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there was no Irish rebellion."* The number of rebels was small; the Irishmen who liked Germany, or would act with her, or take help from her, were few; the first troops attacked by the rebels were Dublin troops; Dublin suffered heavily and felt towards the rebels as any society feels towards a set of men who suddenly plunge it into chaos and bloodshed; the National Volunteers helped to put down the rising. Ireland condemned the rebellion as hotly as England. Never in Irish history had rebels so little sympathy, or rebellion so little encouragement for the future.

THE OPPORTUNITY OF THE RISING.

In this atmosphere there was an unexampled opportunity for British statesmanship, and it happened that there was an illuminating precedent before the eyes of the Government. There was a rebellion in South Africa in the first winter; it was more extensive, for at one time there were 10,000 Boers in the field against Botha, and it was more serious, because De Wet was a much greater figure in South Africa than Pearse or Connolly in Ireland. Botha punished one man with death—an officer who had deserted a battle—the chief leaders with heavy fines and two or three years of imprisonment, and the rank and file with short sentences and loss of civil rights. Before the end of the year, the prisoners were released. "The Government came in for a good deal of criticism," says the *Annual Register*, "on the part of British South Africans for the mild manner in which they treated most of the insurgents, but General Botha declared that his object was to enable the country to forget the unhappy occurrence as soon as possible." He had his reward at the next election. If he had been severe, that election would have been a bitter struggle between British and Dutch, and the consequences of victory for either party would have been disastrous. As it was, Botha remained Prime Minister, representing British and Dutch electors; that act of imagination saved South Africa and the British Empire from a discord that might have been fatal in the hour of danger.

It was not easy for Ministers treating Irish rebels who lived across the sea to follow Botha's superb example in dealing with Dutch rebels who lived under the same sky. England, having passed through a week of wearing strain, was in no temper to look beyond the shock and passion of the hour: in the indiscriminate bloodshed of a great war, when men die in thousands for the acts of others, human nature does not trouble itself about the fate of men who die for acts of their own. It would have taken a great statesman to grasp all that hung on the decisions taken at that angry moment: decisions that went far beyond immediate problems of justice, for they were political events that would mark a crisis in the relations of two peoples. So little did this aspect strike the minds of Ministers that they confided their authority to a military ruler.

There are soldiers who can manage a political crisis, but they are not common. If the Government could have summoned Sir Ralph Abercromby or Sir John Moore or Sir Charles James Napier from the dead, they might safely have resigned their task to such hands. They chose a soldier with the outlook of a soldier, to whom the problem seemed much simpler than the same problem had seemed to Botha, a soldier with the outlook of a statesman. With the habits of his profession, Sir John Maxwell believed that the way to prevent rebellion reviving, when once order is restored, is to strike fear; to a problem so simple he applied the simplest and the oldest of solutions. Day after day from May 3 men were tried in secret and brought out to be shot; the last of them, on the 11th, Connolly, whose thigh had been broken and who could not stand. Fifteen men were thus put to death in a manner designed to create the most powerful impression in Ire-

land.* This was the soldier's object. For Sir John Maxwell wanted not, like Botha, that Ireland should forget the rebellion, but that she should remember it with fear. No Irishman finds it difficult to remember, but he remembers with something more dangerous than fear. Any statesman who knew what a part her haunting memories have played in Irish politics would have realised that it was more important than anything else to let Ireland forget that episode. Ireland had condemned the rebellion; there was one way of making her forgive it. She had thought it a shameful act; there was one way of making her think it a noble act. The Government took that way. Ministers who had refused to let Redmond bring Ireland into the war as a free people, sent her back to the ghosts who had tried to make her a free people. And among the men shot there were rebels of a quality to walk in Elysium with Emmet and Wolfe Tone.

A series of panic measures followed. The rebellion was the act of a few men. The Government proceeded to sweep into prison or across the sea all those whose politics seemed dangerous to the soldier's eye. In districts where there had been no trace of the rebel spirit, men were seized and flung into prison without trial. A Government which makes the soldier judge, prosecutor, and policeman soon fills its gaols.

The effect in Ireland was instantaneous. Sinn Féin had not organised the rebellion; but Sinn Féin reaped the fruits of the repression because it stood for Irish independence. Men who had never heard of Sinn Féin began to ask about its ideas: Pearse, Connolly, Macdonagh, Plunkett, some of them strangers to nine Irishmen out of ten, became heroes; the rebels were forgiven everything, for they had meant, in their wild, mad way, to help Ireland, and the Government that punished them only meant to humble her. The crimes of Cromwell, Pitt, and Castlereagh, which still have such power to embitter the Irish mind, lie lightly on the English conscience, for the Englishmen who are alive to-day are as little responsible for them as the Irish. But now, by the act of living Englishmen, a new legend had been added to the traditions that divided the two peoples. And as fast as that legend grew Sinn Féin gained power.

THE VIOLATED TREATY.

One last blunder completes the story of 1916. Mr. Asquith had given his countenance to this policy of repression, but during his visit to Dublin he had done something to soften its administration and he knew that repression alone could not give Ireland peace. In a few words, which stand in striking contrast to the deeds that followed, he announced (May 25, 1916) that Irish administration had broken down, and an effort must be made to construct a new form of government. The history of this effort is not the least remarkable of the events of this year.

Mr. Asquith chose Mr. Lloyd George for his new negotiations and sent him to treat with Redmond and Sir Edward Carson. Redmond knew that the Irish situation was more delicate than ever, and that a false step on his part would mean his ruin as a political leader, and the loss of his plan for co-operation between

* "They were shot in batches: for days the lesson was hammered home in stroke after stroke that these men were entitled neither to open trial and proof of their guilt before execution, nor to the treatment of captured enemies. The conclusion drawn by National Ireland was that if they had been Englishmen they would have been tried by English courts and sentenced by the judgment of their own countrymen; that if they had been Germans or Turks they would have been treated as prisoners of war; but that being Irishmen they were in a class apart, members of a subject race, the mere property of a court martial. The applause of Parliament when the Prime Minister announced the executions was taken to represent the official sanction of the English people and their agreement with this attitude towards Ireland. It was resented in Ireland with a fierce and sudden passion; a tongue of flame seemed to devour the work of long years in a single night."—*Evolution of Sinn Féin*, p. 221.

* *Ireland in the Last Fifty Years*. By Ernest Barker. Second Edition.