

It is, perhaps, impossible for us at this distance to be fully seized of all the facts and of the exact trend of feeling and events in what may, for convenience' sake and by a considerable stretch of language, be called the storm area. But there are two or three outstanding and dominant facts so clear as to be beyond all possible doubt or question on which we may safely base conclusions. (1) It is evident that a liberal discount must be made on the cable tales of the support which is being accorded to Sir Edward Carson, and of the alleged dimensions of the military developments of his movement. The impressive-looking subscriptions to the provisional government fund are so far mostly promises; and some even of the promises have already been repudiated. According to Tuesday's cables, for example, Sir Samuel McCaughey (the New South Wales grazier), who was reported to have sent a cable to the treasurer of the fund for the provisional government in Ulster requesting him to ask him (Sir Samuel) for any sum that might be required, denies having cabled authorising Sir E. Carson to draw to an unlimited extent on his bankers. He says: 'I forwarded a cheque by letter, but I have cabled no money or authority to draw on my bankers. That would be too much, and it might break me.' The alleged fund of half a million is very largely on paper; and like all paper funds will, if the time ever comes for realisation, fall painfully short of its face value. The military preparations and demonstrations are similarly exaggerated, and the 170,000 men who are said to be awaiting 'General' Carson's orders are as much a creation of the imagination as were Falstaff's multiplied rogues in buckram. Only the other day two representative English Radicals—Alderman Lawrence, of Bermondsey, and Mr. George Beech—were invited by the Carson party to visit Belfast for themselves and examine with their own eyes and ears the real state of affairs. They did so, and on their return reported themselves as more than ever convinced of the wisdom and necessity of Home Rule. In the course of their itinerary they were given an opportunity to witness the 'drilling' of the Ulster warriors who are going to do such deadly things when Home Rule eventuates. And here is what they saw, and what they think about it. 'Whilst in Belfast we were privileged to see the "drilling" at one of the Ulster clubs and were enthusiastically received, although the numbers were but few. But the thought which naturally came to our mind was: Is this preparation for attack or defence? If attack, who is to be attacked? And if for defence, against whom are they to defend themselves? In our opinion there is no Nationalist foolish enough to wish to attack Ulster. The thing is too foolish for words. We also think it probable that the better part of Protestant Ulster is rather weary of the "Orange" movement and its fanaticism.' The *Daily News* bears similar witness, in its notice of a Carson 'review' at North Armagh. 'There are,' it says, 'one or two signs that Sir Edward Carson is exhausting himself and his hearers, even before his Ulster tour is over.'

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(2) Both of the proposals in the 'Ulster' policy—the establishment of a provisional government, to be followed if necessary by the inauguration of civil war—are entirely outside the range of practical possibility. The scheme for a provisional government is not only impracticable: it is, as Mr. Redmond has just declared, a crassly stupid idea. To begin with, the 'Provisional Government of "Ulster"' would have to reckon with the Nationalist minority within the four counties. If it did not perish of ridicule, it would perish for want of supplies. The trade of Belfast would be paralysed. The revenue now collected at Belfast on goods consumed for the most part by Irish Nationalists in Ulster and the other three Provinces, would be collected at other ports to which the traffic would be diverted. As Mr. Redmond points out, the whole of the local taxation grants would cease for 'Ulster.' Outsiders could repudiate all their debts to 'Ulster' subjects, and there would be no means of enforcing their payment. Little wonder that the level-headed and influential business men of Belfast are already holding aloof from the

Carson farce. As the two English visitors to Belfast to whom we have above referred, remark: 'The Belfast manufacturer is far too shrewd and keen to allow this or any other question to interfere with the natural development of his business. In our opinion, for what it is worth, the linen and its auxiliary trades are too competitive and too subject to real difficulties in working to permit of the creation of political barriers. We think that when a business is of such an expansive character (as many of the Belfast firms undoubtedly are) that extensions are necessary, no Home Rule or any other bogey will stop these developments, and the business instincts of the Ulsterman would outweigh his political bias.' Equally vain and visionary is the threat of civil war. A single British gunboat would be sufficient to blockade Belfast Harbor, whilst all communication with the rest of Ulster and Ireland would be almost automatically cut off. And if they are guided by their own military authorities Sir Edward Carson's warriors will be under no illusion as to whether or not British soldiers will do their duty in the event of any attempt at open rebellion. Addressing the Orangemen at Belfast on the 12th of July last, Colonel Hickman, M.P., said: 'He did not want any of them in Ulster to be under the impression that if a British regiment were ordered to come here they would not obey. The regiments of the British Army are strictly under discipline, and the people of Ulster could not count on their feelings as men dominating their feelings as soldiers in regard to discipline. Therefore, Loyalists must not go away with the impression, because isolated members expressed the opinion that they would not fight, that the regiment as a body would not fight when it was ordered to do so. Let them not be under any misapprehension on that point. It was a most solemn thing to say to them, but he thought it was his duty as a soldier to say it.' (*Ulster Guardian*, July 19, 1913.) But as we have said, the whole thing is impossible. Men fly to arms to defend their religion and their homes, their altars and their firesides. But these things are in no danger in 'Ulster' under Home Rule. Despite the apostles of bigotry and hatred, Home Rule will, rather sooner than later, be recognised by all classes in 'Ulster' as a measure of emancipation and enfranchisement.

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(3) If the threat of Sir Edward Carson and his misguided followers to resist to the death the right of the Crown and Parliament to make laws for, or to levy taxes in 'Ulster,' were to intimidate the Government into abandoning Home Rule, or, in the event of the passage of Home Rule, into acquiescence in, or toleration of, 'Ulster's' provisional government, there would be an end of constitutional government in Britain, and the Liberal Government would be indelibly and everlastingly disgraced. The Home Rule Bill is being carried through in strict compliance with the Constitution. 'Ulster' is protected by the most elaborate and ample safe-guards. For the second time in this Parliament, a Home Rule Bill has passed the House of Commons by a considerable majority of British members. Leaving the Irish members out of the question altogether, there was a British majority of forty-five. Let us suppose the present situation reversed. Let us suppose that the Home Rule Bill failed to become law; and that the Irish Nationalists thereupon set up a provisional government in Dublin, with Mr. John Redmond at its head, and, sounding the call to arms, declared war against the British Crown and nation. What a howl there would be! and the very people who to-day are talking of rebellion would be the first to use the utmost rigor of the law against four-fifths of the Irish people. The Government must stand by its own laws. It would be a disgrace to statesmanship if after all these years of debate and agitation Parliament should, to use Mr. Redmond's expressive phrase, 'throw the whole business into the melting pot.' Mr. Asquith has put his hand to the plough; and he is not the sort of man to turn back. Mr. Redmond's declaration is the dictate alike of courage, justice, honor, and true statesmanship: 'We shall go straight on.'

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