

England and Ireland. He therefore demanded and received a written document. The Government's proposals were that an Irish Parliament, with an Irish Executive responsible to it, should be set up at once; that the six counties should be left out during the war; that at the end of the war an arrangement should be submitted to a Council of the Empire before the final settlement by the British Parliament. Until this settlement was reached Irish membership at Westminster was to stand at its original figure. This was the plan put before the Ulster Council on June 13, 1916, and accepted. It was put before the Nationalist Convention at Belfast on June 23, and though strong opposition was offered, Mr. Devlin succeeded in carrying the proposal. Ireland had done her part. All that remained was for England to ratify the agreement.

It should have been plain that delay or failure on England's part would be fatal to the Irish Parliamentary Party. The Nationalist elements in Ireland were divided into those who thought that England could never be trusted, and those who were ready to act and treat with her. At the time of Redmond's declaration the first school was small: after 18 months of the cold and sour temper of the War Office it was larger: after the punishment of the Rebellion it was beginning to be a formidable rival to Redmond's power. If Ireland were tricked now, or if Redmond, having made a compromise intensely unpopular in Ireland, should prove to have made that compromise for nothing, what remained of the case for his policy?

Mr. Asquith apparently took a different view of the situation. He was in difficulties with his Unionist supporters, and he dreaded the prospect of a dissension which might weaken his Government for the purposes of the war. This overshadowing anxiety must be remembered if we are to do justice to his conduct at this crisis. Lord Selborne disliked the idea of the negotiation and resigned before it was entered upon. Lord Lansdowne disliked it and remained. On June 29, when the Nationalists were waiting for the promised Bill, Lord Lansdowne announced in the Lords that the consultations were authorised by the Government, but not binding on it, and that he, speaking for the Unionist wing, had not accepted the proposals. Then began the chapter of prevarications and recriminations which are inevitable when men disagree upon the scope or the importance of a promise. It was the story once again of the misadventure of Fitzwilliam without a Fitzwilliam: of promises made and expectations held out which the Government that made them recalled at the first suggestion of hostility. It became known that Sir Edward Carson had been assured before going to Ulster that the exclusion was to be permanent. Redmond had known nothing of this assurance. This was the first shock. The second soon followed. Lord Lansdowne announced that permanent and enduring structural alterations would be introduced into the Home Rule Act. Redmond had seen the draft of the Bill for carrying out the agreement, and he knew that Lord Lansdowne's words must mean, as was the case, that that draft had been altered. On July 22, Mr. Lloyd George and Mr. Herbert Samuel sent for Redmond to tell him that the Cabinet had decided on new proposals on which they did not intend to consult him. The exclusion was to be permanent and Irish membership was to be reduced. Mr. Lloyd George has a face that can speak with anger, or humor, or indignation, or pride; it must have worn a wry look on that sorry errand of recantation. The agreement had been broken and the plan was in ruins.

In the debates that followed, Mr. Lloyd George and Mr. Bonar Law did not combat the contention that an agreement had been made with Redmond which had not been kept. Mr. Lloyd George said that the Unionists would not agree to the retention of the Irish members, and, therefore, the Government had thrown over the agreement. Mr. Bonar Law agreed that there was a breach of the agreement, but argued that there had been no breach of faith, because the negotiations were subject to the approval of the Cabinet. Mr. Asquith said that neither he nor Mr. Lloyd George had power to bind their colleagues, and he seemed to think

that a question which had been eagerly discussed in Ireland as the governing issue was unimportant, because the pledge that Ulster should not be coerced still held the field. All this was said of a settlement which had been urged on Redmond by the Government, of which the Government had been warned that it would be no easy matter to get Ireland to assent to it. The agreement was that Ulster, i.e., six-county Ulster, was to be excluded in the provisional Bill, with the understanding that the whole question should be settled at the end of the war. Mr. Asquith held that there was no difference between this arrangement and the formal and permanent exclusion of Ulster in 1916, because in neither case could Ulster be included against her will. But Redmond held that if the question was reopened at the end of the war, Ulster and Ireland having fought on the same battlefields, would come to an agreement, and that to give her permanent exclusion in 1916 would prejudice this prospect. Once again the Unionists had overborne the Liberals. They objected to keeping the Irish members at full strength because it would put their party at a disadvantage. The Unionist dissentients were ready to resign if the agreement was kept. No Liberal was ready to resign if the agreement was broken. Could any of the Ministers have thought this, in Bacon's phrase, "fair and round dealing between man and man" if they had been dealing not with Ireland, but with a friend or acquaintance in private life? *

In the debate, Mr. Asquith stated that an Advisory Committee, with Mr. Justice Sankey as chairman, had investigated the cases of the men under detention, and recommended the release of 1272 men out of 1840, and he announced that the Irish Government had been reconstructed by the substitution of Mr. Duke, a Unionist, for Mr. Birrell, as Irish Secretary. Dublin Castle had been re-established with a Unionist staff. A few months later (December, 1916) Mr. Asquith resigned, and the most unaccountable man in politics became Prime Minister. In such hands the Irish situation was certain to become either much better or much worse.

CHAPTER III.

THE DRIFT.

In 1917 the war was no longer a cause; it had become a servitude. England had gone into it like a knight; she fought now as a prisoner of circumstance. The glory of emancipating the world had faded into a cruel and harsh and monotonous and interminable duty. The dreadful rhythm of the machine had succeeded to the buoyant energy of the human will. England's courage did not flag, but she had lost illusions that stimulate; the task of saving the world seemed not so much an honor as a burden. In such a mood England, knowing little of what Ireland had offered or given, drifted away from her. She thought of Ireland as a place where people still had enough to eat, and forgot that in return for her heavier taxation, Ireland got no extra employment, for munitions were not made there.

Ireland was drifting away from England. The great controversy between Redmond and his critics had been settled, and not in his favor. England had not wanted Ireland's help as the help of a free people. The school in England which treated Ireland as a subject people, which felt towards Ireland as Austria to the Czechs, had gained the day. If Ireland took part in the war she could only take part on those terms. And what motive had Ireland for such a sacrifice—the sacrifice not of her sons merely, but of her status? Were her interests those of Great Britain? She wanted freedom; it was just freedom that England had refused her for a century and refused her still. Mr. Asquith said in the House of Commons that nobody could take

* Redmond moved a vote of censure in October, 1916, and described more openly than before the treatment that had made recruiting so difficult in Ireland. He mentioned that at that moment 157,000 Irishmen were serving in the army—95,000 Catholics and 62,000 Protestants.