing at a monster meeting in Limerick which he was to attend in a couple of weeks, and so drive him from his office.

We were manifestly face to face with a grave danger, both for the successful working of the Act and for the future of the policy of national reconciliation. But the danger could easily be exaggerated. In letter after letter

to Mr. Redmond I pointed out that these isolated worries, unavoidable in all human concerns, were of small consequence when contrasted with the fidelity of the overwhelming mass of the Irish Party, of the United Irish League, and of the people, who had only to be apprised of the truth to bring into action a force which nothing could withstand. But the time was come—had come, indeed, six weeks before—for giving the country some plain hint of the workings of a confederacy who were now, however unconsciously, heading straight for national disruption. For six months we had permitted the popular mind to be infiltrated with a steady daily current of misrepresentation without closing with our assailants, or, indeed, giving the average man in the street to understand that there was anything particularly amiss. My own newspaper, indeed, had helped largely to lull the public mind into a false security by singing weekly litanies to the joint glory of “Messrs. Dillon, Davitt, and O’Brien,” who, with a tragically well-intentioned obtuseness to the facts, were held forth as pursuing a common policy in unbroken and unbreakable friendship for each other.¹ Up to a certain point this longanimity had been as wise as it was new in the history of a strong Irish organization persistently and viciously struck at by a numerically insignificant minority, and probably need never have been departed from if the admonition suggested six weeks before had been allowed to be adopted by the National Directory.

But the situation was now wholly changed. What Mr. Redmond had regarded as “a most unlikely thing” had happened with a vengeance. Mr. Dillon had openly raised the flag of a policy of irreconcilability and impracticable demands which was in mortal conflict with the policy of the Directory; several of his adherents among the twenty-two Irish members who were delegated to the Conventions turned them into scenes of bitter attack on Land Purchase and the

¹ As I was able to do little or nothing for the paper myself, a gentleman, who was also a leader-writer for the *Freeman*, was engaged to supply the principal weekly article for the *Irish People*. After my retirement he was by the Dillonites co-opted a member of the Standing Committee who control the funds and organizers of the United Irish League, and as one of the counsel for the *Freeman* assisted in supplying material for my cross-examination out of the columns of the *Irish People*, and he crowned his patriotic career by accepting a modest Crown Prosecution at the hands of the false Saxon.

Policy of Swindling, in place of carrying out their instructions for an organized test of the Act ; on all sides there were evidences of a concerted attempt to instigate the local governing bodies and League branches to take sides with the "determined campaigners," and their every success in this direction was magnified in the *Freeman* to the proportions of some great national revolt ; and finally, the indignation aroused by the publication of the Wexford terms of sale made even the most sober-minded doubt whether the dark warnings of the *Freeman* were not being justified. If the voice of personal ambition, or even of peace of mind, could have been listened to, my own way out of the emergency would have been a primrose one—I had only to repudiate all responsibility for the Wexford bargain and to make the public aware that the terms were totally at variance with those Mr. Redmond and the National Directory had a few weeks before determined to appeal to the country to fight for. The public wrath was directed entirely against Mr. Redmond himself, and I had the best reason to know that up to this time the more private grudge of the leading confederates was also inspired by him, and not by any antipathy to me, such as afterwards developed itself. But not only was such a course personally unthinkable. My persuasion that Mr. Redmond combined a larger number than any of his competitors of the qualifications for leadership of the Irish Party remained as firm as ever ; and if the County Conventions could have been got to apply themselves steadily to the enforcement of our plans for establishing a more moderate standard of prices, the not wholly disinterested clamour raised about this isolated Wexford estate would soon die down and be forgotten.

Three courses remained to choose from : the abandonment of the plans of the National Directory ; a moderate but unmistakable disclosure to the country of the dangers that threatened to make those plans unworkable ; or my own withdrawal altogether from the scene, leaving full freedom of action for those who laid claim to superior sagacity and a less craven spirit. The suddenness with which my final decision came upon the country led many uninformed people to infer that it must have been come to in some rash

moment, and without any previous opening of my mind to those whose counsels I shared. The inference, like many others which I well knew had to be braved, was an entirely unfounded one. For nearly a month before the announcement was made, I remained in the closest confidential intercourse with Mr. Redmond, and continued to the last moment to press upon him the line of action which, it was as clear to me then as it is now, would not only have enabled me to remain at his command, but would have allowed the abolition of landlordism to be effected on at least two years' better terms for the tenants than have actually prevailed, and without any of the futile tumult and bad blood which have postponed the half of that reform for another generation and robbed the other half of its noblest ethical results for our nation.

The essence of the difficulty was that for many months men had been sowing tares among the wheat by night, and neither the party nor the country knew it. I did not call for any angry collision with our assailants or for laying anybody under interdict, or for plunging into any petty dispute with Mr. Sexton over his actuarial *dissertiuncula* in the *Freeman*. All that was wanted was to summon the party together, or, if that was thought too provocative a step, to take the first opportunity in public in the measured words which Mr. Redmond could so admirably command to recall to the country that by every seal that could bind the faith of a nation Ireland stood pledged to the policy of reconciliation of classes and of races embodied in the Land Conference Report and in the Purchase Act; to make it clear to them that the National Directory, in the exercise of its indisputable authority, had drawn up plans for experimental land purchase in the spirit of that policy, but also such as would be an effective safeguard to the tenants against excessive or improvident prices; to appeal to all patriotic men—at least for the next six months—to give him and the constituted national authorities a free hand in the delicate and enormously difficult duty of bringing these plans to the test; and finally, on his responsibility as the national leader, to utter a warning that, if a programme representing the all but unanimous authority of the Irish Party and

the National Directory were allowed to be frivolously or recklessly set at defiance, the Purchase Act would be worked under the very worst instead of the very best conditions for the tenantry—without any settled plan and as the selfishness or necessities of particular estates might dictate—and there would be an end of all real unity or discipline in the national ranks and of all respect among English parties for the authority of Irish leaders or for the value of Ireland's word. My appeal to him was, in a word, with good-humoured inflexibility to "watch out our watch" over the ennobling national programme the party and the country had commissioned us to carry through.

But Mr. Redmond alone could do it. While circumstances had loaded me with an all but insupportable share of the labour of the preparations for testing the Act and the still more redoubtable responsibility in the eyes of the people, I had no constitutional authority to do anything, although we were already within a couple of weeks of the date when the Act would come into force, and every day the Conventions summoned to put the Directory's programme in training were being used to defeat it by some of the very men who attended as the Directory's delegates. "The determined campaigners" were all the time showing their heads with more boldness in a country tragically unaware that they were not speaking for a united party and Directory in inveighing against the policy of national reconciliation as a "policy of swindling," or that they were making demands for 17 and 13½ years' purchase their lever for making the Purchase Act unworkable. For me to sound the tocsin, while Mr. Redmond remained silent, would have been only to give the recalcitrants a grievance and to precipitate a split. On the other hand, it was clear that a policy of moderation, which if the loyal collaboration of leading colleagues failed us would require all the intelligent patriotism of a solid country for its success, could not possibly succeed if the country were left in ignorance of the fact that every principle of party discipline was being trampled upon, in pursuance of a secret compact in order to destroy it. We should be carrying on our operations under a double fire from front and rear—from masked batteries in our own camp, as well as from the worst of the

landlords, blooded for the battle by the *Freeman's* assurances of what an easy victory awaited them. I again and again pressed upon Mr. Redmond that, unless he exercised his authority and that of the party and the Directory to the very moderate extent required, perseverance in our existing programme would not be practicable, and no course would remain for me at least but to leave a free stage for those who, however culpably they had refused us national unity for the more moderate policy, must not at all events be left any room to complain of its being denied to themselves in any more heroic projects of their own.

One bold pronouncement would be sufficient to steady the country and to strengthen the trembling knees within the party. But Mr. Redmond hesitated more than ever. He was now only too fully alive to the danger. He protested the two Swinford speeches—the abstention from the Directory meeting and the defiance of its resolutions—to be altogether inexcusable. But he would only go on repeating the two objections he had made to precautionary action by the Directory, disastrously though his anticipations had been confuted by events. Mr. Dillon would go off on his travels after a Parthian shot or two, nobody would mind the *Freeman*, etc.; but, above all, any action on his part would mean a split. In vain I pointed out that we were already suffering from a split of the worst sort—a subterranean split, which was doing its work of disorganization all but unknown to the country, and that the certain cure and the only one was to bring the danger to the light, without a word of needless provocation, but without fear. He developed now for the first time a perverse habit which was to be his invariable rule of conduct in the five following years. It was to exploit the wholesome popular horror of a split in order not to disarm those who were violating every law of discipline and party loyalty to create a split, but in order to discredit those who were ready for any personal sacrifice to avert it. It was to purchase a nominal unity, at the expense of all that made unity worth having. In his own words of immortal unwisdom: “Better be united in support of a short-sighted and foolish policy than divided in support of a far-sighted and wise one.” And make sure that, in

all great national emergencies, there shall be division, by proclaiming beforehand, that the division-mongers must prevail.

The secret of all these balancings and falterings was, of course, painfully evident. The alarm raised by the publication of the Wexford terms had given his critics a weapon before which he quailed. Every body of tenants who proposed to purchase were being answered: "Certainly, on your own leader's terms of $24\frac{1}{2}$ years' purchase." All rumours pointed to some passionate popular outbreak at the Limerick meeting, and Mr. Redmond was manifestly afraid that any effort of his to recall Mr. Dillon and the *Freeman* to the principles of party discipline would be held up as an attempt to smother legitimate public indignation against a more serious breach of the Directory's resolutions on his own part, in inflating by 4 years' purchase the standard of price the Directory had set up. He was wholly astray in the apprehension that his own error, grave as it was, would for a moment weigh against the passion for national unity, if once it were known to be in danger, but the apprehension was there and was not to be argued down. Besides, I am afraid it is certain he knew me so little as to doubt whether I was altogether in earnest in the determination to give up my political life at a moment of what might well seem rare personal gratification for the old-fashioned sake of loyalty to my plighted word.

We parted on terms of undiminished personal cordiality. I told Mr. Redmond I was far from desiring to regulate his action by my own; that, as he could not see his way to the very simple solution I proposed, he would probably serve the country best by acting in the capacity of a constitutional monarch who, when one Ministry could no longer go on, should call in their Opposition critics, and give them his confidence in working out the rival policy of which it must be presumed they were prepared to take the responsibility. On November 4, in a letter to Father O'Flynn, the President of the Cork United Irish League, free from all personal allusions and touching upon nothing that was not necessary to give my constituents some assurance that I was not acting without deliberation or without weighty cause, I

announced that I had made up my mind to resign my seat in Parliament, to withdraw from the Directory of the United Irish League, and to cease the publication of my newspaper, as there was no other way of saving the country from division.

CHAPTER XV

THE BELLS OF SHANDON

THERE is no precedent in Irish history—nor, indeed, any that I know elsewhere—for the situation that had now arisen. Had the Irish Party without a word of warning torn to flitters the Land Conference policy they had hailed with all the accents of enthusiasm as a new deliverance? Had the National Convention within a few months broken their idols and forsworn their vows? Were they nothing but sordid stage play, those compoundings of old differences, that forgetfulness of old grudges which had moved the respectful wonder of the British Parliament? If so, who should place reliance again upon a party or a country so fickle and unsteady? That these were the first thoughts suggested by the transformation scene in Ireland was not the least serious of the blows struck at the national credit by those who had turned the very word “conciliation” from a talisman of wonder-working among Irishmen into a term of hissing and ridicule.

Happily no such reproach should justly lie against either the Irish Party or the Irish people. Both to the one and to the other, the announcement of my withdrawal from public affairs came with a sense of blank stupefaction. Owing to our own silence, and the adroitness with which the *Freeman* mingled the deference of a party organ with an insidious vilification of the party policy, the mass of our colleagues, and still more of the Irish public, had no conception of the depth of the differences which were mining the national unity and paralysing our plans. More than this, so complete has been the Press boycott which prevented my voice from

reaching the ears of the people of three out of the four provinces ever since, that, after seven years, the province of Munster is to this day the only one where the train of events above narrated does not remain as unknown to the bulk of the Irish people as it is to all but a handful of even the best-informed English politicians. The revolution was, in the Oriental phrase, a palace revolution, in which neither the common people nor even their representatives in Parliament had any voice. A stranger riddle still, it was a palace revolution in which those who yielded represented an overpowering majority in numbers and in strength, and the minority who succeeded had absolutely nothing to work upon except the terror of a split which, for the nation's sake, deterred the representatives of the majority from setting in motion against them the legions which one clear trumpet-note would have called into the field.

Times without number Nationalists, with aching hearts, have said to me, "Ah! if, instead of retiring, you had only let the country know what was wrong!" The reproach was, of course, one I had foreseen. A world that only half believes the force of self-surrender to be any force at all will not easily see anything except weakness in the conduct of a man who, being on a pinnacle of popularity that could not well be more intoxicating, and having with him every power and sanction of national strength—the all but unanimous confidence of the Irish Party and its leader, the whole machinery of a prosperous and all-powerful popular organization—surrendered his position in Parliament, in the country, and in the Press, without striking a blow, rather than go to the public platform and tell the country that Mr. Dillon had violated his party pledge and Mr. Sexton the pledge on which he had gained control of the *Freeman* and had launched "a determined campaign" for the destruction of the country's unity, of its leader, and of its authorized plans. It is only my own countrymen I expect to understand. They, at least, will have memories long enough to know that it was not any possibility of personal defeat I had to apprehend in shrinking from answering the execution of Mr. Dillon's threat to "take the field" by taking the field myself. It was even a moral certainty which every hour's reflection confirms that there

would have been no necessity for taking the field at all if Mr. Redmond in the exercise of an authority which nobody could challenge, and in defence of a policy to which he was at least as deeply pledged as I, had consented to utter even a very much more moderately worded warning of the dangers of dissension and the obligations of majority rule than any one of half-a-dozen he in subsequent years penned against myself at the dictation of the very men who had acquired their ascendancy over him by an organized campaign of dissension and contempt for majority rule.

But Mr. Redmond's shrinking from his own duty made all the difference. If, against his judgment, I insisted upon a National Convention being summoned for the second time in the same year, to make its choice between working Land Purchase and wrecking it, it would be necessary to reveal the full height and depth of the difference in order to justify a step so inconvenient. What a field for malice, to whisper that this new intestine shock was given through some personal pique against great Irishmen, if not indeed as a threat against Mr. Redmond's leadership! The great body of the Convention was so sure to have been with me that most likely, as happened every time before when the issue was knit, no opposition would have shown its head; but would the ultimate results have been any the happier? It is all very fine to say the judgment of the country was so easy a matter now, after seven years' bitter experience has proved that those who made havoc of our plans for virtually placing the carriage of the Purchase Act in the people's own hands had nothing of their own to put in their place except explosions of feeble rhetoric against "our hereditary enemies," which failed ignominiously to prevent the Purchase Act from working, but only succeeded in causing it to work in the very worst way for the tenants and for the highest national interests. Everybody now knows where the financial infallibility of the *Freeman* has landed its shareholders as well as the country. All this which is crystally clear now was by no means so clear at the time. The Act was coming into force in a few weeks, and if our experiments for testing it could only come into play after the shock of a new convulsion in the national ranks, and after a corresponding

increase of unreasonableness and insolence on the part of the landlords, the success of the Policy of Conciliation *plus* Business might have been fatally compromised. We should never have heard the end of how the prices of land might have been whittled down almost to prairie value if the advocates of "the old fighting policy" had only been suffered to put their own braver projects in force, and had not been summarily silenced for preaching that gospel of hate of alien landlordism which we had all drunk in with our mothers' milk.

The Irish people are more naturally open to counsels of forgiveness and elevation of spirit than, perhaps, any other wronged race on earth, so long as those on whose guidance they confide are united in declaring forgiveness to be as patriotic as it is easy. If our foremost men could only have agreed in pointing out that, in the new circumstances, the implacable methods which were essential to obtain the assent of Parliament and of the landlords to the abolition of landlordism, would be the worst of follies now, since they could only tend to obstruct and in every way worsen the process of abolition ready to our hand, the people would have opened their mouths to the lesson as gladly as a thirsty traveller to the fountain. Nothing could be more natural, however, than their perplexity when they heard from respected lips that these new doctrines were inventions of their old incorrigible oppressors to swindle and bankrupt them and pave the way for some heinous plot against the national cause. Nor in a country so much more readily swayed by sentiment than by logic would any arguments, no matter how unanswerable, of the excessive smallness of the minority and of their absolutely inexcusable revolt against every principle of party loyalty and respect for majority rule be altogether convincing when the two principal offenders were men like Mr. Davitt and Mr. Dillon, and when their only apparent offence was an excess of extreme nationality—all the more, that another of the minority had it in his power to colour the views of the country daily to his liking through the self-styled organ of the Irish Party, and still another (Mr. T. P. O'Connor) wielded pretty much as he pleased the organized power of our countrymen in Great Britain.

But it has been urged: "Agreed that, rather than have it out in a row, you should give the other side a chance of producing their own superior policy, why do what no minister who resigns office will do? Why efface yourself altogether from Parliament and the League, and even deprive yourself of any voice in the Press?" It would have been, no doubt, insanity, if my withdrawal was not intended to be a sincere one, or if it was possible to foresee how destitute of any resource or responsible guiding power of their own those who had so recklessly overturned the authorized national programme would turn out to be. But to have counted upon so utter a barrenness of resource or initiative on their part would have seemed to me at the moment an insulting and incredible presumption as against men of the foremost rank who had been so confident in their own sagacity and so contemptuous of ours. And nothing seemed more clear to me than that if a trial of an alternative policy there was to be, it ought to be a full and fair trial, supported with all the undivided energies of the country, and not one open to the taunt of being harassed by a guerilla criticism in the Press or on the platform. In the Purchase Act we had planted an institution against which, in the main, no amount of blundering or even malice could prevail. If the course of a few years proved that the anti-Conciliationists had in practice bettered the terms of Land Purchase and not perhaps lessened the likelihood of Home Rule by showing their teeth, I should have joyfully reconciled myself to Sir Roger de Coverley's axiom that "there is a good deal to be said on both sides" of all human reasonings and should have with all the casier conscience hugged the pleasures of a private life. If time proved otherwise, it seemed hard to doubt that patriotic Irishmen, chastened by the sense of responsibility and by their experience of the hard practicalities of a constructive policy, would be found at last in the mood for giving the broader-based principles of national reconciliation as free a stage and as exhaustive a trial as they had enjoyed themselves.

At all events, failing action by Mr. Redmond, two alternatives only were left:—scenes of open dissension or my disappearance; and whether it be judged an act of

quixotic meekness or of high patriotic wisdom—my choice was to make dissension impossible by leaving no second party to the quarrel. The die once cast, I cut off any further political correspondence with all persons soever; even ran the risk of discourtesy by making no answer to the hundreds of resolutions of sympathy and entreaty that streamed in upon me from almost every Nationalist representative body in the country; declined to receive a deputation from the County Council of the county in which I lived; tried by telegraph to turn back a delegation of the principal men of my own constituency of Cork City, and when they persisted in making the dismal winter journey from the extreme south to the extreme west in spite of me, put an end to debate on the topic by making this reply to them:

It is a heart-breaking business all round, but having done my best to explain to the country the circumstances which necessitated my action, the discussion is absolutely concluded so far as I am concerned.

There is not the smallest danger of any split either in the party, or in the League, or in the country. There will be a perfectly free field for the development of any alternative policy; and I will not use my retirement in any way whatever to criticise or obstruct; neither, I am certain, will anybody in the country who has any regard for my wishes.

Serious differences as to policy happen in every country, and if an individual member of Parliament chooses to retire in order to avoid the continuance of those differences, it is the easiest of all ways of securing that the country shall suffer nothing more serious than a passing personal regret.

Mr. Redmond followed my advice by giving the opposition ministry their chance. By one of history's queer freaks, the Limerick meeting, which threatened to mark the end of his leadership, became his salvation. The soberizing process I had assured him would follow the first real hint to the country of their danger instantly had its effect. The people of Limerick, when they assembled, had something very different to think of from driving the Irish leader also into retirement. It is more than likely that they would then and there have given "the determined campaigners" in all sufficient measure the admonition Mr. Redmond flinched

from administering himself. But on this occasion Mr. Redmond tried for the first time a device which he afterwards made a practice to dissuade that instinctive public opinion which is the saving of the Irish cause in all critical hours, from doing for itself the duty he had failed in. Having put himself in sympathy with the popular feeling by (quite sincerely) avowing my principles to be his own, and adding that "but for Mr. William O'Brien there would have been no Land Conference and no Land Act," he made a moving appeal to the people to maintain silence on the subject of my retirement by giving them an undertaking that the Irish Party would meet at once and would take action that would ensure my return. Considerable allowance must be made for Mr. Redmond if, in his difficult situation, he disarmed public opinion by an undertaking which a little reflection ought to have made clear to him could not be carried out. But he, of course, knew perfectly well from my letters that the step I had taken was not one likely to be retraced in obedience to one of those maudlin resolutions of regret which are seldom denied to the least meritorious of retiring Town Councillors by his colleagues; and that, failing the unequivocal public recognition of the duty of loyalty to the authorized national policy—a recognition which he had shied at himself and which he knew he was not going to insist upon at the party meetings, I could only rejoin the Irish Party on condition of co-operating, like himself, in the destruction of the principles he and I believed in.

It would be idle to deny that the sacrifice of one of the fairest of Ireland's few opportunities and the necessity for giving up, in the very hour of its consummation, a task more full of pride and thankfulness than all the other work of my life put together, were painful, and even stunning blows. The separation from my life's work was all the more poignant because it involved also alienation from two or three of my fastest friends, and a certain amount of injustice, as I conceived, at their hands. But up to this time, nothing much had been done on either side to leave any personal sting, and according to the tragedy of things, in the closest friendships there are gulfs, even as, in Emerson's fine phrase, between the remoter stars, although they seem a nebula of

united light. But, heavy as were these disappointments, my experiences were so little like those usually associated with political downfalls that I had often to dwell upon them in order to find a fair counterpoise of trouble for the almost guilty joys of release from the never-ending waste of brain and nerve force—the noise and fever and fret of a thousand public responsibilities—the crotchets of fatuous friends, the rarity of safe counsellors, the perversions of the noblest principles and the plainest facts—the fathomless difficulties of substituting new ideas for old catch-words in the popular comprehension—the interminable “treading the wine-press all alone”—which had constituted my life for the previous twelve months. One of the rewards of a life of hard work is that rest becomes the best of pleasures. As a matter of fact so little did the ordinary penalties of political disappointment, or the needs for fresh excitement by which they are ordinarily assuaged, count either with myself or with her who was the consolation of my public life and is the joy of the days of my retirement, that for the ensuing twelve months we were never tempted to stir outside our western cottage and its garden’s bounds in search of health or pleasure. We accepted the political blows and certain lost illusions with submission as our share of the public burden. For the rest, one was not without hope that the example set might not be without its salutary influence upon Irish public life and upon English respect for it, and there was the further comfort that the books in writing which we occupied our leisure¹ might not impossibly do something in the way of heightening the attractions of the Irish cause in English eyes and giving a truer insight of the Irish character that might outweigh at least as long a period of service in Parliament.

Then an astounding thing happened. The men who were summoned to guide the destinies of the tenantry renounced the task and had no guidance to give. They had “launched a determined campaign” against those who had undertaken that heavy charge, and had broken up their machinery for putting the Purchase Act to the test. Their opportunity had now come for proving the higher temper of

¹ *Under Croagh Patrick*, by Sophie O’Brien (London, John Long). *Recollections*, by William O’Brien (London, Macmillan & Co.).

their patriotism and their capacity for leading the people upon their own more daring paths. All the machinery and funds of a flourishing organization—the unquestioning obedience of the Parliamentary Party—the support of a National Press, in which there was not a single hostile voice to cross, or even criticize them—such a combination of favouring auguries and all but unlimited power as no Irish leaders had ever enjoyed before was placed before them; and they recoiled from the duty. They could neither command nor obey. Having destroyed the defensive machinery we had prepared for the tenants, they had nothing better—in fact, they had nothing at all—to offer in its place.

A few weeks after the announcement of my retirement, the news was published that Mr. Dillon had left for the south of Italy and Mr. Davitt for the United States for a prolonged stay abroad for the benefit of their health. They left without making a single speech or publishing a single suggestion to the tenants how they were to guard themselves against the “inflated prices,” and the “national insolvency” they had been so strenuously prophesying. They made themselves a parable of Newman’s reproach: “Thou couldst a people rouse but couldst not rule!” Ill-health, if one of the best of excuses for declining responsibility, might well have served as an argument for not commencing a “determined campaign” against those upon whose shoulders the responsibility rested. Mr. Dillon could scarcely be surprised if people made their comments on the peculiar form of ill-health which prevented him from attending the meeting of the Irish Party on February 16 to consider the Land Conference Report, but enabled him to turn up at their meeting of the next day to endeavour to nullify their decision; which exiled him to Greece when the National Convention was summoned to say its “Aye!” or “No!” to the Purchase Bill, but did not prevent him from starting from the Piraeus the next day to throw himself “on the track” of his leader and colleagues while carrying out the National Convention’s behests; and which now again left him unabated vigour so long as he was appealing to the country against the plans of the National Directory by every species of suggestion that they were being swindled, if not actually betrayed by their

leaders, but smote him with a sudden infirmity that compelled him to quit the country as soon as he was summoned to put in practice his own boasted readiness to bring "the old fighting policy" to the rescue of a defenceless tenantry. If the truth was that he was terrified when brought face to face with the consequences of his own work, honour as well as constitutional precedent might well have prompted a less honourable man to make reparation by enabling the country to go back to the defensive armour for which he was unable to offer any substitute. He unhappily took no step to save the edifice that was crumbling about his ears, beyond quitting the scene himself without a word. In all the 300,000 sales that took place under the Act of 1903, in not a single instance did he stand at the tenant-purchaser's back with practical advice in the critical hour of negotiation. The six months while he remained abroad were those in which the prices of land were to be decided for good or ill, and it needed no prophet to foresee that, abandoned as the tenants were to their own devices to bargain as they best could in isolated groups, prices would harden before he returned into a standard which has never been lowered—prices at least 2 years' purchase higher than those which we had laid our plans to stand out for with all the might of a universal tenants' Trade Union. And, by an odd freak of self-deception, when Mr. Dillon came back it was in fulminating tones to charge against the Purchase Act the "inflated prices" which were wholly due to the unlucky campaign of his confederates and himself to rout the tenantry from the defences we had prepared for them and then leave them leaderless and shelterless to bear the brunt.

Mr. Sexton, indeed, remained. The *Freeman* continued daily to pour forth its actuarial discoveries to prove how simple a matter it was to purchase at $17\frac{1}{2}$ years' purchase of second term rents and $13\frac{1}{2}$ of the remainder, regardless of Mr. Redmond's immortal colloquy with the Wicklow farmer who bragged that he could have purchased on equally sumptuous terms under the old Ashbourne Act—"Then, why didn't you?" "Oh! because the landlord would not sell." Numbers of half-instructed or half-witted people got

their heads stuffed with scraps and tail-pieces of the *Freeman's* financial calculations until the bothered country resounded with the learned abracadabra. The moment those conjuror's figures were put to the practical proof, it was promptly demonstrated how poor a figure the theoretical financial expert cuts in the business of real life compared with the rough common sense of the working Irish farmer. The vast King-Harman estates in the county of Roscommon were offered for sale. It naturally occurred to the tenants to appeal to Mr. Sexton to come down and argue out in the rent-office for the enlightenment of the agent the beautiful theories so convincingly set forth in the editorial columns of the *Freeman*. Here, surely, was not only a glorious chance of vindicating the *Freeman*, but an imperious duty for one who had done more than any other man to ruin the more moderate schemes of the constituted national authorities. Alack the day! Mr. Sexton declined to quit his Dublin arm-chair for the more rough and tumble arena of the Roscommon rent-office. He modestly declined the invitation to lead the King-Harman tenantry on to glory on the actual tented field, and contented himself with writing a handsome letter of apology and reiterating the views of the *Freeman* on high finance. Needless to describe the regenerative effect of Mr. Sexton's letter on the Roscommon land-agent. The King-Harman tenants made about as bad a bargain as a deserted and shepherdless body of rustics could make—an average of $24\frac{1}{2}$ years' purchase—from 2 to nearly 6 years' purchase more than the plans of the Directory supported on the spot by responsible leaders and by an unbreakable organization in every surrounding parish must have won for them—and thus gave as evil a lead for Connaught as the Duke of Leinster's estate had already given for Leinster.¹

¹ Here is the *Freeman's* own version of the results of its teaching on the King-Harman estate (September 17, 1904): "The King-Harman estate has, after extensive negotiations, been disposed of to the tenantry, the purchase-money involving over half a million sterling. The average abatement is 21.4 per cent, which represents an average price of $24\frac{1}{4}$ years' purchase, or, with the bonus added, $27\frac{3}{4}$ years' purchase." In benighted Cork, which dispensed with Mr. Sexton's financial advice, the average on £8,000,000 of purchases has been an abatement of 30.7 to 32.10, or, in round numbers, 10 per cent better than Roscommon, and 21.3 to 20.7 years' purchase, or, roundly, all but 4 years' purchase lower than the much poorer district of Roscommon.

Having thus proved to all experienced eyes the impracticability of its own darling theory of land purchase, the *Freeman* threw all its energies into the work of dissuading the tenantry from land purchase altogether and instigating them instead to flock into the Fair Rent Courts to have their judicial rents fixed. The dangers of a purchase annuity for $68\frac{1}{2}$ years were painted in terrifying colours as contrasted with the easy plan of having the rents sliced away in the Land Courts every fifteen years for the second and the third terms until nothing but prairie value was left. All that the Land League and the United Irish League had been preaching for a quarter of a century as to the magical effect of ownership—all our indignant denunciations with which Parliament and the country never ceased to ring against the uncertainty, misery, and fatal effects as against any agricultural progress of the system of interminable rent-fixing by Commissioners who were three-fourths landlord nominees—were forgotten; and a foreigner reading the *Freeman* would ask in some bewilderment had the Irish people suddenly retracted all they had been shouting to the heavens for a generation past as to the iniquities of landlordism and the rent-fixing system and the priceless advantages of occupying ownership as the only remedy. How unnecessary, as well as mischievous, was the suggested rush into the rent-fixing courts may be understood from the fact that “the fair equivalent” of the Land Conference Report would undisputedly have entitled first term and non-judicial tenants to claim an additional 22 per cent reduction in their bargains, which was a considerably higher figure than most of those who entered the rent-fixing courts on the *Freeman's* advice gained by a lawsuit which did not bring them an inch nearer to ownership. By what an universal instinct the unprompted practical sense of the country rejected the *Freeman's* advice is evident enough from the fact that within a few years not far from 300,000 of the Irish tenants gladly availed themselves of the Purchase Act against which Mr. Sexton had turned all his guns of actuarial erudition and evil prophecy. The woful thing is that, in their disorganized condition, they made their bargains under the worst instead of under the best con-

ditions, and that a sufficient number of applicants were tempted into the rent-fixing courts to give employment to a fresh battalion of sub-Commissioners and valuers, thus putting an end to all hope of the economies of £250,000 a year with which Mr. Wyndham had calculated on being able to finance land purchase and raising the expenses of the Irish Land Commission from £147,338 in 1902-3 to £407,000 in 1909.

All effort at testing the Purchase Act in a systematic way was thus given over—not, as in the case of Parnell's plans for testing the Act of 1881, by reason of the violence of a Coercion Government; but through the infatuation of three or four leading Irishmen themselves. They proceeded next to a campaign for the removal of Mr. Wyndham and Sir Antony MacDonnell from the Irish administration as a corollary of their fanatical thesis that all the calamities of Ireland were due to the Act, and not to their own misuse of it—to its authors and not to its wreckers. As they were themselves the first to be frightened by the success of their "determined campaign" for the destruction of the Directory's projects, so they will be found equally uneasy after their triumph in driving Mr. Wyndham and Sir Antony MacDonnell out of the country, and nervously anxious to shift the credit over to the little knot of Ulster Orange members who were their allies in the enterprise.

After Mr. Wyndham's resignation, Mr. T. P. O'Connor, to the astoundment of all who had been watching the strategy of his friends and himself for the previous twelve months, published in his paper, under the heading, "The Passing of George Wyndham," the following appreciation of that event:

The resignation of the Chief Secretaryship of Ireland by Mr. George Wyndham is something more than a mere parliamentary incident; it would not be much of an exaggeration to say that it was even something of a parliamentary tragedy. Here is a man with extraordinary parliamentary gifts, holding, perhaps, the office which, above all others, he would have liked to have held; marking his tenure of it by one of the most gigantic pieces of legislation ever achieved; bringing, moreover, to his work inspiration, the burning ardour of an enthusiast and apostle, and because of the hostility of a few nameless and infinitesimal enemies distinguished

by nothing but narrowness of religious and habitual bigotry, compelled to abandon his work in office at the moment when perhaps he might be still of great service to Ireland and to his party.— (*M.A.P.*, March 17, 1905.)

Mr. O'Connor's words constitute so crushing a rebuke of every reference made to Mr. Wyndham in the columns of the *Freeman* or from the Irish Benches of the House of Commons throughout the whole previous year that they might well be taken for a pretty piece of ironic fooling, only that we shall find at every stage of the new career of the anti-Conciliationists the same contradiction between their words and their deeds—the same political profligacy in holding up to execration in Ireland as a colossal swindle and as an instrument of national bankruptcy the Act which, when it succeeded in spite of them, was used to obtain the subscriptions of Australia and the United States as “one of the most gigantic pieces of legislation ever conceived.” We shall see them later on weeping indignant tears over the treatment of Sir Antony MacDonnell for whom, so long as he remained a power in Ireland, they had no better description than “the domineering Indian satrap,” or, again, “the man—half policeman and half Civil Servant, who was the worst enemy that ever came to Ireland”—both of these flowery compliments being addressed by Mr. Dillon and by another M.P. of the name of Scanlan to the eminent Irishman who gave up the glittering offer of the Governorship of Bombay in order to fight the beasts of anti-Irishism in their dingy lairs in Dublin Castle. No later than while these pages are being written, Mr. O'Connor has been despatched to the United States to make an appeal for funds on the express ground that “the tide had turned in Ireland and we have 200,000 people who were once paupers and slaves but who are now comparatively comfortable, thanks to the Land Act”¹—the Land Act thus handsomely complimented being that which Mr. Dillon and the *Freeman* have spent the last seven years in inveighing against as a heartless landlord swindle and the harbinger of national insolvency.

The reference to “narrow religious bigotry” was doubtless intended to earmark the Orange Ulster Party as the

¹ *Times*, October 13, 1909.

authors of Mr. Wyndham's downfall. Theirs was in truth a very subsidiary, however willing part in the good work. From the date of my retirement, and throughout the whole succeeding session, the only coherent policy of any kind pursued by the Irish Party was one of warring upon Mr. Wyndham, discrediting him in the eyes of not too sympathetic colleagues in the Cabinet, prophesying the failure of his Act, and even darkly hinting at the repudiation of their annuities by the new purchasers. The columns of the *Freeman* will be searched in vain for a single reference to him that was not one of insult and ill-will towards the "burning enthusiast and apostle" whom "the hostility of a few nameless enemies . . . compelled to abandon his work in office when perhaps he might still be of great service to Ireland and to his party." Had Mr. O'Connor uttered his glowing eulogium from the Irish Benches in the session of 1904, instead of by way of funeral oration after Cock Robin had been killed, startling, indeed, would have been the surprise and perhaps not altogether speechless the indignation of his Dillonite confederates. Before the session opened at all, Mr. Redmond had already so far progressed in the school of his new advisers as to pass the word of command in a speech to his own constituents in Waterford on January 5, 1904, by the following declaration—an extraordinary and not very creditable declaration when we remember that he was the recipient of the letter the reader has already perused (p. 258) from Mr. Dillon apprising him that "the Castle people" had made up their minds to devote the next session to a University Bill and were eagerly endeavouring to organize a conference on the subject :

For my part I have no hesitation in answering, and I hope my answer will reach the Government of Ireland, that those who attempt to shelve this (University) question next session must make up their minds to be struck at as quickly and as strongly as we can, and to be quite candid with you, I think the time is not far distant when we will be able to get a fairly effective blow in.

When Parliament met he was as good as his word. In the debate on the Address (with the reason for the failure of the Government's attempt to settle the University question still

fresh in his memory) he delivered this somewhat savage attack :

All their promises, pledges, and assurances are false as dicers' oaths. But they want to remain in office for the rest of this Session, and no doubt they hope that these mysterious negotiations, about which we have heard a great deal for some months past, and these private assurances were simply intended for the purpose of inducing the Irish members to refrain from attack. More than that, I fancy when the General Election comes, the Government would very much like to have these pledges about a Catholic University in the air, so that they might successfully attempt to wheedle and humbug Irish voters in Great Britain to vote for their candidates. Let me tell the Government perfectly plainly that their game is too transparent. It has been played too often and it will fail this time. The Irish people are saying of the Government of the day—"Be those juggling fiends no more believed. They palter with us in the double sense, keeping the word of promise to our ear and breaking it to our hope."

At the National Convention on April 21, 1904, he made another historic pronouncement against the Chief Secretary, who had given us the Purchase Act and had only been baffled by Mr. Dillon in his attempt to bring about an equally broad national settlement of the University question, and who, as it turned out, was about this very time talking around Home Rule with Lord Dunraven and Sir Antony MacDonnell :

The Unionist Government and the Unionist Party are in a condemned cell, waiting in fear and trembling for the execution of the sentence which has already been pronounced upon them, and in all human probability it is reserved for the representatives of Ireland to give the final blow which will end their existence.

From words he proceeded to blows, and on March 15, 1904, by a snap vote on an Irish estimate, and with the aid of the worst of the Orange obscurantists in the voting lobby, succeeded in influencing a defeat on Mr. Wyndham in his "condemned cell" by a majority of 141 to 130.

Efforts have been made to search out some *ex post facto* apology for madly turning to stone the man whose path had been "roses, roses, all the way" of the Irish debates the previous session ; but these pretexts are unsustainable and can only recoil upon those who fabricate them. It has been alleged that Mr. Wyndham played us false as to the

University question and as to the Labourers' question. In a conversation in Committee on the Purchase Bill, Mr. Wyndham had made me a promise, in lieu of the insignificant Labourers' clauses of that Bill, to introduce a Labourers' Bill all to themselves in the following session. He had also pledged himself to bring in a University Bill. His pledges were, of course, founded upon the assumption that the carriage of those Bills would be made easy for him by a continuance—and even, he had a right to anticipate, the intensification—of that spirit of goodwill and higher national unity among Irish classes and sects which alone had made it possible for him to carry "one of the most gigantic pieces of legislation ever conceived." That he intended to be as good as his word, and that Mr. Dillon and his friends knew it, is placed beyond any possibility of dispute by the terms of a letter from Mr. Dillon himself, which I have quoted in public repeatedly and which no attempt has ever been made to explain away. In this letter, which is dated on the eve of his first speech in Swinford and, consequently, before any of the mischief which overthrew the Chief Secretary's projects and overthrew himself had been perpetrated, Mr. Dillon writes (October 2, 1909):

I know nothing of what is going on behind the scenes except what I heard from Shawe-Taylor, who called here last week. He told me that the Castle people had sent for him and urged him to go on with his Conference project and hold the Conference as soon as possible, as the Government were determined to introduce a University Bill next session, and wished an agreement adopted by a Conference to aid him [? them] in drafting the Bill.

With that official information clearly in his mind, Mr. Dillon did not hesitate to go down to Swinford to anathematize as a fraud and a treason to the National Cause, that common action and good-fellowship among Irishmen on which Mr. Wyndham relied to conquer the sectarian prejudices against a University settlement. It is common knowledge that the Irish Government strove strenuously to bring about a University Conference (in which they took care this time to invite Mr. Dillon himself to participate) on the same lines which prospered in the case of the infinitely more entangled land problem, and

that a high personage, than whom there could only be one higher, armed one who went to the north to forward the project with letters of earnest recommendation to the principal authorities on the Protestant Episcopal Bench and in the Orange Order. This being the state of facts, history will perhaps conclude that the Chief Secretary's failure to introduce a University Bill, in face of the fact that the next session found the representatives of Ireland up in arms against the policy of conciliation and against himself, was not of a degree of "criminality" sufficient to consign him to "a condemned cell."

Another popular excuse sought to be found for the Wyndham-hunt which was now the Irish Party's business in life was that he was the author of the Code of Regulations issued to the Estates Commissioners in the name of the Lord-Lieutenant, bedevilling the Evicted Tenants Clauses of the Purchase Act, by directing the Estates Commissioners not to restore any evicted tenants except on such estates as were offered for sale; and I have heard the most ferocious attacks directed against him on that assumption. The assumption, however, turned out to be almost as gross an injustice as the reproaches for the University failure. I heard Mr. Wyndham challenging his silenced accusers in the House of Commons to produce any evidence that he had ever in word or deed unsaid his promises on the Evicted Tenants question. It was discovered that the regulations in question were dated "July 8, 1905," after Mr. Wyndham had been driven from office, and were the work of Mr. Walter Long, whom the attacks and votes of the anti-Conciliationists had succeeded in putting in his place. It is quite true that in this matter, as in his subsequent disavowal of Sir Antony MacDonnell, the Chief Secretary displayed no very Spartan spirit in resisting his law officers who hated his Act and his entire Irish policy as cordially as the *Freeman* itself; but meseems they are not altogether exempt from blame who, in place of fortifying him against his evil advisers by a sympathetic appreciation of his "gigantic work," bent all their energies to proving themselves to be more implacable enemies than even the Castle law officers.

It is no less true, of course, that the Orange group in

Parliament seized with avidity the opportunity which the attacks on Mr. Wyndham and Sir Antony MacDonnell from the Irish Benches gave them to reassert their own flickering existence by still more envenomed attacks upon what their subsequent leader, Mr. Moore, K.C., called "the cowardly, rotten, and sickening policy of conciliation."¹ They were but acting after their kind in making war upon a policy which had already been the means of creating an Independent Orange Order in their very citadel in Belfast, who took the credo "Irishmen first of all!" for their motto, and had found one of their leaders in the only genuinely representative Orangeman in the House of Commons, Mr. Thomas Sloane. They applauded every Nationalist quip and jibe at the Chief Secretary, joined them in the same division lobby, and in common blocked and defeated a Bill for making economies in the Irish establishment which would have gone to the financing of land purchase. But never was there a more flagrant imposture palmed off on human credulity than the pretence that it was the bigots of the Ulster Orange Party who drove Mr. Wyndham and Sir Antony MacDonnell out of Ireland. Mr. T. P. O'Connor's virtuous protestations on the subject in *M.A.P.* are worth little more than the "Thou canst not say I did it!" of Macbeth when confronted with the gory locks of his victim. The Ulster bigots, if abandoned to themselves, would have been as inconsiderable a factor, either in the House of Commons or in Ireland, as they had been in the previous session against the new spirit of national unity. Whether the fact will bring them credit or discredit in the eyes of history, it was the Nationalists themselves beyond all doubt who overthrew Mr. Wyndham and his policy and put Mr. Walter Long and the Coercion Act in his place.

There was one thing I had wholly failed to foresee, and that was the passionate obstinacy with which the people of

¹ That Mr. Moore was, however, acute enough to see that the interest of the Irish Party was very different from his own may be judged from a remark he blurted out in the debate on Mr. Wyndham's resignation that "his friends and himself had always marvelled at the fatuity of the Irish Party in throwing over the member for the city of Cork at a moment when he had all the cards in his hand."

Cork clung to their representative. Within a week after my letter, I had received the Chancellor's appointment to the Chiltern Hundreds, and it did not for a moment cross my thoughts that the first natural shock to my constituents would not, as in the rest of the country, after a short while die away in obedience to my own notorious wishes. What followed was a surprise unique, I think, in the dealings of a great constituency with its member of Parliament in all constitutional history. The first excitement did eventually subside into a perhaps no less significant silence; but the people of Cork sternly forbade the writ for a new election to be moved, and the new Cabinet of the Irish Party had, at least, the wisdom not to disobey. With some intermission for the three or four following years a vast commercial and agricultural community of over 100,000 people with the largest electorate in Ireland, of set purpose disfranchized itself rather than accept any other representative, in spite of that representative's own constant remonstrances and deep distress. The phenomenon is all the more creditable for human nature that, while it would be hypocrisy to forget the magnitude of the blessings the Land Purchase Act had brought to the rest of the country, it had never been my good fortune to do anything deserving of the local gratitude of Cork city, which had, indeed, considerably suffered by the quarter of a century's agrarian war we had been obliged to wage for the extirpation of landlordism. Even my personal associations with the place, dear as they were to me, had only been those of a stripling on a local newspaper, and of a not very potent young revolutionist working in the shade and under a perpetually-impending sentence of penal servitude.

That, whatever be the mystic explanation, there was an inexpressibly thrilling personal bond in the connection, is deliciously certain for me; but it would be nonsense to pretend that that sentiment alone would have proved sufficiently strong year after year to resist, as it might well have seemed, the rational self-interest of a great industrial community, were it not that the intellectual convictions and highest patriotic instincts, as well as the imagination of the people of Cork were captured once for all by the policy of national

reconciliation. The fact is one of a very rare interest, indeed, to British statesmen if they would only measure it, that in the only part of Ireland (as will be seen) where the people were placed in a position fully to understand that policy and the methods of its adversaries, practically the entire community has stood fast by the treaty of 1903, through storm or shine, with a starlike constancy that no pressure of selfish suggestions, misrepresentations or contumely has been able to shake.

For, if the anti-Conciliationists could succeed in wiping Cork off the map of Nationalist Ireland, it would be indeed a drab and forlorn tract of country that would be left. The city and county of Cork (for every part of that enormous tract of country, from the Galtee Mountains to Bantry Bay, was at one with its capital, throughout the conflict, save four or five parishes where the *amour propre* of some influential local priest was at stake) embraces one-ninth of the area of the whole island and more than one-eighth of the entire Nationalist population. Moreover, when it comes to be a question of national orthodoxy, it must not be forgotten that Cork has occupied a position of unquestioned pre-eminence in every great national struggle, revolutionary or constitutional, in every sphere of sacrifice, whether of brain, or of person, or of purse. She contributed the Emmets, and the Shearshes, and Arthur O'Connor and Thomas Russell to the list of the leaders of the United Irishmen; Thomas Davis and Denny Lane and Joseph Brennan and Michael Joseph Barry and Justin M'Carthy to the romantic ranks of the Young Irelanders; two out of the three heroic Fenians who died on the Manchester scaffold, and the one historic figure of the Fenian rising of 1867, Peter O'Neill Crowley, together with perhaps five-sixths of the men who "were out" on that wild but history-making enterprise. In the later constitutional movement Cork supplied far the most numerous and not the least efficient contingent to Parnell's Parliamentary army¹ as well as of the fighting men and Coercion victims of the Plan of

¹ It was the profusion of Cork members in the Irish Party that gave point to the late Colonel Saunderson's witty bantering of Cork as "a city renowned for the manufacture of butter and members of Parliament."

Campaign cycle, and in moneys numbered contributed an annual subscription not far from double the sum now contributed by the entire country to the Irish Party in its career of anti-Conciliation. Ireland's two greatest leaders, O'Connell and Parnell, both went to Cork for the constituency of their choice.

In the higher realms of genius and art, the fame of Cork was no less resplendent. A city and county which gave to Ireland the greatest statesman and the greatest wit of their century, as well as two of the greatest orators of any century, Burke and Curran—which even in the darkest winter of the Penal Laws of Queen Anne kept a nest of Gaelic singing-birds who sang the lifting-up of day in a literature which is still the principal treasure of the Gaelic Revivalists—which in happier hours in every field of intellect and imagination filled the earth with the repute of her bright children—men of letters numerous enough to light up a starry heaven—"Father Prout," *Fraser's* Maginn, Crofton Croker, Thomas Davis, Daniel Owen Madden, Sheridan Knowles, Dr. Anster, J. J. Callanan, Rev. Arthur O'Leary (whom Thackeray used to pronounce the best writer of English of his generation), A. M. Sullivan, and a hundred more whose dynasty still survives in the Justin M'Carthy's, Edward Dowdens, Canon Sheehans and T. D. Sullivans and Standish O'Gradys—painters like Maclise and Dr. Johnson's friend, James Barry, and Hartland, and Sir Thomas Deane and "Thaddeus"—soldiers of England, of France, and of America, like the Generals Church, and O'Connor, and Corbet and Patrick Cleburn and D. F. Burke, and Colonel Rick Burke—administrators known from the bazaars of Hindostan to the South African veldt, the Sir John Pope Hennessys, the Sir Thomas Upingtons, the Sir John Maddens, the Sir Francis O'Callaghans, the Goold Adamases—divines of the great governing minds of the Catholic Archbishop Croke and the Protestant Archbishop Magee—women of the noblest order of mind like the illustrious philanthropist Nano Nagle and Mrs. Aikenhead (the Foundress of the Sisters of Charity) and "Mary" of the *Nation*, sweet as the warble of a redbreast on a morning of battle—judges like Lord Chancellor Nagle, Lord

Chancellor Sullivan, Barry Yelverton, Lord Justice Mathew, Lord Justice Collins, and Sir William Johnson—doctors of medicine and of science like Sir Richard Quain, Dr. W. K. Sullivan, Sir Robert Ball, Dr. H. Macnaughton Jones, and Sir Robert Southwell and Dr. B. C. Windle, the President of University College,—a community with so many proud quarterings as these may, perhaps, be pardoned for a certain comfortable consciousness that their brain-power stands as little in need of defence as their patriotism.

Cork was the only place in Ireland that wrung from Thackeray, midst all the contempt and insolence towards Ireland of his "Irish Sketch Book," a cry of admiration for the literary graces of the people of Cork as well as for its exquisite natural surroundings. *Firenze la Bella* herself is scarcely more fair in her girdle of hills in every classic pose, festooned with vines and olives, than the softly-swelling, sunny heights of Glanmire and Sundays Well, which smile down upon "The Beautiful Citie" of Spencer's love in its pleasure grounds of live-green river meadows, and fairy woodlands. Cork skies, if they are less dazzling, are more tender and rain down no thunderbolts, and the melting vowel-sounds of Tuscany are hardly more bewitching than the caressing accents her people have caught from (or imparted to) "the Blarney Stone."¹ The wise Imperial statesman who should realize that a population of such extent and with such traditions of unshakable nationality has been won over to a no less unshakable determination to be reconciled not only with the disbanded "English Garrison" in Ireland, but with long-sinning England herself, would have good cause to improve upon the cry of the royal father on Harry Monmouth's first revelation of his true self and say: "Four hundred thousand rebels die in this!"

The session of 1904 was in its last days when a Parliamentary free-lance² played his colleagues the trick of moving the writ for a new election for the city of Cork, without the

¹ I once asked an ironclad Unionist in the House of Commons, who told me he had just been to the last Cork Exhibition, how he liked his visit. His reply was: "Oh! there was one exhibit worth all the rest put together—the people. We've all come back in love with them. Get an Englishman to meet a Cork crowd and he'll give you anything." I told him he had manifestly been kissing the Blarney Stone himself.

² Mr. Jasper Tully.

knowledge of the people, or of the Irish Party, or, needless to say, of myself. I only awaited the first communication of any kind from Cork to forbid the use of my name in connection with the vacancy. The Corkmen were so little to be deceived on this head that nobody wrote me even a word, lest I should have the smallest excuse for interfering. I was nominated and re-elected, without apparently anybody of any section in Cork thinking it could be otherwise. Here was a dilemma out of which it took me several months to grope my way. I had long ago exhausted the power of entreaty in begging the people of Cork to elect somebody in harmony with the now dominant authorities in the party, so that there might remain no shadow of excuse for pretending that any counter-projects of theirs met any obstruction anywhere in Nationalist Ireland. Like Suwarrov at a famous siege: "They made no answer—but they held the city." I now pointed out that, to re-enter the party myself, while it was engaged in reversing the policy the party and I stood pledged to would be an act of personal baseness not to be thought of, unless I re-entered it in order to give battle to its new rulers at the secret meetings of the party, and this my experience of ten years' cancerous inward troubles in the bosom of the party made it impossible for me to contemplate. The answer was that the people of Cork did not want me to rejoin the party. But an individual, without any party or popular organization, would be powerless to effect anything, while laying himself open all the same to the odious imputation of dissension; and to form a separate party with its separate organization in the country, although it would be the easiest of tasks at the time, would be to produce that very schism to spare the country from which I withdrew, even when the Irish Party and the United Irish League in almost unbroken bulk were on my side.

"Yes, but," it was rejoined, "you withdrew in order to give a fair field for a counter-policy, and, now that all but twelve months have elapsed, where is the counter-policy, or where are the counter-politicians? Both the one and the other have vanished. The tenants have been left to make their bargains helter-skelter, group by group, without any settled plan and without a scrap of practical guidance from

their leaders as to how the *Freeman's* castles in the air were to be realized, or 'the old fighting policy' proclaimed at Swinford reduced to practice. Is the disorganization in the working of the Purchase Act to be allowed to go from bad to worse? You have only to get the country to understand the principles and plans which were frustrated at Swinford, and it is not yet too late to induce the party and the League to go back to them with joy, since they are at present so many men blindfolded stumbling along in the dark."

I agreed that time was already proving a sharp remedy, but that a much more prolonged experience of the existing chaos would be necessary, if the counter-politicians were to have a sufficiently humbled sense of their own unlucky performances wrought into them to relinquish their present grip of the machinery of the party and League without a bitter struggle. "They are silent enough now," was my constant argument, "but the moment I reappear upon the scene mark how they will fasten upon anything I do or say as giving them what they of all else want, a programme—the programme of fighting me upon some detestable pretence of dissension; and inasmuch as they alone have the ear of the people of three of the four provinces through the Press, Heaven only knows upon what false scent they may lead off the unfortunate country. There are only two effectual alternatives:—time, and that a long time; or to fight them with their own weapons; and the latter—call me by what chicken-hearted name you may—I will not do."

"Well," the ultimate argument came to be, "do anything you please, or do nothing; but don't desert us in Cork." And that argument, I do not shame to say, there was no resisting. A hundred times over as in the glow of my own peaceful fireside I shuddered over the slough of squalid contests, jealousies, and injustices that only too certainly lay before me in returning to the arena under hopelessly unequal conditions and against my own clear judgment, Virgil's question to the Divine Poet rang dolefully in my ears: *Mà tu, perchè ritorni a tanta noia?*—"But thou, why leave the Delectable Mountains to return to such a pit?" But that the duty was a self-denying one made it seem all the more a duty. The truth is that in the case of Cork there were

reasons above all reasoning. They were of the sort more usually associated with a mother or a winsome maiden than with a body of stolid electors. The call of Frank Mahony's haunting lines :

On this I ponder,
Where'er I wander,
And still grow fonder,
Sweet Cork, of thee,
With thy Bells of Shandon,
Which sound so grand on
The pleasant waters of the River Lee !

was as irresistible as was the sound of Bow Bells to Dick Whittington—without any promise of a Lord Mayoralty in the background to disetherealize the spell.

Whatever doubt remained was dispelled by an event which seemed to augur that the political foresight of the people of Cork might prove as faultless as their fidelity. My re-election for Cork took place on August 19—on August 25 the Landlords Land Conference Committee, numbering some three hundred of the foremost of the Irish nobles and country gentlemen, met in Dublin and resolved themselves into a new association under Lord Dunraven's leadership, the Irish Reform Association. On August 31 was published the first manifesto of the new association, proclaiming "a policy of conciliation, of goodwill, and of reform," by means of "a union of all moderate and progressive opinion irrespective of creed or class animosities," with the object of "the devolution to Ireland of a large measure of self-government" without disturbing the Parliamentary union between Great Britain and Ireland. Three days afterwards there was cabled from America, where Mr. Redmond was then lecturing, the following comment upon the manifesto of the Irish Reform Association from the Irish leader :

The announcement is of the utmost importance. It is simply a declaration for Home Rule and is quite a wonderful thing. With these men with us, Home Rule may come at any moment.

I had heard nothing of the Irish Reform Association except what I read in the papers ; but it subsequently leaked out that the idea had been talked over three months before between Mr. Wyndham, Lord Dunraven, and Sir

Antony MacDonnell and abandoned as impracticable at the moment, and it was not too much to assume that the first public announcement of the Association was timed so soon after the Cork election, because that event had opened up the prospect of a fair and sympathetic national hearing for the project of self-government now for the first time foreshadowed by a body of Unionist Irishmen. Nor did it seem rash to interpret Mr. Redmond's glad message from America as a sign that the Cork election had encouraged him also to hope that an opportunity had arisen for reasserting his own genuine convictions which he had been obliged to lay aside during the previous twelve months. There being no rival policy of any kind in the field to be combated, it did seem as if a door had providentially opened for a vast movement towards national unity in the widest sense, under whose inspiration the mistakes or misunderstandings of the previous year, on this side or on that, would be forgotten. If the three or four Irishmen, whose quarrel with the Purchase Act had for good or ill been fought out, would only hearken even now to the advice of him whom they had come to proclaim on all occasions to be "our trusted leader," it did really look as if the generous daring of the people of Cork would prove to be wiser than all my political calculations.

CHAPTER XVI

“DEVOLUTION”

IN a debate in the House of Lords on February 17, 1905, the Earl of Dunraven explained with precision the genesis of the Devolution movement. The idea originated in the Land Conference days among some Irish noblemen and country gentlemen, who felt that, the land troubles once composed, there would be no reason for their refusing any longer to join their fellow-countrymen in obtaining the control of their own affairs. But Lord Dunraven at once saw the sinister construction that would be placed on any mention of the matter at such a time, and no more was heard of it. How truly he had diagnosed that disease of suspiciousness which afflicts the Irish majority and minority alike may be judged from the fact that one of the first imputations suggested by the Attorney-General (now Lord Atkinson) against the Devolution scheme, when it was published eighteen months afterwards, was: “Whether the Devolution scheme is not the price secretly arranged to be paid for Nationalist acquiescence in the settlement of the Land question on generous terms?” As a matter of fact no suggestion, however remote, of any Devolution scheme was made from either side at the Land Conference.

In May 1905, when the Land Purchase Act was already in full progress, the subject was renewed “in many conversations” between Mr. Wyndham, Sir Antony MacDonnell, and Lord Dunraven—the subject of “the co-ordination of the Castle Boards,” and consequently of some co-ordinating Irish authority having been, it will be remembered, one of the reforms to effect which Mr. Wyndham solicited Sir Antony



Photo. Lafayette, Dublin.

COLONEL W. HUTCHESON POË, C.B.



MacDonnell to give up the governorship of Bombay and come over to Ireland "rather as a colleague than as a subordinate." A suggestion was at that time made "that Sir Antony MacDonnell should invite some gentlemen to meet me who might be useful to me in forming the nucleus of a Moderate Party." But objections were made that on the one hand "the business would speedily become known and it would be said that Lord Dunraven was forming a new Irish Party," and on the other hand that "it would be said that Mr. Wyndham was the prime mover in the matter." Besides, the Irish Party was by this time actively engaged in the House of Commons in executing sentence on Mr. Wyndham as "the prisoner in the condemned cell," and there was no longer any power in Ireland to ensure a hearing for counsels of conciliation.

The idea of giving practical shape to the movement was abandoned, and the subject does not seem to have been mentioned again until the Cork election in August revived all the hopes for Ireland that had been dashed in the previous winter. Ten days afterwards there was published, as we have seen, the first public announcement of the formation and objects of the Irish Reform Association. The following are the essential passages of the document :

Believing as we do that the prosperity of the people of Ireland, the development of the resources of the country, and the satisfactory settlement of the land and other questions, depend upon the pursuance of a policy of conciliation and goodwill and of reform, we desire to do everything in our power to promote a union of all moderate and progressive opinion irrespective of creed or class animosities, from whatever source arising. . . .

While firmly maintaining that the Parliamentary union between Great Britain and Ireland is essential to the political stability of the Empire and to the prosperity of the two islands, we believe that such union is compatible with the devolution to Ireland of a larger measure of self-government than she now possesses. We consider that this devolution, while avoiding matters of Imperial concern, and subjects of common interest to the kingdom as a whole, would be beneficial to Ireland and would relieve the Imperial Parliament of a mass of business with which it cannot now deal satisfactorily. In particular, we consider the present system of financial administration to be wasteful and inappropriate to the needs of the country. . . .

We believe that a remedy for the present unsatisfactory system

can be found in such a decentralisation or localisation of Irish finance as will secure to its administration the application of local knowledge, interest and ability without in any way sacrificing the ultimate control over the estimates, at present possessed by the Imperial Parliament. All moneys derived from administrative reform, together with whatever portion of the general revenue is allocated to Irish purposes, should be administered subject to the above conditions.

And the manifesto proceeded to enumerate various questions of national reforms "for whose solution we earnestly invite the co-operation of all Irishmen who have the highest interests of their country at heart."

The document, as was at once recognized by the enemies of Home Rule, embodies in substance, although in words of moderation suited to the least venturesome of Irish Unionists, the main principle contended for by Ireland during the whole Parnellite movement, namely, the control of purely Irish affairs by an Irish assembly, subject to the supremacy of the Imperial Parliament. Nothing that happened subsequently can lessen the historic significance of the fact that this manifesto remained for no less than a month before the public without a word of disavowal or of disapprobation from an Irish Government whose Lord-Lieutenant, Chief Secretary, and Under Secretary had been engaged in "many conversations" with its framers. Nor will time do anything but strengthen the suspicion that the disavowal would never have come if the manifesto had met with a happier reception in Ireland, and if it had not been followed up by a second pronouncement from the Irish Reform Association, published on September 26, in which its authors, quitting the ground of general principles, pinned themselves in detail to a highly cumbersome and somewhat fantastic scheme, part elective and part nominative, for the future government of Ireland.

Lord Dunraven tells us that the second publication was made against his own judgment, and for reasons which remain unexplained. Parnell had taken care never to weaken the national demand for self-government by the dispersive force of details. The Association's first programme was abundantly explicit as the initiation of a movement whose object it was to obtain the widest measure of assent for a great principle by challenging controversy as little as possible on minor

particulars. However, in the elaboration of the second scheme, Sir Antony MacDonnell appears to have played a principal part, as was, indeed, evident enough from the nature of its proposals, which bore the impress of a strong mind better habituated to a bureaucratic mechanism which there is nobody to gainsay than to the exigencies of a country where the bold doctrines and fretful criticisms of democracy have made so much progress as in Ireland. He paid Lord Dunraven a visit of two days on his romantic little island of Garinish in Kenmare Bay, in order to work out the details, and gave the small wits further food for gossip by undertaking to have typewritten copies of the scheme confidentially made¹ for distribution among the Committee of the Reform Association. Still further to set the teeth on edge of the mystery-mongers, he only left Lord Dunraven to pay another visit to the Marquis of Lansdowne at his beautiful summer seat of Derreen, a few miles away on the same bay.

It does no violence to history to assume that the conversations of the two men of state, in the leisure of a lonely country-house—one of them the Unionist leader in the House of Lords—were not wholly free from allusions to the two days' deliberations on the future government of Ireland, which had been taking place, scarcely a cannon-shot away, in Garinish. Indeed, Lord Lansdowne's own avowals on the subject were frank and manly. He pointedly "declined to follow Lord Rathmore in the trenchant vituperation Lord Dunraven's scheme had encountered."² He expressly "admitted that Sir Antony MacDonnell had been in the habit of conferring with Lord Dunraven on many occasions with the full knowledge and approval of the Chief Secretary," and had collaborated with him "in working out proposals for an improved scheme of local government for Ireland." And Lord Lansdowne was so far from repudiating Sir Antony MacDonnell's authority to meddle with these high matters, that he avowed that he had himself pressed him to give up the glittering prize of the governorship of Bombay in order to work for Ireland; that it was understood between Mr.

¹ By his staff in Dublin Castle, some of whom, with the characteristic loyalty of England's servants in Ireland to their chiefs, immediately carried the tidings to the publicists and politicians who were demanding Sir Antony's head on a charger.

² House of Lords. Hansard's Debates, 17th February 1905.

Wyndham and himself, when he consented to accept the office, that a man of his antecedents was to have freedom of action and opportunities of initiative on the great subjects to which their joint efforts were to be addressed; and that "one of those subjects" was "the co-ordination of the many detached and semi-detached boards—the old-fashioned and complicated organization—into which the Government of Ireland is at present subdivided." Still less equivocation was there about the attitude of the Lord-Lieutenant, the Earl of Dudley. He specially bade Lord Lansdowne to anticipate any criticism of his action by making it clear that "he did discuss the reforms suggested in Lord Dunraven's scheme freely on several occasions with the Under Secretary, and did not at all think that Sir Antony MacDonnell was exceeding his functions."

Unfortunately for the promise of a brilliant life, Mr. Wyndham's spirit was not as high nor his candour so transparent. From the publication of the Reform Association's first report on August 31 to the 27th September he remained silent, notwithstanding the almost daily clamour of the *Times* and of his own Attorney-General and of Sir Edward Carson (who was Solicitor-General for England) that he should explain himself; but on the 27th September at last he published a letter in the *Times* officially repudiating, not indeed the objects of the Irish Reform Association, but the specific proposal in its second detailed programme "for the institution of a Statutory Legislative Assembly for Ireland." The careful student of the letter will note that he does not conceal his sympathy with two of the prime objects of the association—the appropriation to Irish purposes (and consequently by some Irish body) of all economies in the existing Imperial expenditure in Ireland, and the enactment of private bill legislation in Ireland (again necessarily by some Irish authority), but confines himself to a denunciation of the specific "Statutory Legislative Assembly" outlined in this particular second scheme; and, it can scarcely be doubted, was driven to this disavowal by the double phenomenon that the Devolution scheme had been anathematized all through the month by the *Times* as "worse than Gladstone's Home Rule," and ridiculed by the

Irish Nationalists as "the Devolution dementia." Mr. Wyndham's only excuse for not repudiating the first manifesto as promptly as he repudiated the second was that he was away on a Continental holiday. This apology for a month's failure to hear anything of a project vitally interesting the country for whose government he was responsible, and following up his own avowed projects and consultations on the subject, will not seriously impress any one who remembers that there is scarcely a hotel of repute in all Europe that does not take in the *Times*, and that even in the least boring of holiday resorts the struggle in the reading-room to get possession of it is one of the normal occupations of the day. "As the result of many conversations," Lord Dunraven told the House of Lords, "my impression is and always was that Mr. Wyndham saw no particular objection to a general scheme of administrative reform, proposed by perfectly independent private individuals, being put forward for public criticism and discussion." He added some observations, the truth of which nobody will now seriously question :

I regret that the disavowal of our policy by the Chief Secretary did not take place a little sooner. Our first report, which was published on August 28, set out our policy very plainly, and, goodness knows, enough fuss was made about it to attract the attention of a much less active and intelligent mind than that of the Chief Secretary, even at an ordinary holiday time. But no notice was taken of it. I am curious to know whether any communication passed between the Chief Secretary and Sir Antony MacDonnell on the subject of the first report. I can only say that I received a letter from Sir Antony MacDonnell on September 25. I think I must have written to him about the dead set that was being made against him in Ireland, because he writes to the effect that a friend had told him that a strenuous and most persistent effort was being made to force the Government to get him to resign his place, and he added : "I am bound to say that my relations with Mr. Wyndham are such that I attach very little importance or credence to these rumours." I should gather from that letter, without any information to the contrary, that no remonstrance of any kind had been addressed by Mr. Wyndham to Sir Antony MacDonnell between the publication of our first report and our second report. But I am sure of this, that I heard nothing at all from Mr. Wyndham himself, although our first report set out our objects and intentions just as plainly as the second one.

This much, at all events, history will with certainty conclude, that the repudiation even of the second report would not have arrived so soon if the public reception of the first had been of a different character. The fury it aroused among the enemies of Home Rule and the fanatics of class ascendancy in Ireland was to be expected, and ought rather to have set Irish Nationalists on their guard against joining in the view-halloo. The Irish Nationalist who found the *Times* declaring (September 1, 1904): "What the Dunraven Devolution policy amounts to is nothing more nor less than the revival in a slightly weakened and thinly disguised form of Mr. Gladstone's fatal enterprise of 1886"; (September 5) "It is reasonable to look to Mr. Wyndham for an explicit assurance that there is no ground for the assumption that the Irish Executive is in sympathy with the policy"; (September 15) "The alarm is inspired by a suspicion which the silence of the Chief Secretary has intensified, that this movement may be a pilot balloon to lead the way for a policy with which Sir Antony Mac-Donnell is identified, and which is even said to have to some extent the sympathy of the Viceroy, Lord Dudley"; and (September 19) "It is not easy to understand why there should be any hesitation or delay in disposing of the rumour not unnaturally arising from the proceedings of Lord Dunraven's Association that a policy of legislative devolution is looked upon with favour by some members of the Unionist Government"—the Nationalist who read in the great Unionist organ of Ulster, the *Northern Whig*, the description of the Dunraven scheme as a "Home Rule more objectionable than that proposed by Mr. Gladstone"; that Lord Rathmore declared that "Lord Dunraven had set the ball of Home Rule running again"; and that the protagonist of the Coercion régime, Sir Edward Carson, wrote (October 16): "For my part, much as I detest the former proposals of Home Rule which have been so emphatically condemned by the electorate of the United Kingdom, I should, I think, prefer them to the impracticable but insidious scheme put forward by the so-called Reform Association"—an Irish Nationalist listening to these and a thousand such cries of alarm from the most formidable foes of the Irish cause might

well have pondered long before joining such allies in turning to rend the policy which had "set the ball of Home Rule rolling again."

Words could not well deepen the pathos of a situation in which Irish Nationalists themselves outvied the *Times* and the Sir Edward Carsons in the ferocity of their determination to give no heed and no quarter to the Irish Reform Association. The same junta of Irish leaders, who had already done so much to strip the Purchase Act of its chief virtues, now proceeded to work equal havoc with the hopes of national self-government. Just as they had trooped into the division lobby with the most primordial of the Ulster reactionaries to "down" Mr. Wyndham for his Purchase Act, they now outbawled the Orange denunciators of Devolution in order to make it impossible for him to touch the problem of self-government. In the words of Lord Rathmore: "Not only did the Unionist Party in Ireland denounce the Dunraven scheme as worse than the Home Rule of Mr. Gladstone, but their language was mild in comparison to the language of contempt which a great many of the Irish Nationalist patriots showered upon the proposals of the noble earl." It seems beyond belief; but it is mournfully true.

One of the apprehensions with which I re-entered the public scene was promptly justified. No sooner was the Cork election announced than the "determined campaigners," who had remained silent and invisible during the previous six months while the tenant-purchasers were appealing to them for guidance, reappeared on the stage with a new lease of health and energy. Unabashed by the results of their destruction of our machinery for testing the Purchase Act, and their own incapacity to supply any substitute, they "launched" another "determined campaign," destined to have still more evil results in postponing for a good many years the hope which now presented itself of a united national movement for self-government. My acceptance of the seat for Cork had barely been made known when Mr. Dillon returned from exile to "take the field" against the Irish Reform Association and all who should give it any toleration. In an anti-Conciliation speech at Sligo he denounced the Devolution scheme as one whose object was

to "break national unity in Ireland and to block the advance of the Nationalist cause," and fulminated the following specific threat :

Now, I say that any attempt such as was made the other day in the city of Cork to force on the branches of the national organization, or on the National Directory itself, any vote of confidence in Lord Dunraven or any declaration of satisfaction at the foundation of this Association would tear the ranks of the Nationalists of Ireland to pieces.

It will be convenient here to consider what was "the attempt made in the city of Cork" against which this thunderbolt was directed. It was simply a resolution of the Cork Branch of the United Irish League in the following terms :

That without in any manner binding ourselves to the particular views set forth in the programme of the Irish Reform Association, we hail the establishment of that Association with sympathy and respect as a proof of the continuance and development among those classes of our countrymen who have hitherto held aloof from us of that spirit which has already led to such happy results in the direction of the abolition of landlordism by common consent, which we believe to be capable of still wider and more blessed results in the direction of a National Parliament of our own ; and we express our gratification at the statesmanlike spirit in which Mr. Redmond has greeted the establishment of the new Association.

This, it will be observed, was no "attempt to force" anything upon anybody, but the exercise of the common civic right, in moderate and inoffensive terms, to tender a message of encouragement to a body of Irish Unionists who, as all the enemies of Home Rule were shouting to the heavens, had gone over to the Nationalist demand for self-government, and threatened to bring the bulk of the Protestant minority in Ireland with them. A more serious matter still, the anathematized Cork resolution was an expression of confidence in the Irish leader, Mr. Redmond, for the broad-mindedness with which, in his American cablegram, he had hailed the accession of Lord Dunraven and his friends as the certain harbingers of Home Rule. Subsequent events clear up the mystery of Mr. Dillon's extraordinary action. With his unhappy faculty for misjudging any new state of

facts, by the light of the narrow suspiciousness which took the place of imaginative insight in his mental equipment, he persuaded himself that the appearance of the Irish Reform Association on the scene simultaneously with my return for Cork must cover some deep occult plot between Lord Dunraven, Mr. Wyndham, Sir Antony MacDonnell and myself. It is probable also that, at the first blush, he read Mr. Redmond's American cablegram as proof that he was in the plot as well, or at all events that, with his known prepossessions, he would willingly allow himself to be swept away by the current my return to public life might set going in the party and in the League. Accordingly, he determined that not a moment must be lost in going back to the old threat, before found so effective with Mr. Redmond, of "taking the field," and terrifying the country, before I could make myself heard in Cork, with a lurid picture of the split "tearing the ranks of the Nationalists of Ireland to pieces," which he assured them was to follow.

Here again was a defiance of all party discipline as flagrant as that at Swinford. The policy of Conciliation had never been recanted either by the Irish Party or by the National Directory. It still stood (as we will hear Mr. Redmond proclaiming in a moment) as the accredited national policy. No national authority of any kind had yet pronounced or deliberated on the programme of the Irish Reform Association. It was wholly within the province of Mr. Dillon and his friends to express their doubts and even their horror of the new movement, so far as they might think it patriotic and statesmanlike thus to reject with insult a movement that would have thrown Wolfe Tone or Thomas Davis into a transport of joy. Where he exceeded all bounds of discipline and, indeed, decency was in endeavouring to trample down every plea for the consideration or even toleration of the subject by the party, the National League, or the country, or by his own leader, by the grossest threat to "tear the ranks of the Nationalists of Ireland to pieces" if the branches of the League or Mr. Redmond himself ventured to dissent from Mr. Dillon's own peculiar prepossessions on the subject. To add a last touch of incongruity to the situation, the eminent Irishman who

thus for the second time "took the field," without a syllable of authority from his leader or party, to enforce his own views on the country by the horrible threat to "tear the ranks of the Nationalists of Ireland to pieces," will be found for the next five years exorcising all who say him nay as "factionists" and claiming to be the heaven-sent evangelist of party discipline and national unity.

The signal to "take the field" with the *Times* and the Sir Edward Carsons against the Irish Unionist converts to self-government was promptly obeyed. On the same day on which Mr. Dillon was uttering his awful words in Sligo, Mr. Davitt (who had already said at Clonmacnoise, September 4: "If we are foolish enough to be wiled by Lord Dunraven and Mr. George Wyndham, who is possibly behind this wooden-horse stratagem, we will richly merit the contempt of our race and friends everywhere for so abject a surrender of the national movement") now declared roundly at Enniscorthy, with Mr. Redmond's American message under his eyes:

No party or leader can consent to accept the Dunraven substitute without betraying a national trust.

Mr. Dillon's minor followers were unloosed to repel in coarser terms the advance of the Irish Reform Association and frighten their own leader from his American declaration. One refined satirist of the Irish Party declined "to touch Dunraven and his gang with a forty-foot pole," and described as "Dunraven's Punch and Judy Show" the project which perturbed the *Times* as "worse than Gladstone's Home Rule," and to which, as we now know, the Viceroy, the Chief Secretary, the Under Secretary, and the leader of the Unionist Party in the House of Lords were more or less privy. Another valiant statesman screamed "No compromise!" heedless of the circumstance that if the uncompromisingness referred to the independence of Ireland, every theory of Irish liberty propounded by Grattan, O'Connell, or Parnell had been a "compromise," and that those who propose to establish an Irish Republic by force of arms alone could claim to be anything but impostors in raising such a cry. Still another of the Irish Party considered him-

self patriotically engaged in backing up the computation of the *Times* that Lord Dunraven's Irish Unionist followers only numbered twenty-five—with a gay recklessness whether Nationalist taunts of that kind were the surest means of increasing their numbers. The young politician whom Mr. Dillon had placed in command of the United Irish League (in the room of Mr. John O'Donnell, who had unselfishly resigned his secretaryship rather than subject himself to the anti-Conciliationists), and who for the first time introduced into Irish national politics the magnanimous traditions of the "Belfast anniversaries," delivered the following high-souled *aperçu* of the situation to his constituents of North Kilkenny (September 18):

From what I know of the men of North Kilkenny they will never consent to a whittling down of the national demand for a free and unfettered Irish Parliament nor seek the co-operation of a few aristocratic nobodies, who make the preposterous demand that our national aspirations should be weakened in order that we may enjoy the luxury of their aristocratic company in the struggle that lies before us.

Surely a gem of manly spirit not to be exceeded by an upper servants' hall in their moments of private relaxation, and specially impressive as coming from an iron resolute who at the bidding of the Liberal Party voted to amend Mr. Redmond's Home Rule Resolution in the session of 1908, by conceding that his "free and unfettered Irish Parliament" must be one "subject to the supreme authority of the Imperial Parliament."

At all events, before Mr. Wyndham had denied that he was the prime mover of the Devolution movement—nay, even because he was believed to be the prime mover—the whole troop of Mr. Dillon's anti-Conciliationists were in full cry against the movement that had thrown the *Times* and its every anti-Home Rule auxiliary into a panic, and all Nationalists who did not receive the new converts to self-government with a cut of the whip across their cheeks were held up ("our trusted leader" included) as weaklings, compromisers, and traitors.

We may wish that Mr. Wyndham had not failed in the altruism which can turn the other cheek to the smiters; but,

remembering that the representatives of Ireland who but the previous year were singing hosannas in his path, had spent the session just closed in endeavouring to trip him up in the division lobby and to discredit his Irish policy and himself in the eyes of his colleagues in the Cabinet, and were now only attacking him the more furiously because they supposed him to be at the back of the Reform Association proposals for self-government, it scarcely lies in the mouths of Irish Nationalists at least to chide him for not showing a more chivalric fidelity to the men who were undeniably his counsellors and confederates in the earlier stages, at all events, of the Devolution schemes.

Yet the uproar that caused all this mischief, like that against the Purchase Act the previous year, was on the surface of things and was of incredibly small extent. It came chiefly from the same half-a-dozen politicians, reinforced, however, by the officials of the League and the party whom they had now at their disposal, and with every molecule of thoughtless popular action swelled into a mountain in the columns of the only Nationalist daily organ. The bulk of the people could no more be moved to frenzy against the Reform Association than against the Purchase Act. If Mr. Redmond, when he reached home, had only stuck to his own authentic sentiments in America—where he exclaimed: "With these men with us Home Rule may come at any moment," and where the Convention of the United Irish League of America had just enthusiastically proclaimed to be "a victory unparalleled in the whole history of moral warfare," the Purchase Act which Mr. Dillon and his friends at home branded as a gigantic scheme for robbing and bankrupting the Irish tenantry—he would have had the Irish people in millions at his back in putting down "the unwise and short-sighted policy" which was being thrust upon him.

This was placed beyond doubt by my own experiences throughout the south on my first visit to my constituents on October 16, 1904. With the exception of one historic entry of Parnell into Cork, it was agreed on all hands that the gathering in the southern capital from every part of Munster on that day was the mightiest and most enthusiastic

witnessed by any living man. In all that host, very nearly approaching if not exceeding 100,000 in number, there was not a corporal's guard who were not yearning for national unity in its widest and noblest sense, and whose hearts were not overflowing with generous love and brotherhood for their countrymen of every rank and sect. The rule not to overload this narrative with my own speeches must in the present instance be to some extent departed from, inasmuch as a few passages from my observations in Cork that day will summarize as conveniently as I could do in other words the frame of mind in which I returned to the public scene, and the grounds on which I pleaded for toleration for those who with gallantry and unselfishness were making the first real breach in the antagonism of the Protestant minority of our countrymen to self-government.

I made no disguise of the fact that, no matter what my feeling of "humble gratitude and wonder and belief in human nature caused by the persistency with which at the penalty of disfranchizing their ancient city the people of Cork would insist upon having me back—aye, upon dragging me back by main force"—even that extraordinary personal compliment, "not at the hands of a mere section of the people of Cork, but of the entire population, with scarcely a single dissentient," would not have induced me to yield to their wish "only that I know that in keeping this seat open so long, and in re-electing me after twelve months for deliberation, you have re-elected me not to discard the policy of Conciliation, but to continue it and develop it as not only the wise national policy, but the only intelligible policy of any sort or kind before the country except a policy of barren destructive criticism and general bad blood. You know that that policy, which would be more correctly described as the policy of Conciliation *plus* Business, has already, within the very few months in which it got the ghost of a chance of fair play, has already accomplished one of the two great objects of the struggle of our lives, by securing the doom of landlordism. You know that that policy, if it even now gets fair play, is just as capable of accomplishing the other great object of our lives, namely, a National Parliament for Ireland, and accomplishing all that without any bloodshed

or strife, or bitterness or injustice to any man, but on the contrary by increasing goodwill and union amongst Irishmen themselves, and by gaining the assent and co-operation not of one English party alone, but of both English parties combined."

While recognizing that a different opinion was held by "four or five distinguished Irishmen, as to whom it is to me a deep personal sorrow as well as a deplorable national misfortune that any difference should have arisen between us," I replied perhaps in not immoderate terms to the taunts of dissension and revolt against majority rule which were now being hurled at me "for the crime of being true to my word of honour and to the honour of Ireland which was pledged to that policy by every representative authority that could bind the honour of the nation."

Now, my friends, I make bold to say that if there are any men in this country who have some right to use the word unity and who have proved their horror of dissension, I am one of these men. And, on the other hand—and I say it as gently as possible—if there are any men who ought to be cautious about hurling insinuations of dissensions, they are my critics. I am not going to mar the dignity of this mighty occasion by any unkind remarks about the inconsistency of some of our friends who have now constituted themselves the apostles of unity and majority rule; but they cannot, with all our friendliness—they cannot really expect us altogether to forget that it was they themselves who twelve months ago broke away from majority rule and . . . smashed the policy which had been almost unanimously resolved upon by the whole Irish Party, by the whole National Directory, and by the whole National Convention. . . . I voluntarily effaced myself from public life, from Parliament, and from the Press at a time when, I think, it will be confessed that no man and no set of men could have wiped me out. I took that course in order to spare our people the anguish of any public conflict between men in whom they deservedly had confidence, and I took it in order to give those friends of ours a full opportunity of trying whether they hadn't some better and wiser plans of their own. . . . But I waited for nine months—nine of the most critical that ever passed for Ireland, because they are the months that have practically decided the price of the land of Ireland. I waited for nine months, and as you know they gave no lead whatever to the country. They produced no programme or no whisper of a programme. The moment the responsibility was placed upon their shoulders they disappeared altogether. Within the last few weeks, it

is true, they have again displayed a preternatural activity, and you will observe that it is only since they have seen some likelihood of my coming back to public life that any energy whatever was displayed. You will observe further that in whatever semblance of agitation they have been carrying on for the last few weeks, three-fourths of their Sunday speeches have been devoted, not to warring upon landlordism, but to talking at the people of Cork for making a friendly attempt by reasonable argument and appeal to save the country from the helplessness that has overtaken it. The only landlords they ever thought of denouncing are the landlords who have helped us to abolish landlordism, and who are ready to help us to an Irish Parliament.

When names were beginning to be mentioned with some anger by the crowd, I deprecated the smallest personal reflection upon those who differed from us, and said the one scrap of consolation the events of the last twelve months have brought to Ireland was the proof that "even the very gravest differences of opinion between leading Irishmen" could be discussed without those hideous scenes or base imputations which our enemies associated with Irish controversies. "All those things can be discussed in a reasonable and temperate spirit as between old colleagues and responsible representative men dealing with matters of a deadly concern for the future of our people." But there was no shrinking from the fact that the country had got to make up its mind again one way or the other, as to whether the Land Conference policy was right or wrong :

Because hostility to the Land Conference was the root of all the mischief of the past eighteen months. That policy is not in the least an affair of the past. We are only in the beginning of its possibilities. We are only on the threshold of the Home Rule stage of its development. This new prospect of a Home Rule settlement will either have to be brought to triumph by the same methods of conciliation as the Land settlement, or it will have to be wrecked by the same system of nagging and petulance by which Ireland has been cheated of half the blessings of the Land Conference settlement. Many easy-going people don't seem yet to understand that there are two diametrically opposite forces at work against one another, and that you cannot hope to have the benefits of the Conference policy if you at the same time kill it. You must make your choice ; you cannot wobble about between the two. You will either have to kill the Conference policy or to give it fair play before any other great measure can be won for Ireland. . . . I don't think the Irish

people have yet in the least realized all that has been lost to Ireland by the sudden, and, to me, absolutely incomprehensible flight of the Irish Party last session from the conquering and unconquerable position they had occupied in the previous session. An opportunity has been lost which might have changed the whole course of Irish history. I am most solemnly convinced that if we had only persevered steadily in the course of action which had brought about the abolition of landlordism, with scarcely a dissenting voice in the whole English Parliament, we might have had a really great amending Land Bill, and a great University Bill, and a genuine Labourers Bill successfully piloted through Parliament last session, and we would be to-day on the straight road to some general understanding both with the Liberal Party and with the Tory Party for a Home Rule settlement, possibly even before the dissolution of the present Parliament, in the same spirit, and by the same means by which the far more thorny subject of the land was settled. It is all very well to tell us now that Mr. Wyndham has been forced more or less to disown Home Rule—is it so very amazing after he has been for twelve months mauled and maltreated by the representatives of Ireland in conjunction with the Orange Ulster dead-heads that he should not be in a hurry to trust his political life to such allies?—but when you remember what a profound and sensational effect the declaration of Lord Dunraven and his friends has made in England even now after Mr. Wyndham and his Government have been antagonized, after his Irish policy has been discredited, and after England's belief in our pledges has been rudely shaken, I ask you to imagine what a glorious position we would occupy to-day if that declaration had been made twelve months ago, as it undoubtedly might have been if Mr. Wyndham's Irish policy was triumphant and if the Land Conference settlement were being peacefully and steadily worked out. Because whatever may be the party interest of the Tories to-day, their clear interest then was to make Ireland their sheet-anchor and their salvation. It was no less clearly the interest of the Liberal Party, as well as their duty to the memory of Gladstone and the honour of their party, to co-operate in relieving their own Parliament once for all from an incubus which weighs upon the energies of Liberal and Tory Government alike, and crowning the pacification of Ireland by letting us govern ourselves in a Parliament of our own. Nothing could have resisted us. We had exactly the Parliamentary situation for which Parnell had laboured for twenty years in vain. We had a weak Tory Government, weak enough to be more or less dependent upon our votes, but strong enough to be able to remove all difficulties with the House of Lords. We had all the high-minded men of the Liberal Party willing and eager to associate themselves with any great Irish settlement. We had all England full of friendliness and full of

wonder and respect for the way in which we had managed to settle the Land question among ourselves.

But it was still easy to repair past blunders. I recalled the fact that the manifesto of Lord Dunraven's Association had within a month forced Home Rule to the front again, after it had been for years ignored by Liberal and Tory alike :

Here was an event of even more national importance than the Land Conference. You would expect it to be received with respect, at least with common decency, by responsible Irishmen. On the contrary, the *Times* was not more virulent than some prominent Irishmen have been in repelling the conciliatory approaches of Lord Dunraven and his friends, in aspersing their motives and doing their worst to wreck their work at the outset by every species of misrepresentation and insult. . . .

Surely it ought to be sufficient for any Nationalist who really wants to strengthen the Home Rule cause to know that every newspaper in England, Tory and Liberal, without exception, understood Lord Dunraven and his friends to mean Home Rule, or an Irish Parliament in some shape. I don't care a brass farthing if it be called a statutory body or a legislature; whether you call it Devolution or Revolution, or, as I prefer to call it, Evolution. For my part I can see nothing but ruin for the country in this determination, wantonly and madly to reject every friendly advance and to trample upon every offer of conciliation. I cannot even imagine what can be the secret of it, unless that the men who could see nothing but evil in the Land Conference and in the Land Purchase Act are afraid that their own prophecies of evil may be still further falsified by its being proved that the men who helped us to abolish landlordism are willing to go further and to help Ireland to a Parliament of her own. We know that, whatever their design, these men have already done us a tremendous service and given Home Rule a new birth. In Heaven's name, at the worst, what possible harm can they do us? We are told they can pervert us from Home Rule. How? By giving us Home Rule. We are to be perverted from Home Rule by obtaining an Irish Parliament as we were perverted from our antagonism to landlordism by obtaining the abolition of landlordism. What on earth else have we been struggling for all these weary years, or are we really to keep our people plunged in hot water and misery for another generation for the mere love of fighting? One distinguished Irishman made a long speech in which he proceeded from beginning to end on the assumption that Lord Dunraven and his friends want to pin us down to their present tentative proposals. And that they expect us to give up our own idea of

Home Rule in favour of their non-representative, and, of course, from our point of view, utterly inadmissible financial council. My friends, I make bold to say all such doubts and apprehensions and hallucinations are all absolute figments of the imagination. I, of course, know nothing whatever of the programme of the new association, except what everybody knows from the newspapers, but from their own declaration it is perfectly clear that their present proposals are submitted as the mere preliminary materials for discussion and negotiation, and that they are rather addressed towards the removal of the prejudices of Unionists than put forward as a final and unalterable answer to our national demand. Lord Dunraven and his friends may be all that is diabolical, but at least they are not such born idiots as to expect us to surrender our own organization, or, as it has been absurdly put, to coalesce with the new association on such a programme. The thing is not even arguable. For goodness' sake let us not frighten ourselves with such nonsensical bogeys of the imagination. Lord Dunraven himself has plainly said they expect nothing from us except friendly toleration and fair play while they are engaged in the hard task of conquering the mass of racial prejudice and sectarian bigotry that has hitherto been solidly arrayed against us. What conceivable motive can any patriotic man have for adding to their difficulties by repelling and insulting them, by exaggerating and envenoming every difference between them and us, and hunting them and their fifty or sixty millions of money out of the country? If hereafter matters should so far progress that there would be any likelihood of some definite arrangement from both sides, everybody knows that the Irish Party and the Directory and the National Convention will have to be fully and freely consulted, and that their consent will have to be unmistakably and overwhelmingly pronounced before the country can be committed to anything. Under such circumstances, what is the meaning of threats to tear the national forces asunder, if the League is asked to extend even a word of common human sympathy to the men whom every enemy of Home Rule is rushing to malign and beat down?

The prospect held forth by the anti-Conciliationists as a certainty that all would be saved if the Liberals came in was discussed in words to which events have given a melancholy fulfilment :

We are told indeed that Home Rule is safe as the Liberals are coming in. For obvious public reasons, I cannot discuss why I am unable to share that rosy view as to what the Liberals will do for us, or will be able to do for us if they come in. I will only say, that remembering their almost insuperable difficulties with the House of Lords, remembering the transformation that has taken place in their

own party since the days of Gladstone, and remembering the declarations that have been frankly made by almost every leading man in the Liberal Party, as to how the next Liberal Parliament will be occupied, I cannot conscientiously share the confidence of those of our friends who think that any extraordinary miracle is going to happen in Ireland when the Liberals come in. I have the warmest and most grateful recollection of all that the Liberal Party have done for Ireland. . . . I have the utmost confidence that many of the Liberal leaders—men like Mr. Morley and Lord Spencer and Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman, and Sir Edward Grey and others—are as eager as ever to satisfy the demands of Ireland. They proved it by their unselfish and high-minded attitude last year towards the Land Settlement. . . . But I think the Liberal leaders who are true to Ireland would be the first to tell you that the best of all ways to make Home Rule a certainty, and an immediate certainty, would be if we could induce both English parties to unite in striking out some great scheme of national pacification for Ireland. That was Gladstone's dream. It was what was actually brought to pass last year in the case of the Land Act, and the *Times* more than half confesses that if that precedent had been followed up Mr. Wyndham's attitude to Home Rule would be a very different one to-day. It may or it may not be too late to recover lost ground, but whether some such agreement before the present Government disappears can be brought about, or whether it is to come under a Liberal Government, I venture to submit to all reasonable Irishmen that the spirit of mutual toleration and concession and goodwill which is the essence of the Land Conference policy, will give us the most powerful weapon that can be put into the hands of any government that may introduce a Home Rule Bill within the next few years. . . . I hold this view so strongly that far and away the most important result I look to from the new association is not so much the number of landlords it may convert to Home Rule, as its effect upon English public opinion in rooting out the last objection to a future Home Rule Bill by satisfying England that, as we have made the most abundant and opulent provisions for the property of the Unionist minority, so it will be their own fault, and not ours, if, for the future, they do not enjoy positions of honour and influence, and usefulness, in their own country, free from the smallest peril of persecution or disability for their religion or for their material interests.

Finally, there was an appeal to a larger spirit of unsuspectingness and loyal comradeship :

I would respectfully make an appeal to every man who commands influence with the Irish people to reconsider this matter in the light of the observations I have made here to-day. I was glad to observe that since the very remarkable declaration of the new

Bishop of Kerry, and the new Bishop of Killaloe, and the no less remarkable spirit shown by the American Convention re-echoed by the broad-minded and statesmanlike speeches of Mr. Redmond—I was glad to observe that there has been a considerable relaxation of the first unreasoning and savage attack on the new association. I trust that as time goes on that better spirit will go on growing and will prevail. I conjure our friends to dismiss from their minds these unworthy suspicions and wild hallucinations that there is some desperate plot on foot to surrender the inalienable right of the Irish people to govern themselves through their own representatives. I entreat them, even now at the eleventh hour, to give honestly and frankly a fair trial for the policy which for the few months when it got the ghost of a chance did more than was done by the twenty previous years of agitation. As they kept inactive so long, I implore of them to wait patiently a few months longer to see what further we can do in the way of cutting down prices to Conference terms, giving the evicted tenants a chance, replenishing our ranks with new forces in Ireland and disarming the hostility of England. I can promise them that if they do so, and if we fail, as many better Irishmen have failed before us, they can count upon my humble co-operation in whatever better or braver form of resistance to English rule they can devise. Because, so far as I am concerned, the policy of conciliation will always begin at home among our own brother Nationalists. The first leaves of the olive branch will always be at the disposal of old friends and comrades, and if we can only establish an understanding that some definite and coherent national policy shall have fair play—not nominally, but genuinely and with all our united strength—I know of no disputed questions as to the party or the League that may not still be amicably settled, and most certainly there will be no recollection of any little personal maltreatment of myself that will not be gladly buried in oblivion as deep as the bottom of the sea. In one word, fellow-countrymen, what I ask you to do is to go back to the spirit of the Land Conference and complete the Land Conference work.

The *Freeman's* report of the memorable meeting in Cork was its first essay in the art of minimisation and mutilation which culminated in suppressing from the knowledge of the country all but the most fallacious snippets of information as to what I said in reply to my critics. The *Cork Examiner* still honestly reported my speeches, as it reported with no less fulness the speeches on the other side, and it is a fact full of eloquence that in every district of Munster through which the *Examiner* circulates—that is to say, in the only districts that had any chance of learning the truth as

to the Swinford revolt, and the monstrous falsity of the fables of dissension invented against me—public opinion has ever since stood unchangeably true to the principles bodied forth in Cork.

Mr. Redmond had one last opportunity on his return from America of freeing himself from his shackles and giving manful effect to the opinions he had just been expressing as to the priceless value to Ireland of the Reform Association, as well as to the passionate enthusiasm into which the Purchase Act had thrown the National Convention of America. A few weeks after the Cork meeting, on November 6, a demonstration of the people of Limerick and Clare was summoned for Limerick City for the special purpose of uniting us all on the same platform. Mr. Redmond accepted the invitation and so did I. Mr. Dillon, unhappily, declined. One might have hoped that, if he really nourished the suspicions which were afterwards branded by a Limerick jury as "false, defamatory and malicious libels," here was the opportunity to communicate them frankly to his old and best political friend, when ten minutes' friendly chat must have driven them out of his head for ever. Even if he had found my explanation unsatisfactory, one would have supposed the straightforward course to be then and there to invite me to clear up any remaining difficulty in his mind before a tribunal of ten thousand unpartisan Nationalists, before whom, at all events, I should have been present to make my answer. He not only failed to attend the Limerick meeting. It is difficult to acquit him of taking careful steps to frustrate its success as a means of healing the differences in the national camp, and, in plain terms, to intimidate Mr. Redmond from persisting in the attitude he had taken up in America. On the Sunday before the Limerick meeting (October 31) Mr. Dillon went down himself to a small indoor meeting at Maryborough, obviously organized *ad hoc*, and at which Mr. Redmond was not present, and delivered a speech only too plainly aimed at the Limerick peace meeting, in which he flouted and jeered at "Dunraven and his crowd," and once more emitted the generous sentiment: "Conciliation, so far as landlords are concerned, was another name for swindling the people."

On the same day he despatched two of his principal instruments in the Irish Party to a meeting at Kilrush, in a district from which the Limerick meeting was to be largely drawn, to pour forth similar diatribes against any toleration for the devoted Irish Unionists against whom all the anti-Home Rule forces of Britain were in full chase with the tongues of asps, or for any traitor Nationalist (including their "trusted leader") who should reach them out a sympathetic hand. A more serious matter still, his partisans on the organizing committee of the Limerick meeting were set to work to turn it into an anti-Conciliationist meeting and to make any good understanding between Mr. Redmond and myself as difficult as possible. There could be no mistaking the design. It was a series of repetitions—especially for Mr. Redmond's benefit—of the threat of the Sligo speech "to tear the ranks of the Nationalists of Ireland to pieces," if there was any declaration of satisfaction (such as the Irish leader had already made) "at the foundation of Lord Dunraven's Association," and the Enniscorthy hint that "no party or leader can consent to accept the Dunraven substitute without betraying a national trust."

When I arrived in Limerick from the west in the course of the evening before the meeting, Mr. Redmond was awaiting me on the railway platform, and there was a crowd which gave me a very ardent reception. He was plainly impressed by the demeanour of the crowd, which, indeed, only strengthened a goodwill that had been there already. He drove with me to my hotel in a carriage which a lady friend had sent to meet me. It so happened that I was enabled to give a corresponding token of goodwill on my own part. The Corporation of Limerick had arranged to present me with the freedom of the city on the day following the public meeting. An attempt had been made to get the same honour conferred on Mr. Redmond and on Mr. O'Callaghan, secretary of the United Irish League of America, who accompanied him, but had been defeated. Had I any temptation to turn the Limerick meeting to the same partisan use to which the anti-Conciliationists afterwards wrenched it, I had only to let events take their course to obtain a striking triumph for

myself at the expense of Mr. Redmond by presenting myself for the proposed presentation of the city's freedom. But being determined to spare no effort of my own to make the morrow's meeting an occasion for reunion rather than for paltry personal capital, I renounced a public honour which could only be enjoyed by inflicting a certain amount of humiliation on Mr. Redmond, and wrote to the Corporation requesting them to postpone the ceremony to some future date, when I trusted Mr. Redmond and myself might be able to share the honour.

Our consultation was of the most cordial character. He asked me: "Well, what are you going to do to-morrow?" I said: "That depends upon you, and not upon me. It is grounds of agreement and not of difference I am looking for." He asked: "What do you want?" I replied: "Simply that it should be made clear that the national policy of last year is the national policy still, and that you stick to it." "If that is all you want," was his reply, "I will make it clear enough. There is not an atom of difference between us." "Make that perfectly clear in action," I added, "and I should have no difficulty about rejoining the party in the morning." The next day I noticed a considerable cooling-off in Mr. Redmond's attitude. Manifestly the anti-Conciliationists still had their uneasy suspicions of some flagitious secret understanding between Mr. Redmond and myself, and a desperate effort was made by a mixture of cajolery and strong-*fi*stedness to warn him off. A number of Mr. Dillon's "stalwarts" in the Irish Party had been drafted into Limerick during the night; there were rumours of armed Gaelic athletic clubs being imported to take possession of the platform; and all the leading anti-Conciliationist groups from the surrounding counties were brought upon the scene with addresses, wherever they could be manufactured, directed to Mr. Redmond alone and studded with sidelong allusions of an unmistakable character to myself and to the policy of conciliation. When I called on him the next day at his hotel, before the meeting began, his room was crowded with partisans of this sort, whose inhospitable looks and whispered colloquies left me in no doubt as to the character of the messages they were pouring

into his ear. Mr. Redmond, who never acquired any first-hand power of judging popular feeling in Ireland, was visibly impressed, and there was in his manner a certain frigidity, compared with his frank *bonhomie* of the previous night, which was not calculated to increase one's respect for the politician temperament.

To go out from this heated atmosphere of partisanship among the assembling multitudes of single-hearted Irishmen was, however, like exchanging the breath of a sick-room for the free air of a mountain-top. It would have been unfair to blame Mr. Redmond in his critical position if he gave, perhaps, an excessive credit to the assurances of popular sentiment he found thrust upon him in his private sitting-room; but, once in presence of the people, although his speech fell sadly short in warmth of his professions of the previous night, it was on the main point sound, and, had it been allowed to work its way, might have led to a happy reunion of the national forces. One extract will suffice to shew it. Said Mr. Redmond:

It has been stated in some newspapers of our enemies that the Land Conference agreement, which was endorsed by the Irish Party, endorsed by the Directory of the League and endorsed by the National Convention and accepted by the people, has in some way been repudiated recently by us. I deny that altogether. It is no part of our business to-day to stop to inquire into the fact that the Government did not carry out to the full that Land Conference agreement. It is no part of my business to-day to inquire into the undoubted fact that many Irish landlords are refusing to carry out that agreement, or to evince the spirit that lay behind that agreement. I speak to-day only for the people, and, so far as the people are concerned, I say that agreement from the day it was entered upon down to this moment has never been repudiated by anybody entitled to speak in their name.

I promptly accepted the olive branch when my turn came to speak:

I ventured to say in Cork that, so far as I was aware, up to the day of my retirement, there was not the smallest difference of opinion between Mr. Redmond, the chairman of the Irish Party, and myself, either as to the wisdom of the Land Conference settlement, or as to the still greater blessings in the direction of National Self-Government that might have flowed from it, and that, please

God, will still flow from it, and whatever reserve there may be still naturally at both sides, as to what has happened since, I am glad to infer, and I think the country will be glad to infer, from the statesmanlike and broad-minded address we have just listened to from the leader of the Irish people, that the agreement between us all as to all the main lines of national policy, and as to the scope and meaning of what has been called the policy of conciliation remains as regards the main issue with as cordial a unity as ever. . . . Whatever differences of opinion may still arise between us and some of our friends, who have candidly confessed that from the beginning they were opposed to the policy to which the Irish Party, the Directory and the National Conventions were again and again pledged—such differences will arise in every country as long as human nature is human nature—all I can say is, it will be no fault of mine if those differences are not solved without any discredit to our cause, and if those discussions are not carried on in a manner that will give crowning proof of our capacity for self-government.

Had the spirit of these declarations (which only interpreted the passionate desires of the ten thousand listeners) been suffered to prevail, the rift in the Irish ranks was closed, and all the refulgent opportunities of 1903 would have burst forth again on the country's path. As evil destiny would have it, the spirit of the Limerick meeting was, on the contrary, shockingly misrepresented to the country and its blessings turned to curses. The leading article of the *Freeman* the following morning was saturated with a virulent acid from the first sentence to the last; its very heading was a partisan war-cry from the letter of apology of an anti-Conciliationist M.P. which was not read to the meeting at all; and the one point that was emphasized in a meeting full of generous mutual concession was part of a sentence in one of the resolutions which the *Freeman* fastened upon as repudiating the "substantial equivalent of Ashbourne prices" standard and giving some countenance to its own doctrine, that second term rents should only be purchased at the same rate as first term rents under the Ashbourne Act. The fact, of course, is that not fifty persons in the multitude heard the long list of resolutions as they were mumbled from the platform; and assuredly not fifty would have endorsed a doctrine which their own experience had proved to be an absurdity. I had

refrained myself from making any objection to the words, owing to my anxiety to avoid minor differences, and my sense of the immeasurable unimportance of a few words in a long string of resolutions compared with the supreme object of ensuring national reconciliation. Nevertheless, the *Freeman* was not content with the crow of triumph with which it represented this resolution to the country as the one event worth marking of the Limerick meeting; but this resolution, which, if it meant anything, would have meant a cruel affront to Mr. Redmond, whose own offspring the phrase "the substantial equivalent of Ashbourne prices" was, was day after day, for months afterwards, prominently set forth in huge black lettering in the *Freeman* as a sort of black flag of dissension and bad blood.

It was the last time Mr. Redmond and myself stood on a friendly platform together. Had he persisted in the desire evinced in his Limerick speech to retain as the national policy the policy he believed in, in place of the policy he in his heart detested, even the virulence of the *Freeman* must have soon exhausted its poison in face of the overpowering passion for peace among all thinking Irishmen. But he had the fatal impregnability to his immediate surroundings of a man whose politics were rather opinions than convictions. Besides, the shadow of the Wexford bargain was still there to give point to the threats not indistinctly whispered into his ears. For, although the tragic issue of the sale for himself was that the estate was declared by Mr. Justice Ross to be an insolvent estate, as to which consequently the *bonus* must go to the creditors and nothing be left to the nominal proprietor, the fact still stood ineffaceable in the memory of every tenant and landlord in the country that $24\frac{1}{2}$ years' purchase had been named in the original terms, and that the *Freeman* had declared that the announcement which bore so woful a meaning for the Irish tenantry "was submitted to Mr. Redmond and rectified by himself."¹ He shrank from any encounter with a daily newspaper and its powerful political allies in possession of such a weapon, and from that day forth tempered his sword to do their bidding.

¹ *Freeman's Journal*, August 9, 1904.

CHAPTER XVII

SIX "FALSE, DEFAMATORY, AND MALICIOUS LIBELS"

Once more—will the wronger, at this last of all,
Dare to say "I did wrong!" rising in his fall?

BROWNING.

UP to this point, little had been said that any but a very thin-skinned politician need resent, or that a cleavage of opinion touching the vitals of national polity would not sufficiently excuse. I had not myself mentioned even the names of my assailants in my public speeches, and to the end, crediting them with intentions as upright as I claimed for myself, confined my allegations against them to specific matters of fact concerning their public conduct, which could be promptly grappled with, if unjustified.¹ Nor up to a certain stage were the attacks upon me, however rough, of a character to be taken in ill part by a fighter well inured to receiving as well as giving hard knocks in a country where invectives were the only arms left unproclaimed under the Peace Preservation Act. Duelling still to some extent survives in Ireland though only with the bullets of the brain; and even when the attacks upon me reached their worst point, I should no more have dreamed of having recourse to the law of libel as a solace for mere wounded feeling than a fighter under the old code of asking legal damages if he were carried off the field with a bullet in his ankle. As will be seen in a moment, if I felt compelled to bring the only six categorical

¹ It may as well be noted here once for all that no attempt was ever made to answer any of these specific allegations, all of which are to be found in the present book; they were all of them systematically suppressed in the journals under the control of my assailants.

charges ever ventured against me to an issue in a court of law and have them stamped as "false, defamatory, and malicious libels" by a brand which can never be effaced, it was for the same reason, and for no other, for which Montalembert, Vacquerie, Lamennais, Weiss, Rochefort, Gambetta and the rest courted and compelled trial by combat in the law courts of the Third Empire; it was, because in Ireland, as in France, liberty of speech and liberty of the Press were brought to so low an ebb that by the forced publicity of legal proceedings alone could the truth in matters of vital national moment be brought to the public knowledge.

On the death of my colleague in the representation of Cork City, Mr. J. F. X. O'Brien, in 1905, I was placed in the dilemma either of asking my constituents to give me a colleague as free and unpledged as myself to represent the principles of national reconciliation or of giving up a task which I had only undertaken in the belief that Cork was as firmly wedded to those principles as myself. The position would obviously be an untenable and even absurd one if my action were to be neutralized by a colleague pledged to act with men whose business in life it now was to make any return to the policy of 1903 impossible. I pointed out that the city of Cork being the only two-member constituency in Ireland, the difficulty could not arise in any other constituency, inasmuch as I had no intention whatever of forming a separate party, but only of making it possible for me to claim that, in advocating a return to the policy of national reconciliation, I spoke with the unequivocal authority of my own constituency, one and indivisible. If my adversaries believed otherwise, their manifest duty was then and there to take the opinion of the electors of Cork by starting an anti-Conciliationist candidate of their own, as I gave them the fullest opportunity frankly to do. They did not see fit to challenge my action at the Cork polls in a constituency comprising 100,000 Nationalists. A Conciliationist was returned unopposed as my colleague. From that date forth began a campaign, public and private, on the platform, in the Press, by word of mouth and by physical violence, without bounds and without scruple, as terrific as ever was directed against a

public man, were he the worst enemy of his country. It was no longer a matter of deprecatory generalities as to the evils of dissension from the arch-priests of dissension; but a systematic arraignment, repeated throughout the country with every detail that could arouse the wrath and hatred of the uninformed audiences to which they were addressed—that I had entered into a fell conspiracy for the destruction of the Irish Party and their replacement by a "Loyal Centre Party," and in pursuance thereof had covenanted to sell 18 Nationalist seats to the Unionists and made myself a party to the organization of a Unionist Syndicate to obtain possession of the daily national organ, the *Freeman's Journal*, and prostitute it to the worst purposes of the Unionists and landlords. They were charges which, if well founded, might well nerve the arm of some Irish peasant Harmodius rather more hot-blooded than the Greek.

The campaign was begun by Mr. Dillon at Tipperary on June 18, 1905, the Sunday after the uncontested election in Cork, and began under auspices in more than one respect repulsive. To begin with, there was a painful lack of candour about his statement of the object of his visit: "I came here, as you know," he said, "not bent upon political work, but simply on a holiday visit to a very dear and old friend of mine, Canon Arthur Ryan, who is now parish priest of Tipperary." The truth is that the day fixed for this holiday visit sacred to friendship happened to be the very day fixed for a popular meeting in denunciation of the Cork City Election to be addressed by Mr. Dillon at Bandon, County Cork, where another "very dear and old friend of his," Canon Shinkwin, was the parish priest, and was to have taken the chair. It was only after popular feeling in the Bandon neighbourhood was found to be of such a character as to compel the precipitate abandonment of the Bandon meeting that Mr. Dillon at the last moment changed the venue for the same day to Tipperary, and, although "not bent upon political work," secured a *Freeman* reporter at short notice to accompany him.¹ Nor was it, perhaps, a particularly happy

¹ Another of his unhappily phrased utterances at Tipperary—"I will say that the two or three days I have spent here have been made so delightful to me that I expect I shall partake of his [Canon Ryan's] hospitality again, for I never

arrangement by which he selected as his platform for the fulmination of atrocious imputations upon me the Square of New Tipperary, the fee-simple property in which was purchased and presented to the people of the town by one whose sex did not protect her from a share in his denunciations. But the least creditable part of the Tipperary raid on those days of happy holiday was an attempt to reawaken the almost forgotten county jealousies between Tipperary and Cork, which had once been the cause of bloody conflicts and reprisals, and the deliberation with which he represented the Cork election as part of a foul conspiracy for the destruction of the Irish Party and the betrayal of the national movement into the hands of its Unionist enemies.

His Tipperary visit was really made in accordance with his now invariable custom, upon all critical occasions, of "taking the field" in order to set the pace to Mr. Redmond and the party, and thus anticipating their judgment by confronting them with the accomplished fact. It may be remembered that it was so on the publication of the report of the Evicted Tenants Conference, on the first appearance of the Irish Reform Association, and on the Sunday before the Limerick peace meeting, and was to be so again when he forced Mr. Birrell to repel the joint Landlord and Tenant Deputation that might have made his abortive Irish Land Act of 1909 a work of fruitful statesmanship and peace. Mr. Dillon was ever the first to commit the party and the country to his lead, and Mr. Redmond came limping painfully in his wake. In vain I sought to reassure all men of good faith of the groundlessness of the hallucination that the Cork election covered any design hostile to the party, not to say to the national movement. On the occasion of the introduction of my new colleague to the House of Commons, I published through the Press Association the following exposition of the facts:

enjoyed any two days more in the whole course of my life"—was probably intended by way of corroboration of the thesis that his visit to Tipperary was one of pure pleasure, or he could not have forgotten that "the two most enjoyable days in the whole course of his life" were days when the noble woman to whom he owes everything he possesses in the world—his cousin, the late Mrs. Deane of Ballaghaderine—was lying on her death-bed in a Dublin hospital. She was dead a few days after.

There is no question of a new party, or a new leader, or of anything like a split. Mr. Roche and I are perfectly friendly to the party and to Mr. Redmond, and possibly a little more so than those who have caused the mischief. The Cork election was simply a question of my own constituents enabling me to speak with their full authority in recalling the party to the policy of conciliation which they adopted two years ago, and have never officially repudiated, but the beneficial effects of which have been lost by the tactics of the last two years.

The difference of opinion between the section responsible for these tactics and myself will not be fought out in Parliament, nor in the Irish constituencies at the General Election, but by an argumentative appeal to public opinion in Ireland, whose decision everybody will bow to. The discussion will be carried on with as much self-restraint and courtesy as the similar differences between the Balfourites and Chamberlainites or between the Roseberyites and Campbell-Bannermanites in England.

But Mr. Dillon had, no doubt, persuaded himself that the popular terror of "a split" was his one engine for preventing the calm consideration of the wisdom of his own proceedings for the two previous years, and wherever he could find an audience he proceeded to work upon that terror by drawing blood-curdling pictures of my nefarious doings, with the knowledge that my replies would be suppressed in the *Freeman* and could never reach the eyes of his hearers. One or two examples must suffice of the working of this joint system of platform misrepresentation and newspaper suppression.

In the province of Munster, where my speeches could still be read in the *Cork Examiner*, Mr. Dillon appeared no more; but to the "Board of Erin" Lodges in the north of Ireland, which now furnished him with most of his audiences, he pledged his credit to the allegation that I had stated I would only rejoin the Irish Party when it ceased to be a pledge-bound party. What were my words at the Charleville meeting (July 9, 1905) to which he referred?

They will find, perhaps, that they can neither gag nor guillotine me, and from this day forth I promise them that if they are determined to plunge the country into an agitation about the pledge they will have enough of it as far as I am concerned; but it will be an agitation not merely for the signing of the pledge, but for the keeping of it; it will be an agitation to make sure that Swinford rival

programmes and "determined campaigns" must never occur again in a crisis of the country's history; it will be an agitation to make sure that whenever the party and the League and the National Convention resolve upon a great national policy for the future, there must be an honourable and absolute obedience to the party pledge and to majority rule; and the moment we come to that state of things again I promise you I will be the first to rejoin a pledge-bound party, because it will then be genuinely a pledge-bound party, instead of being what the determined campaigners have made it—a party where the pledge is not worth the paper it is written upon except as an unscrupulous weapon against me.

The *Freeman*, which had sent a special reporter to the Charleville meeting, suppressed every word of this passage, as it suppressed every word of my reply to Mr. Dillon's charge at a subsequent meeting in Carrigaline on September 10 (1905). Mr. Dillon, far from acknowledging how grossly he had erred, went on repeating the misrepresentation unblushingly, and in three of the four Irish provinces there are not probably a dozen men who to this day know how they were imposed upon as to my view of the party pledge.¹

One illustration more of how propitiatory offerings on my part were thrown away, in the temper of the time. At an early stage of the controversy, the Bishop of Clonfert publicly suggested that two of us from each side should meet in friendly conference to compose our differences. I at once agreed. To similar proposals from public bodies in Tralee, Monaghan, and Wexford I responded with an unvarying "Yes," and Mr. Dillon and his friends with an unvarying "No." The suggestion of a small conference of two a side having failed, I made at Watergrasshill on July 30, 1905, a further peace proposal of a larger character, which was

¹ Nor can there be the excuse that Mr. Dillon may not have seen my words, since I happen to be aware that he had at this time become a subscriber to the *Cork Examiner* for the special purpose of following my speeches. There is a redeeming touch of farce mingled with the mendacity of the *Freeman* report of the Charleville meeting. The meeting, which was an enthusiastically devoted one, broke into fierce cries of "Down with him!" "Hang him!" when I mentioned Mr. Sexton's name, and I was obliged to remonstrate with my friends against this mode of carrying on a great public argument. The *Freeman* actually represented the cries of "Down with him!" "Hang him!" as directed against myself and accompanied with an attempt to storm the platform in the *Freeman* interest! This, it must be added for the honour of my own old profession, was the only case in which the complaint lay against a reporter, as distinguished from his editorial orders.

prefaced by the following statement of the situation—too sadly verified, alas, by events :

Well, now, I should prefer, if possible, to apply myself to the future, and if there be among my antagonists any desire for genuine national unity, I would most solemnly conjure every man of sense and of influence in the country to ponder well whether some means of escape may not even yet be found out of the very grave position with which the country is confronted. That position is, that we have the greatest and most revolutionary Act ever passed for Ireland, and the friendliest Commissioners that ever had the administration of an Irish Act, reduced to helplessness and brought to a dead stop—let us drop now for the moment the question whether it was through our own unwisdom or not—and there could be no wilder delusion than to imagine that those difficulties will be over if the Liberals come in. The position is, further, that we have, by a great national treaty, agreed upon all the main principles upon which the abolition of landlordism ought to be carried out. We have got the united strength of landlords and tenants behind those principles. All that is wanted is that this national treaty should be honestly and in all its fulness carried out. And to me it seems the very ABC of the whole situation, that if there is to be any possibility—either under a Liberal or a Tory Government—of any great legislation on this subject being carried into law, it must be by renewing and increasing the co-operation of those classes who are parties to this agreement. That co-operation will be even more needful to a Liberal Government than to a Tory Government, and, believe me, time will prove it, because although the *Freeman* tells us the Liberals are pledged by their vote the other night to bring in an amending Land Bill, and although I have not the slightest doubt that the Liberals will be only too happy to make up for their helplessness to do anything for Home Rule by making a Land Bill their programme in Ireland, still it would be madness for us to forget that if the Liberals are not to go on ploughing the sands on the Land question as well as on Home Rule, the assent of the House of Lords will have to be obtained, and it is perfectly idle to think the House of Lords will assent to any really radical Land Bill without a common agreement in face of the very serious alarm that has been raised in England by the declarations that the Land Act is a failure, and in face of the growing feeling that the promise of Irish leaders cannot be depended upon, and that instead of getting friendship or peace England has got nothing for her 112 millions but more bitter hostility than ever. These are the facts we have got to face.

I expressed reluctance to make any suggestion myself, "because I am afraid it is enough to raise an instant clamour

against any suggestion that it should come from me"—another anticipation wofully soon to be justified ; but added :

However, as nobody else seems to have anything like a practical proposal to offer, I would suggest that the time has come for some dignified and decisive national action on this subject if the country is to be saved.

I do not propose to reassemble the Land Conference, as the very name appears to exercise so exasperating an effect upon the nerves of some of our friends. I do not suggest any existing organization should lay down its arms or be merged in any other organization ; but I would respectfully suggest that the chairmen of the County Councils and the Lord Mayors and Mayors of the Irish cities and towns should join in calling together some great council of the nation in Dublin, either by way of some mighty public meeting at the Rotunda open to all the world, or of some smaller deliberative assembly, and that all manner and conditions of Irishmen who are agreed upon the abolition of landlordism, and are agreed upon seeking some great measure of national relief from the misgovernment and over-taxation that are draining the life-blood of the country, should be freely invited and welcomed in that assembly. The circumstances are wholly new, and we should have no exclusions and no ostracisms of any man. There is no reason why Mr. Sloan and the Orange democracy of the north, who have recently declared themselves to be Irishmen first of all, and who are perfectly sound on the question of Redistribution, should not be cordially welcomed by their fellow-countrymen. There is no reason why we should not have Lord Dunraven and his Reform Association, who have taken up a perfectly satisfactory position on the Redistribution question, as well as on the Land question. There is no reason why we should not have Mr. T. W. Russell and his Presbyterian farmers, who represent a population of half a million. Three such bodies of men, representing every class and creed of the so-called loyal minority, would speak for that minority with an authority in the eyes of England that would reduce to insignificance the protests of the Ardilauns and Clonbrooks and of the Ulster dead-heads. Then, of course, I need not say there is no reason why Mr. Redmond and his friends, Mr. Dillon and his friends, Mr. Healy and his friends, and the leaders of the Gaelic League and of the Town Tenants' Association, and of the Land and Labour Association, and of the Industrial Association, and every other section and denomination of good Irishmen should not be fully represented, so that no element of moral or intellectual strength in this island should be omitted. I should be most happy to abstain from attending myself, if my absence could in any way conduce to the harmony of the proceedings ; but on the other hand, I should be quite willing to lend a

hand, if it was thought desirable, and I should be ready to draw a wet sponge over a good deal that has recently occurred, in order to co-operate in harmonizing all shades of Irish national opinion in some great national combination for the defence of our country's national rights and even the existence of our people. There may be difficulties, as there are difficulties in any great achievement in this world, but I have not a shadow of doubt that such an assemblage would be animated by a noble and lofty patriotism, and would rise to the height of its great opportunity, and would create a new spirit of unity and buoyancy and hope throughout the universal Irish race.

Those who have taken the trouble to read this proposal will possibly be as much startled as I was myself to find it denounced by Mr. Dillon at a "Board of Erin" demonstration in County Derry a week or two afterwards as a base plot against the leadership of Mr. Redmond, and to exclude the Irish Nationalist Party from my proposed conference! Here was the style in which a responsible Irish leader thought fit to discuss a proposal which might have saved the Land Purchase Settlement of 1903 from the ruin which has since overtaken it, and the Nationalist movement from a scarcely happier fate :

And who are to be the rescuers of Ireland from Mr. Redmond's leadership and from the Irish Party? Lord Rossmore, Lord Castletown, Mr. Talbot Crosbie, Mr. M'Murrough Kavanagh, Mr. Tim Healy, and Mr. Tom Sloane of Belfast. These men are to be called into conference to rescue the country from Mr. Redmond and the Nationalist Party.

And there followed a dark allusion to my "covering with praises the new landlord friends and associates, who now enjoy all his confidence."¹

¹ I mentioned in a suppressed speech in reply made at Carrigaline on September 10, 1905, that, as it happened, I had never laid my eyes upon any of the gentlemen mentioned as "my new landlord friends and associates." Lord Rossmore had been Grand Master of the Orange Order in County Monaghan, and was one of the most invaluable allies won over to the Nationalist cause by Lord Dunraven's Association. Lord Castletown was a man of ancient Gaelic lineage, who has done immeasurable service in the University settlement and in the popularization of the Gaelic language and customs. Mr. Talbot Crosbie was the first landlord in Kerry to sell on terms substantially equivalent to Ashbourne terms. Mr. M'Murrough Kavanagh is a Carlow landlord who, having begun as a Conciliationist and Devolutionist, deserted his professed principles to obtain a seat in Parliament, and was afterwards one of Mr. Dillon's own "new landlord friends and associates" in the Irish Party as a member of the Irish Party until his objection to the Lloyd George Budget drove him out of public life altogether. Mr. Sloane

It cannot be necessary to make any comment to those who have read what my proposal really was; but the Irish public, outside Munster, were denied the opportunity of reading it for themselves. The *Freeman* report of my Watergrass-hill speech, as of all others, consisted of a sentence here and there, patched together without the slightest coherence, a system admirably illustrated by their treatment of the Watergrass-hill proposal. For the *Freeman* report contained my comment, "Now, in heaven's name, what is the crime of making that suggestion?" but reported not a syllable of what the suggestion was, though it was fully set forth by me in the preceding sentence. But press even imagination as we may into the service of charity, it is not possible to conceive what justification Mr. Dillon was able to offer to his conscience for the charge that I had proposed to exclude the Irish Party from the suggested national conference in view of the further explanation—reported by the *Cork Examiner* and again suppressed by the *Freeman*—which I gave of the part Mr. Redmond and the Irish Party might play in such a conference:

We are told that such a conference ought to have the sanction of Mr. Redmond and of the Irish Party and the United Irish League. Of course it ought; nobody outside a lunatic asylum would suggest that such a great council of the nation could take place without their participating in it. Their opposition would be a fatal barrier to it, as it was to the Labour Conference last winter. But can any man give me any intelligible reason why the Irish Party should not participate in it? I will go further and say, why should they not take the initiative in summoning it?

was the first leader of the Independent Order of Orangemen, who, if the policy of Conciliation had been allowed to proceed, would long ago have overthrown the power of the ancient obscurantist Order in Ulster. With Mr. Healy I had not up to this time resumed relations at all, while his aid against me had been assiduously, though unavailingly, courted by Mr. Dillon and his friends. All who know Ireland will appreciate the craft of the allusion to my imaginary intimacy with my aristocratic "new friends and associates," directed to a people nursed by bitter experience into suspicion, and even horror of such intimacies on the part of their leaders. If the shaft was ridiculously without point in my own case, it was only because everybody in the least acquainted with me knew my aversion to "society" and all it connotes to be a fault amounting almost to a disease, and knew that the only person for whose sake I might have conquered my objections was to the full as free from social ambitions as myself. It was because nobody had better reason than Mr. Dillon to know all this that his stooping to weapons of such a character could awaken any stronger emotion than a laugh among those familiar with my idiosyncrasies.

All this I exposed in my reply to Mr. Dillon at Carrigaline, but once more the reply was suppressed, and the Board of Erin lodges who heard his assurance in Derry that I had proposed to shut Mr. Redmond and the Irish Party out of the national conference doubtless to this day accept the fiction for gospel truth, for anything Mr. Dillon or the *Freeman* has ever done to undeceive them.

It was a depressing experience of the seamy side of politics, but was not personally beyond the endurance of one who for a quarter of a century had been seasoned to an almost daily newspaper fire. For the minor Thersites who were sent through the country to repeat Mr. Dillon's railings in still coarser terms, there was never much difficulty in according the same indulgence with which the old Trojan dismissed their Greek original:

HECTOR. Art thou of blood and honour?

THERSITES. No, no, I am a rascal, a scurvy railing knave, a very filthy rogue.

HECTOR. I do believe thee—live!

In the case of one for whom feelings of respect and trust had been so intimately wrought into me, it was, indeed, a different matter; still it is a poor philosophy that is not prepared to bear much misrepresentation as its fair share of the common lot in a world of cross purposes, "where we know that every creature groaneth and is in labour even till now." Even when the personalities hurled against me grew to be specific charges, so to say, with chapter and verse, as heinous as could well be framed against a man trusted by a people whose confidence has not infrequently been betrayed, it would never have occurred to me to exact punishment for them in a court of law, if my exposure of the grotesque injustice of their charges had only been allowed to reach the public eye as freely as the accusations themselves. We have already seen, however, that the worst of all the offences of my assailants was their systematic suppression of my replies through a newspaper despotism which, everywhere outside Munster, was for practical purposes a monopoly. In these circumstances, there remained but one way of establishing beyond yea or nay the truth with respect to charges cutting to the

very heart's core of Irish public life, and that was by legal proceedings which would compel the publication of the sworn evidence by the offending newspapers.

My action for libel against the *Freeman's Journal* newspapers was tried before Mr. Justice Johnson and a Special Jury at the Limerick Spring Assizes of 1907. There were six sets of speeches and publications set forth in the Statement of Claim, each of which was found by the jury to be a false and defamatory libel, and to have been published with malice. The libels can be grouped most conveniently here under three heads. The first, a charge of "unnatural services to insatiable landlordism," and a betrayal of the farmers in their Land Purchase transactions; the third, fourth, and fifth, a conspiracy with the Unionists for the destruction of the Irish Party and a sale of 18 Irish seats to anti-Nationalists; and the second and sixth, a charge of organizing a London syndicate to obtain possession of the *Freeman's Journal*, as the principal obstacle to the conspiracy against the national cause, and prostitute it to Unionist purposes.

LIBEL I.—THE UNNATURAL SERVICES TO LANDLORDISM

The great trouble in the South of Ireland at present is to counteract the tremendous damage to the business of the fair price of land caused by Mr. William O'Brien. While advocating popular demands, Mr. O'Brien has only too efficaciously sapped the foundations of all reasonable solution of these demands by his unnatural services to insatiable landlordism. No champion professedly on the landlords' side has done a tenth part of the injury to the question of the sale and purchase of land at fair price than Mr. O'Brien has done. The greatest present-day admirers of the hon. gentleman are the old rusty tools of the landlords—the bailiffs, the agents, and the grabbers.—(Letter from Glenroe, published in *Freeman*, June 19, 1906.)

The jury found that, according to the innuendo in the Statement of Claim, this was a charge that I had, while posing as a champion of the tenants, played the game of insatiable landlords, and found that it was a false and defamatory libel, and was published with malice.

The official figures of purchase, wherever my counsels

were heard, as contrasted with those where the advice of the *Freeman* and Mr. Dillon had been followed, were so crushing a confutation of this letter—turned it, indeed, into so merciless a piece of irony on the performances of the "determined campaigners"—that I should have been well content to see it side by side with an honest report of a speech of mine, at Bantry the previous day, in which the statistical results of the two policies were set forth. The *Freeman*, however, carefully excised from the Bantry report every word which showed by irrefutable figures that my "unnatural services to landlordism" had taken the peculiar shape of compelling the landlords to be content with two years' purchase less, wherever my voice had reached, than in the happy provinces where Mr. Dillon and Mr. Sexton reigned supreme, and that my popularity with "the old rusty tools of the landlords—the bailiffs, the agents, and the grabbers" was, at all events, of an unexpectedly altruistic character, considering that it was owing to our operations in the immense county of Cork that the occupation of fully half the entire body of "bailiffs, land agents, and grabbers" was gone for ever.¹ These official statistics, indeed—the one conclusive test as between the two policies—had been rigorously kept from the knowledge of the Irish public until the sworn evidence at the trial compelled their publication.

It is one of the singularities of the Limerick action that the principal aid and comfort of those whose aim was to make shipwreck of the Land Settlement of 1903 was derived from the official commissioners appointed to administer it. The staple of my cross-examination during two days was Mr. Commissioner Finucane's notorious Report of the Estates Commissioners of 1906. The character of that Report may be guessed from the fact that not only did the *Freeman* make it the holy writ for the justification of its own work of havoc, but the Clan-na-Gael of the United

¹ It was at first alleged, on behalf of the defendants at the Limerick trial, that their report of my Bantry speech was published exactly as it was received from their local correspondent. It had to be afterwards admitted that the correspondent had duly forwarded a fair report of my words, and that it was in the Dublin office my reply by anticipation to the Glenroe libel which they were publishing the same night was deleted.

States hailed it as the official warrant for a grand national repudiation hereafter of bargains which were declared by England's own administrators to be at least 50 per cent too high. *The Gaelic American*—the organ of the Clan—set forth the justification for the future campaign of repudiation under such flaming headings as :

Revelations of Land Commissioners!—Price of land artificially raised 68½ per cent over average prevailing before 1903!—Evicted Tenants left in the lurch.

and in the succeeding number :

Clan-na-Gael's Policy fully vindicated!—Its exposures of the fraudulent Land Act of 1903 completely justified by the Estates Commissioners' Report!—Ireland robbed to relieve distressed Landlords!¹

The entire argument of the Report as to excessive prices was based upon the obvious fallacy of a comparison between the number of years' purchase under the Act of 1903 and those under the previous Acts. In the case of the previous Acts the tenants' annuity was £4 per cent; under the Act of 1903 it was only £3 : 5s. for practically the same period. Substantially, all the old Ashbourne sales were on first term rents; most of those under the new Act were on second term rents reduced by 22 per cent. When Mr. Commissioner Finucane emphasized the fact that the average rate of purchase under the old Acts was 18 years' purchase, and under the new Act 22.9, he forgot to make any reference to these vital differences for the tenant-purchasers in the conditions in the two cases. But that was not all. The Land Stock in which Ashbourne vendors were paid was for a number of years at a premium, running up as high as 112-109½ in 1898-9; that is to say, at a bonus equal to the 12 per cent bonus under the Act of 1903. Nevertheless, with all these advantages, the rate of sales under the old Acts reached little over £1,250,000 a year, while Mr. Commissioner Finucane had to report £33,000,000 worth of sales under the new Act during the two years and

¹ The organ of the Clan-na-Gael added: "For the character of the Land Act, as above stated, we have the authority of the Estates Commissioners, and of Mr. Thomas Sexton, editor of the Dublin *Freeman's Journal*."

a half dealt with in his Report. The absurdity of the fallacy underlying the Commissioners' Report is sufficiently illustrated by one passage from my cross-examination :

According to the Commissioners' Report, five years before the passing of the Act the landlords were willing to sell at 19 and 18 years' purchase?—Indeed, they were not. It was just because they were not willing to sell that the Act of 1903 was necessary.

MR. JUSTICE JOHNSON—There is nothing to show they were willing to sell. If they were, the Act need not have been passed at all.

The other ground on which the Estates Commissioners ranged themselves under the *Freeman* banner and earned the panegyrics of the Clan-na-Gael was still more untenable. The Commissioners ignored altogether the tenants' own right of combination as an element in fixing the price of land, and claimed for themselves the jurisdiction as to "the equity of price" apart from the State's security for the repayment of its loans: in other words, bade the tenants look to Castle officials (who might change with the first change of Government) to take the place of their own organization in making their bargains; or at the least suggested that without their assistance the Act of 1903 in some unexplained way compelled the tenants to pay 50 per cent in excess of Ashbourne prices. Of course, no suggestion could be more unfounded. The answer to all Mr. Commissioner Finucane's sophistries about the increase of 50 per cent (or, according to the Clan-na-Gael interpretation of his Report, $68\frac{1}{2}$ per cent) over Ashbourne prices was to be found in a modest Table II. A which was buried away in the Appendix of the Report, and remained steadily invisible to the lynx eyes of the *Freeman*, for its readers were never allowed to behold it. And for this excellent reason, that Table II. A showed the prices of first term and non-judicial rents (which were those of the Ashbourne prices) to be in the non-congested districts of Cork 21.2 and 20.8 years' purchase respectively, and in the congested districts of Cork 19.7 and 21.1 respectively, which no jury of farmers would deny to be the substantial equivalent of Ashbourne prices, and which were obtained without any patronage from the

Estates Commissioners, by the aid of a little common sense, backed by the legitimate power of combination which the Swinford revolt had broken down for the rest of the country. In spite of all which, three-fourths of my cross-examination and of Mr. Sexton's examination exhibited the funny spectacle of England's own officials quoted triumphantly by the apostles of eternal discord in Ireland and in the interests of party discipline and majority rule against my reactionary self for having stood true to a treaty which was signed by the leader of the party and unanimously endorsed by its members, and which has transferred half the soil of Ireland to the people's ownership on terms which might have been practically of their own making.¹

The answer to the Glenroe libel was summarized in a single question and answer from my own examination :

What were your "unnatural services to landlordism"?—To abolish it. All the Irish tenants had gained by the land agitation of the previous twenty years was a reduction of 20 per cent. My unnatural services under the Land Conference Agreement was to give them a reduction of 40 per cent more right away and the ownership of the soil of Ireland thrown in.²

¹ The only other shadow of defence, except Mr. Commissioner Finucane's Report, attempted by the *Freeman*, was the scarcely more heroic one of endeavouring to open old wounds as between Mr. Healy (who was one of my counsel) and myself by raking up old newspaper extracts of our encounters in the wars of many years before, in which I was fighting the battle of Mr. Dillon and the *Freeman*. Most of these extracts were from a newspaper I seldom read, written by a young gentleman who had by this time taken service upon a Dillonite journal, and one of the most ferocious which was brought up in judgment against me was, as I afterwards remembered, written by Mr. T. P. O'Connor, M.P. One of my answers in cross-examination will show of how little avail to Mr. Dillon's friends was the device of trying to turn my retorts upon Mr. Healy the politician against Mr. Healy the counsel :

"It is quite true that I was in favour of a rigid interpretation of the party pledge in the sense of iron barrack-yard discipline until we won Home Rule, and that upon this issue hard blows were given and taken between us; but all that was changed, and that theory of party discipline broken down for ever, when Mr. Dillon himself went down to Swinford to do the very thing he, even more than I, had been attacking Mr. Healy for, and doing it in a much more inexcusable way, for the majority rule Mr. Healy objected to was a varying majority of four or five men, while the majority rule Mr. Dillon revolted against was that of a unanimous Irish Party, a unanimous National Directory of the League, and a practically unanimous National Convention."

² It may be added that the rev. gentleman who was the real author of the Genroe libel, nominally signed by three of his peasant parishioners, was sitting in Court throughout the trial and was not examined in support of his anonymous calumnies.

LIBELS II., IV., and V.—THE CONSPIRACY TO DESTROY THE
IRISH PARTY AND SELL 18 NATIONALIST SEATS

There is another matter on which I desire information. It has been treated evasively and mysteriously by the Chief Secretary. There was a mysterious dinner-party arranged in 1903 which never came off. What are the facts? According to the Chief Secretary, not in the year 1904, but in 1903, after the Land Act had been passed amidst general applause—at a time when Lord Dunraven received compliments which he had so well earned from all sections of public opinion, and at the time when the hon. member for Cork City had converted an organ hostile to the Government into an organ of conciliation—it was then that Lord Dunraven came to him and discussed the chances and prospects of a moderate Unionist Party in Ireland. Mark the introduction of the word Unionist. There was a Unionist Party already. What was the idea of the new party in Ireland? Was it to be composed of Unionists is the essence of the question, or was it to be composed of a section of Unionists and a section of Nationalists? . . . Then the right hon. gentleman went on to say that the subjects proposed to be discussed at the dinner-party were subjects on which all men in Ireland were agreed. That appears to be a very lame explanation of that intended dinner-party. It is a matter which ought to be probed to the bottom. . . . I should like to know who were the gentlemen who were going to be invited to the dinner-party. Were they Nationalists, or Nationalists and Unionists? In Lord Dunraven's statement there is not a single word about its being a Unionist Party. It is, on the contrary, a Moderate Central Party, having for its basis the devolution proposals; therefore, that dinner-party is indissolubly connected with all that took place afterwards. These questions are all exceedingly pertinent, and they ought to be frankly answered, if we are to form a real, well-informed judgment of the present crisis in Ireland. Was the Chief Secretary aware of the advances and proposals that were being made to some of us Nationalists in the autumn of 1903? It would be a very interesting thing for me to know whether he was aware of it. I speak only for myself, but I was approached, not at all on behalf of Sir Antony MacDonnell, but on behalf of the friends of Lord Dunraven, in regard to the new policy, and I say that for any man who has lived in Ireland to imagine that he is going to get out of this business by simply hiding his head in the sand is most absurd. I wish to read to the House a brief extract from the London *Globe*, which has made itself the official organ in London of the anti-MacDonnell crusade. The correspondent of the *Globe* in Dublin, a very well-informed gentleman I have no doubt, said on Saturday last: "At an early date I propose to lay before the readers of the *Globe* some interesting details as to the manner in which the Chief

Secretary set himself to bring about a settlement of the Irish question. For the moment I may say that it is useless for any Minister, short of buying a newspaper outright, to hope to influence his policy by the acquisition through a third party of such of its shares as may for the time being be on the market." That is a very cryptic saying to people here ; but we in Dublin understand it perfectly, and we look forward with considerable interest to the details which may be published in the *Globe* in the next few days. This affair has assumed such proportions that it has obscured and overshadowed the amendment.—(Mr. John Dillon, House of Commons, February 21, 1905.)

Mr. Dillon's summing up of the Dunraven-Wyndham story last night profoundly impressed the House. The truth will be found at the bottom of the well, but the Premier affected to be shocked by Mr. Dillon's expression of the view that the well has not yet been fathomed. The matter has gone too far now to be left where it stands. . . . Let their convinced opinions, their real judgment on Irish issues be placed on record, and their nefarious party work will be prevented and defeated.—(*Freeman's Journal*, February 22, 1905.)

My position with regard to Mr. William O'Brien is very simple. Up to his retirement I was in substantial agreement with him. . . . But I say that no one has a right to read into such an attitude any responsibility or approval of events that have since taken place. No one has any right to read into that attitude any approval, for example, of Mr. Wyndham's action on the Land Act ; any approval of Mr. Wyndham's attempt to undermine and destroy the Irish National Party, and substitute in its place a Moderate Party ; any approval of the Reform Association or of the principles of Devolution. . . . Now let me say for myself, and I think I can say it with perfect truth of the whole of the Irish Party, that we never raised a hand against Mr. Wyndham until we discovered that he was engaged in a deliberate plot to destroy the Irish Party, to create, as I have said, a Centre Party in its place ; and to do so by means which some day or other probably will be made public, and which are not creditable either to him or to his Government.—(Mr. John Redmond in London, July 14, 1905.)

Mr. Redmond's speech to the Irishmen of London last night was a crushing reply to the attack of Mr. William O'Brien on the Irish Party and the pledge that makes the party formidable. . . . That is Mr. O'Brien's contribution to the national defence. We shall soon have the Irish Party indicted for Lord Dunraven and Mr. Wyndham's attempt to destroy the national unity by the creation of a Moderate Centre Party in the South of Ireland. It had the same object as Mr. Balfour's Redistribution scheme, and was spared Mr. O'Brien's assault. In vindicating the party policy for the past two years, Mr. Redmond took occasion to repudiate warmly the insinuation that either he or the majority of the Irish Party was in sympathy

with Mr. O'Brien's policy during that period. He protests against the notion that those who approved of the Land Conference, and who agreed to accept the Land Act as a measure from which some good might be extracted, are implicated in any responsibility for Mr. O'Brien's policy since the autumn of 1903. According to Mr. O'Brien, they are bound in honour, not merely to the Land Conference Report, which the landlords have most practically repudiated, but to all the development of so-called "Conciliation policy." They were bound to spare Mr. Wyndham while he was insidiously destroying the best-intentioned parts of the Land Act in their administration; they were bound to ignore his shameful subordination of the administration to the dictation of the Orangemen; they were bound to welcome the Reform Association and its absurd Devolution proposals; they were bound to ignore his cowardly *volte-face* on the University question. The Irish Party, having passed a resolution of approval on the Land Conference Report, were, in fact, thereby bound to be low while the Moderate Centre Party was being organized to dish them. No doubt if they had assented to all this they would be later on invited to commit suicide to save themselves from slaughter.—(*Freeman's Journal*, July 15, 1905.)

Two years ago, at a time when Mr. Wyndham won a considerable hold on Ireland by his lavish promises during the passing of the Land Bill, the confident belief which he had encouraged, that in the session of 1904 he would remove the grievances of the Irish Catholics in the matter of University education, Lord Dudley's speeches, and by the rumours which were circulated wholesale throughout the country in anticipation of the King's visit, Mr. Wyndham made a most determined effort to break up the Irish National Parliamentary Party, by driving out the men who are described as "sham fighters," "irreconcilables," etc., etc., and constructing a new party which was to be composed of Lord Dunraven and his friends and the more moderate and sensible section of the Irish Party. And in pursuit of this object he had recourse to means which, to put it in the mildest form, ought never to have been used by a man in the position of the Chief Secretary. And I agree with Mr. Redmond that if all the details of the intrigue of the autumn of 1904 are ever made public, they will prove in the highest degree discreditable to Mr. Wyndham and to those who were associated with him in these operations. The only causes which the public can conjecture to have led to his resignation are the attacks of the Orange Party and the publication by Lord Dunraven of the programme of the Reform Association, unless, indeed, we are to be told that the true cause of Mr. Wyndham's disappearance was the failure of his plot to break up the Irish Party. Mr. Wyndham got not only fair play, but far more than fair play, and the use he made of his opportunity was to resort to secret and not very reputable means to

disrupt the Irish Party and set up a new loyal party in Ireland. And what, in my judgment, it is really of interest in the country to know is, not why Mr. Wyndham resigned, but what were the details of this plot against the existence of the Nationalist Party, what it was proposed should be the constituent elements of the new party, what was its programme, and who was to be its leader.—(Mr. Dillon in County Derry, August 15, 1905.)

Mr. Dillon's speech in County Derry will command the hearty approval of the Nationalists of Ireland. . . . Mr. Wyndham's so-called Conciliation policy was an insidious attempt, by plausible and treacherous half-promises, to undermine and disrupt the pledge-bound Nationalist Party and to set up what was called a Centre Party in their stead.—(*Freeman's Journal*, August 16, 1905.)

But if we are to be treated to revelations, I trust some one will reveal the true and full history of the plot to break up the Irish Party in the autumn of 1903, and to form a new Loyal Central Party. That new party was, we are informed on the authority of Lord Dunraven, to have been constructed out of his friends and the more moderate section of the Irish National Party, "Swinford Workhouse" politicians and others of that stamp being, of course, excluded. If the truth about that action could be revealed, it would undoubtedly be an interesting and valuable revelation. And it would have this advantage over the bogus revelations which are now being poured forth in the interests of faction and disruption, that it would be a valuable contribution to contemporary Irish history, and most useful for the guidance of the people in the policy which they ought to pursue.—(Mr. Dillon, October 11, 1905.)

It is hard to imagine how Mr. O'Brien can persist in his campaign of disruption after the speech yesterday delivered by Mr. Dillon. That speech is absolutely unanswerable.—(*The Freeman's Journal*, October 12, 1905.)

Never allow yourselves to be wheedled, hoaxed into unnatural alliances until the freedom of Ireland is finally established. The alternative policy is that advocated by Mr. William O'Brien and by the Cork Advisory Committee—a body which, judging by the language used at its meeting, ought, I think, to alter its name and call itself the William O'Brien Leadership Committee. What is that policy? Having condemned the Irish Party and the Directory as purely mischievous in their action, and committed to a short-sighted and dangerous policy, it proposes to set aside the leadership of Mr. Redmond, the party, and the Directory, and commit the future guidance of Irish politics to a conference of the friends of Timothy Healy, Lord Dunraven, Thomas Sloane, T. W. Russell, John Dillon, and John Redmond. On the face of it, this proposal is a proposal for the destruction of the National Party, and for the final abandonment of the whole principle on which the National Party has been founded

since it was formed in 1885; and I say that if the National Party were to consent to such a proposal it would become a laughing-stock and would immediately lose all hold on the confidence of the country. But, gentlemen, that is exactly what is intended. This new policy is a policy having in view, not the maintenance and strengthening of the National Party, as we have known it, but the destruction of that party and the substitution in its place of a new system—a system under which the doors of the House of Commons, through Irish constituencies, would be then open to men who bind themselves by no pledge, and who are not Nationalists. In order to thoroughly understand the origin and true inwardness of this policy, we must call to mind what happened in the autumn of 1903. It is a great misfortune that we cannot get any one to reveal to us the full details of the transaction of that autumn. But this much we know, that Lord Dunraven and Mr. Wyndham were actively engaged in a plot to break up the Irish National Party and to construct a new Loyal Central Party out of a section of the Irish Party and the friends of Lord Dunraven, and we know that Lord Dunraven and Mr. Wyndham were under the impression that a section of the Irish Party could be counted on to support such a plan. We know that the columns of the *Irish People* were then open to Lord Dunraven, and an article was published by him in the *People* which, if it meant anything, pointed in that direction. And then I have heard it stated—though I cannot say with what amount of truth—that Dunraven and his friends were led to believe that 18 Irish seats would be placed at their disposal. At the same time, a most determined effort was made by a London syndicate to buy up a controlling influence in the *Freeman's Journal*. This attempt was defeated by the courage and ability of Mr. Sexton, who preserved the *Freeman* as an independent national journal for Ireland. And I am convinced that amongst all the great services which Mr. Sexton has rendered to Ireland, none has been more useful to the national cause than his action in preserving the *Freeman's Journal* as an independent Irish newspaper. If the *Freeman's Journal* were controlled from London, and the Irish Party broken up, what would become of the constitutional movement in Ireland? And when I observe the ferocious attacks that have been made since 1903 on Mr. Sexton and the *Freeman's Journal* I am forced to the conclusion that the real crime of which Mr. Sexton has been guilty was his successful resistance to the London syndicate in their attempt to buy a controlling influence in the *Freeman*, and the fact that Mr. Sexton and the *Freeman's Journal* were insurmountable obstacles to the great scheme of Mr. Wyndham and Lord Dunraven to break up the Irish Party and construct a new Loyal Central Party in its place.—(Mr. Dillon, Castlecomer, November 19, 1905.)

Here there was no mistaking the inference suggested in speech after speech to innocent rustic audiences, who never heard a word in reply, and driven home in leading article after leading article. It was that the Devolution scheme was hatched in secret colloquies between Mr. Wyndham, Sir Antony MacDonnell, Lord Dunraven and myself, with the object of destroying a genuine Nationalist Party in the Unionist interest by the traitorous aid of a section of the Irish Party and the corrupt sale of eighteen Nationalist seats in Parliament, and that whenever the truth came to be fully revealed, the country would be face to face with the most satanic plot ever devised against the Irish national cause. It seemed incredible that the malice of old comrades could be capable of conceiving such enormities, or their credulity of believing them; yet there was no escape from the one alternative or the other; and the jury (on which, so far as I know, I had only one political sympathiser) came to the harsher conclusion of the two. Yet how quickly the whole invention vanished into thin air the moment its authors were put to the test may be judged from one short extract from my examination:

Now I want to ask you is there a particle of foundation for the suggestion that you were either a party or in any way privy to the formation of a Central Party in Ireland?—Oh, not the remotest approach to it, in any shape or way.

The Devolution proposals of Lord Dunraven appeared after your re-election for Cork?—Yes.

Had you, directly or indirectly, anything to say to Lord Dunraven putting forward those Devolution proposals?—Nothing whatever. From the time of my resignation in 1903 until my re-election for Cork, I had no communication of any sort with Lord Dunraven, Mr. Wyndham, or Sir Antony MacDonnell, directly or indirectly.

I believe you never even met Mr. Wyndham?—Never exchanged a word with him in my life except across the floor of the House of Commons.

Had you anything to say to what is called this syndicate for buying up *Freeman* shares? or to this mysterious dinner-party?—Decidedly not. I never stirred from my own home in Westport during the entire time. I had no communication of any sort or kind with any of these people.

Were you invited to this mysterious dinner-party?—Certainly not.

Did you ever try to found a Moderate Centre Party with Lord Dunraven or anybody else? or covenant to sell eighteen Nationalist seats to him?—I never heard a suggestion from any human being of anything of the kind until I read it in the *Freeman's Journal*.

The chairman of the Irish Party was associated with you in whatever you did?—In every step I took I had his co-operation.

And approval?—And approval. I never saw one of these men except in his company and at his request.

That Mr. Sexton and his friends had actually managed to convince themselves that there was some foundation for Mr. Dillon's terrible accusations and that "the truth would be found at the bottom of the well," I am quite willing to conclude from seeing how abjectly they were struck all of a heap by the above evidence. They did not venture to return to the subject by a single question during my two days' cross-examination. Mr. Sexton did, indeed, feebly attempt to deny in his own cross-examination that the references to the moderate section of the Irish Party who were plotting at secret dinner-parties for the betrayal of their party were intended for me, but when asked for whom else they could have been intended, he found himself, with all his remarkable dialectical skill, at such a loss for an answer that the Judge—one of the mildest of men—burst out: "There is really no use in a man trying to bury his head in the sand in that way."¹ It was clear that Mr. Sexton had looked to Mr. Dillon

¹ Mr. Sexton's figure in the witness-box under the masterly cross-examination of Mr. Campbell, K.C., was, indeed, one of the chief surprises of the trial. One or two specimens will show how unpleasant the surprise was to his friends:

"Where did you derive authority for criticism of the action of the leader of your party?—At that date?"

"Yes.—(After a pause) Well, the National Convention——"

"Did you ever before you made the attacks write to Mr. Redmond on the subject?—No."

"Or consult him?—Oh, no."

"Though he was the leader of the party. Tell me were you on speaking terms with Mr. Redmond?—Well, Mr. Redmond——"

"Will you answer my question?—No! I was not."

"Now, Mr. Sexton, I suppose I may take it that Mr. Redmond in his efforts for the tenants during the years 1902 and 1903 was actuated by the highest motives?—I have no doubt that he was; not the slightest."

"Would it be in your opinion a fair criticism of him that he was 'rendering unnatural services to insatiable landlordism'?—No, it would not be."

"Now, sir, can I ask you in what particular do you suggest he differed in all that period from Mr. William O'Brien?—Well, I am not aware."

to make good his words to his innocent country audiences in Derry and Castlecomer. My cross-examiner, Mr. Ronan, K.C., pressed me with the freedom permissible in Irish courts, to give my opinion of Mr. Dillon's conduct.

Do you think Mr. Dillon to be an honourable man?—I certainly believed him to be quite incapable of conscious malevolence. But he is a man rather devoid of imagination of the higher kind and liable to a suspicious habit of mind, and I do believe he managed

“And yet while you admit that that would not be fair comment on Mr. Redmond, the *Freeman* published of Mr. O'Brien a statement that he rendered unnatural services to insatiable landlordism?—They published a letter from a country branch containing these words.

“From a country branch? Don't you know that what gave sting to that libel on Mr. O'Brien was not the letter but your publication of it? Don't you know that?—They claimed publication.

“May I take it from you then that when that letter was published you knew of nothing to justify that statement as regards Mr. O'Brien?—Mr. William O'Brien had been pursuing a special course on the Land question for a long time.

“Point out to me during all the Conference agitation and the Land Act of 1903 a single thing that Mr. O'Brien did in reference to Land legislation that had not the approval of Mr. Redmond?—Mr. William O'Brien took up a special position—

“Tell me a single thing he did or said about the Land Act that was not said by Mr. John Redmond?—I am not able to analyse the speeches so as to go into the differences at this stage.

“Was not Mr. O'Brien's view as regards the Land Conference and the Land Act identical with Mr. Redmond's?—Up to a certain time.

“Up to the time of the passing of the Act and up to the time of Mr. O'Brien's resignation?—I dare say up to the time of his resignation.

“Are you still in the dark as to who was referred to by Mr. Dillon as ‘a section of the Nationalist Party’?—I am. Will you allow me to say that the Irish Party consists of about eighty members, and half of them are not personally known to me.

“So that the *Freeman's Journal* has been publishing all these articles and speeches about the new party, and you, as chairman of that paper publishing all these things, have no conception as to whom they referred to?—It was no part of my duty to ascertain.

“At that time you had no conception?—No.

“And have you got any conception now?—No. I would not be certain. I could not identify it.

“Have you any suspicion?—I cannot say I have.

“Have you any belief?—Now, between ourselves—it will go no further?—I cannot undertake to identify the section.

“Who did you think was the individual who had eighteen Nationalist seats to give away?—I really don't know any one who had eighteen seats to give away.

“And yet you publish that? believing that the statement must be false you give it publicity in your paper?—The man says he does not know with what amount of truth.

“The man is Mr. Dillon?—Yes, the speaker.”

to persuade himself that a plot was going on, of which I was the chief machinator, for the destruction of the national movement.

Do you still think Mr. Dillon an honourable man?—I will answer you that as soon as I see him in the witness-box. Here we are now "at the bottom of the well"—where is Mr. Dillon?

Mr. Healy took up the parable in my re-examination.

Mr. Dillon talks about "the William O'Brien Leadership Committee;" at one time did Mr. Parnell offer to retire in your favour, and did you insist upon putting forward Mr. Dillon in your stead?—Yes.

Did you ever put yourself forward as a leader?—I have never taken any position in Irish public life that I could find anybody else willing to take instead of me, and the positions I took were so uninviting that I never found any rivals until our success at the Land Conference brought the inevitable result.

Mr. JUSTICE JOHNSON—You are perfectly right in that, Mr. O'Brien, that is the whole case.

The hearing of the action went on for five days after my evidence; but Mr. Dillon did not appear to express his regret if he had been betrayed into unguarded words, or to explain where his information as to the sale of the eighteen Nationalist seats came from, or who were "the section of the Irish Party" who had plotted "the destruction of the party" and its substitution by "men who bind themselves by no pledge and who are not Nationalists." Is it surprising that he subjected himself to a condemnation even more stinging than the six verdicts of the jury at the hands of a judge whose impartiality the bitterest partisan in Ireland has never challenged—a judge, moreover, of lifelong Liberal sympathies and upon whom a Liberal Government has since conferred the distinction of a Baronetcy? "Now, the next matter complained of," said Mr. Justice Johnson, "was contained in the speeches of Mr. Dillon. He did not know if it struck the jury, but it struck him that the conspirator in this whole case—the dark conspirator—the masked conspirator, who had not come upon the witness-table was Mr. Dillon; but perhaps he had no right to offer that opinion."¹

¹ Mr. Dillon failed likewise to make any response to Lord Dunraven's point-blank contradiction of his statement in one of the libels that "I was myself approached on behalf of the friends of Lord Dunraven in regard to this new policy." Speaking at Limerick on December 20, 1903, Lord Dunraven said:

LIBEL III.—THE CONSPIRACY TO DENATIONALIZE THE *FREEMAN*

None of the charges fulminated by Mr. Dillon created so much natural horror as the suggested conspiracy to capture the principal Nationalist organ in the Press for the Unionists by means of some mysterious plutocratic "syndicate in London." "We in Dublin," he told the House of Commons, "understand perfectly the cryptic saying of the *Globe* as to Mr. Wyndham acquiring power over the *Freeman* by the purchase of shares by a third party," and he left nobody in any doubt who was the Nationalist accomplice in the dark "doings" of the London syndicate by his charge that "the real crime of which Mr. Sexton had been guilty" in my eyes "was his successful resistance to the London syndicate in their attempt to buy a controlling influence in the *Freeman*, and the fact that Mr. Sexton and the *Freeman* were insur-

"Mr. Dillon spoke just a week ago and did him the honour to mention him in his speech. He mentioned him as being more or less connected with a great variety of conspiracies and plots and with general clandestine arrangements. There was, according to Mr. Dillon, a syndicate formed in London with the object of obtaining a controlling influence in the *Freeman's Journal*. There was also a conspiracy—a 'deal' of some kind whereby he (Lord Dunraven) and his friends were to obtain eighteen Irish seats for the purpose, of course, of breaking up the Irish Parliamentary Party. He and Mr. George Wyndham were said to have been constantly plotting for the purpose of driving a wedge into the midst of the Nationalist Party. Well, as far as he was concerned, all these deals and all these conspiracies existed only in Mr. Dillon's fervid imagination. Whether they existed at all outside Mr. Dillon's imagination he could not say. All he knew was this, that so far as he was concerned, he had no part or parcel, directly or indirectly, to say to it, and knew nothing at all about it. He was frankly sorry Mr. Dillon took up that line. He did not think it was worthy of a man of his position to take up that line. It was perfectly true, said Mr. Dillon, that he was not certain whether this deal took place, whereby he (Lord Dunraven) was to acquire eighteen seats. Well, Mr. Dillon must have known perfectly well that when he said he was not perfectly certain, every one of his audience believed that it was true. Yet it was not true, and such a thing never entered into his (Lord Dunraven's) mind. Only last February, he thought it was, Mr. Dillon made a statement in Parliament in reference to him. The exact words he did not remember, but that was immaterial. His statement was to the effect that he had been approached by some person or persons on his (Lord Dunraven's) behalf. Seeing that, he sought an interview with Mr. Dillon and asked his authority for saying so; but Mr. Dillon did not give him any authority, and he then told Mr. Dillon that he was absolutely mistaken, that he had never authorized any one or suggested to any one that they should approach him on his behalf or on behalf of his friends about anything whatever, and he thought that after that Mr. Dillon might have been a little more careful in making other statements which were equally absolutely unfounded."

The contradiction was published two years before the Limerick trial; notwithstanding which, the libels were persistently repeated until summarily closed by the Limerick verdict.

mountable obstacles to the great scheme of Mr. Wyndham and Lord Dunraven to break up the Irish Party and construct a new Loyal Central Party in its place." When we came to have the facts at last out as to what "we in Dublin understood perfectly" of this unspeakable plot, the person who so perfectly understood all about it was missing; all I was able to do to clear up the mystery was to swear that I had never heard a whisper of the transaction until I read Mr. Dillon's speech on the subject; and had not the faintest conception of what it was all about until the true facts came to my knowledge by accident a couple of years afterwards; nor was a single question on the subject hazarded during my cross-examination; while, as we have seen, Lord Dunraven had personally assured Mr. Dillon that he was as innocent as I of any knowledge of the dark designs of "the London syndicate."

When, happily, "the truth was found at the bottom of the well," what turned out to be the key to the mystery? That the Hon. Charles Russell, son of the great Liberal Lord Chief Justice of England and himself a staunch Liberal Home Ruler, having some trust money to invest, purchased some *Freeman* shares and proposed to have them registered in the name of Mr. John Redmond, the Chairman of the Irish Party, and that Mr. Sexton, like the loyal follower he was of "his trusted leader," refused to register the shares unless they were put in the name of Mr. John Dillon! Mr. Russell, in a letter dated 11th May 1903, replied:

There is no gentleman whom personally we should be prepared to nominate more than Mr. John Dillon, but it has occurred to us that it would be more constitutional not to nominate a private member of the party, but that it would be preferable that the leader of the party should be the gentleman named. We are quite prepared to agree with you that the voting power shall be left in the hands of Mr. John Redmond.

But Mr. Sexton, most loyal of followers and fanatical of believers in party discipline and majority rule, summarily put a stop to the correspondence in these tart terms (25th May 1903):

We are desired to point out that Mr. Dillon was suggested as a possible nominee, not because he was a member of the Irish Party,

but inasmuch as he was a distinguished Irish Nationalist, who is a large shareholder in the *Freeman*, of which he has been for a long time a consistent supporter. As to Mr. Redmond, it has no doubt escaped your attention that he is not a shareholder in the *Freeman*, and is or was until a very recent date a director of a rival company, the *Independent Publishing Co., Ltd.*, with which he had been intimately identified from its inception.¹

An astounded public thus learned for the first time that the inexpressible crime of "the London syndicate" was an offer of an eminent Irish Liberal Home Ruler to give a voice in the management of the *Freeman's Journal* not to Mr. Wyndham, Lord Dunraven, or my unspeakable self, but to Mr. Redmond, the leader of the Irish Party, and that the reason why Mr. Sexton earned the thanks of the Irish race for being "an insurmountable obstacle" to that arrangement was that Mr. Russell did not give his voting power instead to Mr. Dillon, who was already at that date in the closest league and covenant with Mr. Sexton against the policy of Mr. Redmond and of the entire Irish Party!

Upon every one of the eighteen issues put before them the jury found that each of the six sets of speeches and leading articles relied upon was a libel, that each of them was false and defamatory, and that each of them was published with malice. One or two Dillonite camp-followers of the meaner sort feigned to find some crumb of comfort in the fact that the jury only awarded nominal damages. But their principals did not even affect to lay that unction to their souls. It may be asserted safely that not half-a-dozen people in all Ireland could be got to believe that it was for damages the action was brought. The knowledge of where the damages awarded to me in previous proceedings of the kind had gone was too fresh in the public mind.² Moreover the jury having

¹ Mr. Redmond had, as a matter of fact, long before ceased to be connected with the *Independent* after the reunion of the Irish Party under his leadership.

² The £100 damages in my action against the *Cork Constitution* were contributed to the Mandeville Memorial; the £100 damages paid by the *Glasgow Herald* were sent to the late Sir Charles Tennant as a contribution to the funds of the Scottish Liberal Association; and the £1000 odd remaining on my hands from a national testimonial to myself after the long proceedings in connection with the Dublin Castle scandals were distributed as a Christmas gift among the poor of my native town. As a rather droll illustration of how little personal feeling counted with me in all this political warfare, it may be recalled that I forgot even the name of the Scottish newspaper against which my action was brought,

suggested a friendly settlement, were aware that only the previous evening I had offered to stop the action on payment by the *Freeman*, in token of the sincerity of their apology, of a sum of £50 to any Limerick charity named by the Bishop (who was a political adversary of mine) and not even to ask for costs. Probably one of the most bitter reflections connected with the verdict must be the regret that the offer was not closed with, and the *Freeman* and all concerned in it saved from the crushing condemnation that followed; for Mr. Sexton's appearance in the witness-box was scarcely less distressing to his own side than Mr. Dillon's absence. The action was brought for the sole purpose of compelling the public disclosure of the truth in reference to every definite accusation made against me, and for the reason—disgraceful enough in a country which has made the suppression of public opinion by coercive laws one of its principal grievances—that in a law court, and before a jury of my countrymen, alone, was it possible for me to make my answer heard under an atrocious system, which the *Freeman* had been practising for years, of libelling, suppressing the reply, and going on libelling again as though reply there were none.

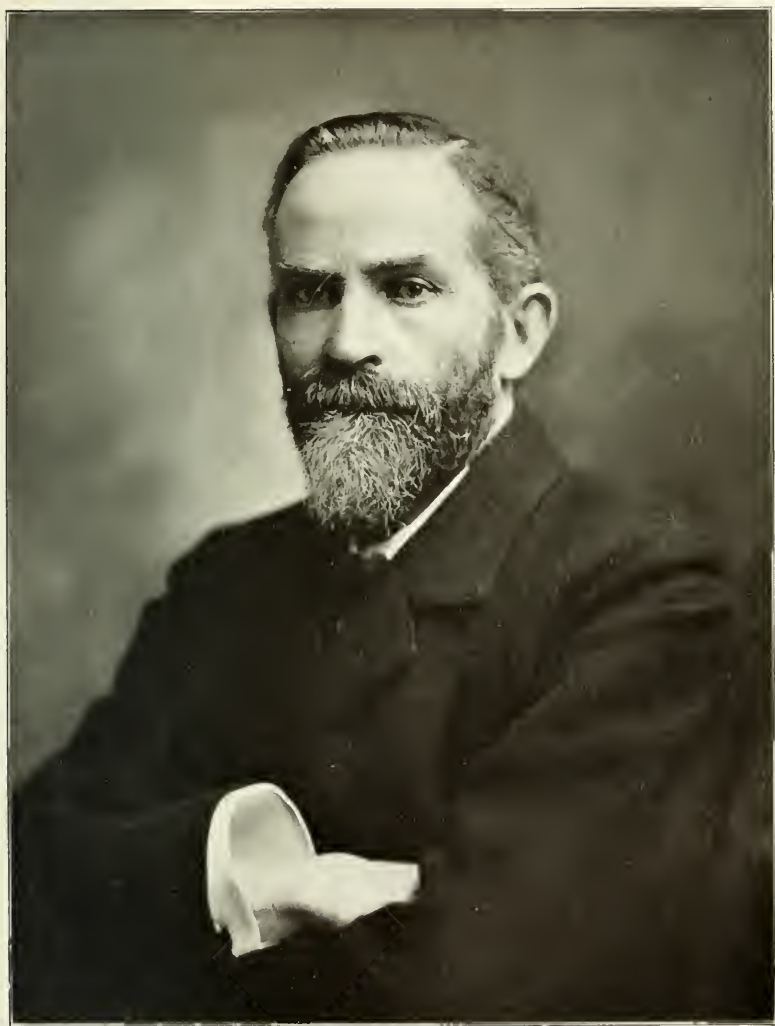
The Limerick verdict established once for all that the campaign carried on for years by speech and pen against the policy of national reconciliation was, in every particular, founded upon falsehood and calumny. I gladly pass—I hope for ever—from the subject of Mr. Dillon's extraordinary derangement of character in respect to myself with the remark of Swift in relation to an ungrateful friend—"Well, he is deep in my debt—there is an end; and I never had the least obligation to him—and there is another end."

and was only set right as to the fact by an indignant protest from the *Scotsman* which I named by inadvertence.

CHAPTER XVIII

PROFIT AND LOSS

WHEN I accepted the seat for Cork, it may be remembered it was with deeper regret than for any other decision of my life, and with the clear consciouness that I was but furnishing the programmeless with a programme—that of attacking me, and attacking me on the detestably false plea of defending national unity against me. The wisdom of the situation, as it seemed to me, was summed up in the heavenly hint vouchsafed to the great Florentine in his dealings with his own faction-fighting city: *Taci e lascia volger gli anni!*—"Keep silent, and let the years tell their tale;" and probably before the earth had made its third yearly round the anti-Conciliationist infatuation would have perished of mere inanity. I am bound to own that events have led me sometimes to doubt whether the instinct of the people of Cork was not the wiser one—in the material, if not in the higher national order. If my forecast of years of cruel misrepresentation for myself in a country where no answering voice could be heard to undeceive the people was only too faithfully realized, it can, at all events, be demonstrated that whatever measures of importance to Ireland have since 1903 been constructed from the ruins—the Labourers Act, the Evicted Tenants Act, the Irish Universities Act, and the smooth progress of Land Purchase on moderate and mutually satisfactory terms, wherever our advice was practised—originated, one and all, in the initiative taken in Cork, had to encounter, one and all, in their first stages, the opposition of the dominant faction of the Irish Party; and could none of them have been carried into law at all except by the same methods of mutual con-



Phot. Lafayette, Dublin.

T. W. RUSSELL, M.P.

ciliation and concession by which the Purchase Act had been carried and which the Cork Election again brought into play. These are roses worth the prick of a great many thorns in the plucking. What happened upon each of these questions can here be summarised briefly and, I hope, without fatigue to the reader.

I. LAND PURCHASE

It need scarcely be recalled that, after shipwrecking our projects for testing the Purchase Act systematically, parish by parish, the anti-Conciliationists failed to provide any defensive machinery of their own, or to stand by the tenants of a single estate in their negotiations with the landlord: in fact fled from the chaos they had created, and only returned to father on the Purchase Act the high prices they had left the tenants to flounder into without any lamp to their feet. Our first care after the Cork Election was to see what could be done to repair the disaster. An advisory committee was formed composed of delegates from the eight divisional executives of the city and county of Cork, which thus supplied a strong central body of manageable size comprising the flower of the representative men and fire-tried Nationalists of this vast region of the country. Landlords as well as tenants instantly came to know that they were dealing with men firmly attached to the twin principles of the policy of Conciliation *plus* Business; sincerely desirous of peace and reasonable accommodation as between class and class of Irishmen, but all the more determined to show no quarter to extortionate demands; men ready-armed for either eventuality—peace for the peaceful-minded, or war for the warlike.

In order to give no pretext for the cry of dictation to our neighbours, we resolved to confine our experiment to the county and city of Cork; but, of course, our success would have tempted every other county in Ireland, had they been left free, to form a similar committee. The official statistics now place it beyond dispute that, if in every county there had been established an advisory committee of the same timber as the Cork one, the Irish tenantry would have benefited to the extent of at least two years' purchase in the price, and have increased at least threefold the area of

purchase. But this was not to be. From the day the Cork advisory committee was founded the high priests of anti-Conciliation put forth all the strength of their organizers and all the wealth of their invectives to denounce, and ridicule, and calumniate it as a "William O'Brien Leadership Committee;" to obstruct its operations even in Cork by the aid of the three or four influential Catholic clergymen who clung to their belief in Mr. Dillon, and when the influence of the organizers in Cork proved inconsiderable, at least to prevent the example of Cork from being imitated elsewhere.

By their fruits the two policies of Conciliation and of anti-Conciliation will be judged. If our critics were right in charging us with being the "hypnotised," if not traitorous, tools of the landlords, the tenants of the districts where our guidance was followed would naturally exhibit the results in higher prices, and those counties where the policy of "kicking up a row" prevailed would be triumphing in the "prairie value" prices which would reward their reliance upon more valiant counsellors. Directly the contrary, however, is the tale told by unanswerable official statistics:—prices roundly two years lower, and purchases of immeasurably greater extent wherever Conciliation *plus* Business got a chance, and high prices, infinitesimally few sales, and unabated misery and unrest wherever the unhappy tenants trusted to Mr. Dillon's speeches and Mr. Sexton's leading articles for their salvation. In the county of Cork the advisory committee was almost universally the guiding influence; in the county of Mayo Mr. Dillon's doctrines held sway, without a disturbing voice. Both counties contain congested districts and are not far from the same extent. Let us compare the five years' operations in the two counties as disclosed by the latest official statistics: ¹—

EXTENT OF SALES.

Counties.	Number of Tenant Purchasers.	Amount of Purchase-money.
Cork	16,159	£7,994,591
Mayo	774	181,256
Cork (Congested Districts)	1,785	351,667
Mayo (Congested Districts)	497	78,543

¹ Report of the Estates Commissioners for period from November 1, 1903, to March 31, 1909.

AVERAGE PRICES ALL ROUND.

Counties.	Reduction on Rent.	Number of Years' Purchase,
Cork	30·7	21·3
Mayo	26·8	22·6
Cork (Congested Districts)	32·7	20·7
Mayo (Congested Districts)	31·4	21·1

Behold in plain prose the results of the two teachings! Here is the answer from practical experience to the cry persistently dinned into the tenants' ears that the iniquitous Purchase Act would compel them to pay anything from 26 to 33 years' purchase of their holdings. Commissioner Finucane who, in his too famous report, estimated that the landlords were getting $68\frac{1}{2}$ per cent over Ashbourne prices, estimated at the same time 28 per cent as the average reduction under the Ashbourne Acts. On the sale of half the entire area of the county of Cork, as his own figures prove, the average reduction on first term, second term, and non-judicial rents lumped together, secured by tenant purchasers under the Act of 1903, amount to 30·7 in the uncongested and 32·7 in the congested districts; while in the classes of first term and non-judicial rents on which the Ashbourne sales really took place, the Cork purchasers under the Act of 1903 obtained average reductions of 31·4 and 32·7 per cent respectively in the uncongested districts, and of 35·6 and 33 per cent respectively in the congested districts—that is to say, well over 4 per cent more than the average reduction under the boasted Ashbourne Acts. And Cork headed not only Mayo, but all the other counties in Ireland both as to the extent and as to the cheapness of its purchases—the average reduction for all Ireland being only 27·5 as compared with Cork's 30·7 and 32·7, and the average number of years' purchase for all Ireland being 22·5, as compared with Cork's 21·3 and 20·7. What more conclusive proof could be given that the "inflated prices" under the Act of 1903 were not inherent in the Act, but were simply the consequence of the conduct of those who destroyed the plans for a systematic test of the Act, seeing that in Cork, where alone those plans got even a moderate share of fair play, no difficulty was found in not only realizing "the

substantial equivalent of Ashbourne prices" but bettering them by 4 per cent.

The statistical records were, indeed, so crushing that it would not be easy to conceive the assailants of the policy of Conciliation *plus* Business ever raising their heads before a body of Irish farmers again, only that they took the most elaborate means of concealing the figures from the public eye. Incredible though the fact may seem, not one farmer in a hundred to this hour has any clear knowledge of the official statistics above quoted. The *Freeman's Journal*, which gave twelve columns of its space to Commissioner Finucane's notorious Report of 1906, suppressed altogether what was for all practical men the most valuable part of the Report—namely, the tables showing the actual terms of sale county by county, and for the sufficient although shameful reason that the tables proved that Cork had made its bargains on better than Ashbourne terms, and that the "inflated prices" only reigned in the happy provinces illuminated by Mr. Sexton's high financial teachings. For several years afterwards it was sought to be shown, by disingenuous questions in Parliament—aided, I regret to say, by no less disingenuous official quibbles—that Cork had rather lagged behind other counties in the number and cheapness of its purchases. The irresistible logic of the official returns, year after year, however, eventually silenced all attempts to dispute that Cork had shown a lead which, if it had only been followed in the rest of Ireland, would have long ago made Land Purchase all but universal, and on substantially cheaper terms, than under any previous Purchase Act.

The sophisticators, however, were not yet at the end of their resources. They continued to suppress the awkward statistics in Ireland, and to keep the public mind addled as to what had taken place in Cork, but in America they adopted a different plan of claiming for themselves the credit of the success which had been gained in spite of them, and which they still affected to deny in Parliament and in Ireland. The Secretary of the United Irish League of America was actually put up to publish a flaming article in the *Irish World*, bragging heaven-high of the success of Cork in abolishing landlordism, and attributing the glorious results

there to the three anti-Conciliationist members for Cork—Messrs. Abraham, Flynn, and Donelan¹—who, as a matter of fact, never gave the smallest assistance in the purchase of any estate of the lot, while the Secretary passed over in frozen silence the names of Messrs. Sheehan, Gilhooly, and Crean, M.P.'s who had been the means of making at least 15,000 families, of some 75,000 souls, the owners of their own hearths and fields. As Gambetta once said of anti-clericalism in France, the anti-Conciliation which in Ireland could see nothing before the country but swindling and national bankruptcy, and the anti-purchase infatuation which led its chief priest to “wish to God he had the power of making land purchase work less smoothly,” were not articles for exportation. Mr. Dillon's secretary in America had positively the hardihood, when appealing for subscriptions only a few months ago (November 1, 1909), to claim that: “Farmers who had purchased their holdings were bound in honour to stand by the Irish Party and subscribe for them,” that is to say, by the men who prophesied ruin and bankruptcy for them if they dared to purchase. Mr. T. P. O'Connor, who was sent out as the party missionary to America in their extremity on the eve of the late General Election, burst out into this dithyrambic hymn to Land Purchase before a New York audience on November 8:

The Irish landlords were on the run, and if they continued to yield, in fifteen years the very name of landlordism would be unknown. I say to the British power:—after seven centuries we have beaten you; the land belongs now to the Irish; the land is going back to the old race.²

¹ Two of these three have since been expelled from Parliament by their constituents, who were not to be deceived by the pretences of the Boston official to an innocent American public.

² Compare with this impudent claim for the success of Land Purchase, Mr. Dillon's speech in Swinford (September 12, 1906): “It has been said that we have delayed the reinstatement of the evicted tenants, and obstructed the smooth working of the Act more than we have done. It has worked too smoothly—far too smoothly to my mind. Some men have complained within the past year that the Land Act was not working smooth enough. For my part I look upon it as working a great deal too fast. Its pace has been ruinous to the people.” Also the following declaration by Mr. Dillon's principal ally in the County of Limerick, Mr. Samuel Harris: “I thoroughly agree with Mr. Dillon that Land Purchase should be stopped, as it is no benefit to the country, and it is a meritorious act of any member of Parliament who checks it.”

Mr. T. P. O'Connor forgot to inform his audience that for the 2192 farmers, who have been ridded of the yoke of landlordism in Mayo, 17,073 of the calumniated farmers of Cork have won their deliverance and upon very much better terms—and have won it, moreover, by the despised methods of conciliation and mutual concession, and not by the irreconcilable high-falutin from which Mr. O'Connor draws his metaphors, or by the sham-battles which have left Mayo stewing in its wretchedness. It is by the not very noble device of parading as their own work abroad the successes they have done their worst to prevent at home that the anti-Conciliationists have coaxed from innocent Irish-American and Irish-Australian audiences the funds which have up to the present saved them from extinction.

2. THE CANADIAN CATTLE QUESTION

In the session of 1906 the late Mr. Cairnes, member for Newcastle-on-Tyne, introduced a Bill raising the embargo on the importation of live store-cattle from Canada to the British ports. Had it been successful the herds from the boundless ranges of the Argentine Republic must have followed. The consequences to the Irish cattle trade, which represents an export of £14,000,000 a year, would have been little short of annihilating. The breeding of young stores is the principal means of livelihood of at least 200,000 of the Irish small farmers. The admission of the chief Canadian and Argentine live-stock would have ruined their market with the fatteners of the east of England and the north of Scotland, and made it impossible for the new occupying proprietors to fulfil their engagements to the Treasury. Even the poor consolation of crippling the trade of the "big graziers" at home would have been denied to Ireland, since on the contrary all the interest of the big graziers of Meath and Roscommon lay in the removal of an embargo which would have enabled them to import their young stores on terms on which the poor breeders of Connaught and Munster would have been hopelessly distanced. It was nothing short of a national calamity which threatened the credit and very means of existence of the Irish agricultural masses.

A Free Trade Parliament had just been elected in the full glow of its triumph over all proposals to restrict the British food-supply. The newly formed Labour Party was enthusiastic in its support of the Bill. The Prime Minister himself (Sir H. Campbell-Bannerman) and the Chief Secretary (Mr. Bryce) had all but irrevocably pledged themselves in its favour to their Scottish constituents, who represented the fattening and "finishing" interest. But the greatest phenomenon of all was that it was a secret of Polichinelle in the lobbies of the House of Commons that not only were the leaders of the Irish Party not irreconcilably opposed to the Bill, but saw in the importation of the Canadian live-stock some providential interposition in the interest of Ireland herself. Incredible as it may well seem now, it is beyond contradiction that the assailants of the Land Conference policy, with all their instruments in the party, in the United Irish League, and in the Press, not merely abstained from offering any opposition to Mr. Cairnes' Bill, but with all their might strove to spread the impression that the admission of the Canadian stores would have a most blessed effect in bringing down prices under the Purchase Act, and that, according to the favourite watchword of the moment: "they were bound to come, and the sooner they came the better." It is impossible to believe that the men who were willing to welcome the ruin of almost the whole small farming class in the hope of lowering purchase prices by one or two years' purchase, or of vindicating their own prophecies that the Purchase Act must lead to wholesale insolvency, realized at the time the full extent of the catastrophe they invited for their country. There would have been something too wicked, if it were not merely too fatuous for words, in the policy of saving a few shillings a year in the small purchaser's annuity by bringing upon the country a loss which the best authorities on the Irish cattle trade estimated would equal, if not exceed, the entire rental of Ireland. The remedy suggested by amiable theoreticians, who had not to drag their children's daily bread out of a small farm in Connaught—viz. that the Irish stock-breeders had simply to turn to tillage—was to the knowledge of everybody practically acquainted with the conditions of Irish farming scarcely more helpful

than the Queen of France's exhortation to her subjects starving for lack of bread to turn to eating currant-cake. Nevertheless, such was the infatuation of the hour, the enemies of Land Purchase hailed the coming Bill with scarcely disguised exultation as some inscrutable vengeance upon the landlords and the tenant-purchasers who had disobeyed their advice, and the vindication of their own prophetic warnings, and worst of all, their feelings were notorious in the Parliamentary lobbies among the supporters of the Bill.

It was Cork, almost alone and unassisted, that averted the catastrophe. It was the only portion of Ireland that took any organized action against Mr. Cairnes' Bill. A deputation, perhaps the most remarkable that ever crossed the Irish Channel, went over to wait upon the Prime Minister, including the Lord Lieutenant of the County and the Lord Mayor of the City, the High Sheriffs of the County and City, the Chairmen of all the representative Boards and Commercial and Agricultural Associations—peers and democrats, Nationalists and Unionists, of all shades and of all creeds—a deputation of such a character that the Premier remarked to me, when they had just left his room: "I never expected to live to see the day when you of all men could have got such a body of Irishmen to agree on anything." The deputation took Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman frankly into their confidence as to what the consequences must be of disturbing on a vital point the conditions on which, on the faith of England's pledges of 1903, a most blessed renovation of the whole framework of society was going on in Ireland, and strongly though he confessed his own sympathies, and even his pledges to his constituents tended in the opposite direction, he left no doubt on our minds that upon this, as in every other relation of his with the Irish cause, he would sacrifice not only his own personal but his own party interests without stint to strengthen and encourage the propitious revolution that was being effected in Ireland.

Our success with the Prime Minister was received with very mixed feelings on the Irish benches. Mr. Redmond, with an unusual gruffness, declined to tell the President of the South of Ireland Cattle Trade Association how the Irish Party intended to vote. It has been repeatedly stated in

public by a member of the Irish Party, and never contradicted, that when, at the party meeting held to consider the situation, it was urged that the admission of the Canadian and Argentine store cattle would spell ruin for the mass of the new tenant-purchasers, one of Mr. Dillon's most active followers, whose name was given, shouted, "Serve them right!" without any rebuke from his colleagues. The leader of the Labour Party, Mr. Keir Hardie, told me after I had spoken in the debate, that he was sorry his party had been allowed to pledge themselves to give their votes for the Bill, for that they would never have done so if they had been made aware of the facts. Only one member of the Irish Party opposed the Bill during the debate, and men who understand how the Parliamentary pulse is felt will appreciate the significance of the fact that he was not Mr. Redmond, nor Mr. Dillon, nor Mr. T. P. O'Connor. In spite of the Prime Minister's loyal acknowledgment of the strength of our objections, the second reading would unquestionably have been carried if a vote could have been taken. It will not be easy to forget the crestfallen look of the anti-Conciliationists as they trooped out of the House after the Speaker had refused Mr. Cairnes' motion to close the debate at the close of the Wednesday sitting, and thus given the Bill its death-blow for the session.

Their more or less stealthy encouragement of the Bill disclosed itself in one other unmistakable manner; for the party, which had displayed so strange an inertia while the peril of the Bill being voted by the vast Free Trade majority was plain to all eyes, held a special meeting on the very night after the debate and came to a resolution which, as it was published the next morning, was read by every Free Trader in the House of Commons as an encouragement—if it would not be too strong to say an incitement—to Mr. Cairnes to reintroduce his Bill in the following session with a certainty of success.

That while we are strongly opposed to the removal of the existing restrictions on the importation of Canadian cattle, and shall do all in our power to prevent their removal, we feel bound to warn the tenant-farmers of Ireland that they have no security for the continued maintenance of this restriction, and we strongly urge them for their own safety to take full account of this, as affecting

the price of land, in agreements which they may enter into for the purchase of their holdings under the Land Act of 1903.

The enemies of Land Purchase have happily proved as unreliable in the character of prophets as of advisers. Four years have since passed, and at the end of that period the free admission of Canadian or Argentine store cattle, instead of proving to be a fatalistic certainty, seems a remoter contingency than ever; the Irish cattle trade, which the tenant-purchasers were assured in every accent of lugubrious dogmatism was bound to fall faster and faster on the slippery road to ruin, has risen in value from £11,447,747 in 1905 to £13,323,521 in 1908, the highest figure it ever reached; and 200,000 tenant-purchasers have been saved from a calamity which in those three years alone would have cost them in moneys numbered a larger sum than their entire yearly payments for the ownership of their own holdings.

3. THE EVICTED TENANTS QUESTION

The night before the Land Conference met, among the 8000 to 10,000 evicted tenants, who were "the wounded soldiers of the land war," there were not as many dozens with any real hope of living to see their restoration to their old homes. As soon as the Land Conference Report was signed and universally accepted as the basis of legislation, the evicted tenants possessed, under the seal and bond of the landlords and of both English parties, a solemn covenant to treat an equitable settlement of the entire evicted tenants problem as an "essential" portion of the Land Settlement. But the execution of this covenant depended upon the loyal observance of the rest of the Land Conference bargain; and the persistent warfare waged from our own side for the complete overthrow of the Land Conference, and of the Act that sprang from it, had in no respect more cruel consequences than in reducing the evicted tenants clauses to a nullity by reviving vindictive passions among the evicting landlords on the one hand, and enabling hostile law officers to give them the narrowest and most illiberal interpretation on the other. The obvious remedy was to reassemble the Land Conference, and get them to specify in precise language the settlement

they had declared to be essential and insist upon its enforcement as an obligation of honour and of public safety.

The Cork Evicted Tenants Association did in their extremity beseech the members of the Land Conference to come together again with that object. All the representatives of the landlords and of the tenants on the Conference accepted the invitation with the single exception of Mr. Redmond. For some unexplained reason, Mr. Redmond declined to aid in giving effect to the covenant to which he had been a party, and the Earl of Mayo, while quite ready to join in a plenary Conference, regarded one from which the leader of the Irish Party ostentatiously abstained as an inevitably futile one. Notwithstanding these discouragements, and still more illegitimate ones,¹ the Conference met in the Shelbourne Hotel, Dublin, for three days in October 1906, and found no great difficulty in agreeing upon the main lines of a settlement which would long ago have removed all the rankling poison of this old wound from the body politic.

The only point of consequence on which we had any conflict of opinion was upon the clause in our Report which recommended the immediate and automatic reinstatement of the 1300 evicted tenants, whose holdings were still on the landlords' hands untaken. The landlord delegates did not object in principle to this being compulsorily done, but only pleaded in a Supplemental Report for a delay until the results

¹ Mr. T. W. Russell, M.P., was waited on by a certain high official in Dublin with a message from Mr. Dillon that unless he withdrew from the Land Conference the Nationalists who formed the bulk of his supporters in South Tyrone would eject him from Parliament at the first opportunity. Mr. Russell resisted this pressure with a high civic courage, and continued to give his still powerful influence to the Conference to the end. When he returned to his own constituency he found the threat realized by an intimation that he should have to quit Parliament unless he promptly "toed the line." He did from that date faithfully "toe the line," and soon after, as it happened, became Vice-President of the Department of Agriculture in lieu of Sir Horace Plunkett, who was still more obnoxious to the dispensers of patronage in Ireland. It remains only to add, as one of life's little ironies, that hard as he thereafter strove to come up to the Dillonite standard, Mr. Russell was driven out of Parliament at the last General Election, owing to the very general disgust caused by his tergiversations. Coercion no less cruel was brought to bear upon Mr. Harrington to induce him to withdraw from the Conference, but without much profit for the coercionists. Broken health and private sorrows disabled Mr. Harrington from giving us the active assistance of the moral courage blended equally of moderation and daring, which was the dominating note of his career; but his adherence to principle throughout all these years—"unshaken, unseduced, unterrified"—was one of the finest redeeming features of a base time.

of the official inquiries then going on as to the necessity for compulsion with those whom Lord Dunraven called "the cantankerous landlords" should be made public. The official reports shortly after appeared, and did justify our demand for compulsion, so that all ground of difference between the landlord and tenant delegates at the Conference disappeared. How auspicious the opportunity was, and how easily a Bill based on those lines might have been carried without contention, if not in the Autumn session then in progress, assuredly in the following session, may be judged from a letter to myself (dated November 6, 1906) from the Chief Secretary (Mr. Bryce), to whom I had sent a copy of our Report :

Thank you for your letter, which I have read with great care and interest, as well as with the respect due to any expression of opinion from you, who have made this question your own, and who, in 1903, did so much to secure its solution. Pray be assured that I do not underrate its importance nor its urgency. The maintenance of social order is involved. But I feel a difficulty in promising at this moment to bring in legislation, because I can't be sure we could pass it through at these sittings, which are already heavily mortgaged ; and though it is probable that legislation may be needed, the case for it will be far stronger when we can show we have done our utmost to get all we can without it. I do earnestly hope you will exert your influence to keep the people quiet. I am pressing the Estates Commissioners to go ahead, and they themselves heartily wish to do so. Your suggestions—I mean those of your Conference—are before them, and when you come over I shall be happy to discuss the whole subject with you.

It is humiliating to be obliged to admit that the contention came from the Nationalist side alone, as in the case of every other effort to free and broaden the working of the Act of 1903. Following the method already pursued in reference to the Limerick meeting—a method thereafter practised on every occasion when there was any danger of conciliatory counsels getting the upper hand—Mr. Dillon published in the *Freeman* on the morning after the publication of the Evicted Tenants Conference Report a manifesto five columns long, with the object of dissuading (not to use an uglier word) the Chief Secretary and Mr. Redmond from giving any heed to its recommendations. Did space permit,

there would be a grim humour in recalling now the anathemas and the usual dark insinuations of some unholy conspiracy against the national cause which he hurled against a report that would have straightway brought back under their old roof-trees 1300 sorely-afflicted families, for whom Mr. Dillon himself had not been able in the previous fifteen years to obtain a scrap of legislative relief. The justice, as well as good taste, of his strictures may be sufficiently estimated from the fact that Captain Shawe-Taylor having shortly afterwards presented himself as a candidate at the Galway Election, Mr. Dillon publicly charged that the candidature of that "black-blooded Cromwellian" had been organized by "the cowardly Shelbourne Hotel Conference" as a deadly stab at the Irish Party. It ought to be unnecessary to say so to any clean-minded Irishman, but the reality was that so far from Captain Shawe-Taylor's candidature being a plot hatched between the landlord representatives and ourselves at the Shelbourne Hotel, the landlord representatives expressly (and, as I thought, rather harshly) refused to admit Captain Shawe-Taylor to the Evicted Tenants Conference at all; and that, so far was I from instigating his candidature myself that, when he besought my help, I wired him twice over that he was but (quite unconsciously, of course) playing the game of the enemies of National Reconciliation.¹

¹ Mr. Dillon's gross charge against "the cowardly Shelbourne Hotel Conference" was but one of dozens of shocking and utterly baseless accusations which he publicly made, and failed either to substantiate or apologise for. In reply to the constantly repeated parrot cry that Mr. Wyndham had, by his instructions to the Estates Commissioners, broken faith as to the evicted tenants, I heard Mr. Wyndham, in Mr. Dillon's presence in the House of Commons, challenge any proof that he had ever publicly or privately receded by an inch from his promises in the debates of 1903, the fact being that the regulations referred to were made not by him, but by his successor in office, Mr. Walter Long, whom Mr. Dillon's own statesmanlike strategy had placed in power in Dublin Castle. Mr. Dillon listened without attempting a word of reply, but in Ireland went on repeating the charge unabashed. On another occasion he made the specific charge that to his own knowledge Mr. Wyndham had actually drawn up a Bill to deprive the Irish priests of the management of the national schools, and intimated that the draft could be produced. Mr. Wyndham replied that the story was a grotesque invention without a particle of foundation; needless to say, Mr. Dillon did not produce his draft, which, if it existed, would be within the procurement of his friends; but neither did he ever express a word of regret for the unfounded accusation into which he had been betrayed. His language at Galway in reference to Captain Shawe-Taylor and his family—as to whom he, of all men, ought to have carefully watched his words—was of a character that might well have reminded him of the example of the brother of Harmodius, who swallowed his own tongue lest it should betray him.

“The cowardly Shelbourne Hotel Conference” had, however, effected its object. The grievance which during the three previous years of the anti-Conciliationists’ sway had remained untouched, was to some extent put on the way to settlement by Mr. Bryce in the following session. Mr. Bryce throughout his Chief Secretaryship (and therefore to its early termination) asserted his independent judgment with a moral courage which, unhappily, cannot be numbered among the many virtues of his successor; but even Mr. Bryce so far “toed the line” in deference to Mr. Dillon’s letter and his 80 votes, that he rejected the far larger recommendations of the Conference for a measure which had to be amended by a further Bill a session or two after, and which, in all the time that has elapsed since, under a perfectly friendly Government, has effected fewer restorations than the proposals of the Conference would have accomplished automatically the moment the Bill received the Royal Assent.¹ But, at least, the evicted tenants received more substantial comfort than a five-column letter of denunciation of conciliation in the *Freeman*.

4. THE LABOURERS QUESTION

One sequel of the Land Settlement, scarcely less wonder-working than the abolition of landlordism itself, has been the establishment of the entire rural labouring class in cosy cottages with allotments of one acre apiece, at a rent not exceeding 1s. a week, where only a few years ago they

¹ The one special charm of the Bill which the anti-Conciliationists took to their hearts was that it substituted the favourite principle of provocative “compulsion” for that of “compulsory attraction.” The value of the two principles may be measured by the fact that under the latter every Plan of Campaign evicted tenant in the country, except those on the Clanricarde estate, has been reinstated in his home, while on the Clanricarde estate all the elaborate machinery of “compulsion” has been up to the present almost wholly ineffectual, and the wretched ratepayers of the County Galway, in which the policy of “kicking up a row” has been most extensively practised, have had to pay £18,000 a year for the support of extra police. It may be permissible to light up this sombre subject with a reminiscence of the old savage days, which have now, in most of the Irish counties, passed away for ever. As Mr. Dillon and myself were one night returning from Loughrea, in the height of the Plan of Campaign fever, after holding one of our “rent-offices” on the Clanricarde estate, our driver confided to us his own views of the situation: “’Twas a grand day’s work, gentlemen, and fine talk; but why don’t somebody go over to London and let daylight through the ould devil! But sure, ’tis the ould story—what’s everybody’s business is nobody’s business!”

were huddled landless in some fœtid room in a town slum, at a crushing rent to starve for half the year. The history of this sub-revolution is all the more fascinating that it has been unbloody. In Committee on the Purchase Act of 1903, Mr. Wyndham accepted a suggestion of mine that he should drop the insignificant clauses touching on the labourers' grievances and replace them by a Labourers' Bill all their own in the succeeding session. When the succeeding session came, the Irish Party were acting as though the supreme object of patriotism was to overthrow Mr. Wyndham and his Under-Secretary with all the other guilty authors of the Purchase Act, and Consols had been falling at so alarming a rate that the Treasury refused point-blank to finance a Labourers' Bill at the same rate of $2\frac{3}{4}$ per cent interest as the Purchase Act. The Chief Secretary's failure under such circumstances to carry a satisfactory Bill was quoted with glee as an *ex post facto* justification for the bitter opposition that had tied the hands of Mr. Wyndham and Sir Antony MacDonnell and stifled the hope in the labourers' hearts.

One of our first cares on my return to Cork was to restore vitality to the labourers' cause, and formulate for the first time a precise legislative scheme on which they might take their stand as their charter. This scheme was placed before the country at a memorable meeting in Macroom on December 10, 1904, and whoever will take the trouble of reading it will find therein all the main principles and even details of the great measure subsequently carried into law in 1906. The Irish Land and Labour Association, which was the organization of the labourers, unanimously adopted the scheme, and commissioned their secretary, Mr. J. J. Shee, M.P., in their name, to solicit the co-operation of the Directory of the United Irish League in convening a friendly Conference of all Irish parties and sections for the purpose of securing the enactment of a Labourers' Bill on these lines as a non-contentious measure. If common ground was to be found anywhere on which all Irishmen, or at the worst all Nationalists, might safely grasp hands, and with a most noble aim, it was surely here. But once more Mr. Dillon scented some new plot against the unity

and authority of the Irish Party, and at the Directory meeting the secretary of the Land and Labour Association was induced without any authority from his principals to abandon their invitation, and thus take the first step to the disruption of his own association.

I bowed and held my peace, to see what another year might bring forth through the efforts of those who had made a national agreement upon the subject impracticable. Another year dragged along without a Labourers' Bill, or any effort of the Irish Party to bring it within the domain of practical politics. The Land and Labour Association determined to rouse the Government and the country to the urgency of the question by an agitation of an unmistakable character. Mr. Redmond, Mr. Dillon and all their chief supporters were invariably invited to these demonstrations; but the moment they learned that Mr. Harrington, Mr. Healy and myself had been invited as well, a rigorous decree of boycott went forth against the Labour demonstrations, and as a matter of fact no representative of the Irish Party figured on the Labourers' platform throughout the agitation. This, unfortunately, was not the most inexcusable of their services to the Labourers' cause. When the Land and Labour Association held their annual Convention, the secretary, who had infringed their instructions at the Directory meeting, finding himself hopelessly outnumbered, seceded from the organization and formed a rival association of his own; and sad and even shocking though the fact is, it is beyond dispute that this split in the ranks of the unhappy labourers, in the very crisis of their cause, was organized with the aid of the moneys of the National Organization administered by the men who were at that very moment deafening the country with their indignation against dissension-mongers and their zeal for majority rule.

It was all over again the dog-in-the-manger policy which had already kept the evicted tenants for years out in the cold. They would neither stand on a non-contentious platform with myself, nor organize a single Labourers' demonstration of their own. It has been repeatedly stated by members who were constant attendants at the meetings

of the Irish Party that the subject of the Labourers' grievances was never once discussed at any meeting of the party until the agitation in Ireland had first compelled the introduction of Mr. Bryce's Bill. Then, indeed, when the battle was won, and there was only question of the booty, Mr. Redmond made the public boast that he and Mr. Dillon "were in almost daily communication with Mr. Bryce upon the subject." The excuse was as unavailing as his plea that the finally revised terms of sale of his Wexford estate left him without a penny of profit. What concerned the country was the first announcement of 24½ years' purchase authorized under his own hand which had "given a headline" to every landlord in the country. In the same way, whatever obsequious attendance he might dance on Mr. Bryce, when the die was cast and the Bill safe, the ineffaceable facts remain that neither he nor anybody in his party whom he could influence had stood on a Labour platform, or touched upon the subject at the party meeting, while the intentions of the Government were, as we shall see in a moment, undecided in the extreme, but on the contrary were (it may be hoped unconscious but none the less indispensable) parties to an organized effort to split the Labourers' Association asunder while their fate was trembling in the balance.

Their war upon the Land and Labour Association was all the more wanton, because Mr. Dillon's persuasion, which gave rise to it that the association had been brigaded into my secret service for some nefarious purposes of my own, was as absurdly astray as all the rest of his troubled dreams of my Machiavellian ambitions. To avoid giving any pretext for such a suspicion, I declined to accept any office or honour or even to become a member of the Land and Labour Association, attended no meeting to which Mr. Redmond and Mr. Dillon were not invited as well as I; and beyond my speeches at those meetings, never in the remotest degree interfered in the business or counsels of the Association. A number of men on the governing council of the Association were to my knowledge, and continued to be, sympathizers with my critics. Beyond the fact that their president, Mr. Sheehan, M.P., happened

to be the most successful practiser of my Land Purchase plans in the county of Cork, as well as by far the ablest advocate the Labourers' agitation had called into action, I know of no shadow of excuse for the extraordinary folly which led responsible Irishmen, with the cry of "Unity" on their lips, not only to decline to meet me on a common platform, but to make tens of thousands of absolutely unoffending labourers the victims of their differences with me.

Despite their aloofness and their attempts to divide the Labourers' body, the agitation swept throughout the south of Ireland with an intensity which nothing could withstand. Demonstrations of amazing extent and still more remarkable resoluteness of spirit were addressed by my friends and myself in Charleville and Macroom, County Cork; Kilfnane and Drumcolliher, County Limerick; Tralee and Castleisland, County Kerry; Scariff, County Clare; Goolds Cross, County Tipperary; and Ballycullane, County Wexford; and by the time they were over, the field was fought and won. One last difficulty remained; but it was a formidable difficulty. So far from Mr. Redmond's "almost daily communications with Mr. Bryce" reaching back to the critical days of the problem, we were already in the first days of summer in the session of 1906 when a communication was made to me from a high official quarter that the Irish Government were so deeply immersed in the Irish Council Bill of the following year that they shrank from the labour and the financial difficulties of a Labourers' Bill in the current session, and an appeal was diplomatically hinted as to whether there was any possibility of slowing down the Labourers' agitation so as to make a postponement to the following session practicable. My reply was undiplomatically clear:—that, if the Government wanted to deprive the Irish Council Bill of all chance of a hearing, they could not take a better means of making the country too hot for themselves than by proposing to fob off the labourers for another year; and that not only would I not, if I could, but could not if I would, moderate their insistence upon immediate redress.

A short time afterwards I met Sir Antony MacDonnell in the House of Commons, and he asked, "What is your labourers' minimum?" I gave him a brief outline of the

Macroon programme. "No rational being could object," he said; "but what does it mean in hard cash?" I replied, "Roughly, four millions." And the great Irishman—"the worst enemy that ever came to Ireland" of Mr. Dillon's nightmare hours—ended the interview with these laconic words: "The thing ought to be done and I think can be." At the period of the session at which the Bill was introduced, the opposition of even half-a-dozen determined men could have at any stage achieved its ruin. Thanks, however, to the good feeling the precedent of the Act of 1903 and the admirably conciliatory temper displayed by the labourers themselves in their agitation had engendered, the Bill went triumphantly through and has been crowned with glory in its practical application. I never pass through any of the southern counties now and feast my eyes on the labourers' cottages which dot the landscape—prettier than the farmers' own homes—honeysuckles or jasmynes generally trailing around the portico—an acre of potato ground sufficient to be a sempiternal insurance against starvation, stretching out behind—the pig and the poultry—perhaps a plot of snowdrops or daffodils for the English market, certainly a bunch of roses in the cheeks of the children clustering about the doorsteps—without thankfully acknowledging that Cork was right in thinking such conquests were worth a great deal of evil speech from angry politicians.

5. THE UNIVERSITY QUESTION

Finally, a University Settlement neither very good nor very bad is to be reckoned among the salvage. It took the lumbering machine of English Government eighty years from the Act of Emancipation of Irishmen's bodies to the Act which emancipates their minds. We have no doubt laid ourselves open to the retort that it was not altogether due to any strategical genius of our own that the Emancipation Act came even then. The letter already quoted from Mr. Dillon is proof conclusive that before he made his ill-starred journey to Swinford, which ended by half-wrecking Land Purchase and wrecking Mr. Wyndham altogether, he had been officially made aware that a University Bill had been resolved upon

as the principal Irish business of the session of 1904, and that the Irish Government were striving to assemble a Conference on the Land Conference model as the surest means of making straight its path. These hopes were blown to the winds by the campaign deliberately set on foot for the destruction of Mr. Wyndham and Sir Antony MacDonnell and of their work. The effort of the Irish Party in the next session to repair the ruin they themselves had wrought only succeeded in their University motion being defeated by a majority of 263 to 104—so far as I can discover, the largest vote ever cast against an Irish University Settlement. It was a political necessity, however, to convince the Irish Bishops of their zeal in the cause; and as if this was not already a sufficiently melancholy monument of their labours, they in the session of 1906 introduced what was really a veiled vote of censure on Mr. Bryce under circumstances of such maladroitness and exasperation that they found it convenient to “talk out” their own motion rather than face the results in the Division Lobby.¹

The University question was reduced to this forlorn condition when the people of Cork took the matter into their own hands, as they had taken the Land Purchase question, the Labourers question, and the Evicted Tenants question. The prime obstacle to a University Settlement had always been the belief in the English and in the Irish Protestant mind that it was wholly a Bishops question, in which the Catholic laity had no real concern, if they had not a secret content in seeing the Bishops left ungratified. It was this delusion which the people of Cork determined—and with instant success—upon cutting up by the roots. The Catholic laity—supported, as was now beginning to be the normal case in Cork, by the mass of the Protestant laity as well—made the question their

¹ The spirit in which a subject calling for the utmost delicacy and circumspection of treatment was debated, may be judged from the circumstance that, when Mr. Bryce remarked that he never passed Trinity College without being tempted to take off his hat at the thought of its venerable national traditions, Mr. Dillon replied with a ferocious retrospect of all that was worst in the history of Trinity College, and said he never passed it himself without desiring to break its windows—the institution which, whatever its faults as the headquarters of Protestant ascendancy, had been the nursing mother of Goldsmith and Burke, Grattan and Flood, Emmet and Davis, and Butt and the speaker's own respected father.

own at an historic representative gathering which no longer left in statesmen's minds the shadow of a doubt that the Catholic laymen of Ireland regarded a University training consonant with their religious beliefs as one of their most cherished rights as freemen, and were resolved to stop at nothing to put an end to their present intolerable condition of intellectual disability. Considering that the question had been more or less lukewarmly agitated for the previous half a century, it is a singular fact that the two great public meetings which were held upon the subject in Cork were the first (and the only ones) ever held which were composed wholly of Catholic laymen and organized under lay inspiration. The taunt of lay indifference upon the project—which used to be the staple of Parliamentary opposition—was never afterwards heard.

The preference of most Irish Nationalists (the Catholic Archbishop of Dublin amongst the rest) would have gone to a University system in which Catholic and Presbyterian Colleges would have been grouped with Trinity College in a common national institution, autonomous within the religious sphere, but bound together by ties of common intellectual training and common national inspiration. This was also the plan favoured by Mr. Wyndham and Sir Antony MacDonnell and Lord Dunraven, and subsequently by Mr. Bryce; and if the tremendous fusing heat set free by the union of Irishmen of all shades and degrees in 1903 had been suffered to work its way, the hesitations of Trinity College would doubtless have been overcome. As matters stood, with Mr. Wyndham's Irish policy hacked to death, and Sir Antony MacDonnell's position rendered all but untenable by the joint assaults of the Orange and Nationalist anti-Conciliationists, one supreme and all-embracing national university was out of the question, and only a division into separate universities remained. The ambitions of the people of the south thus turned passionately to the idea of a regional university of their own, where the soul of local genius and independence could freely expand; where children of the very poorest class, with the necessary natural gifts, might be enabled to work out their destiny, without the expense or dangers of residence in a great distant city; but where, it

was made a no less indispensable article in the programme, the youth of the Protestant minority should be welcome to mingle their studies and their lives with those of their Catholic comrades on terms of good-will, of which equality would be a poor description. The Cork meeting, accordingly—Catholic and Protestant alike,—threw all their enthusiasm into the demand for a Munster University, the material fabric for which already existed in the exquisite Tudor buildings of the Cork Queen's College. They gave an unanswerable test of their sincerity by pledging themselves in the name of the local City Corporation and County Council to supply from local sources the additional revenue required for the Munster University for the first five years, provided the State undertook to bear the charge hereafter. It was an experience absolutely without precedent in the experiences of English government in Ireland.

According to the old cruel decree—*Sic vos non vobis mellificatis apes*—the people of the south were destined to be the heaviest sufferers under the Bill which their action above all else had made practical politics for the rest of the country. It is perhaps better not to inquire too closely why Mr. Birrell, in according a richly-endowed separate university to Belfast which never asked for it, felt himself compelled to deny it to Cork, where it was an object of passionate longing. Never perhaps was the power of self-renunciation of a hot-blooded population for the general national good put to a severer strain; but never was strain more unselfishly borne. At the second great meeting, at which I had to ask them to renounce their own ideal, rather than bring to shipwreck the Bill which bore so rich a freight of blessings for the other provinces, their patriotic self-denial proved equal to the call; and it is but just to add, Mr. Birrell softened the blow by giving the Cork College a liberal autonomy in its government and in the bent of its studies, with the fullest freedom of expansion in process of time into a separate university, after the precedent of the Victoria University in England. There was no greater intellectual delight than to watch with what full-blooded enthusiasm, with what genial and supple skill Mr. Birrell piloted through Parliament a Bill as to which

he tingled with knowledge and joyous sympathy to his finger-tips, and to his heart's core; and no more painful contrast, alas, than our experiences of his performances on the Land question, where good intentions struggled on hopelessly unequal terms against a repulsion for, and, it must be added, an irredeemable ignorance of the subject, which laid him at the mercy of every wind of party interest or intimidation that blew. It was Ariel snatched from his happy excursions in the Emyrean to be re-imprisoned in his cloven pine.

Be it noted that the University Bill was carried by the same methods of conciliation as the Purchase Bill, the Labourers' Bill and the Evicted Tenants Bill, and could not possibly have been carried if the methods of "black-blooded Cromwellian" rhetoric and of "kicking up a row" had invited reprisals. Warned by the fate of Mr. Wyndham's suggested Conference, Mr. Birrell took care to avoid the name, while securing the substance in a more or less shamefaced way. It is disclosing nothing that is not known to all well-informed people in Ireland to mention that Lord Castletown of Upper Ossory—a nobleman of ancient Gaelic blood, who was one of Lord Dunraven's principal allies in the neo-Nationalist movement among the Irish Unionists—acted as Mr. Birrell's ambassador to the men of weight on both sides, one after another, who, but for certain somewhat childish susceptibilities, might have been much more conveniently assembled around a single Conference table. The results were happily manifested when, in the House of Commons, Mr. Balfour, Mr. Wyndham, Sir E. Carson, and Professor Butcher proved to be among the staunchest friends of Mr. Birrell's Bill. It was only those who watched how easily the only two genuine opponents of the Bill remaining—Captain Craig and his brother—"among the faithless, faithful only they!"—were able to prolong the proceedings in Grand Committee week after week all but to the crack of Parliamentary doom, who can appreciate with what certainty the stroke of doom would have descended, if the hostility of men like those I have just mentioned had not been disarmed by "the cowardly, rotten, and sickening policy of conciliation."

One incident will show how keenly Mr. Birrell himself realized "what might have been." In the last stages of his struggle with the Treasury for an adequate endowment, and especially for the means of building halls of residence for the new university in Dublin, the best thing he could think of in his desperation was to request Mr. Redmond and Professor Butcher, Mr. Dillon and myself to wait upon the Chancellor as a deputation to try if anything could relax his bowels of iron. It was, of course, too late. The Bill the Chancellor knew to be safe, and the financial winds and waves were already rising around him. By a curious coincidence, the only cash product of our representations to the Treasury was an addition of £2000 a year to the endowment of the Cork College. But who will measure how different might have been the results both as to the character and resources of the new National University, had we been suffered from the outset to confront the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the Chief Secretary with the whole force and consensus of a united Ireland? The substance of the national agreement was there. All that was achieved by preventing it from taking a practical shape was to weaken Mr. Birrell's position into that of a feeble Treasury mendicant, and, still worse, to deprive the advocates of Home Rule of the argument that, in the case of the University problem as of the Agrarian problem, Irishmen's own good sense and mutual toleration had succeeded where the Imperial Parliament had for half a century abjectly failed.

It has been, I submit, proved that whatever considerable legislative measures have been won for Ireland since the repudiation of the compact of 1903, have been won without the initiative of the Irish Party managers—not to put it further and say, in spite of their more or less covert hostility. The only measures which the Irish Party managers can legitimately claim to be their due in all those years are two well-intended, although almost inoperative little Acts—the Town Tenants Act and the Housing of the Working Classes Act—for which the unassuming ability of Mr. Clancy, M.P., is principally to be thanked. It seems at

first sight unaccountable how a party numbering at least a dozen men of excellent ability, and having the entire undisputed power of the country at their command, should have so uniformly walked astray as to measure after measure of signal national importance. The explanation, however, is a simple one. It was not the soldiers, but the plan of campaign, that was all wrong from start to finish. According to Mr. Redmond's own avowal, they were bound to pursue "a short-sighted and foolish policy" in preference to "a far-sighted and wise one" in order to remain united, and consequently they could only be united in doing mischief. Conciliation, once repulsed, must be repulsed in all its forms. Blundering was with them—the bull is not mine, but theirs if it be one—a strategical necessity. Having once begun, they were bound to repeat to the end Mr. Sexton's historic wrangle with gentle old Mr. Mellor, and go on from one false step to another to their suspension.

CHAPTER XIX

THE IRISH COUNCIL BILL

IS it a dream to hope that the Protestant minority in Ireland can be brought to sympathize with the national aspirations of their fellow-countrymen? Is it a treason to the Irish cause to be ready for compromise to all honourable lengths in order to win them? If the answers were in any doubt, it were indeed a black look-out for Irish Nationality that we must class one-fourth of the Irish population, and these not the least forceful, as a standing army of enemies, neither placable nor to be placated. To read the platform literature of the past five years, a stranger would conclude that Nationalists of my way of thinking, in rejoicing that the Dunravens, Castletowns, and Rossmores—the ex-landlord class and the Independent Orange Order—had come so far in our direction, and holding out every inducement to them to come farther, were guilty of some novel and monstrous heresy against our motherland. The historic truth, nevertheless, fortunately is that it was those who met the overtures of our Protestant brethren with the shouts of “black-blooded Cromwellians” and “hereditary enemies” who were making a new departure, never heard of before among the men who gave their blood and life for the love of Dark Rosaleen, and it was we who held an open door and open hearts for all who were “Irishmen first of all,” no matter what their ethnical or catechetical history—it was we who stood where all the fathers and confessors of Irish Nationality stood before us.

Modern Irish nationality is at least as much Protestant as Catholic; and the causes which since the Union of 1800

made a temporary chasm between the men of the two creeds were matters of material interest—ecclesiastical ascendancy and landlord oppression—which have now ceased to operate. Only a very illiberal mind, or a politician willing to stoop to flattering such illiberality, could forget that the grandfathers of the men now stamped as our “hereditary enemies” were fully as staunch Irish patriots as our own. Castlereagh has left it on record that the Union could never have been carried if the Catholic opposition had been as active as that of the Protestants. As early as the middle of the eighteenth century Bishop Berkely openly advocated the admission of Catholics to the Dublin University. As a matter of fact, Dublin University—the Trinity College for which the latest school of Irish Nationalists can find no higher compliment than to break its windows—was the first university in these kingdoms to throw open its halls to Catholics. For many years Trinity elected Plunket as its representative, while he was the leading advocate of the Catholic claims. The students of Trinity College presented Grattan with an address, couched in language of noble toleration, to thank him for his exertions for Catholic emancipation.

The first Maynooth grant was the free gift of a Protestant Irish Parliament. So was the first Catholic Emancipation Act, that of 1795, a more generous and ungrudging one by far than that passed by the Imperial Parliament thirty-four years later. The passage of a complete measure of emancipation by the Irish Parliament was only defeated by the English Viceroy and his stipendiaries. Practically the whole Protestant population took part in the Volunteer movement which won the declaration of Irish independence, and practically the whole Presbyterian population were numbered in the ranks of the United Irishmen. The first club of United Irishmen formed by Wolfe Tone in Belfast proclaimed for its object, “To promote a union of friendship between Irishmen of every religious persuasion.” Those who have got possession of the United Irish League of our own day in the spirit of a prize crew, and have turned its guns against the policy of national reconciliation, are strangely forgetful of the fact that the very words of this exalted sentiment of the United Irishmen of old were adopted in 1898 as the

first clause of the constitution of the modern United Irish League—its foundation stone and its inspiration.

The sectarian bigotry which in the late century divided Ireland was a modern invention belonging to the nineteenth century, and, like most of the scourges which fell upon Ireland, was a consequence of the Union. The Irish Protestant clergy, who used to be men of the largest and most liberal culture, were first inoculated with their sectarian views by the epidemic of evangelical zeal which came from England. Their active hostility to O'Connell could only be awakened by English representations that repeal would be followed by the disestablishment of their Church—representations that proved as faithworthy as those that the Union would be followed by Catholic emancipation by which Pitt won the Catholic bishops to his projects. O'Connell himself—a Catholic to the marrow of his bones, a lay champion such as Catholicity has not found in any other country in Europe, as Montalembert and Windhorst were the most ardent to proclaim—regarded a reunion of the severed limbs of the Irish body politic as an object not only so desirable, but, even in despite of the immediate obstacles in his day, so practicable that he wrote¹:

You do me but justice in saying that I have shown an anxious desire to promote the happy union of all sects and parties. That is, indeed, the great object of my political life. . . . Patriotism in Ireland, emphatically consists in causing the inhabitants to combine and coalesce in the true spirit of human benevolence and Christian charity.

Nor can those Nationalists, who from the first treated Lord Dunraven and Sir Antony MacDonnell as the worst enemies of Ireland, cite the small number of Irish Unionists, who had the courage openly to identify themselves with their movement, as proof of the impracticability of their hopes. Quite the contrary, we all know that the happy issue of the Land Conference was succeeded by one of those upheavals of generous patriotic passion and creative energy in which nations find their resurgence. Lord Dunraven's adherents among the Irish nobles and country gentlemen counted by the hundred, and all the younger generation needed was

¹ Fitzpatrick's *Letters of O'Connell*, p. 214.

very moderate encouragement indeed to find salvation in a patriotism which offered them the only road to influence or distinction in the country in which their lives would have to be spent. For a time it looked as if the demonstrations of Messrs. Sloane and Lindsay Crawford's Independent Order of Orange Nationality in Belfast would eclipse those of the official reactionary Grand Masters. It is not easy to set bounds to the transformation Mr. T. W. Russell might have effected among the Ulster Presbyterians if he had been encouraged to spread the conciliation evangel instead of being coerced to drop it. Nothing except folly of our own could have prevented the sects from insensibly gliding into the same common interests. In a famous phrase of Grattan's, "unless both sides had lost their understanding, they must have lost their animosities." If all these auspicious omens were met with an insult or a blow—with recriminations going back to the days of Oliver Cromwell for their point, and contempt and ridicule for "scratch alliances with Tom Sloane"—the sudden check in the movement among the Irish Unionists is not so much a reproach to Protestant patriotism as to the aberrations of a few Nationalist leaders and leader-writers.

In view of instances so modern, it seems incredible how any cultivated Irish Nationalist should in our more enlightened days, and when all the material interests have changed to our side, declare to be a chimera and an impossibility that power of amalgamation with the native population which has affected all the races that ever came to Ireland, and against which for so many centuries England in vain directed act after act to counteract the fatal spell of Irish manners and of Irish wives. More extraordinary still that the effort to make such a coalition a prime object of national policy—the policy of every great Irishman from the days of Grattan to those of Parnell—should be at this time of day branded as *lèse patrie* in the name of Irish Nationality and Irish Catholicity. The plea of our critics is twofold: first, is not the number of Irish Protestants in the Irish Party a sufficient answer to the charge that we are unwilling to conciliate the Protestant minority? and, second, Ireland must not be asked to pay an extravagant price for a Catholic-

Protestant coalition. Let us give some consideration to both these arguments.

For broad toleration and absolute freedom from sectarian rancour the masses of the Irish Catholics can stand any test ; but the Irish Protestant representatives in the Irish Party are not representatives of Irish Protestants, but only of Catholic good-will. The ten Protestant Home Rule members would wield a mighty force if they spoke for their co-religionists ; unluckily they represent no Protestants except themselves, and excite among the Protestant masses very much the same feeling of scorn with which the Catholics used to regard the occasional " jumper " won over from popery by the soup and blankets of the Church Missions to Connemara. The conversion that is crowned with a seat in Parliament is not unnaturally, though by no means always justly, regarded as was that of Henry of Navarre by the Parisians. What the anti-Conciliationists fail to perceive is that one Protestant member genuinely representing the thoughts and interests of his brother Protestants, even in a comparatively moderate acceptance of the national ideals, would be a better argument for Home Rule than if the present unrepresentative Protestant representatives were to be multiplied thrice over.

The anti-Conciliationists, indeed, were not content with repulsing the aid of the Devolutionists as missionaries among their Unionist brethren, by the methods of which Unionists are the best judges ; they have adopted the old argument of the Connemara Missions by dangling seats in Parliament before some of the most promising of the young Devolutionist catechumens, thereby weakening and discrediting the motives of the Devolutionists, without adding a single Protestant except the individual "verts" to the Nationalist ranks. Two of the most valuable disciples of the Irish Reform Association in the days when toleration might still have been hoped for from the masters of the Irish Party were Mr. Stephen Gwynne, a man of remarkable literary gifts, and allied both with the Unionist gentry and with the best Nationalist traditions as a nephew of Smith O'Brien, and Mr. Walter M'Murrough Kavanagh, a scion of the old kingly house of Leinster, who has given more indications than one of a capacity not unworthy of a father who was the most formid-

able leader the Irish Unionists have ever found. Here were two men invaluable as propagators of a tolerant nationality so long as they maintained their influence with their own class ; but two solitary individuals and no more the moment they forsook them for seats in the House of Commons as Dillonite "whole-hoggers." Mr. Gwynne went down to Galway under the wing of Mr. Dillon to oppose as "a black-blooded Cromwellian" Captain Shawe-Taylor, with whom he had gone up to Belfast a few months previously to preach the doctrines of Devolution to the Orangemen. Mr. M'Murrough Kavanagh also deserted the Irish Reform Association for the benches of the House of Commons, and was so soon fired with the zeal of the ex-Palikar that, when fifteen other members of the Irish Party and myself proposed to hold a friendly conference with the landlords in order to prevent the repudiation of the treaty of 1903 by Mr. Birrell's Amending Act of 1908, Mr. M'Murrough Kavanagh could find no better way of making atonement for his landlord blood than by being the first man in the Irish Party to stand up in support of Mr. Dillon's policy of no conference and no quarter. Where the Irish Unionists might have found enlightened leaders to raise their thoughts to higher planes they only saw renegades ; and in place of the self-sacrifice of a new national evangel, a vulgar scramble for seats in Parliament.

Before many months were over we had these young gentlemen instructing caitiff Conciliationists like myself in the true principles of Irish nationality ; and Mr. Kavanagh, who had sold his own estate in Carlow at two years' purchase higher than the Land Conference standard, gave us "down in Cork" an edifying lesson in our degeneracy in purchasing half the county at only three years' purchase less than his own patriotic figure. But the pity of it ! Had the Irish Reform Association received even a moderate degree of toleration, or had these two young men stood to their guns and staggered not until the first cannon smoke cleared away, they might by this time have achieved a truly glorious fame in dissipating the prejudices of their own Irish Unionist class, instead of declining into the position of two isolated members of Parliament, without any influence worth counting

either on the side they have forsaken or on that they have acceded to.¹

Did we propose to pay an excessive price for the conversion of the Protestant minority to Irish ideals? The terms which the Land Conference proposed for the amortization of Irish landlordism were without doubt generous, and intended to be generous ones, and such as no hard-pressed and more or less broken aristocracy had ever obtained before from a people who owed them little. This was, indeed, to some of us one of the principal attractions of the bargain. It demonstrated both to the minority themselves and to Britain in the most substantial of all ways how imaginary were their fears for the property or liberty of our Protestant countrymen. It showed the capacity of Irishmen to settle with justice and generosity a problem which the Imperial Parliament had only meddled with still further to complicate its entanglements of blood-bespotted oppression and resistance. And those who fought landlordism hardest

¹ Mr. M'Murrough Kavanagh has since retired from the Irish Party altogether. It can hardly escape remark that not a single Protestant member of the Party took Parnell's side in 1890, with the exception of Mr. Pierce O'Mahony, who lost his seat therefor; nor again did any of them take his stand by the policy of national reconciliation in 1903 from the moment they concluded (and in this they were absurdly wrong in many cases, if not most) that the Bishops had taken the other side; and that notwithstanding the fact that more than one of them in private assured me, with a sincerity not to be doubted, of their sympathy with those who were struggling for a future of honour for men of their blood and creed in their native land! One of them was not satisfied with honest argument against Lord Dunraven's efforts to propitiate the Irish Unionist prejudice against Home Rule, but raked in the family sepulchre for evidence that his grandfather had won his peerage by a corrupt vote for the Union—that, in his own refined phrase, "his coronet reeked with the fetid stench of the Union." As it happened, Lord Dunraven was able to reply that while one of his grandfathers did give a conscientious vote for the Union without any bribe either of money or of title, his other grandfather gave his vote unpurchaseably against that fatal measure, and that the family peerage was of a much later creation and had no more to do with the Act of Union than with the fall of Troy. After our experiences of the anti-Conciliationist code of honour in the like cases, it is scarcely necessary to add that the inventor of the myth neither attempted to dispute the denial nor offered a word of public regret for his misconduct. One other characteristic detail: this intransigent hater of our landlord "hereditary enemies" even in the third generation had himself quitted Mr. Butt's Home Rule movement in the days of its eclipse for the arm-chair of a leader writer on the *Daily Express*, the bright particular organ of Irish landlordism and Unionism, and only emerged when the sun began to shine again on the Home Rule banner. It remains only to be added that this versatile patriot is now a stipendiary of the British Consolidated Fund as the incumbent of a well-paid office in the new University.

in its days of pride may perhaps be forgiven a certain feeling of personal gratification that the settlement which transformed our own people from what De Beaumont called "animals of chase" into the freehold owners of the soil of Ireland, at the same time extricated from a position of the keenest financial and social suffering a class of our countrymen who, if many of them were but undergoing the just expiation of their own or their father's heartlessness, were most of them in a greater degree the victims of England's past system of misgovernment in Ireland. One of the worst results of the "short-sighted and unwise policy" has been in a great measure to rob Ireland of the credit, not to speak of the gratitude, thus earned by enabling the more ungenerous of the disbanded "English garrison" to boast that their superb retiring allowance has been won, not by the statesman-like chivalry of the Nationalist leaders, but in despite of their rabid opposition and class-hatred. And the folly of our own side is all the more inexcusable that the *braves après combat*, the "short-sighted and unwise" politicians, who now talk as if the Irish landlords were utterly vanquished and beaten to the earth when the Land Conference came to the rescue, held a very different opinion of the Landowners' Convention's fighting resources and of Mr. Wyndham's Coercion proclamations three months before the Land Conference sat.

But what was the actual price in moneys numbered demanded of the Irish people for the immeasurable blessings of this great national and social revolution? The price paid in the county of Cork—where alone the Land Conference settlement was worked out with even approximate adherence to the principles of its authors—supply the irrefutable answer: an average of 20 to 21 years' purchase on £8,000,000 worth of sales. I should be willing to peril my physical as well as political head upon the verdict of any jury of intelligent practical farmers as to whether, with the reduced rental and the reduced interest, this is not in the fullest sense of the word "the substantial equivalent" of the Ashbourne prices it is now the fashion to glorify.¹ And,

¹ The Advisory Committee, through which the purchase transactions in Cork were principally negotiated, was in the main composed, in addition to half-a-

be it always remembered, what was done in Cork, or better, might have been done everywhere else, so far as the Act of 1903 was concerned, only for the assurances of Mr. Dillon and the *Freeman* that purchasers would be only swindled and bankrupted.

Another of the terrific bogies by which it was sought to raise the country in revolt against the Act of 1903 was that it would impose some ruinous burden on the Irish ratepayers. More than half the purchase operations have been already effected, and to this hour, beyond Ireland's contribution to the bonus as imperial taxpayers, no Irish ratepayer is the loser by a penny by this tremendous national transformation, with two exceptions which are easily disposed of. The first is that the Ireland Development grant has been drawn upon to the extent of £140,000 a year, which was originally earmarked for primary education; but that sum has been substantially made up by an addition of £119,000 to the imperial estimates for Irish national education. The other—a confessedly unjust and unscrupulous one—is that, under a power in the Act of 1903 which, by the admission of the Liberal Prime Minister, was inserted by an oversight, and was never intended on any side to be enforced, claims for large amounts in connection with Land Purchase finance were served on a number of the county councils by the Treasury on the very eve of the National Convention of 1909, in order to aid Mr. Dillon and his friends to force Mr. Birrell's Bill on the Convention by the terrors of some indefinite financial liability unless it was passed. With the exception of the threat conveyed by this not very creditable piece of politician's bluff, it is beyond dispute that the

dozen devoted priests like Father Barrett, Father O'Flynn, Father Coveney, Father O'Donovan and Father James Murphy, of members of the Cork County Council—the largest representative body in the island, and consisting, without exception, of Nationalists. A number of its leading members—including Mr. J. J. Howard, the first Chairman of the County Council, Mr. W. A. M'Donald, the present Chairman, Mr. Michael Ahern, the Chairman of the Cork Rural District Council, and Mr. Thomas Linehan, formerly the Vice-President and singularly successful Chancellor of the Exchequer of the County Council—had purchased themselves, under the Ashbourne Acts, and they were all agreed had purchased on less favourable terms than they were able to obtain for 17,000 Cork purchasers under the Act of 1903.

happy revolution which has transmuted half the tenants of Ireland into freeholders has cost the Irish ratepayers less in any single year than the charges for extra police and malicious injuries have in this last year alone cost the ratepayers of the county of Galway, where, above any other county in Ireland, the policy of "kicking up a row" has been most extensively practised. Let me add one other observation of some interest. The Irish politicians, who were so horrified at the smallest quit-rent being imposed upon Ireland for her deliverance from landlordism last winter, declined to vote against Mr. Lloyd George's Budget, which imposed on the already overtaxed shoulders of the Irish people—not for Irish but for British purposes—additional taxation large enough to finance at least three times over, even at the existing Stock Exchange rates of discount, the loans that would complete the purchase of the land of Ireland.

Is there any greater substance in the plea that there was some shameful compromise of Ireland's "inalienable rights" in that policy of gradually overcoming the objections of England and of the Irish Protestant minority to national self-government which culminated in Mr. Birrell's Irish Council Bill of 1907? We have only to take the briefest bird's-eye view of the national struggle to see how senseless the cry is. If we were called in to the creation of the world all over again, I should gladly shift Ireland's moorings a thousand miles away into the Atlantic Ocean and make her the ideal republic of an ideal universe. But there are few Irish children who have come to the use of reason who are not aware that, in present conditions, the first part of this programme would be as practical politics as the remainder. The admission may not have the less weight coming from one who ran his risks in storming against the decrees of nature, and acknowledges nothing to be contrite for in his young allegiance to the Irish Republic. There may still be those who prefer the visionary inactivity of dreaming no less lustrous dreams than those of Irish independence, intangible and unalloyed, to the toilsome second best of mundane shifts and compromises. Assuredly, it is a form of heroism—if one should not say, of vapid self-indulgence

—that need no longer dread much interruption from the armed hand of England. But Jack-o'-Dreams like these are the only persons in Irish life in whose mouths the cry of "No compromise!" can have any claim to logic, or, indeed, to honesty. The moment we descend from idealizing to realizing, we are confronted with that iron necessity for accommodation, for giving and taking, for negotiating away difficulties, which led Burke to say, "All government—indeed, every human benefit and enjoyment, every virtue and every prudent act—is founded on compromise and barter," and made even Shelley, that most air-drawn of idealists, to confess, "You know my principles incite me to take all the good I can get in politics, for ever aspiring to something more."

How few people realize that Fenianism was the only Irish movement ever deliberately founded with the programme of total separation. And nearly all the most daring spirits, as well as all the wisest heads in the Fenian movement, have undergone the evolution to the methods of peace and reconciliation, even as the Bothas and De Wets of the gallant South African Republics have had more glory in the apparently losing day of Vereeniging than in all the heady draughts of victory on Spion Kop or at Magersfontein. Every other Irish movement for the past century and a half (including Wolfe Tone's United Irish movement in its conception) was an attempt, in Mr. Lecky's happy phrase, "to reconcile the blessings of independence with the blessings of connection." Whether the demand for national self-government took this shape or that depended upon the times and the circumstances, and not upon any divinely appointed commandment. O'Connell's Irish Parliament could not be Grattan's Parliament; O'Connell's Repeal gave way to Butt's Federalism, and Butt's Federalism to the Parnell-cum-Gladstone Dual System; and nobody supposed that the heavens were falling because the name or the form changed with the times. The consistent and unchanging substance was the right of the Irish people to govern themselves in their own way in their internal affairs, subject to whatever safeguards might be essential to the maintenance of the connection. All the rest was leather and prunella.

Personally, I have never harboured a doubt that England would have done more wisely in applying Gladstone's great policy of trust of Ireland in its fulness and all at once, as unstintedly as she has since applied it in South Africa, and that the Irish minority would have done more wisely to accept it in the spirit of the British defenders of Ladysmith and Kimberley. That, with all my eagerness to welcome even the most timid advances of Irish Unionists towards the principle of self-government, I never minimized our ultimate demand is, perhaps, sufficiently testified by an observation of mine in the House of Commons in the debate on Mr. Wyndham's resignation :¹

He had never concealed from anybody what was to him as clear as daylight that it was sheer nonsense to talk of any final settlement of this question of Irish self-government until this House devolved upon an Irish Parliament the management of purely Irish affairs, through a Ministry responsible to the Irish people.

But the fact had to be faced that all the inspiration of Gladstone, and all the impact of Parnell's will of steel, had failed disastrously to shake the prejudices of England ; that both those giants were now missing from the fray ; and that, with one or two exceptions, all the men of power in the Liberal Party of the future proclaimed that, if Home Rule were to be even seriously discussable as a General Election issue again, it must be by a slow process of arguing down England's objections, and the tenderest consideration for Irish Protestant susceptibilities, however irrational or even whimsical. Had this altered Liberal view been a desertion of an unpopular cause through brutal party selfishness, it would have been a duty and a joy to Irish Nationalists to bring the deserters to justice, but the developments of 1902-3 changed the whole aspect of the battle almost as did the invention of gunpowder the old wars. The moment it became evident that not only one, but both English parties—the Balfours and Wyndhams on very much the same lines as the Asquiths and Haldanes—were casting about for some safe form of experimental Home Rule, and that the Land Problem, which had been the most unconquerable obstacle in the eyes of the Irish minority, had now been

¹ May 9, 1905.

converted into the best argument for identifying themselves with the aspirations of their fellow-countrymen, a readiness to discuss, to encourage, to soften the rudeness of the shock to age-old prejudices, in order to produce national concordance, became elementary patriotism, and the clamour of "No compromise!" "No hauling down the flag!" became demagogism of the least lovely type on the lips of educated men.

That the experimental something was to be called "Devolution," and not "Home Rule," might have been of some moment in evading the English objection to a name whose unlucky assonance with "Rome Rule" had irritated the ear of stout English Protestantism, but was a word-wrangle of measureless insignificance in the eyes of sensible Irishmen. Indeed, Mr. T. P. O'Connor happily described as "the Latin for Home Rule" the "Devolution" he was a few months afterwards anathematizing as blasphemy and black treason to Ireland. If it is worth while wasting a sentence on the logomachy at all, "Devolution," meaning the transfer of any portion of power, small or great, from a supreme authority to a subordinate one, would be just as accurate a description of Gladstone's Irish Legislature, or of Mr. Redmond's Home Rule Amendment of 1908, as of Mr. Birrell's Irish Council Bill. It is the literal truth that every form of Home Rule which is not revolution is necessarily devolution. When we come to the core of the matter we find that, although the first scheme of the Irish Reform Association was devised so as not to scandalize the weaker brethren on the Unionist side, the essential difference was so slight that Lord Dunraven has publicly accepted the House of Commons' resolution proposed by Mr. Redmond as a definition of his own views of national self-government. Even in the multiplied sorrows of Irish story-telling, there is surely none more pitiful than that Irish leaders of repute should throw the whole strength of the national organization against a programme of national unification in all substantial things undistinguishable from their own—should pelt it with scorn as "the Dunraven Punch and Judy show"—should hold up one of the two great Irishmen who framed it as a "cowardly plotter," "an aristocratic nobody," whose coronet was "reeking with the foetid stench of the Union," and the other as "the worst enemy

who had ever come to Ireland," and should spend years endeavouring to compass the extermination of myself for pleading for the faintest hearing for their message of peace to their countrymen. And even lest the touch of farce should be wanting to the tragedy, the fanatical shout of "No compromise!" of "Back to the old methods!" came from men who, until Mr. Wyndham, the coercionist war-god, became the angel of conciliation of the Land Conference days, answered every appeal for a resort to "the old methods" by saying they had made up their minds never to go to jail again! It was the old foible of a certain school of Irish Nationalists, who are apt to show their prudence when they ought to show their valour, and to show their valour when they ought to show their prudence.

When the parliamentarians were driven themselves to propose to the National Convention of 1907 the rejection of the Irish Council Bill, they had just been concerting with Mr. Birrell, Mr. Redmond, and, in coarser language, Mr. T. P. O'Connor strove to cover the ignominy of their position by attributing to Lord Dunraven's Devolution movement, and to my toleration of it, the fact that complete Home Rule was not now available from the Liberal Government. Never was there a public statement more notoriously contrary to the truth. The very name "Devolution," and the policy of "Home Rule by instalments," had been invented by Liberal leaders at least two years before Lord Dunraven's name was heard of in Irish affairs. Mr. Redmond himself had been obliged to undertake a speaking tour in Great Britain as early as September 1900, to complain of the "step-by-step" programme which had been propounded not merely by Lord Rosebery, but by almost every man of weight in Gladstone's old Home Rule Parliament—by Mr. Asquith, Sir William Harcourt, Sir Edward Grey, Sir Henry Fowler, Mr. Haldane, and Mr. Lloyd George. The only two exceptions of any importance were Mr. Morley, who remained silent since there was nothing to say, and Earl Spencer, who remained silent as well; and deeply saturated with Liberal traditions as Mr. Dillon always was since he began life in a Manchester cotton-spinner's office, on the nomination of Mr. John Bright, he might have thought the fact well worth pondering that when

Earl Spencer (whose fidelity to Gladstonian Home Rule no Irishman has ever doubted) did at last break silence, it was to avow his sympathy with Lord Dunraven's efforts,¹ and that the new Liberal Prime Minister himself, with all his belief "in the larger policy," was notoriously of the same mind; and further, that it was Mr. Morley himself—*ultimus Romanorum!*—who insisted upon Mr. Simmons' Amendment, "subject to the supreme authority of the Imperial Parliament," before he would consent to vote for Mr. Redmond's Amendment of 1908. The truth, of course, was that, far from the Devolution manifesto killing the Liberal interest in Home Rule, it was really the trumpet note of resurrection for a question which for several years had sunk out of notice on Liberal platforms, or in the calculations of party politicians, until the Land Conference spirit gave it a new life and opened to it a certain road to victory.

The excuse made to the National Convention that it was all the fault of Devolution that the Irish Council Bill was not a full-fledged Home Rule Bill, had a side more unscrupulous still. Mr. T. P. O'Connor has since avowed under his own hand that the Irish Council Bill, which he thus inveighed against and threw over at the first note of ignorant clamour, was the outcome of a secret compact which he himself and his colleagues established with Sir H. Campbell-Bannerman. Here is his own narrative:²

The Irish Nationalists had already become restive for, while not openly repudiating Home Rule as an ultimate solution, several of the friends and adherents of Lord Rosebery among the leaders of the Liberal Party had proclaimed that they would not only not support, but would resist any attempt to introduce a Home Rule measure in a parliament that was about to be elected. It was under these circumstances that I had an interview of any length with Campbell-Bannerman for the last time. He invited a friend and me to breakfast with him. . . . This exchange of views was brief, for there was complete agreement as to both policy and

¹ "I don't think it necessary to discuss the principle of the proposals which the noble earl (Dunraven) and others in Ireland have put forward. All I would say in that connection is that I naturally look with sympathy and interest on these proposals, and shall watch their course with care."—Earl Spencer, House of Lords, 17th February 1905.

² *Life of Sir H. Campbell-Bannerman, M.P.*, by T. P. O'Connor, M.P., p. 72.

tactics. . . . It was shortly after this that he made his historic speech in Stirling. That was the speech in which he laid down the policy that while Ireland might not expect to get at once a measure of complete Home Rule, any measure brought in should be consistent with and leading up to a larger policy. Such a declaration was all that the Irish Nationalist Party could have expected at that moment, and it enabled them to give their full support at the elections to the Liberal Party.

It needs no seer to divine who was "the friend" of Sir H. Campbell-Bannerman's breakfast-party. The treaty to substitute Home Rule by instalments for Home Rule all of a piece was publicly ratified by Mr. Redmond in a speech at Motherwell, a couple of days after the Stirling *discours-programme*, in which he announced his readiness to accept any concession "which would shorten and smoothen the road to Home Rule." Notwithstanding all which, Mr. Dillon went on proclaiming in his speeches in Ireland up to the eve of the production of the Irish Council Bill that Ireland must accept nothing less than "Boer Home Rule as a minimum," and that, being in full communication with Mr. Birrell, he had every reason to anticipate a Bill that would satisfy their demand; and when the crash came at the National Convention, Mr. Redmond and Mr. T. P. O'Connor protested that the Bill as to which they were "in complete agreement both as to policy and tactics" round Sir H. Campbell-Bannerman's breakfast-table, was in reality a satanic invention of Lord Dunraven. To crown his performances as a statesman of foresight and nice honour, the Irish leader, in a speech at Barrow-in-Furness two years afterwards, actually complained that the Liberal Party had "evaded" the question of Home Rule at the General Election of 1906 by adhering to the treaty which Mr. T. P. O'Connor and "a friend" had struck up over the Liberal Prime Minister's hot muffins.

It has been made a ground of complaint against me by some friendly as well as unfriendly critics that I absented myself from Parliament during the session when the Irish Council Bill was introduced. I did so believing my absence to be the best thing I could do both for the Bill and for the Irish Party. Had there been any ground to believe that the

party would be insane enough to throw over the Bill, I should certainly have considered it a duty to struggle against the madness in every possible form, in the House of Commons and in the country, but on the contrary, the probabilities, almost the certainty, seemed all the other way. During Mr. Bryce's Chief Secretaryship I had been honoured with an outline of the proposals of the Government as they then stood, and had made such recommendations as seemed to me essential to ensure their acceptance by the Irish Party. Two of them only need be touched upon here. The guaranteed yearly surplus to the Irish Council above its liabilities then stood at only £250,000. I urged that a balance of £500,000, clear of all existing claims, would be the minimum that would make the scheme a workable one. My recommendation was even improved upon in the Bill as it was introduced by Mr. Birrell. There is, in fact, solid reason to be confident that the yearly surplus guaranteed to the Irish Council for works of national development would have grown to £1,000,000 before the Bill left Committee, and that the principle, first practised by Mr. Wyndham, of allocating to Irish purposes all savings in the Imperial establishment in Ireland would have been unequivocally recognised.

There is not much vainglory in claiming that my other recommendation would have saved the Council Bill, for to anybody behind the Nationalist scenes the recommendation would seem a commonplace of prudence. One of the principal levers worked by the anti-Conciliationists on the average mediocre mind in the Irish Party was the terror that under any scheme of Devolution they would find themselves ousted by abler men of greater practical usefulness in the workaday business of the country. I urged with all the energy at my command that it would probably prove fatal to the success of any Bill, if it proposed any *diminutio capitis* of the *personnel* or powers of the existing Irish party. That did turn out to be the reef on which Mr. Birrell's Bill made shipwreck. The arrangement I suggested for the removal of this difficulty, and for the no less important objects of swelling the importance of the new body in the eyes of the Irish people, and giving the Protestant minority

an influential representation in a shape that would rather increase the national pride, was that the Irish Council should be composed of the existing one hundred and three representatives of Ireland in the House of Commons, of the Irish representative peers in the House of Lords, and of one non-parliamentary representative elected *ad hoc* in each of the Irish constituencies in addition. That was only one of a dozen ways that might be devised of disarming the apprehensions of the existing Parliamentary incumbents, and indeed—a matter of scarcely less importance—of avoiding the inconveniences to public business of any such ordinance as shut out the members of the French *Constitutionnel* from the Legislative Assembly that succeeded it. There was every reason to anticipate that, as in the first case, my warning would have been heeded, and that some means would have been found of disarming the Parliamentarians of a grievance.

These two conditions once satisfied, it never occurred to me for a moment that a Bill so framed could be in any danger at the hands of any section of responsible Irishmen. The confidence was increased by the fact that the managers of the Irish Party, having to all practical intents driven out Mr. Bryce, as they had driven out Mr. Wyndham, for his suspected tenderness for the policy of Conciliation and its advocates, were now dealing with Mr. Birrell, who was the Chief Secretary of their special choice. As a matter of fact, in speech after speech for several months before the introduction of the Bill, Mr. Dillon intimated, as broadly as diplomatic reserves would allow, that he and his friends were in constant communication on the subject with the Chief Secretary, and were confident that a satisfactory Bill would be the result. His reiterated hints at “Boer Home Rule as a minimum” led me even to conclude that Mr. Birrell’s Bill would prove to be a very much more enterprising one than the scheme many months before communicated to me.

Such being the state of circumstances—the safety, as well as the sufficiency of the Bill being according to all human calculation assured—it seemed to me pre-eminently a case for putting in practice the principle on which I had invariably acted, of never attempting to intermeddle with the

freedom of action of the party in any matter in which they were willing to act in conformity with the obvious national interests. To have done otherwise—to have interfered in the House of Commons or the country with suggestions or criticisms of my own would have been only too certain to array against the Bill enmities that would be largely decided by the side I might take, or, at the least, would have been construed as an attempt to deprive the party of the credit fairly due for a great national achievement. The curious political morals which urged Mr. Redmond and Mr. T. P. O'Connor at the National Convention to shift to the shoulders of Lord Dunraven and myself the responsibility for their own mismanagement and want of moral fibre, gives a lively notion of the avidity with which they would have made me the scapegoat for every defect of the Bill, and for its rejection, had I remained to take the smallest part either in its preparation or discussion. It was, therefore, solely with a view to leaving the party the most unrestrained freedom and harmony of action in a matter where no wit of man could have anticipated what followed that I removed myself wholly from the scene and, during the seven months while the Bill's fate was at stake, betook myself to a portion of the Turkish Empire (the Holy Land), where I did not receive a single letter or newspaper from home—where, indeed, one of the attractions was a newspaperlessness in which even the *Times* failed to penetrate to the hotels.

It was not the Irish people who rejected the Irish Council Bill; it was not the United Irish League; it was not even the Irish Party—it was a Frankenstein of their own raising which in Ireland passes by the name of “Molly Maguire.” One of the first results of the triumph of the anti-Conciliationists in the winter of 1903 was the gradual disappearance for all practical purposes of the United Irish League, except in one or two counties in the west. Whatever branches remained confined their energies to organizing collections for the Parliamentary Party, and passing fire and brimstone resolutions which achieved nothing except to earn for them the contemptuous nickname of “the Resolutionists.” Deprived of any platform in the south, and restricted even in the west to his own ill-omened Corioli of Swinford, Mr.

Dillon turned for a platform and an audience to an organization calling itself "The Board of Erin" wing of the Antient Order of Hibernians, which had established itself extensively among the Catholic labouring classes of the Ulster towns and villages. The "Board of Erin" was a mock modern survival of a secret society with a lengthy and blood-stained history. It originated in a wholly legitimate combination under the title of the "Defenders" of the Catholic small farmers of the County Armagh against the barbarous conspiracy of the first society of Orangemen in the latter end of the eighteenth century to expel them from their homes and banish them into Connaught. Mr. Lecky truly describes them in their original function as "a sort of irregular police force" to protect the defenceless Catholics against cruel wrong. In subsequent generations, the "Defenders" in Ireland got lost in the confused current of agrarian turmoil, and from a ribbon society eventually developed into a sort of Catholic freemasonry, or collection of patriotic drinking clubs, which held their "green walk" (or procession) on the Catholic anniversaries of St. Patrick's Day and Lady Day, and probably after the example of the French Marianne, became known to one another and to the public as the "Molly Maguires."¹ In America, on the contrary, the "Defenders" developed into a great religious and benevolent association, the Antient Order of Hibernians, which is now the greatest Catholic benefit society in the United States, and has many great works of philanthropy and piety to its credit. It is characteristic of the love of unity and majority rule which became the war-cry of those who had put an end to both in 1903, that the "Board of Erin," which now became the principal fortress of Mr. Dillon's strength in Ireland, was a secessionist offshoot from the great American order, and is at this moment in active revolt against the decrees of the vast majority of the genuine Antient Order of Hibernians. It is another of its singularities that, while nobody except a Catholic can be admitted to its ranks, some of its social and clandestine aspects are of such an order as to have in most places attracted the public condemnation (in

¹ After the name of the proprietor of a shebeen house in which their plots in the ribbon days were hatched.

one district extending to excommunication) of the Catholic Episcopacy, with the exception of one Irish Bishop, who has not only encouraged the spread of the "Board of Erin" organization but given them his own Administrator for their Grand Chaplain.

An organization of this kind, with all the signs and passwords and trumpety mysteries of a secret society, and without any of its risks at the hands of the law, exercised a considerable attraction for the young and uninstructed, who could see no harm in retorting the exclusiveness of their Protestant neighbours with a freemasonry of their own, and who naturally enough had not a penetration piercing enough to see that, in the new conditions of the Irish cause, an organization that shrouded its purposes in the dark and admitted none but Catholics to its brotherhood, was, from the national, as well as social point of view, wholly mischievous and indeed absurd. Accordingly, as the United Irish League declined, the "Board of Erin" took its place, or wherever the League survived reduced it to its own humble servant. It must be accounted one of Mr. Dillon's strangest errors of judgment that he should have seen in an organization so narrow and in its essence so anti-national, the chief source of his strength in Ireland. The presidency of the "Board of Erin" was secured for his most active ally, Mr. J. Devlin, M.P., a young man full of ambition and organizing gifts, who achieved a very considerable success on the platform by means of a rich and inexhaustible flow of eloquence of the kind depicted by a great Frenchman as "pouring a deluge of words over a desert of ideas." As Mr. Devlin was at the same time Secretary of the United Irish League, the "Board of Erin" was soon enabled to spread its network of organized lodges all over Ulster and over the greater part of Connaught as well and to meet the branches of the United Irish League on at least equal terms at the Conventions for the selection of Parliamentary candidates, and eventually acquired an actual majority of the Standing Committee, who controlled the organization and funds of the United Irish League.¹ This was the body—an *imperium*

¹ It was proved in Court in the case of *Crean v. Devlin* and another, after the National Convention of 1909, that the following members of the Standing



Photo, Lafayette, Dublin.

COLONEL NUGENT EVERARD.
H.M. Lieutenant for Co. Meath.



in imperio of the worst kind, since it was both occult and irresponsible—which made the first display of its sovereign strength at the National Convention of 1907, at which Mr. Birrell's Irish Council Bill met its humiliating doom.

The Bill was full of defects, but few which were not remediable in Committee and none which contravened the conditions agreed to at the historic breakfast-party in Downing Street of "being consistent with and leading up to the larger policy." The elective principle was to prevail in the constitution of the Irish Council; the French system of Departmental Commissions, with a Minister (placatingly called Chairman) at the head of each, would have supplied the practical materials for a Ministry responsible to the people's elected representatives. The Council was to be provided with the full imperial costs,—the dearest in the world—of the departments they were to administer and with a clear yearly surplus of £600,000 in addition to any savings on the luxurious imperial establishment, to spend as they pleased in the development of Irish resources; and finally, however exiguous the present instalment of self-government might prove, the experiment was only to last for five years; and who can doubt that, if the experiment had been proved to work with the harmony of classes and the broad-mindedness of patriotism of which the Land Conference Settlement had set the example, the end of the quinquennial period would have found all Ireland and all England ready with a heart and a half for "the larger policy"? There would even have been advantages which no thoughtful Nationalist will

Committee, which is the governing body of the United Irish League, were also members of the "Board of Erin" wing of the Hibernians:—Mr. Joseph Devlin, M.P., President of the "Board of Erin"; Rev. J. Cannon, Adm. Letterkenny, Grand Chaplain; Mr. J. Nugent, National Secretary; Mr. W. Redmond, M.P., Mr. P. A. M'Hugh, M.P., Mr. T. Kettle, M.P., and Mr. Denis Johnston, Assistant-Secretary of the U.I.L., and the Lord Mayor of Dublin. It only remains to add, in confirmation of my experience that every effort of mine towards the reconciliation of the two countries was visited with much more virulent opposition by England's officials in Dublin Castle than they ever displayed towards me in the days of our apparently unappeasable quarrel with the whole English connection, that the police magistrate, who heard it proven that the United Irish League was thus under the thumb of a more or less clandestine organization with unspecified aims, gave the officers of the "Board of Erin" free licence to refuse to answer any question in the witness-box as to their secret grips and passwords, or their ceremony of initiation, or their objects.

ignore, in accustoming our people to habits of self-government by a probationary period of smaller powers and of substantial premiums upon self-restraint.

The Bill of Mr. Birrell was of a purely administrative character, and contained no provision for the "Statutory Legislative Body" projected even by the first much abused manifesto of Lord Dunraven's Association. Another grievous mistake of the framers of the Bill (it would be curious to know with what degree of concurrence on the part of their advisers in the Irish Party) was to transfer the control of education to a committee preponderatingly composed of laymen—an arrangement which even a rudimentary knowledge of Ireland ought to have warned them would be almost equally inadmissible with the Protestant as with the Catholic Church. This was one of the matters which inevitably would have been altered in Committee by an extension of the number of nominated members admitted by the Bill, but it unquestionably caused widespread alarm among the clergy—especially after Mr. Dillon's confuted, but still unwithdrawn allegation of the existence of a Bill drawn up by Mr. Wyndham to deprive the clergy of the managership of the National Schools, and it gave to the "Board of Erin" a formidable accession of strength in their warfare against the Irish Council Bill. But the mainward of their battle—the shaft which left the Irish Council Bill stone-dead—was beyond dispute directed at the clause which failed to make the Irish Parliamentary Party *ex-officio* members of the Irish Council, and consequently set an impassable chasm between the two bodies.

One of Mr. Dillon's principal weapons against the policy of national reconciliation had always been the pretence that it covered a plot to oust the rank and file of the Irish Party from their seats and replace them with men of greater capacity, who had been hitherto estranged from popular sympathy. The plot, as we have seen, was a myth, but it served its purpose with a good many members of the party, more or less dimly sensible of their own inferiority as representative men. The argument was still more powerful with large numbers of local men intoxicated with their new powers as county councillors and district councillors, and alarmed

by the vision of popular ex-landlords and ex-Unionists flocking in to deprive them of the spoils. The probable changes, either in the party or in the local councils, would have been of quite unalarming extent, but the Mephistophelian force of the argument was that nobody knew whether the case might not be his own. When members of parliament, carefully plied with these suggestions, found that the Irish Council would probably divert all national attention for years from Westminster, and that they themselves would have to fight for seats on that Council against some unknown new local men, for whom many of them felt that they might be, intellectually and from the business point of view, no match, the alarm first raised by Mr. Dillon grew almost to a panic, and made many of them willing partners in the more genuine popular clamour against other features of the Bill.

Mr. Devlin seized the opportunity to put himself and the whole force of his "Board of Erin" at the head of the malcontents. The ostensible outcry, of course, was against the compromise of the inalienable right to national self-government involved in the acceptance of a gas and water scheme of Home Rule so little susceptible of heroic oratorical defence. They were fortified in this attitude by Mr. Dillon's repeated declarations that anything short of "Boer Home Rule as a minimum" would be treason to the national cause, and by the unmistakable hints of Mr. Redmond, Mr. T. P. O'Connor, and himself that they "had been for three months in consultation with the Government" on the subject, and had reason to anticipate that Mr. Birrell's Bill would satisfy the expectations of the country. Mr. O'Connor was not content with prophesying to his American contributors that "Gladstonian Home Rule was coming, and coming soon," but was incautious enough to fix his time limit "within six months." It was only too natural that a country buoyed up with such anticipations should receive a lively shock from the production of a Liberal Bill which fell considerably short even of Lord Dunraven's first Devolution proposal, which Mr. Dillon and his friends had spent the previous three years in denouncing up hill and down dale with contumely and ridicule.

It was a repetition of the fate of Perillus (was not that the gentleman's name?) who, having invented for the Sicilian tyrant a brazen bull within which the victims were to be roasted alive, found himself to be the first on whom the invention was to be tested. With his usual inacquaintance with Irish popular feeling, Mr. Redmond carried on his happy relations with the Liberal Ministers with the most *béate* unsuspectingness of what was awaiting him and his advisers in Ireland. "We took what steps we could," Sir H. Campbell-Bannerman declared in dropping the Bill, "to ascertain Irish feeling and we had good reason to believe that the Bill would receive the most favourable reception." Allusions to "Boer Home Rule as a minimum," and execrations on the name of "Devolution" were quietly dropped out of the speeches of Messrs. Dillon and Redmond in their "later manner." Mr. Redmond and his party actually broke bread with Mr. Birrell at a banquet in London the night before they went over to Ireland to the National Convention. It is now certain, from the always obliging public confessions of Mr. T. P. O'Connor, that Mr. Redmond and his followers (or leaders) crossed to Dublin with the express determination to support the Irish Council Bill, and in the full expectation that they would carry it.

What followed is a chapter of humiliation, so unredeemed by any trait of courage or good faith, that the wonder of history will be that the men involved in it ever again presented themselves as persons fitted to be entrusted with a nation's destinies. From all my enquiries and experiences after my return to Ireland, I am wholly convinced that the rejection of the Irish Council Bill was a mere tragedy of misunderstandings from beginning to end, and that, even as to the great mass of those who attended the National Convention (which is known ever since as the Convention of Misunderstandings) they should never have dreamed of rejecting it, if the leaders had only shown presence of mind enough to explain the true character of the Bill, and courage enough to withstand a storm of hopelessly ignorant clamour, which was in reality little more than a tempest in a teacup. It can be stated on unimpeachable

authority that the clergy of the diocese in the north of Ireland most deeply pledged to Mr. Dillon arrived at their hotel in Dublin on the eve of the Convention with a firm determination to support the Bill. They left their hotel for a caucus meeting at the United Irish League offices in the evening, and returned late at night with the watchword that the Bill must be thrown out. The truth beyond all question is that Mr. Devlin, with his "Board of Erin" staff, and with a full muster of the same lodges which for ever disgraced the name of liberty in Ireland at the subsequent Convention of 1909, was absolute master of the situation at the caucus meeting, and dictated his own terms to his "trusted leader," and to his crest-fallen cabinet, and was able easily enough to enforce the decree the following day at a Convention for many reasons incensed against the Bill and utterly bewildered as to Mr. Redmond's attitude or as to the consequences of their action.¹

I have it from the lips of hundreds of delegates to that Convention that Mr. Redmond had only to make a few points clear as to the Bill, and put down his foot with the resolute declaration that he could be no party to its rejection, and the overpowering majority of the Convention would have been with him.

Even a defeat under such circumstances would have given him a greater place in Irish history than his career of inopportune opportunism is likely ever to secure for him. Instead of such an attitude—fully knowing what he afterwards declared in the House of Commons when he said "he agreed with the Prime Minister that apparently there was some misunderstanding at the Convention with reference to some of the more vital portions of the Bill"—far from setting himself manfully to removing the misunderstandings, he became himself the prime champion of the misunderstanding, and rather than face the frowns of "Molly Maguire" began the proceedings by proposing himself, even without any semblance of discussion, to slay the Bill which he had come over from Westminster in order to carry.

¹ It is possible that Mr. Devlin, who very likely had never read the Bill, would have been less aggressive only that Mr. Dillon, who alone commanded any influence over him, was at the moment of the Convention removed from the scene by a grievous domestic bereavement.

If there was a drop wanting to the cup of humiliation he had filled for himself, he supplied it when he and Mr. T. P. O'Connor proceeded to excuse themselves to Mr. Devlin's lodges by pleading that it all came from not wiping Lord Dunraven and myself off the face of the earth. Mr. Redmond, in whose company only I had ever met Lord Dunraven throughout the whole period until after the Devolution scheme had been made public; Mr. Redmond, who had, two years before Lord Dunraven was heard of in Irish affairs, launched denunciation after denunciation against the Liberal leaders for inventing Devolution as an excuse for deserting Home Rule; Mr. Redmond, who, on the first appearance of Lord Dunraven's manifesto, had cabled enthusiastically from America:—"It is simply a declaration for Home Rule and is quite a wonderful thing. With these men with us, Home Rule may come at any moment." And Mr. T. P. O'Connor, at whose request I had first consented to meet Sir Antony MacDonnell; Mr. T. P. O'Connor, who had described Devolution as "the Latin for Home Rule"; Mr. T. P. O'Connor, who had assured the Irish people that "Gladstonian Home Rule was coming within six months," knowing all the time that he had covenanted with the Liberal Party at Sir H. Campbell-Bannerman's breakfast-table for a Devolution scheme considerably less extensive than that propounded in Lord Dunraven's first manifesto!

There would have been some comfort if the rashness of the Convention of Misunderstandings had been heroic rashness—if it had been one of those *gestes* (as the French say) of noble self-sacrifice which illuminate the annals of a nation and which are sometimes in the end the highest wisdom. Unhappily, it was nothing of the sort. It was neither magnificent nor war—it was nonsense, neither more nor less. It was a breakneck game of all or nothing, and nothing was its brilliant outcome. Whatever the defects of the Bill (and the worst of them would assuredly have been remedied in Committee) it would have established the priceless principle of self-government in Irish affairs by Ireland's elected representatives, by means of Ministers responsible to them, and with a separate exchequer equipped with a guaranteed budget surplus every year, such as few countries

in Europe or outside it can make sure of. Better still, it would not have been a mere piece of legislative stock scenery, but, as there is solid ground for believing, would have succeeded in passing into law with the consent of both Houses. In its stead, Ireland has but reaped with both English parties a reputation (as to her people, utterly unjust) for childish impracticability, for faithlessness in her leaders, and helplessness at the mercy of every irrational wind that blows. The truth is that for this, as for most of the other follies of the past five years, the mass of the Irish people have only the same responsibility that a chained prisoner has for the proceedings of the jailor who binds him. They trusted for leadership and they have found chains. The decision of the Convention of Misunderstandings was itself the worst of the misunderstandings. It was the decision, not of their leaders' judgment, but of their fears; not of the wisest or the worthiest part of the Convention, but of all that was most ignorant and worst. It was, in a word, the decision not of Ireland, but of "Molly Maguire."

CHAPTER XX

ANOTHER VIOLATED TREATY

UNDER the influence of the depression caused by the mismanagement of the Irish Council Bill, a determined agitation for reunion sprang up after my return to the country. As in all other impulses of reform, the agitation took its rise outside the Parliamentary Party and for a long time encountered their bitter resistance. The complete and even ignominious collapse of their own strategy, however, had considerably tamed their souls of fire ; and they were soon face to face with a popular onset there was no resisting. As in the case of at least a dozen similar overtures to peace, my own co-operation was readily forthcoming. A series of vast "unity" demonstrations was held through Kerry, Limerick, Clare, Cork, and Wexford. The principal party leaders invariably declined invitations, and the more youthful spirits of discord¹ threatened flat rebellion if Mr. Redmond should have scot or lot with the peacemakers. Mr. Redmond himself was far too shrewd a politician not to recognize the discredit into which his plight at the Convention had thrown himself and his followers, the imperious demand of the country for some permanent settlement, the total failure to collect funds and the open threats of branch after branch of the League not to subscribe any further unless unity were re-established.

When the agitation spread into his own county of Wexford, and when at the Ballycullane demonstration on

¹ Among the most irreconcilable, Mr. T. M. Kettle, M.P., who has since subsided into a peaceful pensioner of the British Consolidated Fund to the extent of £500 a year as a university professor.

November 24, 1907, I publicly formulated the terms on which the reunion of the party would be possible, even the rashest enemies of peace blenched before the universal popular feeling that the terms were reasonable and must not be resisted. Here were the conditions I stipulated for at Ballycullane :

We believe that all the Nationalist representatives of Ireland can and ought to be united in a pledge-bound party on the following principles :—

1st. No man or party has authority to circumscribe the inalienable right of Ireland to the largest measure of national self-government it may be in her power to obtain.

2nd. Pending the attainment of the Irish Parliament, and Irish Ministry, with full control of all purely Irish affairs, which, in our belief, alone can be accepted in full satisfaction of our national demands, it is the duty of the Nationalist representatives of Ireland to devote themselves honestly to working for every measure of practical amelioration which it may be possible to obtain for our people from either English party, or from both, and as specially urgent matters, for a university settlement acceptable to the Catholics of Ireland and for the completion of the abolition of landlordism.

3rd. The co-operation of Irishmen of all classes and creeds willing to aid in the attainment of any or all of these objects should be cordially welcomed.

There was one further proposal, viz. one in reference to the party pledge. It placed Mr. Dillon in the dilemma of offering him his choice between the two diametrically opposite views he had taken in turn as to the obligation of the party pledge. The first, on which he had carried on his wars against Mr. Healy, was "that the pledge binds members unreservedly to the loyal support in or out of Parliament of any decision come to by a majority of the party ;" and the second and opposite doctrine on which he had striven to defend his own revolt against the party in 1903, was that "the pledge leaves members at liberty to be guided by their own conscience as to how far in case of disagreement with any decision arrived at they would be justified in finding fault with it publicly in Ireland"—the latter clause being taken from a letter of Mr. Dillon's own, discussing his Swinford revolt. The Ballycullane terms thus compelled him to

repudiate either one or the other of his two contradictory interpretations. The other conditions, it will be observed, inoffensively but unmistakably restored the national policy as it stood in 1903, and bound the party to cultivate systematically in every department of our national life that union of Irishmen of all classes and creeds by which the Purchase Act of 1903 had been framed and carried into law.

The effect in the country of the publication of these terms was so profound that before a week was over an ambassador from Mr. Redmond (who had up to that time remained mute as to all proposals for a friendly conference) waited upon me at Bray to discuss the preliminary arrangements for a Conference between two men on each side. If the proposed peace was to be a reality, Mr. Dillon was obviously the man designated for Mr. Redmond's colleague. In a recent hour of domestic affliction I had given him the best proof in my power how little any resentment of my own would have stood in the way of renewed friendly relations.¹ Unhappily nothing would induce him to join in the conference to which he was an essential party, or to seize the opportunity for one of those frank interchanges of explanations between old comrades in which all sorts of mutual misunderstandings might have been dissipated. All he could be induced to do was to be represented by Dr. O'Donnell, the Bishop of Raphoe, who had by this time become his closest,

¹ Without much effect, unhappily, as the following letter in reply to a taunt of one of Mr. Dillon's friends will show: In reply to Mr. Martin O'Dwyer, Co. C. delegate for Mid Tipperary on the National Directory, who called his attention to a statement in a speech of Mr. Gwynn, M.P., at Nenagh, that "they were not going to throw over John Dillon to please William O'Brien and that, he believed, was the root of the matter," Mr. O'Brien, M.P., has sent the following letter:—

January 14, 1908.

DEAR MR. O'DWYER—The statement is a more than ordinarily silly and unjust one even for my calumniators. One fact will sufficiently dispose of it. On landing at Constantinople towards the end of May last, I, for the first time, learned the news of the death of Mrs. Dillon. Without losing an hour I despatched to Mr. Dillon a cablegram (and telegraphing in the Turkish Empire is not an empty formality) telling him I had only just heard the awful news of his bereavement and begging him to rest assured he had the heartfelt sympathy of my wife and myself. This message of peace was, I understand, suppressed from the knowledge of the Irish people, and not so much as a postage stamp has ever been expended in acknowledging it.

WILLIAM O'BRIEN.

It may be added that the *Freeman's Journal* refused to insert this letter, and that Mr. Dillon made no attempt to dispute its accuracy.

if not only, confidant in the Irish Hierarchy. It would be painful and futile to recall the ungenerous spirit Dr. O'Donnell imported into those negotiations. A determination was only too plainly evinced from the first to shut Mr. Healy out from any accommodation by the device of sticking to the interpretation of the pledge which it was believed Mr. Healy would refuse to accept, although this was also the interpretation Mr. Dillon himself had openly violated by his revolt at Swinford. On the other hand for me the exclusion of Mr. Healy for acting upon a reading of the pledge in which Mr. Dillon, after first fighting him, had subsequently imitated him, was unthinkable. Mr. Redmond displayed the broad-mindedness and conciliatory temper which always mark him in his unfettered hours, and Father James Clancy, of Kilkee, my own colleague, and like myself, an old antagonist of Mr. Healy on this very point, strained every nerve for a generous agreement. Dr. O'Donnell brusquely broke off relations at our first sitting, and, on the suggestion that we should reassemble later on to see if any accommodation could be arrived at, responded with the almost rude taunt that "my time is of some value."

Mr. Healy's self-abnegation saved the situation. He declared straight out that he would be no dissenting party to the terms, be they what they might. No further churlishness on the other side could defend itself to the country against such an attitude on Mr. Healy's part. At a second sitting the Conference accepted the terms of reunion substantially as I had laid them down at Ballycullane, with a few verbal alterations suggested in order to cure any wounded feeling on Mr. Dillon's part.

Had this agreement been followed up, as Father Clancy and I suggested, by a National Convention, it would have been endorsed with universal gladness by the nation and new streams of national enthusiasm would have been instantly struck from the rock of insensibility to which the movement had for years been hardening. But it had now become the besetting passion of Mr. Dillon and his friends that on no account must I be permitted to get the ear of a National Convention under any circumstances which, they knew, must involve a new national consecration of the

policy of Conciliation. Our proposal for a National Convention was almost fiercely resisted, pathetically though it was craved for by the mass of the party, as the only practicable means of reawakening enthusiasm or even obtaining funds.

This did not prevent the six of us who rejoined the party under the above treaty of peace—Mr. Healy, Sir Thomas Esmonde, Mr. Sheehan, Mr. John O'Donnell, Mr. Roche, and myself—from doing all that it was possible to do at the first meeting of the reunited party to give cordiality to the occasion. Meeting Mr. Dillon in the library of the House of Commons an hour before the meeting, I stretched out my hand and said, "Dillon, I hope there is no reason why we should not shake hands and have done with it." He put out his own hand and responded with a frigid word or two. When the party reassembled in Committee Room 15, however, it was painfully evident that the determination to prevent any outbreak of enthusiasm at a National Convention was still more potent in the narrower and more ungenerous sphere of the party meeting. Mr. Dillon's friends maintained a sullen silence, as if under the stroke of some grievous disappointment rather than partaking in the general national relief. A man of larger and more generous soul in Mr. Redmond's place might still have appealed to the better feeling of the party and made the occasion one for cementing the broken sections genuinely for a noble purpose, to which all his own secret sympathies undeniably tended. He destroyed his opportunity in one or two ungracious and embarrassed sentences, dismissing the whole subject with the expression of an almost contemptuous hope that "we will hear no more of all this dissension." It afterwards came to my knowledge that he adopted this unlucky tone in order to propitiate the fiery young men of the Professor Kettle Cave who were muttering the direst threats of an explosion if Mr. Redmond should betray any conciliatory temper. At all events where there so easily might have been cordiality, generosity and an honest re-knitting of old comradeship, there were only embarrassment, black looks and sullen silence; and Mr. Redmond had once more placed his neck under the heel of a faction who, it was tragically clear, had

only submitted to unity at the country's call with the settled purpose to make the peace an unreal and unworkable one.

On the other hand the spirit in which the experiment was approached from our side is sufficiently indicated in the following *communiqué* printed as the first leading article in my paper, the *Irish People* (January 25, 1908):

THE TRAGEDY OF 1903.

Your readers will not, I am sure, be surprised if I request you to suspend the publication in the columns of *The Irish People* of "THE TRAGEDY OF 1903." *Causa finita est*—the controversy is at an end, so far as I am concerned. Certain little ebullitions of feeling here and there on both sides are for a week or two unavoidable, considering the weakness of human nature. But I am certain the universal Irish instinct will be, frankly and completely, to drop all disputes as to the past, and have no rivalries except as to who shall do most to create good-will and a common patriotism among Irishmen of all shades and schools of thoughts. Let us all turn with high hearts from the tragedies of the past to the glorious possibilities of the future.

WILLIAM O'BRIEN.

January 18, 1908.

The first important occasion that arose for testing the sincerity of the party's acceptance of the Ballycullane terms realized my worst forebodings. A Treasury Committee was appointed for the nominal purpose of revising the financial clauses of the Purchase Act of 1903, but in reality in order to evade the honourable obligation undertaken by the Imperial Treasury in 1903, with the assent of both parties and of both Houses to abolish landlordism over the whole country by the aid of Imperial credit. Their Report substantially embodied those proposals for lessening the landlords' bonus and increasing the interest on the tenant-purchasers' annuity which have since been legalized by Mr. Birrell's Act of 1909 and have for all practical purposes brought Land Purchase to a dead stop and repealed the Act of 1903. A meeting of the reunited party was summoned in the Mansion House, Dublin (April 29, 1908), to deal with this very grave emergency. The emergency was all the graver because it was notorious in the Parliamentary lobbies that Mr. Dillon was a sympathizer with the

Treasury proposals, and that they were openly championed by the *Freeman's Journal*.

The first woful phenomenon of the Mansion House meeting was that Mr. Redmond did not open his lips to give his party any indication of his own views upon the destruction of the Land Settlement to which he was himself so deeply pledged. Having waited in vain for any official proposal, I submitted a resolution myself which, if there was a spark of sincerity in the party's vote accepting as the basis of reunion the promise that : "the co-operation of Irishmen of all classes and creeds willing to aid in the attainment of" (among other things) "the completion of the abolition of landlordism is cordially welcomed," ought to have commended itself, without even a word of discussion, as the obvious common sense of the situation. Here was my resolution, which was seconded by Mr. E. Barry :

That inasmuch as it is highly improbable that any contentious land legislation can be carried at this period of the session, and there is substantial ground for believing that a common agreement can be arrived at by which the Treasury plan for the suspension of Land Purchase can be defeated and the opposition of the House of Lords to further agrarian legislation disarmed, we hereby declare that this party is prepared to appoint representatives to confer with representatives of the Irish landlords with a view to considering measures by which an indefinite postponement of the hopes of the cultivators of the soil can be prevented, provided that any agreement so arrived at shall not be binding on this party, unless and until same shall be ratified by a National Convention.

Obviously, if the admitted Treasury plot for hamstringing Land Purchase for the sake of a purblind economy was to be defeated, it must be defeated by the same alliance of landlord and tenant forces which in 1903 had coaxed or coerced the Treasury into a loan of £100,000,000 and a free grant of £12,000,000 to oil the wheels of the agrarian settlement, and whose co-operation the party had solemnly bound themselves to welcome. But this was just the party policy against which Mr. Dillon instantly rose up in arms now, as irreconcilably as against the unanimous decision of the party and the National Directory in 1903. Co-operation with Irishmen of all classes and creeds there must not be, if the

heavens were to be rent to prevent it. He proposed an amendment insisting that "the report of the Treasury Committee shows clearly that the finance of the Land Act of 1903 has completely broken down," and shaking before the Irish ratepayers the absolutely unreal bogey that "if the Act is allowed to continue working on its present lines, a crushing burden will be imposed upon the ratepayers of Ireland for the next $68\frac{1}{2}$ years." The danger here referred to was caused by a draughtsman's oversight in the Act of 1903, which both Mr. Wyndham for the Unionist Party and the Liberal Prime Minister, Mr. Asquith, for his own party, had in the previous November admitted that neither party in 1903 intended to impose upon the ratepayers and which he declared further "no government could think of enforcing." This was the flimsy and confessedly imaginary terror by which Mr. Dillon then and until the Birrell Act became law frightened the Irish ratepayers into the acceptance of the provisions which have reduced the great Act of 1903 to a nullity. His amendment offered no pretence of any argument against the proposed Conference with the landlords, whose interests were entirely identical with those of the tenants; but Conference he insisted there must be none, and the amendment proposed to refer the whole matter to a Committee of the Irish Party exclusively, thereby directly and fatally striking at the principle on which the party had been reunited.

Mr. Redmond still remained dumb while the Land Conference settlement to which he had been a signatory and the terms of reunion which he and the party had only three months before subscribed were torn to flitters under his eyes. One incident of the debate is of sinister memory. Not only did Mr. Dillon in his speech not object to the proposed increase of 5s. in the tenant-purchasers' rate of interest, but to the open-mouthed amazement of his hearers owned that he himself favoured an increase of 10s. per cent in the tenant-purchasers' annuity. Mr. Healy, who got up to answer him, began by saying: "The speech we have just been listening to sounded to me like an old *Freeman* leading article dictated by a Treasury clerk." The veteran figure of Mr. Harrington, already under the shadow of the grave, also uprose, and, in the last speech he made in the

party, and in a voice which was barely audible even in the solemn stillness, registered his protest against the destruction of the great agrarian settlement of 1903. But Mr. Dillon's battalion voted steadily with him by platoons, and by 42 votes to 15 my demand for the fulfilment of the terms of reunion was rejected, and the treaty by which the party was reunified was tossed into the fire.

The fifteen members who made this last stand for sanity in the national councils and for honour in the party's own engagements deserve to have their deed remembered, sadly though two or three of them have since done penance for their heroism of the moment. They were:—Messrs. T. M. Healy (North Louth), T. C. Harrington (Dublin Harbour Division), Thomas O'Donnell (West Kerry), Conor O'Kelly (North Mayo), E. Barry (South Cork), E. Crean (South-East Cork), G. Murnaghan (Mid Tyrone), J. Gilhooly (West Cork), Wm. O'Brien (Cork City), P. O'Doherty (North Donegal), John O'Donnell (South Mayo), H. Phillips (North Longford), A. Roche (Cork City), T. Smyth (South Leitrim) and D. D. Sheehan (Mid Cork)—7 from Munster, 3 from Connaught, 3 from Leinster and 2 from Ulster.

One last effort was possible to save the country from the paralysis of Land Purchase which has since overtaken her. I remembered how promptly Ireland had been saved from the importation of Canadian store cattle by the famous joint deputation of the foremost landed men and representative bodies of Cork which waited upon Sir H. Campbell-Bannerman, at a moment when the Irish party were wholly inactive on the subject and even secretly friendly to the invasion. We resolved to try the efficacy of a still more powerful deputation from the province of Munster to warn the Government of the fatal effects of the Bill which Mr. Birrell had founded upon the Report of the Treasury Committee. The meeting in Cork at which this deputation was selected was, it is no exaggeration to say, one of the most auspicious events in Ireland's history. The courtly Lord Lieutenant of the county, the Earl of Bandon, was moved to the chair by the Lord Mayor of the democratic Corporation of Cork, seconded by the chairman of the most democratic County Council in the island. Upon the platform

were assembled all the men, either on the landlord or the tenant side, who had figured most prominently in the wars of the previous twenty-five years—nowhere more desperately waged on both sides than in the province of Munster from which the meeting was recruited. The landlords and agents who had conducted vast eviction campaigns and enlisted regiments of emergency men in their service stood side by side with the popular leaders who had garrisoned the threatened homes of the people, and borne the penalty in physical injuries and long sentences of imprisonment. Irish nobles like Lord Dunraven and Lord Castletown found themselves throbbing with the same emotions and united by the same interests as “the Watergrasshill Defenders,” who but a year or two before had stood a most gallant siege against a little army corps of constabulary. The voice of Mr. S. H. Butcher, the gentle but all the more fearless Unionist member for the University of Cambridge, rose in unison with those of Nationalist colleagues, whom he had seen time and again expelled from the House of Commons or marched off to Ireland in handcuffs.

The most singular spectacle of all was the fraternization on the same platform—for the first time, and more is the pity for the last, at least as yet—of Lord Barrymore and myself, or as Viscount Midleton more picturesquely than accurately¹ put it: “The owner of Old Tipperary and the founder of New Tipperary,” standing on the same ground and breathing the same sentiments. By a train of logic which would not be very creditable to the Irish understanding, if it were not really to the discredit of conscious deceivers of

¹ Lord Barrymore, as commander-in-chief of the landlord hosts, cleared the entire Ponsonby estate of its inhabitants in the interest of brother landlords of a very different type from himself, and his Tipperary tenants, who had no grievance of their own, retorted by leaving his whole town of Tipperary on his hands tenantless, through a loyalty to their brother tenants even more heroic than Lord Barrymore's own sacrifices for more unworthy brethren. Those who betook themselves to New Tipperary, in the great words of Archbishop Croke, “realized the ideal”: but as a matter of accurate history, I had no more to do with the founding of New Tipperary than with the discovery of America; and never heard even a whisper of the enterprise until I was released from prison several months after the contract for the building of the new town had been signed. I was *non tantis culpandus virtutibus*. The founding of New Tipperary, hard though he has striven to deny himself the honour, was due to the speeches of Mr. John Redmond, M.P., aided by a gentleman who is now one of the principal officials in the Government of Ireland.

the people, it has been ever since thrown up to me as an unexpiable sin that I succeeded in inducing Lord Barrymore—the very Hector of the landlord walls of Troy—to join us in the common work of the complete abolition of landlordism. The crime, I regard, of course, as the most auspicious achievement of my life—the rich recompense for all the slings and arrows of a lifetime in the trenches—one in which, it might well seem, only the most besotted ignorance or the most incorrigible malice, could fail to see a conquest beyond price for Ireland. For it was not we who had foregathered with Lord Barrymore to buttress up the institution of landlordism against which we had staked whatever life held for us of the most precious. It was far the most dreaded and unselfish defender of landlordism, who had come to recognize that it could no longer be defended and was in complete and hearty agreement with us as to the terms on which it could be ended with gladness and profit to every section of the Irish nation. And, if the meeting called for any generous measure of amnesty from our side, was there no prompting of pride or resentment to be overcome on the part of a man to whom the war he had come there to terminate had, still more trying considerations apart, cost probably £100,000 at the least out of his own privy purse?

The two hosts found themselves absolutely agreed as to the three main conditions on which the Land Settlement of 1903 might have been preserved—that the abolition of landlordism should be completed in the briefest practicable span of time, and in order that this might be so, that the rate of interest of the tenant-purchasers' annuity ought not to be increased, nor the State bonus to the landlords be diminished; that the losses on the flotation of land loans for one of the greatest of Imperial purposes must be Imperial and not local; that, in a word, the Imperial Treasury must be called upon to stand by its honest bargain of 1903, and not repudiate it like a bankrupt South American Republic. The deputation named to represent these views to the Prime Minister, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, and the Chief Secretary for Ireland spoke beyond any possible dispute for the whole landlord, tenant, and commercial community of broad Munster. It consisted of:

Landlords' Representatives—Earl of Bandon, Earl of Dunraven, Earl of Kenmare, Viscount Midleton, Lord Castletown, Lord Barrymore, Sir George Colthurst, Bart. ; Sir R. Penrose Fitzgerald, Bart. ; R. Bagwell, D.L. ; R. M. D. Sanders, D.L.

Tenants' Representatives—Mr. Michael Ahern, Chairman, Cork Rural District Council ; Mr. J. Hurley, Chairman, Newcastle West District Council, Co. Limerick ; Mr. E. Higgins, M.C.C., Midleton ; Mr. J. M'Inerney, M.C.C., Co. Clare, and Chairman of Limerick Board of Guardians ; Mr. William M'Donald, Chairman, County Council, Cork ; Mr. M. J. Nolan, Vice-Chairman, Kerry County Council ; Mr. Martin O'Dwyer, M.C.C., Co. Tipperary ; Mr. William O'Donnell, Chairman, Tralee Rural District Council ; Mr. Florence O'Sullivan, Chairman, Killarney Rural District Council ; Mr. Thomas Power, M.C.C., Dungarvan, Co. Waterford.

Members of Parliament—Mr. E. Barry, Mr. S. H. Butcher, Mr. Eugene Crean, Mr. James Gilhooly, Mr. T. M. Healy, Mr. William O'Brien, Mr. Conor O'Kelly, Mr. John O'Donnell, Mr. Augustine Roche, and Mr. D. D. Sheehan.¹

And now happened what will perhaps yet be recorded as the most insane blunder in all England's eight centuries of blundering and crime in Ireland. To the astoundment of all men, the Government actually refused a hearing to the deputation, which no man knowing Ireland could deny to be the most representative of all races and all creeds that ever came out of Ireland with a message of peace and friendship ! As at every other critical moment of his ill-starred rule in Ireland, Mr. Birrell took his orders from Mr. Dillon, and killed the great peace of 1903. Had he done so frankly on the ground that he only obeyed the word of command from the majority of the representatives of Ireland, he might at least have preserved some constitutional footing for his decision, colossal though the mere discourtesy was of refusing a hearing to such a body on such a topic which would not have been denied to six peers and eleven members of Parliament on any other subject under the sun.² Unhappily for his fame, Mr. Birrell added disingenuousness to his error in

¹ We further invited Mr. Walter Long as chairman of the Ulster Party to join the deputation, and that distinguished man, whose fearlessness and rectitude of purpose had gained the respect of his most determined antagonists in his Coercion days in Ireland, was full of sympathy with the project.

² On the very day on which the Prime Minister announced his refusal to receive the Munster deputation, on the ground of pressure of business, he had been actually receiving an obscure deputation from Glasgow on the subject of Sunday Closing !

statesmanship. Having no other fault to find either with the composition or proceedings of the historic Munster gathering, he picked out a sentence from the speech of Mr. Butcher, of all men—the very abstract of courtesy and fine feeling—referring to the quite notorious hostility of the Treasury to the Act of 1903, to write a public letter inveighing against this heinous offence, and on the strength of this one sentence from the speech of an individual speaker, banged the door in the faces of a deputation under whose feet a wise English Minister might well have scattered roses. To make his refusal to receive the deputation all the more offensive, he scoffed at the suggestion that the treaty of 1903 involved any bargain on England's part beyond the strictest letter of the bond (a draughtsman's confessed mistake included), although nothing was easier than to prove to him in reply, out of the mouths of all the men of leading in the old Liberal Cabinet—Sir H. Campbell-Bannerman, Mr. Morley, Mr. Haldane, Sir Edward Grey, and Mr. John Burns—that they had celebrated the Act as the most blessed pact of peace that had ever been sealed between the two islands.

The voice was the voice of Mr. Birrell, but all the world knew the hand was the hand of Mr. Dillon. The deputation which, as time has since proved, represented to an unprecedented degree those interests over whose sacrifice the whole country is now mourning, was turned from the ministerial door, and for the paltriest of Treasury excuses, but, above all, for the satisfaction of the grudges of the worst enemies of peace between the two islands, the Government of England tore the treaty of 1903 to shreds.

CHAPTER XXI

MOLLY MAGUIRE, IMPERATRIX!

IN order to appreciate what happened at the gathering which will go down to Irish story as "The Molly Maguire Convention," it is necessary to bear in mind that I had not yet severed my connection with the Irish Party; that the party had not formally committed itself to Mr. Birrell's Bill; that, on the contrary, the purpose of the so-called "National Convention" was to consider whether the Bill would expedite or destroy Land Purchase, and that it was solely with the object of preventing my own objections to the Bill from reaching the ears of the mass of the Convention that the elaborate measures of disorder and violence now to be detailed were set in motion. During the subsequent legal proceedings, there was a faint pretence that the hiring of special trains of Molly Maguires and cattle-drivers, and the manufacture of batons for use in the Round Room of the Mansion House itself, were due to an apprehension of some attack in force upon the Convention by my friends. But, of course, no scrap of evidence was offered to sustain so farcical a suggestion.

Indeed, it was publicly boasted by the chairman of the Convention that my friends only numbered ten men out of an assembly of 3000. This was an exaggeration scarcely less untruthful; but is useful as a proof how little the organizers of the Convention believed in their own *ex post facto* apprehension of violence from our side. The truth was that my friends and myself knew quite as well the day before the Convention as the day after it that we were entering an assembly in which not only should we be

numerically in a tiny minority, but in which the word had been passed to a formidable secret society, composing at least one-third of those present, to refuse us a hearing at all costs. Our one hope was that the remainder of the assembly—quiet, sober men, whose deepest interests in life were at stake in the question whether Mr. Birrell's Bill would hasten or put a stop to the abolition of landlordism—would insist upon at least being allowed to listen to views and arguments which time has since wofully justified. It was just because we felt these arguments to be so irresistible that, in spite of every warning that they would be met with personal insult and even physical violence, we resolved at least to make the attempt to lay them before the Convention. It is, I am afraid, certain that it was the same feeling that the arguments had only to be heard to carry the day, in any assembly of reasoning Irishmen, that determined the organizers of the Convention that not a sentence of what I had to say must be heard in peace.

It must not be forgotten with respect to the delegates from three of the four provinces—Ulster, Leinster, and Connaught—that, owing to the Press boycott, they had never read a single connected statement of my views during the five previous years, while the newspapers they read were every day stuffed with misrepresentations of my every word and deed. In the province of Munster alone had any speech of my friends or myself been circulated honestly as it was spoken, and there, wherever the *Cork Examiner* reports penetrated, public opinion was overpoweringly with us; but care had been taken to make the representation of the province of Munster illusory; and that of the vast county of Cork—containing one-eighth of the Nationalists of Ireland—all but entirely non-existent. The branches of the United Irish League had sunk out of existence, save a few kept alive for one reason or another by half-a-dozen clergymen, whose real weight with the electorate was demonstrated by the fate of their candidates at the polls in the late elections for North Cork, North-East Cork, Mid Cork, South-East Cork, and West Cork. The "Board of Erin" had not yet spread its own lodges to the south, but, as we have seen, had paved the way for them by organizing

a split in the Land and Labour Association—the only popular organization now left in Munster—and utilized the opportunity to refuse admission to the National Convention to the parent Land and Labour Association, while distributing cards of admission to the schismatic organization of its own creation.¹ Accordingly, even from Munster—and especially from Cork, Limerick, and Kerry—the only representatives of the majorities that have since made themselves heard at the polls who were suffered to filter through were a few dozens of county councillors and district councillors deputed by their own bodies. There is something even more comical than impudent in the suggestion that this handful of staid representative men required a special train full of armed men from Belfast, and another of the choice cattle-drivers of the Midlands to restrain them by the fear of their batons from carrying the Mansion House by main force.

The only other plea offered during the police court proceedings in defence of the batonmen and their work was the suggestion of some deadly plot for the break-up of the Convention hatched in my hotel on the previous night. It was characteristic of much in the latest phase of Irish government that the police magistrate while he allowed on cross-examination the admission of a version of this meeting to be given by a Molly Maguire spy, introduced into my private room on the occasion, he refused to allow us to give direct evidence of what had really taken place there. Had the evidence of myself and of everybody else present, except the two Molly Maguire spies, been permitted, it would have covered the inventors of the Imperial Hotel plot with as much ridicule as the story of the march of the men of Munster upon the Mansion House.

The prosaic truth is that no meeting of any kind had been projected beyond the casual calls at my hotel of such friends as were staying there or came up from the country by the different trains. A number of them were calling

¹ With what profusion the "Board of Erin" distributed its favours among its own brethren may be judged from the evidence of a Tipperary County Councillor, Mr. Martin O'Dwyer, who saw a well-known "Molly" exhibiting a bundle "of hundreds of cards of admission to the Convention" publicly at a Dublin bar.

all through the day and departed after a chat, without being invited to return. The evening trains brought them in larger numbers, and they dropped in quite without concert, until my small sitting-room had no longer chairs for them and we were obliged to turn to a larger room, where our conversation was so informal that the two spies deputed by the "Board of Erin" for their noble mission had no difficulty in obtaining admission. Earlier in the evening a number of Limerick delegates had called to tell me, on the authority of the member of the National Directory for West Limerick, that the Directory, at their meeting during the day, had resolved upon a marked change of front with respect to the Birrell Bill. Mr. Redmond had announced that the Convention had only to be asked to approve the Bill on condition that the tenants' rate of interest under the Wyndham Act was to remain undisturbed, if the landlords would accept payment in 4 per cent investments. I mentioned this piece of good news to my friends with the heartiest relief, and told them that, if it were well founded, there would be an end of all difficulty from our side, and that I should scarcely care to trouble the Convention with a word myself. But having regard to all that I knew of Mr. Dillon's views as to the tenants' annuity and to positive information which had reached me from the brother of a bishop¹ that the most elaborate arrangements were being made to howl me down the moment I presented myself, I had my doubts whether the news as to the decision of the Directory was not too good to be true, and said we must be prepared for the other alternative—that of a deliberate attempt to make any real discussion of the Birrell Bill impossible. We chatted the matter over around the table, without the slightest formality. I mentioned four hours as a reasonable time for a debate involving the whole future of Land Purchase in the country, and referred to the possibility of an attempt to "rush" the vote before Mr. Healy (who was engaged in an important trial at the Four Courts) could arrive. Beyond these general observations, and an intimation

¹ The gentleman was in court when the trial of *Crean v. Devlin and Johnston* began, but, having heard his name alluded to in the counsel's opening statement, disappeared and was not to be found when a subpoena was sought to be served upon him as a witness.

that, while I should joyfully hail any conciliatory attitude on the part of the Directory, I should not myself submit without protest to any attempt by mere rowdyism to closure the discussion of a subject so vital, there was not in the famous "Imperial Hotel Plot" invented by the Titus Oates of the "Board of Erin" another syllable that need have troubled the rest of those who had arranged for special trains of Molly Maguires and cattle-drivers in prescient anticipation of the deeds of derring-do of the two or three dozen delegates "with a Cork accent."¹

The next morning, one hundred and fifty "stewards" from Belfast (why the Irish capital was not able to furnish Nationalists enough to hold the doors has never been explained²) arrived by special train and were marched in military order to the Mansion House and placed in possession of the citadel *manu militari*. Shortly after the special train of cattle-drivers from Longford and Westmeath, armed with "the hazels" hitherto reserved for use on the flanks of the bullocks, brought a fresh accession to the corps of occupation.³ Two sackfuls of policemen's batons had been already distributed to knots of "special constables" recruited for service within the hall at an honorarium of ten shillings apiece, with

¹ The general orders to the stewards, with boxwood batons concealed up their sleeves, who were posted in gangs through the hall, was: "Not to let anybody with a Cork accent near the platform." It was the melodious accent of Belfast that reigned wherever a delegate was to be hit on the head, or a speaker guillotined. Nemesis overtook the authors of the anathema against "the Cork accent" at the General Election, when a half-penny daily sheet, with the title *The Cork Accent*, was one of the principal agencies in the panic flight of the Molly Maguires from the south.

² It was probably because the "Board of Erin" Lodges had not then established their supremacy in Dublin so completely as they have now, when the Lord Mayors, High Sheriffs, and Town Councillors are of their making.

³ The cattle-drivers were drawn upon as reliable allies of the Molly Maguires owing to the fact that I had incurred their enmity by publicly denouncing the folly of their campaign at a moment when Mr. John FitzGibbon, one of the three Trustees of the Irish Parliamentary Fund, and now an official member of the Congested Districts Board, had declared at meeting after meeting that he "had consulted his leaders" and that "they blessed the cattle-drivers." While "his leaders" have since rewarded Mr. FitzGibbon by nominating him to a Board that has £250,000 a year of charitable doles at its disposal, the only substantial form their "blessing to the cattle-drivers" has taken has been a heavy extra-police charge wherever their instructions were put in practice. In the county of Galway, which distinguished itself above all others by deserving "the blessing" of "the leaders," the extra-police charge upon the happy ratepayers is at the rate of £28,000 a year.

instructions to conceal up their sleeves their murderous weapons, which were fastened to their wrists with thongs of leather. As the main force from Belfast was stationed outside the entrances to the Mansion House upon which the onslaught of the fabled "march of the men of Munster" must principally fall, and as there was no evidence that batons were supplied to these, it may be safely assumed that they came armed with revolvers, which are the weapons freely employed on both sides in all Belfast riots.

When Father Clancy of Kilkee and myself walked up to the Mansion House an hour before the opening of the Convention, it was to be gruffly refused entrance at the hall door of the Mansion House, and having responded humbly to the challenge for our tickets to be passed on from one barrier to another, held by one outpost after another of burly Belfast men, speaking a cast-iron dialect as irresponsive as a *chevaux de frise*, until we found ourselves imprisoned in a corner at the back of the platform, where the half-dozen seats reserved for my friends were hemmed around, as within solid walls, by a battalion of secret society men and cattle-drivers, glowering at us with faces of passion and hate. These were the preparations for ensuring freedom of debate at a great national deliberative assembly summoned to decide within a few hours an issue of supreme importance to the future of millions of the Irish people.

The most serious feature of the scandal was that it was not the work of the open and responsible organization of the United Irish League, but of the leaders of a secret and irresponsible sectarian society, who had obtained the mastery of the machinery of the public movement and the control of its funds. Of this fact, unhappily, there can be no doubt. Mr. Redmond swore on cross-examination that he knew nothing himself of the arrangements for the Convention, but left them in the hands of Mr. Devlin and Mr. Denis Johnston. Mr. Devlin was the Grand Master of the "Board of Erin," as well as paid Secretary of the United Irish League, and Mr. Johnston also occupied the double function of an officer of the "Board of Erin" and the chief organizer of the public League. It was further established on oath that a majority of the Standing Committee of the League, in whose hands

rested all the details of organization and the uncontrolled disposal of the League funds, were at the same time officers or brethren of the clandestine Order.¹ On the platform itself, indeed, the ascendancy of the "Board of Erin" was visible to all eyes. Mr. Redmond's chair was flanked by the Grand Master on one side and by the Grand Chaplain on the other, as joint secretaries of the Convention; and behind his chair sat Mr. Dillon, once more illustrating the allusion to him by a distinguished Liberal judge as "the masked conspirator in the background who did not venture to present himself in the witness-box." One of the most painful facts elicited in the evidence was the statement of an influential Ulster brother clergyman (entirely confirmed by my own experience) that all the time while I was being howled down by the "Board of Erin" brethren and the cattle-drivers, the Grand Chaplain sat by Mr. Redmond's side, with a broad grin of delight upon his face, and with his hand to his cheek making motions which to all seeming were the secret signals of the Order to the disturbers.

Mr. Redmond spoke for an hour in support of his motion for the endorsement of Mr. Birrell's Bill, and there was not a disturbing voice while he developed his argument. The two points on which he gained the adhesion of the Convention were points on which time proves him to have been wholly in the wrong. The first was that the financial clauses of the Bill, increasing the tenant purchasers' annuity and destroying all inducements to the landlords to sell, could and would be amended in Committee. He even gave a broad hint that his information came from the highest authority. In my reply, so far as I could make it audible, I pointed

¹ The members of the Standing Committee proved to be also "Board of Erin" Hibernians were: Mr. Devlin, M.P., Grand Master; Rev. Father Cannon, Adm., Grand Chaplain; Mr. Nugent, Grand Secretary; Mr. P. A. M^hHugh, M.P. (since dead); Mr. T. Kettle, M.P. (who has since been quartered on the British Consolidated Fund for £500 a year as "Professor of National Economics" at the New Dublin University College); the Lord Mayor of Dublin; Mr. Denis Johnston, chief organizer of the League; and Mr. William Redmond, M.P., who at the Cork election publicly kissed the scarf with which he was invested on his initiation into the Order. It was not proved in evidence that Mr. Dillon, M.P., was himself an initiated member of the "Board of Erin"; but at the Dublin Hall of the "Hibernians" he delivered a glowing public eulogium of the Molly Maguires and of their patroness, and defended even their rule excluding all Protestants from membership.

out that, on the contrary, these financial arrangements were of the very essence of the Bill and could not be altered without wholly dropping it; and that any such alteration was all the more out of the question because Mr. Birrell knew that one of the most influential leaders of the Irish Party strongly favoured the proposal to charge tenant purchasers the increased annuity. Mr. Kettle, M.P. (now "Professor of National Economics"), was put up to scoff at my setting up my poor judgment against Mr. Redmond's authoritative assurance that the Irish Party could and would see that the finance clauses would be amended. When the point was brought to the legislative test, the assurances on the strength of which the Convention was allured into approving the Bill proved to be illusory. The finance clauses were passed in both Houses without the alteration of a comma, and the result which it was so easy to anticipate followed. The Birrell Act, to which the Convention was bidden to look for a new heaven and a new earth, has killed Land Purchase stone dead outside the congested districts.

Mr. Redmond's other appeal to the Convention was equally disingenuous. For five years the favourite war-cry of the anti-Conciliationists had been that the Irish ratepayers would be bankrupted by the cost of financing the Purchase Act of 1903. The danger was a wholly imaginary one, but those who invoked it succeeded in causing a vague terror by reason of a draughtsman's oversight in the Act of 1903, which apparently threw upon the Irish local rates all losses connected with the financing of Land Purchase loans. Considering that imperial credit was the breath of life of the Act, the absurdity of transferring the imperial liability to the shoulders of the Irish ratepayers, one-third of whom had no direct interest in Land Purchase at all, was, it might seem, too glaring even for the politician conscience to exploit. Mr. Asquith, the Liberal Prime Minister, had declared as frankly as Mr. Wyndham that it was a liability which none of the parties to the Act of 1903 intended to impose, and which no Party and no Government could dream of enforcing. This was nevertheless the transparent bogey by which the enemies of Land Purchase in the Trea-

sury and in the Irish Party frightened the Convention into the acceptance of Mr. Birrell's Bill.

By a coincidence, for which it will not be easy to find a natural explanation, a number of the Irish County Councils (including the Cork County Council, which had evinced a determined hostility to the Birrell Bill) received claims for many thousands of pounds from the Treasury, on foot of the flotation expenses of Land Purchase loans, a few days previous to the Convention which was to decide the fate of the Bill. By a no less curious coincidence Mr. Redmond was made aware of the strategy of the Treasury, and in a voice of solemn portent read out to an awestruck Convention the threatening messages from the Treasury, and asked them were they going to reject a Bill which alone could save the Irish ratepayers from this terrific burden? If the reply of Mr. Healy and myself could have been heard, it is not likely that a rag of the ghostly raiment of this poor bogey would have been left. But Molly Maguire had taken ample precautions against any misadventure such as that, and the Convention meekly proceeded to kill Land Purchase in order to escape from a liability which the Liberal Prime Minister himself had proclaimed to be a wholly unintentional and, for all practical purposes, mythical one. The manœuvre had the one recommendation of a momentary success; but there is already a lively competition between the Treasury and the representatives of Ireland to shift the credit of the victory to any shoulders except their own.

I had given notice of an amendment, the necessity for which every farmer in Ireland would now attest with a groan:

That any Bill based on the lines of the Birrell Land Bill of last Session must lead to the stoppage of Land Purchase for an indefinite number of years in the interests of the British Treasury, and impose an intolerable yearly penalty upon those tenant purchasers whose purchase money the Treasury has failed to provide, while postponing for at least fifty years to come any complete solution of the problem of the West and of the redistribution of the untenanted grass lands of the country.

The moment I stood up the situation revealed itself precisely as it remained until I sat down. From the bulk of

the staid, seriously-minded country folk seated in the body of the hall there burst forth a cheer of generous and unmistakable welcome; but it was immediately drowned by shouts of angry hostility raised simultaneously, and in manifest obedience to a signal, by the detachments of armed "Molly Maguires" planted all round the auditorium at the back of the platform, and in the great gallery which encircles the Round Room. It was clear from the first that the password for the day was not to permit a word to be heard by the great mass of the Convention, and the order was put victoriously into execution. In the course of their subsequent search for some shadow of excuse for the scene of unmitigated blackguardism which followed, the Grand Masters fastened upon five not very sensational words of mine—"Constituted as this Convention is," used in a good-humoured appeal to the generosity and good sense of the majority to accord me a fair hearing—as a sufficient reason for refusing to listen to a single sentence on the view of the Birrell Bill which is now all but universally acknowledged to be the sensible and patriotic view. They were the only words of mine in which even malice could see offence during the hour for which I remained facing the insults and uproar hurtling about my ears. This *ex post facto* apology could not impose upon any candid witness of the scene at the Convention. It was from the beginning, as it was to the end, a determined combination, organized by the officers of the "Board of Erin," and paid for out of the national funds, to make it impossible for two-thirds of the delegates to hear in peace so much as one connected argument in opposition to the official programme of the "Board of Erin"—or, in the Grand Master's own gleeful words a few days before the Convention, "to give O'Brien his Waterloo." As the determination to drown my voice grew more furious, the various bands of "Molly Maguires" and cattle-drivers stationed around the hall broke into obscene choruses, sounded tin whistles, and beat their sticks violently against the woodwork of the galleries; while on the platform behind me, within a few yards of where Mr. Redmond and Mr. Dillon sat in an Olympian calm, voices in the raucous Belfast accent did not spare even a lady's name in a chorus of

ribaldry which—let it be added for the sake of the traditions of ancient chivalry that once lighted defenceless woman in safety through the Green Isle—would have filled the mass of the Convention with horror, if it could have reached their ears.

While I was endeavouring by the aid of a fairly powerful voice to dominate the ear-splitting clamour around me, Mr. Crean, M.P., on the suggestion of Father Clancy, attempted to reach me in order to urge me to give up the unequal struggle. He was no sooner on his legs than he was pounced upon by a group of brawny Belfast "Mollies" and dragged back by main force; while Mr. Devlin, with a face blazing with passion, rushed towards his colleague in the Irish Party, shouting to his Lodgemen: "Put the fellow out! Throw the fellow out." At the same time, Father Clancy, Mr. Sheehan, M.P., and Mr. Gilhooly, M.P., having interposed to remonstrate with Mr. Crean's assailants, found themselves in the midst of a disgraceful *mêlée* of curses, blows, and uplifted sticks, Mr. Sheehan being violently struck on the face, and one of the "Molly Maguire" baton men swinging his baton over Mr. Gilhooly's head to a favourite Belfast battle-cry: "I'll slaughter you, if you say another word!"

The scene must have done irreparable damage to the repute of our race, only that fortunately two-thirds of the assembly at the least must be acquitted of complicity in what happened. I watched the demeanour of the Convention closely during the hour for which I struggled to obtain a hearing; and the assembly consisted of two elements as distinct as a body of sane men amidst an irruption of unloosed furies. The majority sat peacefully with pained faces and ears straining to listen; but the sympathetic cheer they began with soon died away into mere silent anguish as the organized clamour carried the day. The victorious minority were mostly young city tradesmen or labourers, who assuredly knew little more of the Land Bill under debate than of the latest Assyrian inscriptions, but they had all the advantage of a secret organization with precise orders; and their batons, revolvers, tin whistles, and filthy choruses had an easy triumph over the remonstrances

of the elderly county councillors and farmers who cowered under their clamour. At no time was it possible for me to make even any considerable fragment of my arguments heard for more than a few yards beyond the reporters' table; and at long last mere physical exhaustion compelled me to desist. Mr. Thomas O'Donnell, M.P., who attempted to second my amendment, was not permitted to utter a single audible sentence. Silence was restored while young Mr. Kettle, M.P., member of the "Board of Erin," and since rewarded with a stipend from the Consolidated Fund, was relieving himself of his painfully incubated sarcasms against me for uttering the warnings which six months afterwards 400,000 Irish farmers were recalling with torment and remorse. But when Father Clancy rose to reply to him, once more pandemonium was unloosed, and at the first mystic signal from the Grand Masters and Grand Chaplains on the platform, Molly Maguire resumed her sceptre.

The comical incident never quite missing from Irish tragedies turned up at the close. While Father Clancy was still endeavouring to make himself heard, Mr. Healy arrived on the platform from the Four Courts. The moment his arrival was signalled, Mr. Dillon, who had been taking copious notes for a reply to me, hurriedly bundled his notes into his pocket and passed the word to Mr. Redmond, who straightway got on his legs, invited the assembly to closure. Father Clancy, and having silenced all further debate upon the subject, put his resolution approving the Birrell Bill, amidst a scene of frantic uproar and confusion, in which two-thirds of the audience knew not in the least what was going forward, and then declared it carried with only ten dissentients! The whole guillotine process was over within a minute, and Molly Maguire yelled her joy over the death of Land Purchase and of Free Speech with her thousand throats and the rattle of her thousand "hazels." Of the four hours occupied in the "debate," two passed in speeches lauding the Bill, without a word of interruption, and the other two in preventing a single complete sentence from being heard on the other side.

A worthy sequel of the Molly Maguire Convention were

the proceedings in the Police Court, where Mr. Crean, M.P., endeavoured to bring his assailants to justice. The Court was taken possession of by the brethren of the "Board of Erin" Lodges, who without let or hindrance conducted themselves as unceremoniously as Henriot's Paris Sections did in their wildest raids on the French Chamber. They disgraced Irish manhood by making the shout of "Down with the Russian Jewess!" their war-cry,¹ with only the feeblest of rebukes from the police magistrate. They made the Court ring day after day with interruptions and insults to Mr. Crean's counsel, with menacing demonstrations against the witnesses, and rapturous appreciation of the magistrate's witticisms and of his astounding refusal to compel the "Board of Erin" witnesses to reveal their secret rites and passwords. The Lord Mayor of Dublin (himself a brother of the "Board of Erin") daily sat on the bench beside the magistrate, and had his state carriage in waiting to escort the defendants to and from Court amidst the ovations of their admiring Lodges. The most sensational performances of the Molly Maguire Convention itself paled before the decision of the Court, not merely dismissing Mr. Crean's summons for the assault, but inflicting upon him in the shape of costs a fine of £150 or two months' imprisonment for his audacity in even preferring his complaint!² Molly Maguire remained the undisputed mistress of Dublin, as well as of the North and West. But one result of surpassing importance had been achieved. It was placed on imperishable record that all the unbridled ruffianism of the Convention was the work of the leaders of an occult sectarian brotherhood, who, forming a majority of the Standing Committee, pulled the wires and expended the moneys of the public organization of the United Irish League according to their own sovereign will. The triumph of the moment was dearly purchased by a discovery which implanted the seeds of

¹ The poor besotted creatures fondly supposed they were wounding a lady of the race "of whom," wrote the inspired Jewish Apostle, "were the fathers and Christ according to the flesh," and of a family who were the treasured friends of the men of genius of half Europe.

² The crowning touch was given to this judicial scandal by the promotion to the chief magistracy of Dublin of the magistrate who had thus welcomed the Molly Maguire Lord Mayor to sit beside him on the Bench of Justice and basked in the rowdy applause of his Molly Maguire auditory.

inevitable decay both in the League and in its parasite tyrant.

The great Nationalist province of Munster was still not widely infected with Molly Maguirm. The effect there of the scene in the Dublin Mansion House was one of horror. The proposal to start a new and broader national organization under the name of the All-For-Ireland League, to cope with the merciless intimidation practised by the secret brotherhood which was rapidly stealing southwards, was received with the relief with which an uneasy sleeper sees the first lifting of a nightmare. A circular to the representative men of the county, borough, and district councils of the city and county of Cork was responded to by a consensus of opinion so earnest and so all but unanimous that in any other country except Ireland its weight would have been irresistible. But no newspaper in the country could be found to give publicity to their declarations in the ordinary way. It was only in the shape of an expensive advertisement of many columns in length that even a single daily paper could be induced to enable these 400,000 Nationalists to make their voices heard above their breath. The brutalities of the Molly Maguires and cattle-drivers had exercised a still more intimidatory effect upon the unhappy rank and file of the Irish Party.¹ The Grand Masters promptly utilised their opportunity to call the party together, and wring from them a sentence of major excommunication against the new league and against every member of parliament who should venture on its platform. To add the last touch of sardonic irony to this stroke of tyranny it was justified on the ground that the new organization would be an infringement of the national monopoly of the United Irish League, the truth being that the very men who launched the excommunication had themselves usurped for their own clandestine organization the complete mastery of the machinery and moneys of the United Irish League, and were now meditating arrangements to spread their power into the last province held by the moribund league.

¹ One poor man ventured the remark that "Joe (meaning Mr. Devlin) overdid the thing" (at the Molly Maguire Convention), and went within an ace of losing his seat at the General Election for the blasphemy.

It was only with a feeling of almost unconquerable repulsion I had been forced back into the public arena through loyalty to the people of Cork, and I could only retain my hateful post so long as the commission from Cork lasted. The resolution of the party crying anathema against the All-For-Ireland League had been voted by five out of the nine representatives of Cork, among the deserters being my own colleague in the city of Cork—whose infidelity to the cause and the colleague he had so often covered with a nauseating homage could not even be brought to the test of the public judgment, since he refused to submit himself to his constituents. Every avenue to public discussion being thus closed, and the only hope of a remedy lying in an angry agitation, which by reason of its very suppression in the newspapers, might assume a form of violence fatal to all our objects—the country being further on the eve of a session of Parliament in which the fate of the Land Bill was to be decided, and in which its failure to redeem the promises on which the Convention accepted it would be sure to be attributed to some malign interference of mine—I had no difficulty in making up my mind that the time had come when my position in public affairs was no longer constitutionally, nor indeed, even physically maintainable in a country over three of whose four provinces my voice could no more be heard than amidst the deviltry of the Molly Maguire Convention. Little though the stage thunders of the Molly Maguires could impress myself, I had also to remember that it was a very different matter to ask my faithful friends to quit their positions in the party to follow me in an enterprise as desperate as it could well be in a country where the very rudiments of a free public opinion had disappeared. I once more renounced my seat in Parliament, and left the field, as I supposed, in the absolutely undisputed possession of those who alone had it in their power to make their voices heard, or to give effect to whatever policy they might persuade themselves underlay the ascendancy of the “Board of Erin.” For the nine following months I neither saw any Irish newspaper, nor sent nor received any communication to or from any body in Ireland. For the rest, a dangerous illness, which struck

me down in Italy almost immediately after my arrival there and kept me for nearly five months helpless in the hands of the surgeons and nurses, removed the last danger of any intermeddling of mine with the precious reign of Molly Maguire in her Irish realm.

CHAPTER XXII

THE ALL-FOR-IRELAND MOVEMENT

E QUINDI uscimmo a riveder le stelle! It was the cry of joy with which Dante emerged from the infernal pit and beheld again the stars of heaven. The words sang blissfully in our ears as descending from the Simplon, we saw the first almond blossoms of Lombardy. But Italy, its golden skies, its classics in nature and art, amidst which everything is possible except the commonplace, had barely opened its treasure-houses before my eyes when, with the suddenness of one of its own earthquakes, I fell under the knife of a surgeon in a little English nursing home on the Guidecca, in Venice. "Amidst all your adventures," the kindly Devonshire lady in command consolingly suggested, "you have never had the sensations of an operating-table. You won't find them too shocking." Nor did I, but for the next two months, I had to explore the wonders of Venice and Florence under the drawback of a wound that had to be kept open by the gentle process of torture known to the surgeon as "packing"; and we had scarcely moved up to the mountains for the hot season when a combination of two fresh maladies laid me on the flat of my back for two months more.

The Villino in which we were housed had, however, the advantage of a loggia, or, so to say, wall-less chamber, adjoining my bedroom, where from my couch I was able to survey on one side the dark green forest of Vallombrosa and far underneath me all Tuscany with its vineyards. It was like living in a classic dreamland. We no longer saw any Irish newspaper and had carefully cut off from friend

and foe in Ireland any knowledge of our whereabouts. It was on a note-book resting on the palm of my hand as I lay on my *chaise longue* in the loggia that the greater part of this book was written. It had at least the advantage of being written with as complete a detachment from the present, and as calm a retrospect of the past as from my eyrie I could devote to the memories of Dante and Michael Angelo and Savonarola floating amidst the purple haze of Tuscany underneath me. It seemed as impossible that I should ever hear the tocsin of Irish battle again as that the big bell of the Palazzo Vecchio should ring out for the resurrection of the old captains of the Republic.

So it seemed also to those who were left in triumphant possession of the political field, and their belief that the last had been heard of me as a living force was their undoing. There was, undoubtedly, a touch of old tenderness for me and of resentment at the base proceedings of the Molly Maguire Convention in the obstinacy with which the people of Cork elected Mr. Maurice Healy in my place by a great majority over Mr. Dillon's candidate, who had been specially selected because he had turned over his newspaper to the service of my assailants. But I had not in the remotest degree suggested or supported any opposition to the will of the Dublin Caucus, nor written nor received a line upon the subject to or from any body in Ireland. Had Mr. Dillon and his friends shown the prudence—not to say magnanimity—of gratifying the people of Cork by cheerfully welcoming the man of their free choice into the party, and made up their minds honestly to forget old grudges against the half-dozen other members of the party whose only offence was their fidelity to the Policy of Conciliation, the history of the past twelve months would have been a different one, and would have wholly spared the victors of the Molly Maguire Convention the humiliations which have ever since been crowding thick and fast upon them. Neither Mr. Maurice Healy nor my other friends would have any conceivable motive for stirring up trouble within the party. For myself, clear as was my vision that a return to the policy of 1903 was the only way of averting the ultimate dislocation of the national movement, I was not without

hope that, the element of personal hostility once eliminated, the course of events would inevitably lead even Mr. Dillon to adopt for his own the principles he found not to be tolerated in me. Be that as it might, I was content to bequeath as my only remaining contribution to Ireland's future the book in which I should have told the story of what so easily might have been, for the instruction of the new generation who would, with fresher energies and in a more generous time, happily complete the half-told tale.

The wildly exaggerated rumours of my physical breakdown seem to have determined the inner circle in Dublin to throw all prudence as well as magnanimity to the winds, and once for all to finish with every colleague in the least tainted with sympathy with my principles or myself. The man chosen by the principal Nationalist city in the island was refused admission to the party with every circumstance of insult. All my other immediate friends—Mr. Gilhooly, Mr. Crean, Mr. Sheehan, and Mr. John O'Donnell—who were still members of the party, were one and all marked down for extermination at the General Election, and organizers despatched into their constituencies to make sure their fate. The first and only letter from Ireland which had reached me for many months (it was from a private citizen of Cork) informed me of these facts, and implored me to interfere if these faithful men were not to be ruined, politically and financially, without mercy. The only thing it was then possible for me to do I did. It was to despatch the following telegram to the Press Association for publication :—

If these people are wise they will drop their campaign of vengeance against my friends.

Doubtless the deepest feeling of "these people" in many an hour of bitter reflection since is one of remorse that they did not take the hint. But by this time, as I know now, their heads were completely intoxicated with their undisputed power in the country, and with their confidence that I was no longer to be counted with in the clash of living forces to dispute their will. They not only proceeded with their operations for the destruction of my

immediate adherents in the party, but, with the ruthlessness of a Jacobin club in the wildest days of the September massacres marked down for the tumbrils at least twenty additional members of the party who were suspected of secret sympathy with the Policy of Conciliation, although they had never plucked up courage to vote against their paymasters, even in the confidential councils of the party. It was not merely to be a Pride's Purge; it was to be a feast of heads worthy of "the Sea-green Incorruptible" himself.

Having silenced all discussion of the Birrell Land Purchase Killing Bill in Ireland by the boxwood batons of the Molly Maguire Convention they had now forced that measure through Parliament, and thereby (as has been since proved) virtually repealed the great measure of 1903 for the abolition of landlordism. Having thus relieved a hard-pressed Liberal Chancellor of Exchequer from the expense of financing Irish Land Purchase, they proceeded next to do him a still better turn at the expense of Ireland by supporting his famous Budget of 1909, which however it might pave the way for a Socialistic revolution in England, made an immediate increase of £600,000 a year to the direct Imperial over-taxation of Ireland, and by the same stroke inflicted a loss of £1,500,000 upon one of the foremost industries of Ireland, in addition to the loss of £1,500,000 a year involved in the stoppage of Land Purchase. Strive as one may, it is difficult to comprehend the state of mental infatuation in which the representatives of Ireland made those tremendous and unrequited sacrifices to the Liberal Party.

It was all done for the sake of eliciting some promise from Mr. Asquith to make Home Rule, as the phrase went, "the dominant issue at the General Election." From that point of view the calculation turned out to be a wofully mistaken one. The line of strategy adopted had the double disadvantage of being equally hurtful to the Liberals and to Home Rule. The occasion was obviously one for establishing some full and frank arrangement such as Parnell made with Gladstone when the Irish forces were thrown into his scale in 1886. There was no reason why Mr. Asquith

should not have been pressed to make his position as to Home Rule clear, at least in a private interchange of opinion, and why he should not have been frankly opposed if his bid was an unsatisfying one, or the best means of securing a Liberal triumph at the polls been loyally adhered to if his intentions towards Ireland were proved to be no less loyal.

The astounding truth seems to be that Mr. Redmond and Mr. Asquith never exchanged a confidential word in the course of those momentous months. Mr. Asquith was treated not as a statesman dealing with the highest concerns of the empire, in concert with the representatives of a proud people, but as either a trickster too "slim" to be trusted or as a trimmer contemptible enough to allow himself to be bribed into anything by the prospect of the loss of office. This way of treating a great question from the point of view of gamblers rather than of statesmen was the initial cause of many disastrous hours both for the Liberal Party and for Ireland. Mr. Asquith read out his Home Rule paragraph in the Albert Hall under the painfully obvious pressure of public threats. The passage was listened to in dead silence by an audience wild with enthusiasm over all the rest of the speech. The Home Rule pronouncement was not further referred to by any official Liberal in whose constituency the Irish vote was not a factor to be counted with. One of the Liberal Party Whips publicly declared there was no Home Rule engagement at all. The maximum of disrepute was brought upon the Liberals by the Albert Hall speech, and only the minimum of gain secured to the Home Rule cause by a promise which was too vague to be binding and too plainly dictated by electoral considerations to have any character of sincerity in the eyes of the British public. Mr. Asquith was probably only saved from condign punishment at the polls by the fact that the rejection of the Budget by the House of Lords ate all other issues up and made Mr. Redmond's pretence that Home Rule was the dominant issue at the General Election too ridiculous to be even seriously adverted to in England. Nevertheless, the Dublin Caucus went to the General Election proclaiming that Home Rule—defined by Mr. Dillon as "Boer Home Rule as a minimum"—was the

prime article of faith with the Liberal Party, and was already as good as carried—that, in the words of the *Freeman*: “The Liberals were returned to power at the General Election to carry Home Rule, and they must be compelled to carry it,” and to the end they clung to this delusion with the same fatuity with which they had quite made up their minds that the last traces of the policy of 1903 were about to be wiped out of the public life of Ireland.

The oak woods of Vallombrosa were already yellowing, and so far from dreaming of re-entering the political lists, I was still looking forward to my first journey downstairs as probably a more desperate enterprise than to Napoleon seemed the crossing of the Alps. In the autumn, however, we had successfully scrambled down to Florence again, and secured a lease for six months of a delicious little snugger out towards Careggi, owned by an English poetess, who was accustomed to return there yearly for inspiration. So little did we even then think of any interruption of our idyll that we were deeply disappointed that the lady could not be induced to extend our lease over the heavenly Italian months of May and June. We had even brought our own maids from Ireland, and delightful was it, as proof of the sunny adaptability of the race, to watch how the Irish girls, without one Tuscan word, managed by signs and nods and laughs to establish as genial a talking acquaintance with their native colleagues, Asunta and Fausta, as if they had been brought up in the Lyncæan Academy.¹ It

¹ We had ourselves kept so entirely aloof from any contact with society, native or foreign, that for many months we had scarcely heard the sound of the English language, except from our worthy Scottish doctor and a sweet-faced Irish nursing nun, and (I am tempted to add) from a Newfoundland dog from England which one day sidled up to us at Vallombrosa at the sound of our English conversation, and with his eyes and tail made to us a charming speech in that language. To our humbler Italian neighbours, a simple and fascinating folk, we were just a pair of the usual “eccentric English,” with the additional eccentricity in our case of attending the Catholic Mass. As to any difference between Ireland and England, I regret to say, the Italian mind was as void of illumination as upon the vexed question whether Tasso wrote “ultima Irlanda” or “ultima Islanda” in his catalogue of the Crusaders. To the credit of the English name and of what “the English Parliament” means to the foreign imagination, it is but fair to add, that a month or so after our departure for Ireland, as it became noised abroad in Florence that the eccentric stranger had been elected not only to one but to two seats in “the English Parliament,” our maids, who had remained behind, began to find themselves heroines around whose own heads something of the glory of “the Mother of Parliaments” was seen to shine. Doubtless, had

soon became possible for me to hobble about with some comfort ; but, indeed, a Sybarite need not have grumbled to have been kept all through that shining summer-winter, in our classic little quarters at Il Poderino, breakfasting well on into November on the balcony in a bower of blue convolvulus each as large as a toy plate—watching the clustering grapes as they decorated the garden below like Bacchants ready-decked for a feast of roses, and the pomegranates as they grew ripe-red, and the silver-grey olive trees as they were stripped of their harvest—working on through the sunny (or now and again sky-smashing) day at the easy task of finishing my book until the sun went down away towards Pisa in a golden serenity past the power of words or paints to describe, and at night by an English fireside—actually an English fireside!—luxuriating in the pretty literature—from Plato's *Republic* to the *Nuits* of Alfred de Musset—with which our poet-landlady had stored her shelves.

But the storm-signals of the General Election in Ireland, as the winter went on, began striking on my ear with a persistency there was no shutting out. My friends, there seemed to be hardly a ray of doubt left, were about to meet a miserable fate. Their constituencies were swarming with paid organizers and with brother-members of Parliament demanding the heads of their colleagues like as many *Conventionnels en mission*. An apparently irresistible influence was being enlisted against them. They were without resources, without any trace of organization of their own, without a single newspaper in the country to offer them a comforting word or even report their speeches in their own defence. Unless I came to the rescue, it began we ever returned to Careggi, a torchlight procession in our honour might have been upon the cards.

Another of our delightful experiences was that of the poor priest who used to celebrate Mass for us in the bijou chapel which was built, Florentine fashion, by the side of the Villino, as a summer-house might be in a suburban garden in London. He had but just finished his three-years' service "with the regiment," but remained still so unspoiled by the world's passions that he was content to tramp all the way from Fiesole every Sunday for the magnificent stipend of a five-franc piece, and when offered some strawberry jam with his frugal cup of coffee, had not the remotest conception of the nature of that dainty, and was lost in wonder as he learned what it was and tasted its sweetness. The Church in Italy, assuredly, is not gorged with the world's goods.

to be urged upon me with piteous iteration, they must all go under. That this wrong should take place, and with its perpetration the last hope of a saner future national policy be blotted out, was clearly unthinkable so long as I had even a segment of a sword left in my hand to offer any resistance. It seemed to me still (and up to two weeks before I left for Ireland) as impossible that I should be forced back into Parliament myself as that I should make the journey home in a balloon; but I did offer to go to the rescue of my friends for whatever my assistance might be worth, and I suggested various names from which to select a colleague for Mr. Maurice Healy in the representation of Cork City. The situation there, unluckily, was complicated by the candidature of a *tertius gaudens*, Sir Edward Fitzgerald, whom English policy in one of its silly hours had made a baronet, in pure affront to Nationalist feeling, but who was still shrewd enough to accept for himself the cognomen of "Fitzy," with which "the prime boys" of his ward had decorated the "primest boy" of them all. This versatile gentleman did us the ill turn of desiring to be the second candidate under our auspices, and thereby threatened a humiliating defeat for Mr. Maurice Healy as well as himself, if he were accepted.

It boots not now to tell with what anguish it was borne in upon me that there was no possible means of saving either of the seats except by standing myself. Like every other critical step of my life, it was settled by some inscrutable destiny as to which my own plans or desires counted for nought. I made but one stipulation—that I should only undertake to address three meetings in the City of Cork, and must not be asked to address any outside it. The reply was that my physical presence in Cork was the one desideratum, and that there was no reason why, after making one appearance there, I should not immediately return to Florence. It was upon that covenant, and leaving all our household gods behind us at Il Poderino, that we set out upon our mournful mission one bitter cold night, the 27th of December, at a season when flying from England was so much more popular a business than returning to it that we had the *train de luxe* all to our two selves as we bade good-bye to Florence.

If we had reason to repeat Dante's cry of joy as the first breath of fresh air on his escape from the *Inferno* caressed his temples, my sensation on opening the first Irish newspaper for nine months was what the divine poet's might have been if he had been suddenly thrust back again—and for life—into the Malebolge. The country was in a hideous state of chaos. Far outside the immediate theatre of war against my own friends, at least fifteen other counties had been worked up into a condition of exasperation—helpless, but all the more pitiful—by the determination of the triumphant "Board of Erin" to make a clean sweep of the Parliamentary "suspects," and with that object by hook or crook to pack, browbeat, capture, or dissolve Conventions for the selection of candidates. The rumours of my own return to Ireland were scoffed at as fables, or at most dismissed with the disdainful assurance that, if the impossible happened, I should only find how completely Cork had shaken off and forgotten my baleful influence. But the impossible would not happen. The first story was that I was mad, the next that I was blind, and the final one that I was paralysed. Unsatiated by this liberal administration of Job's comforts, these generous folk further spread abroad the good news that I was financially ruined. On the day before my arrival in Cork, one of the principal agents of the "Board of Erin" there offered to wager that if I came at all I should be brought into Cork in a bath-chair. Open-mouthed was their amazement when Job, under the stroke of all these tribulations, duly arrived, not in a bath-chair, but in the common street carriage of commerce, and, piercingly cold as was the winter night, was received with raptures by some thirty thousand people, without one murmur of dissent.

That night's proceedings would have clinched the matter, only for the eminent ward politician already referred to. He had a few days before summoned a "Convention" of his own naming, at which he was "selected," in substitution for Mr. Maurice Healy, to be my colleague in the representation of the city. The *Freeman* (it will be found worth noting as a specimen of the morals of the time) reported this gathering as "The O'Brienite Convention," and pelted me with a pretty sweet-smelling shower of epithets for my asso-

ciation with such a colleague. The astute ward politician followed up his "Convention" with a move which seemed astuter still. For my health's sake, it was determined that my speech should be an indoor one in the City Hall. While the people in tens of thousands were flocking to the railway station to meet me, our Napoleonic ward-strategist marched a couple of hundred of the choicest hooligans in the market into the City Hall, with instructions to receive me with all possible enthusiasm, but first of all and last of all to insist that "Fitzy" must be my colleague. By an utterly unlooked-for accident this stroke of genius miscarried. The crowd at the railway station was of such proportions that to attempt to pack it into a hall not capable of containing more than two thousand persons would have been like packing, not a quart, nor even a gallon, but a whole puncheon into a pint-pot. The rush must have ended in a panic and loss of life. Accordingly as the night, though icily cold, was dry, the meeting was held in the open air on the Grand Parade, and "Fitzy's" ambuscaders in the City Hall, finding themselves in a banquet hall deserted, could only make a hasty bolt for the Grand Parade, where they were so lost on the outskirts of the multitude that they never once ventured to mention the name of their patron during the proceedings. "Fitzy," no doubt, had his revenge. It was a sudden and mysterious *mot d'ordre* which passed around late on the polling day that the vote up to that hour "plumped" for him should be for the rest of the day divided with the candidate of the Molly Maguires which determined the defeat of Mr. Maurice Healy by a narrow vote. But the point worth retaining about this squalid ward intrigue is that "Fitzy," whose brilliant device for "capturing" me had gone agley, made some saintly observations at the declaration of the poll, declaring that his one high-souled object all along had been to save the unity of the Irish Party from my sacrilegious hand, and the *Freeman*, which had branded me with shame for having been selected as "Fitzy's" colleague at "Fitzy's" "O'Brienite Convention," now bragged heaven-high of the victory won for an infallible and impeccable Irish Party by the virtuous manœuvre of the no less infallible and impeccable "Fitzy."

The instinct of the unpurchasable masses was with us, but it was the only thing that seemed to be with us, as we began that dread campaign, four or five days before the writs were issued. Every other influence stood up against us apparently insurmountable as the Italian face of Mont Blanc. The most powerful of the Catholic ecclesiastics in Cork, for some reason then (and indeed still) incomprehensible to me, went almost frantic in the cause of a secret society which was regarded with abhorrence by the Catholic prelates and priests in Ulster who had known it at close quarters. We had not a shadow of organization at our command, while the lodges of the Molly Maguires obeyed their passwords without asking the reason why, and were amply armed with the weapons and the funds which had proved effective at the infamous Dublin Convention. All the public representative bodies were overrun either with old antagonists or with the still more zealous renegades who, after my departure for Italy, deserted the losing side with the same meanness of soul with which in olden days the King's evidence followed every successful *coup* by Dublin Castle. The Press was not only bristling with outrage and misrepresentation—in which no man on our side was spared, nor woman either—but, worse still, boycotted ruthlessly every speech made in answer.¹ It is more than likely that not a single speech on our side would have been heard of except by those who were actually listening to it, were it not that at a week's notice we started a halfpenny campaign-sheet called *The Cork Accent*,² which was originally intended to disappear as soon as the voting was over, but which some higher dispensation destined to be the forerunner of a revolution in the Irish Press as well as in the country. Our financial outlook was still more desperate. The

¹ The *Irish Independent*, of Dublin, was an exception in point of fair play, but did not undertake to give lengthened reports of political speeches on any side. Even more formidable than the editorial boycott by the official organs in Dublin, Cork, and Belfast was the fact that nearly all the principal English papers, Liberal and Unionist, were supplied as to their Irish news from their offices, and the American and Australian cables were also skilfully exploited in their service.

² In allusion to the order at the Molly Maguire Convention that "nobody with a Cork accent" should be suffered to come near the platform. Assuredly the time came when the mellifluous "Cork accent" fell upon the ears of its ostracisers with a sound terrible as Doom.

generous adversaries who had been crowing over my financial ruin now inconsequently consoled themselves by proclaiming that every cheer raised for me was paid for in solid gold. The truth was that even with the aid of the two or three faithful friends who assisted me to bear the strain, I had to return a blank *non possumus* to at least a dozen constituencies which might have been ours if the sheriff's expenses could have been provided to enable the ballot-boxes to speak, while our assailants were able to concentrate in a small number of contested divisions the immense subsidies just levied in the United States for nobler purposes. Finally, I was myself so disabled by the daily danger of a complete physical collapse that I was only able to address four public meetings during the Cork City campaign, and had to give up all hope of a personal canvass, and was unable to visit any other constituency at all except North-East Cork, which fate bade me contest as well. There also I was forced to be content with three speeches to the people, and to complete my disabilities there was scarcely a day throughout the four weeks' campaign when it did not rain, freeze, or snow, until a speech made bareheaded in such an elemental Gehenna might well have involved as much risk to a threatened life as a pitched battle.

When the smoke of the battle cleared away, nevertheless, every friend of mine against whom this pitiless cannonade of vengeance had been directed stood victorious on the field, and it was the conspirators who a few weeks before deemed themselves unshakable in the mastery of Ireland who, to their almost comical bewilderment and dismay, found themselves and their boasts rolled in the dust. Not only did every man for whose destruction they had thrown all prudence to the winds find his way back to Parliament in their despite, but in at least eighteen other constituencies their plots to replace members under any suspicion of independence with reliables absolutely amenable to the signs and passwords of the Order resulted in their being blown sky-high with their own petards. Mr. T. M. Healy issued victoriously from the fiery furnace they had kindled around him in North Louth. Mr. T. C. Harrington's forty years of service in the thickest of the wars—even the fact that he

was already tottering on the brink of the grave and was supposed to be wholly without resources to defend himself—did not protect him from projects of vengeance for his fidelity to his word as a member of the Land Conference. Even under the stroke of a fatal attack of heart-disease he was made the victim of a vile intrigue to filch his seat for the son of a bailiff, who was high in the occult confidences of the Lodges. There are few things more tragic even in Ireland's plentiful library of tragedies than a letter I got at the time narrating how "the broken old man bustled about with new life the moment he heard he would not be deserted." Attempts of the same character were made in North Donegal, in Mid Tyrone, in North and South Monaghan, in East Cavan, in South Fermanagh, in North Meath, in North Wexford, in the Tullamore division of King's County, in North Tipperary, in West Limerick, in East and West Kerry, in West Clare, in North, South, and West Mayo, in South Leitrim and in the College Green division of Dublin, and were supported by an audacious system of manipulation of the Conventions, both by the manufacture of bogus delegates and by the exclusion of genuine ones. In every single instance, those infamous plans for repeating in the constituencies the baton-play of the Dublin Convention were covered with defeat, either by revolts in the Conventions themselves or at the polls, wherever the defeated Convention pluggers ventured to dare the issue. Perhaps the most startling incident in a whole chapter of surprises was that every candidate on whose behalf Mr. John Dillon personally intervened throughout the campaign—Mr. Hazleton in North Louth, Mr. Lavery in South Monaghan, Mr. Conor O'Kelly in South Mayo, Ald. Cotton in South Dublin, and Mr. T. W. Russell in South Tyrone—was soundly beaten at the polls, and their champion no less unceremoniously handled in the constituencies. Wherever the ballot-boxes were allowed to tell the people's inmost thoughts, the exploiters of "majority rule" were themselves left in a minority by the country. Only 44,865 votes all told were given for the official candidates, while 45,547 were given for the men against whom the campaign of extermination had been planned. Messrs.

Dillon and Devlin led their demoralized forces back seventy in place of eighty-three, and for the first time since 1885 they went back a minority of the members for Ulster as well as left themselves in a minority of the Nationalist votes actually cast as between the Policy of Conciliation and the Policy of *Vae Victis*.

The rest is rather history in the making than already made. I told the electors of Cork that my attitude in the new Parliament should be one of patient observation, maintaining a steady but unaggressive allegiance to the principles of national reconciliation until the fatuity of the policy or impolicy then in the ascendant should have made itself clear to all eyes. This waiting attitude was made impossible after the General Election by the same infatuated intolerance which had forced me back from Italy. Revenge for our successes at the General Election took even a more virulent form than the remorseless campaign which had provoked them.

Even yet a sensible show of deference to the discontent expressed in one shape or another by at least thirty constituencies might have led to a peaceful internal reform of the party. The doors of the party were, on the contrary, banged insolently in the faces of all who had got into Parliament otherwise than through the secret password of Molly Maguire. Preparations were immediately set on foot in their constituencies for their certain annihilation the next time. The fact was joyously emphasized by Mr. T. P. O'Connor in his syndicated cablegrams to the United States, that with the disappearance of our tiny campaign sheet would be stifled our last voice in the Press; that organization we had and could have none; that the newly elected members would be left by their constituents without the means of even travelling to London; and that in the chaste language of the patriotic cableman "O'Brien's cheque-book would be soon exhausted," and he and all his brother heretics be mowed down without resistance at the next St. Bartholomew at the polls.

A graver matter still, the party now chained to the service of their secret paymasters by a new and double-

locked disciplinary code made it soon clear that they intended to persist obstinately in their engagements with the Liberal Party to wreck the Irish Land Settlement and impose a fresh load of Imperial over-taxation on Ireland in their interest, upon the mad calculation that all would be made good to Ireland if the more far-seeing men in the Liberal Party could only be bullied into a revolutionary Socialistic war to the knife against the House of Lords, and Home Rule, no matter in what bankrupt form, hustled through the House of Commons without even asking England's leave. The policy spelled almost certain overthrow for the Liberal Party and inevitable ruin for the hopes of Ireland.

Inactivity was no longer possible. The *Cork Accent* did not disappear until the people had subscribed £11,800 for the foundation of a permanent daily newspaper in its stead. The appearance of the new organ in the Press was followed promptly by the establishment of the All-for-Ireland League, whose purposes are perhaps sufficiently set forth in the resolution which gave it birth :

That, inasmuch as we regard self-government in purely Irish affairs, the transfer of the soil of Ireland to the cultivators upon just terms, and the relief of Ireland from intolerable over-taxation, as essential conditions of happiness and prosperity for our country, and, further, inasmuch as we believe the surest means of effecting these objects to be a combination of all the elements of the Irish population in a spirit of mutual tolerance and patriotic good-will, such as will guarantee to the Protestant minority of our fellow-countrymen inviolable security for all their rights and liberties, and win the friendship of the entire people of Great Britain—this representative meeting of the City and County of Cork hereby establishes an association to be called the All-for-Ireland League, whose primary object shall be the union and active co-operation in every department of our national life of all Irish men and women who believe in the principle of domestic self-government for Ireland.

Beginning modestly, and with a full recognition of the fact that its work must be one *de longue haleine*, requiring indomitable patience, and a spirit ironclad against discouragements from all narrow party interests, Irish and British alike, pending the discovery that its programme made appeal to the higher National and Imperial interests of them all, the

All-for-Ireland League has in the course of a few months progressed, both in Ireland and in Great Britain, to a degree for which there was no precedent in the history of the United Irish League, or even of the Land League, and in quarters to which neither of these movements ever suggested anything except distrust and repulsion. Two phenomena of its progress are already historic landmarks. The generous appeal its programme makes to the chivalric side of Irish national aspirations has awakened among the Nationalist young men an enthusiasm the like of which in all the varying movements of the last forty years I cannot remember ever firing young blood before. No less certainly and still more wonderfully, it has inspired the mass of the Protestant minority, at least in the southern half of Ireland, with a profound confidence that its programme would ensure them an identity of their material interests and opportunities with those of their Nationalist brother Irishmen in the future government of their common country and put an end to all alarm for their Imperial connections and protecting powers.

This much further may be affirmed with confidence: that while the average Liberal Party man has not forgiven us for our heresies anent the Budget and is naturally enough more concerned to make friends with the Mammon of seventy votes than with the modest disposers of ten, and while the older Unionist statesmen still look askance at their Irish policy of 1903 which will yet write the most shining page in their history, the younger and bolder men of both the great British Parties, born into more spacious thoughts and times, have begun to a surprising degree to realize that the All-for-Ireland League holds within it the germ of peace between the two islands, and are only awaiting the electoral opportunity to say so.

Many are the lions still blocking the road and terrifying enough their roar. But of two things I have already an unshakable conviction. The first is that upon the day when the All-for-Ireland Party will be in a position to say that their principles are those of the Nationalists of Ireland in mass, it will not be possible for the statesmen of either British Party to resist the proposal to co-operate in drawing up the terms of an Imperial Settlement in Ireland which

will place on the side of the Imperial connection those boundless Liberal-Conservative forces in Ireland whose essence it is to reconcile property with poverty, religion with liberty, and all that is best worth veneration in the past with all that a young-eyed democracy dreams of doing highly and holily in the future. The other is that Ireland—Nationalist and Unionist—is won to the All-for-Ireland movement whenever the burden that is at present perhaps too heavy for a few war-worn elders like Lord Dunraven, Mr. Healy, Lord Castletown, and myself is taken over by some as yet undiscovered Irish leader, of the type which Ireland has seldom failed to produce in great moments, free from the distrusts, the hates and disenchantments with which forty years of wild wars can scarcely fail to have scarred the boldest hearts.

The rest is on the knees of the gods—or let us rather, with all reverence, say, of Him before whose throne—whether we be Gaels, or Saxons, or a little of both—whether our inward eye of faith turn to Rome, or to Augsburg, or to Geneva—we are all within our Irish shores united in bowing down a lowly and submissive head.



APPENDIX

LAND CONFERENCE REPORT

WHEREAS it is expedient that the Land question in Ireland should be settled, so far as it is practicable, and without delay.

And whereas the existing position of the Land question is adverse to the improvement of the soil of Ireland, leads to unending controversies and lawsuits between owners and occupiers, retards progress in the country, and constitutes a grave danger to the State.

And whereas an opportunity of settling once for all the differences between owners and occupiers in Ireland is very desirable.

And whereas such settlement can only be effected on a basis mutually satisfactory to the owners and occupiers of the land.

And whereas certain representatives of owners and occupiers have been desirous of endeavouring to find such basis, and for that purpose have met in conference together.

And whereas certain particulars of agreement have been formulated, discussed, and passed at the Conference, and it is desirable that the same should be put into writing and submitted to His Majesty's Government.

After consideration and discussion of various schemes submitted to the Conference we are agreed :—

(1) That the only satisfactory settlement of the Land question is to be effected by the substitution of an occupying proprietary in lieu of the existing system of dual ownership.

(2) That the process of direct interference by the State in purchase and resale is in general tedious and unsatisfactory; and that, therefore, except in cases where at least half the occupiers or the owner so desire, and except in districts included in the operations of the Congested Districts Board, the settlement should be made between owner and occupier, subject to the necessary investigation by the State as to title, rental, and security.

(3) That it is desirable in the interests of Ireland that the present owners of land should not as a result of any settlement be expatriated, or, having received payment for their land, should find no object for remaining in Ireland, and that, as the effect of a

far-reaching settlement must necessarily be to cause the sale of tenancies throughout the whole of Ireland, inducements should, wherever practicable, be afforded to selling owners to continue to reside in that country.

(4) That for the purpose of obtaining such a result an equitable price ought to be paid to the owners, which should be based upon income.

Income, as it appears to us, is second term rents—including all rents fixed subsequent to the passing of the Act of 1896—or their fair equivalent.

(5) That the purchase-price should be based upon income as indicated above, and should be either the assurance by the State of such income, or the payment of a capital sum producing such income at 3 per cent, or at $3\frac{1}{4}$ per cent, if guaranteed by the State, or if the existing powers of trustees be sufficiently enlarged.

Costs of collection, where such exist, not exceeding 10 per cent, are not included for the purpose of these paragraphs in the word "income."

(6) That such income or capital sum should be obtainable by the owners—(a) without the requirement of capital outlay upon their part, such as would be involved by charges for proving title to sell. Six years' possession, as proposed in the Bill brought forward in the session of 1902, appears to us a satisfactory method of dealing with the matter; (b) without the requirement of outlay to prove title to receive the purchase-money; (c) without unreasonable delay; (d) without loss of income pending reinvestment; (e) and without leaving portion of the capital sum as a guarantee deposit.

(7) That as a necessary inducement to selling owners to continue to reside in Ireland, the provision in the Bill introduced by the Chief Secretary for Ireland in the session of 1902 with regard to the purchase of mansion-houses, demesne lands, and home farms by the State and resale by it to the owners ought to be extended.

(8) We suggest that in certain cases it would be to the advantage of the State as ensuring more adequate security, and also an advantage to owners in such cases, if, upon the purchase by the State of the mansion-house and demesne land and resale to the owner, the house and demesne land should not be considered a security to the mortgagees.

(9) That owners wishing to sell portions of grazing land in their own hands for the purpose of enlarging neighbouring tenancies should be entitled to make an agreement with the tenants, and that, in the event of proposed purchase by the tenants, such grazing land may be considered as part of the tenancies for the purpose of purchase.

(10) That, in addition to the income or capital sum producing the income, the sum due for rent from the last rent-day till the

date of the agreement for purchase and the hanging gale should be paid by the State to the owner.

(11) That all liabilities by the owner which run with the land, such as head-rents, quit-rents and tithe rent-charge, should be redeemed, and the capital sum paid for such redemption deducted from the purchase-money payable to the owner. Provided always that the price of redemption should be calculated on a basis not higher as regards annual value than is used in calculating the purchase-price of the estate. In any special case where it may have to be calculated upon a different basis, the owner should not suffer thereby.

Owners liable to drainage charges should be entitled to redeem same upon equitable terms, having regard to the varying rates of interest at which such loans were made.

(12) That the amount of the purchase-money payable by the tenants should be extended over a series of years, and be at such a rate, in respect of principal and interest, as will at once secure a reduction of not less than 15 per cent, or more than 25 per cent, on second term rents or their fair equivalent, with further periodical reductions as under existing Land Purchase Acts, until such time as the Treasury is satisfied that the loan has been repaid. This may involve some assistance from the State beyond the use of its credit, which, under circumstances hereinafter mentioned, we consider may reasonably be granted. Facilities should be provided for the redemption at any time of the purchase-money or part thereof by payment of the capital or any part thereof.

(13) That the hanging gale, where such custom exists, should be included in the loan and paid off in the instalments to be paid by the purchasing occupier, and should not be immediately recoverable from the occupier, but the amount of rent ordinarily payable for the period between the date when the last payment fell due and the date of agreement for sale should be payable as part of the first instalment.

(14) That counties wholly or partly under the operations of the Congested Districts Board or other districts of a similar character (as defined by the Congested Districts Board Acts and by section 4, clause i. of Mr. Wyndham's Land Purchase Amendment Bill of last session) will require separate and exceptional treatment with a view to the better distribution of the population and of the land, as well as for the acceleration and extension of those projects for migration and enlargement of holdings which the Congested Districts Board, as at present constituted and with its limited powers, has hitherto found it impossible to carry out upon an adequate scale.

(15) That any project for the solution of the Irish Land question should be accompanied by a settlement of the evicted tenants question upon an equitable basis.

(16) That sporting and riparian rights should remain as they are, subject to any provisions of existing Land Purchase Acts.

(17) That the failure to enforce the Labourers Acts in certain portions of the country constitutes a serious grievance, and that in districts where, in the opinion of the Local Government Board, sufficient accommodation has not been made for the housing of the labouring classes, power should be given to the Local Government Board, in conjunction with the Local Authorities, to acquire sites for houses and allotments.

(18) That the principle of restriction upon sub-letting might be extended to such control as may be practicable over resales of purchaser's interest and mortgages with a view to maintaining unimpaired the value of the State's security for outstanding instalments on loans.

And whereas we are agreed that no settlement can give peace or contentment to Ireland or afford reasonable and fair opportunity for the development of the resources of the country which fails to satisfy the just claims of both owners and occupiers.

And whereas such settlement can only be effected by the assistance of the State which as a principle has been employed in former years.

And whereas it appears to us that, for the healing of differences and the welfare of the country, such assistance should be given and can be given and can effect a settlement without either undue cost to the Treasury or appreciable risk with regard to the money advanced—we are of opinion that any reasonable difference arising between the sum advanced by the State and ultimately repaid to it may be justified by the following considerations:—

That for the future welfare of Ireland and for the smooth working of any measure dealing with the transfer of land it is necessary—

First, that the occupiers should be started on their new career as owners on a fair and favourable basis ensuring reasonable chances of success, and that in view of the responsibilities to be assumed by them they should receive some inducement to purchase.

Second, that the owners should receive some recognition of the facts that selling may involve sacrifice of sentiment, that they have already suffered heavily by the operation of the Land Acts, and that they should receive some inducement to sell.

Third, that for the benefit of the whole community it is of the greatest importance that income derived from the sale of property in Ireland should continue to be expended in Ireland.

And we further submit that, as a legitimate set-off against any demand upon the State, it must be borne in mind that, upon the settlement of the Land question in Ireland, the cost of administration and of law, and the cost of the Royal Irish Constabulary would be materially and permanently lessened.

We do not, at the present time, desire to offer further recommendations upon the subject of finance, which must necessarily be regulated by the approval of the Government to the principles of the proposals above formulated, except that, in our opinion, the principle of reduction of the sinking fund in the event of loss to the State by an increase in the value of money should be extended by the inclusion of the principle of increase of the sinking fund in favour of the purchasers in the event of gain to the State by decrease in the value of money.

Inasmuch as one of the main conditions of success in reference to any Land Purchase scheme must be its prompt application and the avoidance of those complicated investigations and legal delays which have hitherto clogged all legislative proposals for settling the relations between Irish landlords and tenants, we deem it of urgent importance that no protracted period of time should ensue before a settlement based upon the above-mentioned principles is carried out; that the executive machinery should be effective, competent, and speedy; and that investigations conducted by it should not entail cost upon owner or occupier, and, as a further inducement to despatch, we suggest that any State aid, apart from loans, which may be required for carrying out a scheme of Land Purchase as herein proposed, should be limited to transactions initiated within five years after the passing of the Act.

We wish to place on record our belief that an unexampled opportunity is at the present moment afforded His Majesty's Government of effecting a reconciliation of classes in Ireland upon terms which, as we believe, involve no permanent increase of Imperial expenditure in Ireland; and that there would be found on all sides an earnest desire to co-operate with the Government in securing the success of a Land Purchase Bill, which, by effectively and rapidly carrying out the principles above indicated, would bring peace and prosperity to the country.

Signed at the Mansion House, Dublin, this 3rd day of January

1903.

DUNRAVEN, *Chairman.*

MAYO.

W. H. HUTCHESON POE.

NUGENT T. EVERARD.

JOHN REDMOND.

WILLIAM O'BRIEN.

T. W. RUSSELL.

T. C. HARRINGTON.

THE END

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