

him that all confidence in the bona fides of the Convention was knocked on the head by Bonar Law's statement. It is evident that he expected some question from Dillon to which he referred.

Sincerely yours,

WM. M. MURPHY.

Wm. O'Brien, Esq., M.P.,
Bellevue, Mallow."

Later on, however, Mr. Murphy confessed he was a little shaken by the disgraceful cry that his object was to wreck the Convention, with which he was assailed in public and in private. He now wrote that "I have no doubt whatever the three of us" (Mr. Healy, himself, and myself) "would dominate the show with the combinations which I think could be got together and the fear of public opinion outside acting on the Co. Council Chairmen, and he too ended by accepting the invitation of the Chief Secretary, adding: "If I cannot do any good there, I may be some check to those who would do mischief."

One of the entreaties it was most difficult to resist was a secret message I received (June 26) from a member of the Cabinet for whom I entertained a sincere respect, and the difficulty of resistance was all the greater that the message came through one whose single-minded services as an intermediary in the highest quarters were of priceless value to Ireland throughout these years, although they were rewarded with the usual brutal injustice by Irish politicians. This was the communication of the Minister to my excellent friend:

"Go over and see O.B.; don't give him messages from me direct; but move him. I know so much more than he can know of the North East people. I know how hard and almost impossible it is for them to confer with R. or he with them. . . O.B. has got very near the Northerners. He, if anyone can bridge the last gap. Will he not do it? If he knew all that is in the wind and how much importance attaches to his attitude he would."

It can scarcely be necessary to accentuate the historical value of this testimony from a Cabinet Minister of exceptional authority with "the Northerners," both as to the transformation our conciliatory labors might have wrought in them, had we received even common toleration from our own side while there was still time, and as to the evil effect on the mind of "the Northerners" of the Hibernian ascendancy. It was too late to think of all this except with a sigh. In an Hibernian-ridden and an Orange-ridden Convention, neither we, nor, as it turned out, the sober Conciliationist Northerners could do anything but wring our ineffectual hands in presence of an artificially constructed majority whose programme was: "Either Partition or nothing."

My friend received my answer with sorrow, most gently and most diffidently expressed; but his next communication contained a startling confirmation of my prognostication that Partition, in even a more offensive form than I had suspected, was up to that time the settled purpose of the projectors of the Convention:

"The forces that are gathering in this connection are very interesting and complicated and frankly not to my liking. I will throw out the idea as I get it from very high up. There is a lot being said about a Federal Commission, and the idea is not merely Home Rule all round but *Partition all round*—that England is to be broken up into two States, Scotland, two; Ireland, two; and Wales one! Then also it is believed that Smuts and Borden have dealt a death-blow to Empire Federation; that what we are asked to work on now is a lot of local Federal Units—the B. Isles, Canada, Australia, S. Africa, N.Z.—and that these scattered federations are to be loosely united under the Crown in what I suppose will be called a 'Confederacy of States.' . . . I feel that the issue—that a score of vast issues—whether they emerge for better or for worse hangs on the toss of a coin."

My indomitable friend worked on for a manageably-sized Conference as the true remedy, but reported: "No, their minds run on big battalions and noise! They think that a small Convention will be described in the U.S. as 'hole and corner,' and that the columns given to it over there will be in direct proportion to what Jones of Nevada used to call 'base Roman numerals'"; he struggled for at least a Referendum of all Ireland and could only get as far as dim understandings that the Convention itself might order a Referendum—a Referendum which, *ex hypothesi*, would be one to destroy their own guilty (but successful) conspiracy! They were still humping on "the U.S. and the big battalions and noise!"

Finally, on the eve of the sitting of the Convention, the Prime Minister came to the charge once more, in a manner probably without a precedent in the usages of Prime Ministers, by addressing to me a second public letter (dated from Downing Street, 20th July) asking me would I not withdraw my refusal?? He had nothing better to offer than these anodyne generalities: "The Convention is a sincere effort to see if Irishmen in Ireland can agree on a settlement which will make for better relations between the different parties in Ireland and happier relations between Ireland and Great Britain. With the object in view, I know that you are in full sympathy, and I most earnestly hope that you will respond to this appeal, which I understand, has come also from many other quarters, to give your help toward securing the success of the Convention."

The controversy was wound up in a letter in which I repeated that "the type of Convention selected by you defeats its stated object with fatal certainty by leaving the great mass of Nationalist opinion all but wholly unrepresented and conferring the power of decision upon a majority of politicians who have notoriously lost the confidence of the Irish people," and begged of him to persevere no further with a Convention hopelessly out of touch with Irish public opinion, but to fall back upon a friendly conference of the most potential friends of peace in all parties as the only means—a

forlorn one enough by this time—of finding a way out.

Unluckily this latter advice was now a counsel of perfection. An event had just happened which put an end to the last chance of negotiating otherwise than with weapons of steel. At the battle of Messines on June 7th, Major "Willie" Redmond, like the "vera parfait, gentil knight" he was, insisted "on going over the top" at the head of his men and met his death. His only complaint, we may be sure, was that he could but repeat the dying cry of Sarsfield at Landen: "O that this were for Ireland!" For his constituency in East Clare, Mr. de Valera offered himself as a candidate on the straight issue of an Irish Republic. The Hibernians made a supreme effort to rehabilitate their fortunes and, what, with the sympathies enkindled by the young soldier's fate, the high expectations created by the Convention, and a candidate of widespread local influence, they were fatuous enough to count upon an easy victory. To their stupefaction, the Irish Republic carried the day with a majority of five thousand votes. Had the figures been reversed, a Partition scheme must have been carried through the Convention with not more than half a dozen dissenting voices. East Clare put an end to the danger of the Convention coming to a criminal agreement for Partition, but it was only to create a new danger—for the uprise of the Republic forbade the possibility of any other agreement, since if it were to meet acceptance by the country in its present mood, it would not have the smallest chance of acceptance either by Ulster or by the British Parliament. The Irish people are too ready to make idols and too ready to break them. It was by men too little known to excite either idolatry or animosity that the ways were to be in the long run straightened out. But for the next four years, at all events, Mr. de Valera, with his Republican Tricolor, was the National idol, and Mr. Griffith and his peaceful penetrationists were laid up in lavender. The presence of Sinn Fein at an amicable Conference-table was no longer practical politics. Elated with what seemed the cleverness of a paltry electioneering dodge, Mr. Lloyd George and his Hibernian counsellors released Mr. de Valera and established the Irish Republic.

CHAPTER XXII.—THE DEATH OF MR. REDMOND.

None the less, the joint Convention of the Hibernians and Covenanters assembled in Dublin on July 25th, amidst decorative surroundings that might well give a good-natured people like the Irish the impression that some great work of peace was on foot. The Convention held its sittings within the historic walls of Trinity College amidst the finest stage scenery the genial Provost, Dr. Mahaffy, could provide; a President of respectable neutrality was found in Sir Horace Plunkett; not a few single-minded Irishmen, with a nobler gift for peace and goodwill than for the mean realities of politics, were induced to join in attempting to elevate the assembly above the normal man-