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VIII

IRELAND

I. THE DUBLIN INSURRECTION

(June, 1916)

I write of this question as an English Liberal whose father was an Irish Catholic and a friend of Daniel O'Connell. I have all my life been a devoted Home Ruler, a follower of Mr. Gladstone, Mr. Asquith, and Mr. Redmond. All these leaders are loyal Britishers, and believe that Home Rule is good both for Ireland and for the whole British Empire.

What was the cause of the Dublin insurrection of April last? The delay of Home Rule, causing widespread disappointment and mistrust; the bad example of the Ulster Party before the war, with their importation of arms from Germany and their open threats of civil war if Home Rule was passed; and lastly, the constant seditious propaganda of the avowed enemies of England, whether old Fenians and "physical force men" or paid tools of the Germans.

Why was Home Rule delayed? Because it was so difficult to carry. The Liberals proposed the first Home Rule Bill in 1886, and were thrown out of office upon it. They got it through the House of Commons in 1892, and were defeated in the Lords. After a long period of defeat they carried it three times through the House of Commons between 1910 and 1914, and meantime passed the "Parliament Act," overriding the veto of the House of Lords. So at last in 1914 Home Rule was ready to come into law. Then came the last ditch, the armed opposition of almost all the Protestants of the Northeast corner of Ireland. These Ulstermen, led by Sir Edward Carson, refused to accept any compromise or amendment, but merely declared that they would not accept Home Rule, and, if it were passed, would declare a civil war. They proceeded to drill and to import arms from Germany.

What was Mr. Asquith, then Prime Minister and leader of the Liberal Party, to do? His object was to pacify Ireland; and it appeared that four fifths of Ireland threatened permanent disaffection if Home Rule was not granted, while one fifth threatened instant civil war if it was granted. With immense patience and public spirit he tried to bring both parties to accept some compromise, but did not succeed until the war with Germany broke out. Then, under the stress of a common and terrific danger, both sides accepted a compromise. The Home Rule Bill was passed into law, but it was not to come into operation till after the war; and before it came into operation an amending bill was to be passed which should enable Ulster to stay outside the bill. Home Rule was thus again postponed.

Next came the Coalition. Mr. Asquith thought the country would be more united in the work of the war if all parties joined in the Government. The new Government was composed of Liberals, Tories, and Labour men in proportion to their numbers in the House. Among the Tories in the new Government was Sir Edward Carson, who had declared that he would lead a civil war rather than accept Home Rule. The Irish Nationalists began to lose faith; it looked as if they would never get Home Rule at all. True, Carson very soon left the Government, but all the Tories had been pledged against Home Rule; and though they declared, quite honestly, that they would abide by the compromise of 1914, it was easy for mischief-makers in Ireland to sow mistrust. These mischief-makers, partly in German pay, partly disaffected fanatics, kept up an underground propaganda, saying that England would break all her promises, that the English Liberals were frauds, that the Irish Nationalists under Redmond were a stale old crew of politicians, run by "the priest, the publican, the 'gombeen-man', and the English M.P." Thus, all was ready for treason, and treason came in a very abrupt and bloody form.

There are three main parties in Ireland: (1) The Constitutional Nationalists, under Redmond, loyal to the British connection, but determined above all things to win Home Rule by Parliamentary and legal methods. They generally work with the English Liberals. (2) The Ulster Protestants led by Carson, including the Orangemen and the few Protestants in the other parts of Ireland, professing extreme loyalty and refusing to be in any way separated from Great Britain, but ready to fight against Great Britain rather than be made part of a Home Rule Ireland. They are supported by most of the

English Conservatives. (3) Conspirators and avowed enemies of England, including some Sinn Feiners, some old Fenians, and some revolutionaries, who were intriguing to help the Germans or any one else who would injure the British Empire.

Now, it is obvious that ordinary loyal Britishers can have no dealings with this third class, least of all at a time when we are fighting for our lives, and thousands of loyal Irishmen, both Catholic and Protestant, are giving their lives for us in the trenches. And further it is obvious that, whenever the constitutional demand for Home Rule seems to fail and the Irish begin to lose hope, this third party of treason and violence will be strengthened. It is to this third party that Casement and the Dublin rebels belonged.

Roger Casement had been in the British consular service all his life. He had done good work, received promotion, been treated with confidence, been awarded a knighthood, and had written a letter of almost excessive gratitude for it to the Government. Just before the outbreak of the war he got away from England, crossed to Germany, and gave the Germans all the information he was able to give to help them in destroying us. In particular he was employed to seduce from their allegiance all Irish soldiers who were prisoners in Germany. These poor fellows were promised immediate freedom and high pay if they would join the Germans and help to invade Ireland; they were fed with the most detailed and infamous lies against England; if they accepted Casement's proposals their food allowance was increased; if they refused his proposals, they were starved. To their infinite credit it must be said that only some forty or fifty men out of several thousands gave way. On the contrary, Casement was more than once hooted out of the camps and had on occasion to be protected from the indignant prisoners by a German sergeant. On one occasion, one of his associates offered, for a payment of five thousand pounds, to betray Casement to the British Government. The offer was, of course, accepted. Whatever one may think of the man who offers to betray his associates, no Government in the world would refuse such an offer if it was made to them. The man, however, did not carry out his plan.

At last all was ready. On April 20, Casement was landed on the west coast of Ireland from a German cruiser, laden with arms. The cruiser was caught by British destroyers and sank itself to conceal something that it contained; the crew was saved. Next day Casement was arrested near the shore with a companion, heavily armed and giving a false name. On the 24th a bloody little rebellion broke out in Dublin. All police and soldiers—even wounded soldiers from the hospitals—were shot down at sight, and a great number of peaceful citizens killed or wounded. The dead amounted to some hundreds. At the same time a German squadron attempted a raid on the east coast of England, but was routed by the local destroyers and small craft. There was an unsuccessful rising at Enniscorthy which was put down by the spontaneous action of the Irish Nationalist Volunteers. There were attempts at risings in other parts of Ireland and attempts against the railways in England. It was not till May 1 that the whole rebel force surrendered unconditionally. During a whole week Dublin had lived under a reign of terror. For the rising, though containing a number of leading Sinn Feiners and sentimental Irish enthusiasts, was chiefly carried out by wild Labour men, who had been disowned by the trade-unions, and by actual criminals. These men used explosive bullets and committed some acts of great cruelty.

The German raid was defeated, Casement arrested, the rebels in Ireland put down. What was to be done next? Two answers were possible. "Punish the rebels," said the Ulstermen and the English Conservatives; "annul the Home Rule Bill; send forty thousand troops to Ireland, and uphold the law. Let there be an end of paltering with treason." "Grant Home Rule at once," said the Nationalists and the English Liberals; "remove all possible excuses for mistrust. And—guilty as they are—give pardon to all the rebels you possibly can." What was Mr. Asquith to do? His whole object was to pacify Ireland, and that could be done only by finding a course to which both parties would, however reluctantly, agree. The course ultimately approved was (1) to punish a small number of the rebels, who had personally been most deeply engaged in the bloodshed, and so maintain the rule of the law. Sixteen men were thus put to death. (2) To satisfy the national demand of four fifths of Ireland by putting Home Rule into force at once. All "loyalist" or Protestant Ireland had been roused to fury by the Dublin insurrection, and it was almost impossible to win their consent to this grant of Home Rule. It was hard also to persuade the Nationalists to make any concessions. However, Mr. Lloyd George was set to the work of persuading both parties in Ireland to agree to some settlement. If the rebels had not been punished Ulster would not have listened to him.

At last Lloyd George induced the Ulstermen to agree to Home Rule for the rest of Ireland on condition that Ulster should not be forced into the scheme without her consent, and the Nationalists to agree to the exclusion of Ulster provided the whole arrangement should be reconsidered by an imperial conference after the war. This was the basis of a compromise which had then to be laid before the Cabinet, and which unfortunately came out of the Cabinet in a slightly different form from that with which it went in. A fierce dispute is now raging about the changes in the scheme; but they

seem to me to be only points of detail and easily capable of arrangement by sensible men. The main point that remains is the question of Casement's fate.

He was tried for high treason in London in June. He had a fair and even a generous trial. His advocate, Mr. Sullivan, was allowed unusual latitude. A special arrangement was made to allow a distinguished American lawyer to come and take part in the defence. But of course there was no real defence possible. If ever there was a clear case of high treason, it was this, nor can one discover any extenuating circumstances except possibly the prisoner's previous services to the country he had now betrayed. If you take the ground of open hostility to England, and argue that any act of rebellion by an Irishman is meritorious in itself, you can excuse Casement. But that is not a ground that any English tribunal, or any impartial tribunal, can be expected to take. On grounds of justice there is no doubt whatever of Casement's guilt, and no reason why he should not be put to death, like any other traitor.

It is entirely a question of policy; entirely a question of what will be the effect on Ireland. The Conservatives argue—with much justice—that the law has too long been despised and disobeyed in Ireland. The Government must assert the law, and show they are not afraid. Above all, they must not pardon the most guilty of all the rebels after executing many of his dupes, just because he is a man of some wealth and position with a title and a gallant past. The Liberals tend to retort that an execution goes badly with an attempt at pacification. Too much blood has already been shed in Ireland, especially by the rebels themselves. An act of mercy does little harm in any case, and Casement is less dangerous living and pardoned than dead and transformed into a martyr.

For my part, I leave the question to Mr. Asquith. Mr. Asquith has no vindictiveness in him and is never swayed by passion. I know he will think of nothing but the granting of Home Rule, the pacification of Ireland, and the reconciliation of the two warring parties. Compared with those aims I care very little whether Casement lives or dies; and, to do him justice, amid all his treachery, I believe that he himself cares as little.

II. THE EXECUTION OF CASEMENT

(August 3, 1916)

I wrote the foregoing words in New York in July, while Casement's fate was still in the balance. About a week later he was hanged. The royal prerogative of pardon was not exercised. For my own part, not having attended the Cabinet council at which the final decision was reached, I cannot tell how I should have voted had I been there and heard the arguments; but I freely admit that I should have gone to the discussion with the intention of voting for a pardon.

On what ground? It is somewhat hard to say. Certainly not on any ground of justice. There never was a clearer case nor a fairer trial. Nor yet from that fine, if somewhat unreasoning, sense of decency and chivalry which makes the British Government spare the Countess Markievitch and steadily refuse to execute female spies. Not from the sort of personal pity which made Lord Grey intervene on behalf of the American boy who was caught acting as a German spy in England, and sent him home to his parents. Not from that admiration for a stout fighter and a brave enemy which made Captain Müller of the Emden rather a hero in England, and which has twice saved De Wet. Not because Casement was an ignorant man seduced into evil courses, on which ground the court acquitted his fellow prisoner, Bailey. Neither could one plead for Casement's pardon on the ground that he was deranged in mind like that other unhappy Irishman, Lieutenant Coulthurst, who shot Mr. Sheehy-Skeffington and two other prisoners because a voice from Heaven so directed him, and who is now among the criminal lunatics at Broadmoor. Alienists were sent to examine Casement, but none could find any insanity in him. Least of all would I seek to pardon him because there were press campaigns on his behalf in neutral countries. I should be sorry to seem in any way discourteous to my journalist friends on either side of the Atlantic, but I do think it would be a bad day for justice if legal sentences were to be reversed in America to please English newspapers, or in England to please American. It is certainly not the Irishman in me that would have pressed for his pardon. I regard Casement as one of the worst and most cruelly reckless enemies that Ireland has had for the last fifty years, and I believe that most Nationalists agree with me. As the son of an Irishman and a lifelong Home Ruler, I boil with indignation when I think how Casement's crazy treason has deluged Dublin with unforgettable blood and perhaps ruined forever a cause that was almost won.

I should have voted for pardoning him because, with the part of me that is English and Liberal, I feel still a sense of ancient hereditary guilt towards Ireland, and have an instinctive desire to seize every possible opportunity for magnanimity towards Irish rebels. In general we British are good governors and even popular, so far as governors are ever popular. A vast experience has eventually taught us our lesson. But we went to Ireland before we, or any other Power, had learned either to govern or to assimilate dependencies oversea; we made all the usual mistakes, committed the usual crimes, and have left a state of permanently inflamed feeling which it will take many generations of wisdom and sympathy to live down. And every drop of Irish blood spilt by English law, however justly, seems to rouse the sleeping furies of all the Irishmen unjustly slain by England since the days of Elizabeth and Cromwell.

On this ground I should have voted for pardoning Casement.

With these thoughts in my mind I happened to read an article in the "New York Times" on Sunday, August 13, by an Irishman whom I regard with every respect and sympathy, Mr. John Quinn. Part of it is an impassioned defence and eulogy of an old friend to whom Mr. Quinn, in spite of a recent breach, remained deeply attached. On all that part of the article I have nothing to say. Casement's character is to me an enigma. The evidence—even the pre-war evidence—about it is violently conflicting; but it is greatly in his favour that many of his oldest associates, who ought to know him, feel towards him as generously as Mr. Quinn does. But other parts of Mr. Quinn's statement seem to me to illustrate what I said above: a drop of Irish blood spilt by Englishmen rouses all the furies of the past.

Mr. Quinn's reason is pro-Ally, and I think I may even say pro-British. The last paragraph of his article is an eloquent appeal on behalf of the Allied cause. But the tragic end of Casement has roused in him just that ancient, and, if I may say so, unreasoning, bitterness towards England which otherwise had fallen asleep.

What are the reasons he urges to show that Casement should have been spared? I do not wish to speak slightly of them, but really they form a curious collection. And as you study them you see that they are none of them reasons connected with justice or even with that reasoned mercy which normally influences the Crown in its prerogative of

pardon. They are at worst based on the hypothesis that any act committed by an Irishman is pardonable so long as he commits it from hatred of England; at best they are the sort of arguments that are, sometimes, in bad cases, submitted to a French jury in defence of a *crime passionné*.

Casement did commit high treason against Great Britain. But then "he regarded the British Government as his country's permanent and irreconcilable enemy." He did not love Germany. "No single action of mine," he wrote, "has been an act for Germany;" only Germany happened to serve his hatred of England! He acted from pure hatred. Is that any special reason for not letting the law take its course? Similarly, when he tried to seduce the Irish captives in Germany from their allegiance, and was rejected and scorned by the enormous majority of them, "it is an abominable falsehood" to say that Casement got the recalcitrant prisoners' rations reduced, or, I suppose, got certain individuals among them shot. Casement was perfectly innocent! He merely walked away, protected by a German sergeant, and it was the Germans who starved or shot the disobedient prisoners! Not a very satisfying defence, I think. And it seems regrettable that two of these starved Irish prisoners, who were afterwards exchanged as incurable, continued to believe this "abominable falsehood," and sent a message to the Prime Minister that they regarded Casement as their murderer.

Again, Mr. Quinn quotes some edifying sentences in which Casement explains that "loyalty rests on love," and that government should be based on love, not on restraint. Such sentiments are almost common nowadays among the worst stirrers-up of fraud and hatred! There is hardly a Nationalist in Ireland who will not smile bitterly at this praise of "love" from one who set himself savagely to prevent the growth, not only of love, but even of decent peace and good feeling between Irish and English. I wonder if the Irish prisoners in Germany thought of him as an apostle of love?

The legality and the fairness of Casement's trial are admitted—except apparently that even justice is unjust if it comes from Englishmen—and Casement himself did not really deny his treason. Yet Mr. Quinn repeats some half-hearted suggestions made by the prisoner's counsel. He admits that Casement did seduce prisoners in Germany, with German help, from their allegiance, and formed them into an Irish brigade which was inspected and approved by German authorities. But his intentions, it is pleaded, were quite harmless: "he never intended them to help Germany!" Mr. Quinn is a lawyer; does he know many juries who would accept that statement?

Lastly, "in Casement's insurrection not a drop of blood was shed." This is really a little brazen. Casement landed from a German submarine on April 20, intending to stir up a rebellion in the West; the rebellion broke out in Dublin on the 24th; at the same time the German fleet made an unsuccessful raid on the east coast, and attempts were discovered to cut the English railway lines.^[1] And we are asked to believe that all these events had nothing to do with one another and that Casement has no responsibility for the three hundred men and women killed and more than a thousand wounded in Dublin!

No. I would myself have been disposed to pardon Casement, but I cannot see the ghost of a doubt about his guilt, nor yet about the fairness of his trial. I cannot see any extenuating circumstances in the case of Casement, beyond those that can be pleaded for all political criminals from Guy Fawkes to Booth. My only reason would be that reluctance ever, if one can possibly help it, to put any Irishman to death for offences against England, that anxiety to atone for the harshness of the past by extreme tenderness in the present, which moves most liberal Englishmen in their feeling towards Ireland. I accept Mr. Quinn's parallels from Germany and Austria. I do not for a moment think that the English Government of Ireland for the last century has been at all like that of Germany among her Poles or of Austria among her Slavs. But a century earlier it was so, and I accept the parallel. I do not in the least blame the Austrian Government for executing the assassins of the Archduke, provided she gave them a fair trial first, and only punished those really guilty. The most I should dream of asking from that Austrian tribunal would be a certain leniency to the very young or misguided, and extreme care in every case where there was a shadow of doubt.

"But at least," Mr. Quinn may retort, "you would have admired or praised the criminals, who were rightly striving to be free?" Not exactly. I would judge them far less harshly than ordinary private murderers, just as I do Casement; because, however wrongly, they thought they were working for their country and had suffered gross oppression. The rest would depend on a multitude of questions. How far were they disinterested; how much were they really oppressed; how brave or cruel, devoted or treacherous, was their action; what reasonable chance was there of its leading to any good result? I will, and do, weigh all those questions on behalf of Sir Roger Casement. I am sure he was brave and in a sense disinterested; but I do not think he was at all seriously "oppressed,"^[2] I do not think his plot had any reasonable chance of doing good, and I cannot acquit him of some cruelty and treachery.

Mr. Quinn foretells that he will be a popular hero in Ireland, his faults forgotten, his virtues and good looks idealized. That is very likely, indeed. It would remain likely if Casement had been the greatest scoundrel in Christendom, and all that his enemies said of him were proved true. Mr. Quinn knows enough history to realize the freakishness of popular fame in these matters. One cannot acquit or pardon a guilty man because he would make a good hero for a novel.

No. I can find no ground for pardon, except that one ground which I have mentioned. I even doubt whether, if the Government had spared Casement on the mere cynical ground of trying to please Irish opinion, they would have got the price of their weakness. Our opponents were ready for either event. Since he is hanged, he is to be a stainless martyr; had he been spared, he would have been an English spy, who had got up the rising to give the English a chance of massacring Irishmen. At the best, he would have been let off because of his social position and his Protestantism. I heard the subject discussed myself, and know that these lines were to be taken.

But what of American opinion? American opinion, on the whole pro-Ally and not by any means anti-British, would certainly have welcomed Casement's pardon. Yes, and so should I. But I think that American opinion in these grave matters suffers from one very serious weakness. To us the war is a reality; to neutrals it is largely a spectacle. To American onlookers an Irish rising is a romantic episode; to us, in our long death-grapple, it is a cruel stab in the back, all the more cruel because it was provoked by no oppression, only by our supposed dangers; because it was stirred up by deliberate hatred after Home Rule was already passed and on the statute book; because the man who meant to lead it was one whom we had taken into our political counsels, trusted and treated with honour.

Our business is a very serious one; we have to do the right thing, the wise thing, not the thing that will be most applauded in the gallery. American opinion is generous, generally disinterested, rather romantic. Its gallery is well situated, but rather distant from the real stage. It likes fine gestures and brilliant stunts. It likes to see the little chap hit the big one, and tends to boo the big one if he hits back. It only makes matters worse if the big chap had beforehand the name of being a generous sort of fellow; the gallery will boo him whenever he does not fully live up to his name. His enemies, fortunately for them, have no reputation left. They need not live up to anything.

After all, the big chap has got to use his full strength and means to do so. He has big enemies as well as little ones. And, big as he is, he has no such vast store of superfluous muscle. Blame him by all means if he cheats or bullies; but it is hard to blame him very much because in a great danger he does not always spare his enemies.

III. THE FUTURE OF IRELAND

(March 18, 1917)

So all is well as regards Ireland? I am content, am I? with the record of British statesmanship in that island?

No. I consider the state of Ireland utterly disastrous, a disgrace to British statesmanship, a mockery to our high professions, and an extreme peril to the Empire.

All that I assert strongly in our defence is that the Irish Question is not a question between two nations; it is an internal question. It is not the case that England is refusing self-government to Ireland. Almost all England, converted slowly and by bitter experience to the old Liberal policy, would give Ireland self-government to-morrow and be thankful. The trouble is that the strongest and most prosperous corner of Ireland still threatens civil war if Irish self-government is granted, while all the rest of Ireland is seething with disaffection because it is not granted.

The situation is not in the least like that between Austria and Bosnia, Austria and Bohemia, Germany and Lorraine, Russia and Poland. It is not England coercing Ireland; it is one part of Ireland, recklessly backed by a small reactionary party in England, blocking the will of the rest.

Nearly all the leading English Unionists have publicly admitted their conversion. Mr. Bonar Law himself, once the leader of the pro-Ulster irreconcilables, is plaintively begging the Irish to say what sort of Home Rule they can agree upon. Mr. Garvin, perhaps the best and most respected of Tory journalists, tells the Government that it is disgraced if it cannot solve the Irish Question, and produces a very good Home Rule scheme of his own. The versatile Lord Northcliffe, whose journals simply wallowed in bloody insurrection in 1914, now makes Home Rule speeches at an Irish dinner. They are all Home Rulers, if only the Irish will agree among themselves what sort of Home Rule they will be so obliging as to accept.

I do not wish to excuse the English Tories, much as I respect many individuals among them. They prevented the settlement of the Irish Question till disaster occurred, and their change of heart comes a little late. But our business is with the future, not with the past. Why is it that an Irish settlement is so difficult?

The fault does not lie with the Irish Members. Mr. Redmond and his followers have behaved with a broad-minded patriotism which is rare in political history. They have sunk their personal feelings, they have submitted to strange insults and humiliations, they have imperilled their whole position as leaders of Irish opinion, in order to serve unreservedly the cause of the Allies. Those of military age, and some who were well beyond it, have voluntarily enlisted or taken commissions. Some have been killed. The speeches of one or two of these Irish soldier M.P.s, such as Major W. Redmond and Captain Stephen Gwynne, have wrung the hearts of every decent Englishman in the House. Meantime the Irish regiments have fought in the cause of the British Empire with a desperate valour which ought surely to have earned a hundred times over the freedom of their own little nation.

In the opposite scale there is nothing to be set except a few outbreaks of bitter speech, seldom unjustified, from Mr. Dillon and others; a certain fractiousness among the Irish free-lances, like Mr. Ginnell; and now, at last, after thirty months of continued disappointment, the formal protest of the whole party against the Government.

"We could trust the Irish party," some Tories may say, "but we cannot give the Government of Ireland to the Sinn Fein. And we are told that Redmond has lost his influence, since the Dublin rebellion."

There is something in this argument. During the last few years a new party or rather a great new stream of thought has silently grown to importance in Ireland. The regular Nationalist Party had begun to suffer from its own success, as well

as from its failure. Its success made it all-powerful in Ireland, leaving Ulster aside. Consequently, critics aver, its *morale* deteriorated. The jobbers and time-servers who used once to persecute the Nationalists when they were weak, now joined them and got offices among them. The saloon-keepers—a terribly powerful class in Ireland—all rushed into the National League and were apt to be local chairmen and committeemen. The great agitators grew elderly and stiff in the joints, and began to think more about retaining their power than of leading their people to the light. In Ireland, as in all nations where the government comes in a foreign guise, there is a very low standard of honesty in dealing with public money. Public service is apt to present itself rather in the light of fat jobs to collar or distribute, and the best way to secure the jobs was to belong to the National League. It is impossible for a stranger to judge how much of this description is true; it is certainly in the air in Ireland.

Ireland has never been poor in idealists, especially in those of the unpractical sort. The more impulsive young men and women, idealist, cranky, rebellious, malcontent, disappointed, or whatever they were, began to turn away from the National League and the Parliamentary Party and what seemed to them the narrow-minded tyranny of the priests. Their energies found outlet in different channels. There was a great revival of the Irish language. There was a great study of Irish antiquities, a revival of idealized Irish history. Hundreds of young clerks and shop-assistants after a hard day's work would gather at night to study these severe subjects and to attune their minds to the supposed purity and unworldliness of that Ancient Ireland which formed the antithesis of the sordid modern world. All that was modern and sordid they called "English" and associated with the English connection: prosiness, money-bags, Dublin Castle and its police, dirty publicans and gombeen-men, fat, corrupt aldermen prating of Nationalism, stupid priests and the "Freeman's Journal" and snubby elderly gentlemen and time-servers in general. That was all English, and the opposite of it was true Irish, the mark of that Ireland that had once been in the idealized past and must surely be born again if they only remained true to themselves. Let their motto be *Sinn Fein*, "*We Ourselves*," and their rule of life be to reject all the compromises and temptations and pollutions of the great, ugly, English-ridden world.

There was much absurdity, of course, in this movement. I have known enthusiasts for the revival of the ancient Irish language who could not, for the life of them, manage to learn it. They could just learn to write their names in it, to look well on posters when they addressed popular meetings. Others, who really could speak Irish, used to get into quaint situations by refusing to speak English. I myself was once cursed by a branch of the Gaelic League. The curse was in Irish, but the Secretary was obliging enough to enclose a French translation of it, explaining that he would not demean himself by using the English dialect. He came to dinner a few days later and was extremely agreeable. The last I heard of him, he was fined two pounds for refusing to answer a policeman in any language but Irish.

There was also, besides the idealism and besides the absurdity, an element of extreme danger. To reject compromise is all very well if you are absolutely right; but it becomes deadly dangerous if you are, like most other human beings since the creation of the world, a little wrong in your foundations. It is so easy to think you are heroically striking down triumphant Evil and then find that you have only murdered a good-natured policeman, with several children, while he was lighting his pipe.

The great mischief wrought by Sinn Fein has been to destroy the hopes of the constitutional Home Rule movement. The quarrels which are the bane of Irish politics began soon to affect it. The Sinn Feiners directed their special hatred towards the Irish Parliamentary Party. It was contemptible to go trafficking with England about Ireland's liberties. No true Irishman ought to enter the doors of a British Parliament. Home Rule would be worthless if they got it. It would still leave them dependent on England. Complete separation was the goal, and the method was simply to ignore England's existence. Let their elected M.P.s stay in Ireland and form a separate body; let them all refuse to pay British taxes or obey British laws, and oppose a passive resistance to all England's attempts to exert authority. As for the Nationalist Members, no doubt it was a pleasant enough job for them, to draw four hundred pounds a year and have a good time in London, hobnobbing with English Liberals and pretending to work for a Home Rule that never came and never would come. The true way to serve Ireland was to die for Ireland. Let the Nationalists do that, and Ireland would follow them!

The taunt was essentially foolish, and all the more unfair, since at the time thousands of brave Irishmen were really fighting and dying in the common cause, convinced that in saving France and England they would save Ireland too. But the state of mind which produced it was a dangerous one.

When the rising in Dublin came, one of the things that surprised many observers was the ferocity shown by various boys and young women. Young women committed unprovoked murders, lads shot wounded soldiers in their hospital clothes, boys of fourteen refused to surrender and fought to the death. Such is the effect on crude and unbalanced minds

of a gospel of hatred embittered by small irritations and persecutions. It explains how a small section of the Sinn Fein, educated and in some ways high-minded men, allowed themselves to be dragged into a mad and criminal enterprise, which was certain to recoil heavily against their country. A few old, embittered Fenians, some gangs of Dublin roughs, and a number of the malcontents left behind by some desperate strikes in 1914 account for the rest of the rebels.

The rising took a week to put down, and at the end of it sixteen men were executed. It was not a large number. There can have been very few cases in history where so serious an outbreak has been followed by so few executions. But Ireland is a great sounding-board, and the sixteen executions have reëchoed through the world. Austria, I believe, has executed over ten thousand Bohemians since the war began.

But no Government sheds blood in Ireland with impunity. The sixteen are now martyrs, and the moving details of their deaths have become household words.

In considering the Irish Question a man finds himself continually saying, "It would be all right if only so-and-so had not happened!" If only Carson had not been allowed to preach civil war; or if only there had not been the Dublin rising; or, even after the rising, if there had not been the executions; or, even after the executions, if only there had not been wholesale imprisonments of suspects till the jails were crowded! And now people say, since most of the suspects were fairly soon released, if only there had not been the deportations of Sinn Feiners without trial! (Some people add, if only Dublin Castle and the British War Office were gifted with tact and sympathy when dealing with individuals whom they do not like: but the people who expect that, live in dreams.)

Deportation is a harsh and exasperating form of governmental precaution. A man is living peacefully with his wife and family in some Irish town, earning his living by serving in a shop or by writing for a suspect newspaper. Suddenly the police ring the bell, produce an order from a military authority, and tell him he is to live till further orders in Birmingham or Oxford or some other place where he is a stranger. No harm is done to him; he is not even a prisoner. But meantime he loses his livelihood, his house is left on his hands, he probably finds it difficult to get any paid work in his new place of residence, and his family, whether they follow him or stay behind, are left in a very awkward position.

And yet, what else is an unfortunate Government to do? I was talking a few days ago to a *déporté*, an agreeable and well-read man of much intellectual distinction, for whom I was trying to get some work. He was complaining bitterly that no charge had been made against him; he was an absolutely innocent man. I ventured to ask him: "Suppose a German submarine had come, laden with arms, to the bay where you lived, and asked you to distribute them through the district, what would you have done?"

He hesitated a moment. "The bay is too rocky; they could not bring a submarine there.... Well, if they had, I don't know what I'd have done.... Yes, I'd have distributed them."

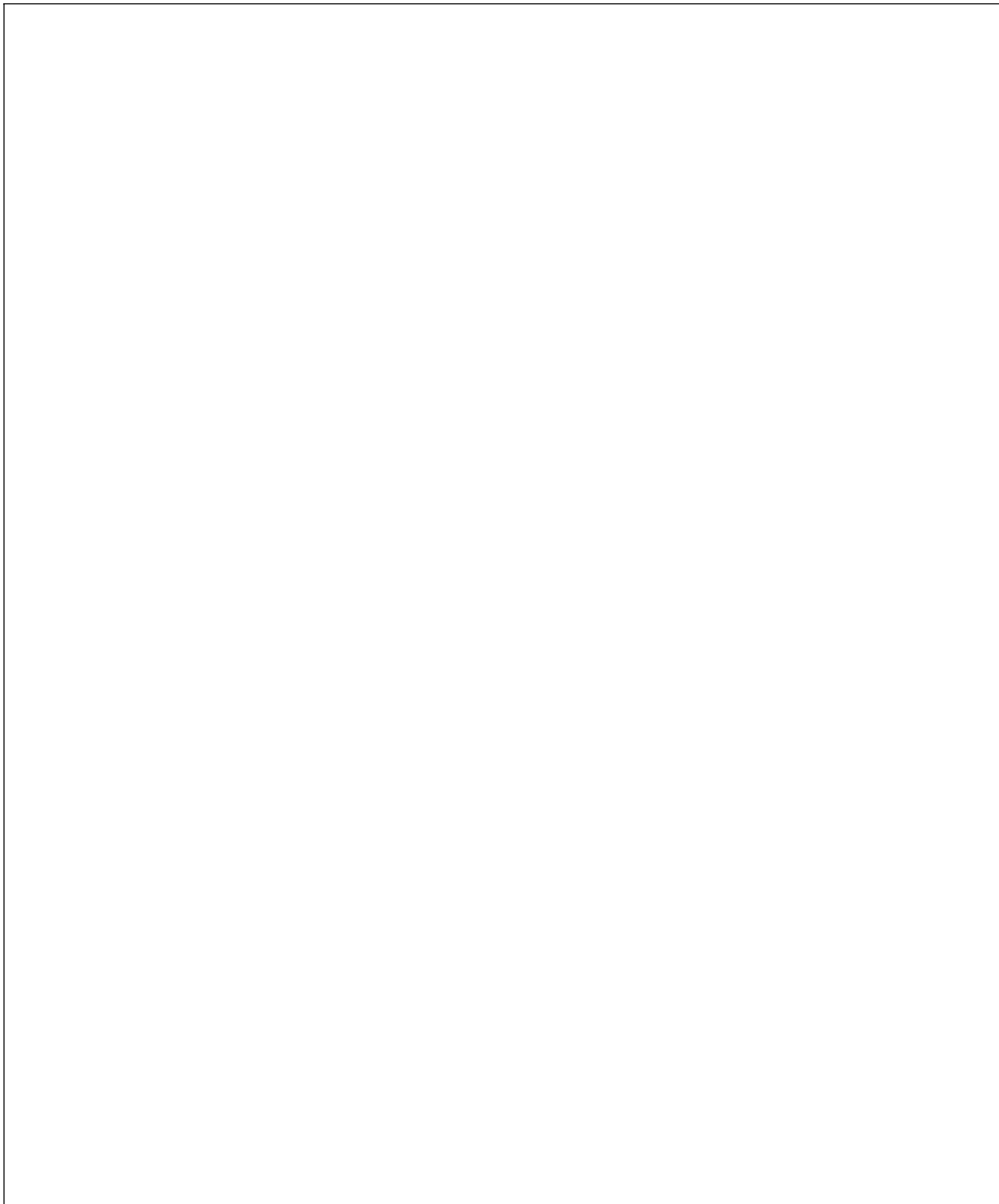
It was candid of him to speak so frankly. But, after all, can you much blame a Government if, in the midst of a long and very terrible war, it refuses to allow people who would help the Germans if they could to live in places where their help would be effective? For my part I cannot.

There is no use in reproaches. Everybody can make them, and everybody has deserved them. There is no use in recalling the wrongs and just resentments of the past. Nothing will help in the Irish Question but absolute mutual forgiveness and absolute concentration on the future.

As an intellectual problem the Irish Question is not very difficult; nothing like as difficult as the Federation of South Africa, for instance. The only difficulty lies in faults of human nature, in self-deception, vindictiveness, rooted suspicion, the devotion of the soul to party hatreds and the fostering of age-long feuds.

The next move must come from Ulster. Ulster has beaten the rest of Ireland. She has beaten England, Scotland, and Wales. She can afford to yield a little. The one strong defence to be made for the inclusion of Sir Edward Carson in the British Government, against which he was lately conspiring, is that a Carson Government can do what no other

Government can, in the way of appeasing Ireland. Let the present Government grant, in any reasonable form, some sort of Home Rule to Ireland, and the Ulster Covenanters can surely not feel injured or humiliated. They can smile a grim smile, and feel that, since they have clearly shown their Catholic fellow countrymen who was master, they do not so much mind admitting that they are all Irishmen.



FOOTNOTES:

I myself was one of a party called out to guard the Great Western.

The act of oppression about which he seems to have felt most bitterly was the decision that the Atlantic mail steamers should cease to call at Queenstown. I do not know the merits of this question, nor whether the initiative came from the steamship companies, or the Government. But it is not the sort of "oppression" that can be wiped out only by blood.

[The end of *Ireland (1916-7)*: VIII from "*Faith, War and Policy*" by Gilbert Murray]