

the Home Rule Bill off the Statute Book. The Irishmen thought otherwise. Experience has justified them. And all the great train of historical grievances had been set in motion by recent events. Englishmen think of Irishmen as a people for whose benefit they have passed numberless Acts. Irishmen think of England as a nation that took away their rights and property, and makes a great virtue of a partial and tardy restitution. It was inevitable then that England and Ireland should drift apart.

The new temper of Ireland was seen in the growing influence of Sinn Féin and the growing definiteness of Sinn Féin teaching. Redmond had said to Ireland, "Trust the British Parliament and the British Government; throw yourself into the war and you will recover your right to self-government." The failure of this policy was now manifest. Sinn Féin's alternative was obvious and it was definite. "Think no more of the British Parliament; it is either indifferent or hostile; be an independent nation; act like an independent nation; wear no foreign Government's uniform; fight no foreign Government's war; when the war is over go to the Peace Conference and demand your rights. This policy had two results of importance. First of all, it drew Ireland away from Redmond; secondly, it kept Ireland from violence because Irishmen were looking to the Peace Conference for the rescue of their country. The new power was revealed in February, 1917, when Count Plunkett was elected at a bye-election for Roscommon by a large majority.

Mr. Lloyd George's first act on becoming Prime Minister had been wise and bold. He had set free all the deported Irishmen, except those serving sentences of penal servitude. But by that strange law which seems to govern his political conduct, his next step was in the opposite direction. Plunkett's victory, which ought to have been a warning against coercion, was followed by rearrests and deportations. In March, 1917, the Parliamentary party made a great appeal to Lloyd George not to pursue this policy, but to remove martial law, keep no untried men in prison, and "confer upon Ireland the free institutions long promised her." The debate was notable for a last appeal from Major Willie Redmond. "In the name of God, we here, who are about to die perhaps, ask you to do that which largely induced us to leave our homes." The House was moved, but Mr. Lloyd George replied in a speech which, if it had been made eight years earlier would have changed the course of politics. He had found that Ireland was not one nation but two. The Parliamentary party in despair withdrew after Redmond had warned the Government that they were killing the Constitutional party. Two months later, Sinn Féin won a second seat at South Longford.

Willie Redmond returned to France where, three months later, he died from his wounds at Messines.* England had given him nothing that he wanted for his country in return for his sacrifice. His constituency, with an act that was painfully significant, gave his seat to de Valera, who defeated his Nationalist opponent by 5000 votes. All this time coercion was in full swing, with the political results that Redmond prophesied.

THE CONVENTION.

In May, Mr. Lloyd George suggested that Ireland should have the Home Rule Act with a clean cut of the six counties, or that an Irish Convention should be set up to discuss schemes for the government of Ireland. A new turn was thus given to Irish politics, and for some weeks there was an atmosphere of subdued hope, during which the Nationalists won two elections, their last successes. Mr. Lloyd George promised that if "substantial agreement" should be reached as to the character and scope of the constitution for the future government of Ireland within the Empire, the Government would accept the responsibility for taking all the necessary steps to enable the Imperial Parliament to give legislative effect to the conclusions of the Convention. The proposal was welcomed warmly by Redmond, criti-

cised by William O'Brien, and rejected by Sinn Féin, which could not, of course, accept the limitation put on the scope of the deliberations. The Government was urged to release all prisoners, and, after a delay which robbed the act of its grace they took this step, releasing, among others, de Valera, who now became Sinn Féin leader; with his election as President (November, 1917), Sinn Féin became implicitly Republican.

The Convention sat through the autumn and winter. It was, within sharp limits, a representative body, including among its 90 members, five Nationalists, five Ulster Unionists, three Southern Unionists, four Catholic bishops, two bishops of the Church of Ireland, 31 chairmen of county councils, four mayors, eight representatives of urban councils, seven Labor representatives (the Labor Party in Dublin and the South refused to take part), and a number of distinguished Irishmen like Dr. Mahaffy, the Provost of Trinity College, Lord MacDonnell, Lord Desart, Sir Bertram Windle, Mr. Edward Lysaght, and "A.E." The chairman was Sir Horace Plunkett.

The Convention sat through the autumn and winter. The most important facts about its history are these. It proved that outside Ulster, Unionists and Nationalists were not irreconcilable. It proved that the Ulster Unionists, armed with the famous formula that Ulster should never be coerced, were not ready to make any concessions.* Not least important, in view of what followed, it published a report of a sub-committee on questions of defence, declaring unanimously that it would be impracticable to impose conscription on Ireland without the Irish Parliament's consent. The members of this sub-committee were Lord Desart and Mr. Powell (Unionists), the Duke of Abercorn (an Ulster Covenanter), and Captains Doran and Gwynn (Nationalist Members, serving with the forces).

In the closing days of the Convention Redmond died: he had lived too long for happiness, but he escaped the final blow that fate and General Ludendorff and Mr. Lloyd George were conspiring to deal to all his hopes. "Better for us never to have met than to have met and failed," he declared. He died before Mr. Lloyd George had destroyed the work of the Convention and the work of Redmond's life.

THE DEMAND FOR IRISH CONSCRIPTION.

On April 8, 1918, the report of the Convention was signed. Next day Mr. Lloyd George announced that conscription was to be extended to Ireland. By the 13th the proposal had been carried through Parliament after nearly eight hours of debate. Mr. Asquith made a powerful and impressive appeal to the House of Commons, warning it of the inevitable consequences in Ireland, but the German advance was in full tide, and neither Ministers nor Members kept cool heads. It is incredible that any Englishman could have supposed that Ireland would provide a single company of conscripts, but there were many who thought that England could not be asked for a final effort unless Ireland was drawn into the common bondage.

The effect in Ireland was instantaneous. This was the most emphatic declaration ever made that Ireland was England's property, that she had just as much or just as little right to her own life as the Czecho-Slovaks or the Poles, forced to send their sons into Austrian or German armies; that Ireland was a subject people of whom her rulers could claim tribute of blood and of money at their pleasure. No Irishman with a spark of national feeling could acknowledge that claim, and the

* This formula was as great an obstacle as the old Polish *liberum veto*: so long as Irish government was treated as a problem to be settled by England, it meant that a British Government could carry no reform to which this minority objected. The true solution, of course, was to leave the problem to Ireland to settle. Ulster with Belfast and its munitions was in no conceivable danger of coercion: with the English "complex" (to use the fashionable psychological term) removed, she would have no motive for recalcitrance. When neither party can coerce the other, and each needs the other, agreement is possible.

* He was 56, two years older than the Prime Minister.