

ment were deliberately and drastically altered in the vital matter of the retention of the Irish members at Westminster, the representation being reduced from 103 to 42. Our correspondent either fails to see the significance of this Tory trick or his party predilections lead him to minimise it. Of course the Irish Party would not want the full present representation at Westminster if once Home Rule were definitely and permanently secured. But, as was at first agreed and asserted on all sides, the whole arrangement was to be of a purely provisional character. The 'heads of agreement' expressly provide that 'further and permanent provision for the government of Ireland' was to be made by the Imperial Parliament within twelve months, or within such extended period as might be prescribed by Order in Council. When the time for giving effect to that provision arrived, Ireland would require her fullest strength at Westminster if she was to have any guarantee that the ground already won would be retained, or any hope that further advantages might be secured. That would, indeed, be the critical hour. It is then that the real battle of unity or partition would be fought, and the whole fate of the national cause might hang on the narrowest possible margin of votes. It is clear, therefore, that the retention of the full Irish strength at Westminster until some sort of equality has been reached on the Home Rule measure is a supremely important matter, on which there could not safely be any parley or compromise. With such a trial of strength before him, it would be little short of suicidal if Mr. Redmond were to throw away any of his man power or to allow his fighting machine in any way to be weakened. Had he elected to pursue such a course assuredly he would still have had plenty of critics, but in that case we think he would have deserved all he got. To withdraw his men at the very time when the final issue was to be decided, would be to sell the pass, with a vengeance. From the point of view of the Irish Party, the retention of full representation was vital in that it stamped the whole measure as provisional. It gave a pledge to Ireland that the House of Commons would not allow the question to slumber indefinitely.

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With reference to the exclusion proposals, the elaborate historical treatment of the matter by our correspondent, though interesting in itself, has no bearing on the point of our article, which was that the original proposal, as submitted to the Irish Party, was for a purely temporary exclusion, but that when a certain measure of Irish consent had been given, the terms were varied, partly by Mr. Asquith's declaration, but still more by a secret written undertaking, given by Mr. Lloyd George to Sir Edward Carson, conveying an assurance that the exclusion was intended to be definitely and absolutely permanent. That the original proposal was for a strictly temporary partition is shown beyond all possible question by the clear terms of the Government White Paper on the subject. Clause 14 of the official 'Heads of Agreement' is as follows: 'The Bill—that is, of course, the provisions of the Bill—to remain in force during the continuance of the war and for twelve months thereafter, but if Parliament has not by that time made further and permanent provision for the government of Ireland the period for which the Bill is to remain in force is to be extended by Order in Council for such time as may be necessary in order to enable Parliament to make such provision. It is also understood that at the close of the war there should be held an Imperial Conference with a view to bringing the Dominions into closer cooperation with the Government of the Empire, and that the permanent settlement of Ireland should be considered at that Conference.' One of the provisions of the Bill was to provide for the exclusion of certain Ulster counties, and in the clear terms of the agreement that provision, like all the rest of the Bill, was to 'remain in force during the continuance of the war' and a certain defined period thereafter, after which the 'permanent settlement' was to be further considered. If words are to be taken as having any meaning at

all, it cannot be denied that Clause 14 conveys the impression—and was intended to convey the impression—that the whole arrangement under discussion was of a temporary and provisional character. That Mr. Redmond so understood them, and that he was, as he has always been, opposed to permanent partition was shown by the fact that at the Ulster Convention he gave a solemn promise that if permanent exclusion were proposed, he would reject the scheme. As a matter of fact no one has denounced the idea of a permanent division of Ireland more vehemently than Mr. Redmond. So late as October 12, 1913, addressing a meeting at Limerick, Mr. Redmond said: 'I have to say here to-day that that suggestion (the possible exclusion of a portion of Ulster) is a totally impracticable and unworkable one. . . . A unit Ireland is, and must remain, and we can never assent to any proposal which would create a sharp eternal dividing line between Irish Catholics and Irish Protestants. . . . The two-nations theory is to us an abomination and a blasphemy.' Mr. Devlin has expressed similar sentiments. Speaking in the House of Commons on June 13, 1912, he said: 'Whether Home Rule be a good or a bad thing for Ireland, Ireland stands by itself, and will not be broken up into sections. . . . No Home Rule Bill will ever be acceptable to those I represent in Belfast unless it be Home Rule for a nation and not Home Rule for a province.'

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But our article of September 21 was not concerned with the past utterances of Mr. Redmond or of anybody else, but with the existing situation; and in following our correspondent we have strayed from strict adherence to the subject which the article was intended to discuss. Our contention was that the Irish Party had been basely betrayed by the British Government; that a proposal for the temporary exclusion of Ulster was submitted to which the Irish Party reluctantly agreed and that a declaration of permanent exclusion was afterwards substituted for it; and that this, and a variation of terms on another vital point, were responsible for the breakdown of the negotiations. The position was made abundantly clear and vigorously emphasised by the leading members of the Party themselves in the historic debate in the House of Commons on July 31. We have not space for quotation from all the speeches, but we make a typical citation from that of Mr. Devlin, which was recognised on all hands as the most brilliant in the debate. 'Now, let me come,' he said, 'to where I stand upon this question. I have, perhaps, been as passionate and insistent in all these Irish controversies as anyone in this House when I have spoken, and outside I have always done it because I do not believe that Ulster, either permanently or temporarily, ought to be divorced from the rest of Ireland. . . . No; I would never agree to the permanent exclusion of Ulster. (Cheers.) I agreed to these proposals, because I thought it was a temporary war measure. We were prepared to recommend to these people to allow these six counties to remain under the authority of the Imperial Parliament during the war; that they were not to be automatically forced in at any time until the whole matter should come up for revision. I am not a lawyer; I am not even a subtle rhetorician. I have no experience whatever, even of Parliamentary controversy. But one thing I do understand. I understand with my blunt mind the meaning of a contract. That is clear to all of us. A contract was entered into between the parties in a great question of controversy and of national importance. We were one set of men who were parties to the arrangement, and the right hon. and learned gentleman, the member for Trinity College, and his friends were the others. We took this document to our friends, and we got them to agree to it as a temporary solution of the Irish difficulty. They did the same. I am not going to lay the blame upon any shoulders now, but this I do say, that if there was any lack of lucidity or clearness in what was proposed to us or to the right hon. and learned gentleman, that should have been cleared up before we left, and not after. . . .'

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