

## There is no Ground for the Libels

that represent us as a minority downtrodden and oppressed, or that, though tolerated, we are distrusted. We say from our experience—experience obtained from every part of Ireland—that we have received not only the same, but even better, treatment from our Roman Catholic fellow-countrymen than they frequently extend to each other. But, ladies and gentlemen, these facts and views will be developed by many speakers who will follow me. As chairman of this meeting—let me say a position I am glad and proud to occupy—my duty is to offer a brief word of explanation of the object of our meeting. We wish it to be clearly understood that this platform is not that of any party organisation; if it were I would not be here. The name Irish Protest Committee sufficiently describes the object of the movement. To avoid misrepresentation it was decided that the resolutions to be subscribed to at this meeting should be circulated beforehand. One result of this decision is that these resolutions will, as we anticipate, receive the support of this meeting to-night, as they have already received the written endorsement of many hundreds of Protestants from North, South, East, and West of Ireland whom distance and other obstacles have prevented from being here in person to-night. If to these we add the thousands of names which have been sent to us as sympathisers, but whom we have been unable to reach, we are satisfied that a body of Irish Protestants join us in repelling the suggestion that Irish Protestants have anything to fear from their Roman Catholic fellow-countrymen whatever the future political conditions of Ireland may be. One concluding word—We are sure to be misrepresented by the same party of extremists who denounced those of us who labored to bring about the Land Conference, a movement which paved the way to the happy settlement of the land war; but let us not be discouraged; we shall at least have done our duty to our Roman Catholic fellow-countrymen in repudiating the slanders which have disgraced the name of Irish Protestantism.

## The Apologies.

A large number of apologies for absence were received from leading Protestants throughout the country, amongst those read being the following:—

Walter Kavanagh, D.L., of Borris, wrote: As a Protestant, I join with you all in emphatic protest against the introduction of religion into this controversy, and I may say for myself that I have no fear of religious persecution or intolerance under a Home Rule Government. Such an imputation is a libel and a slander on our Catholic fellow-countrymen. After 20 years of service on the public boards of this country, I may say that I have received nothing but kindness, and consideration from all whom I came in contact with.

Rev. J. B. Armour, M.A., Presbyterian minister, Ballymoney, wrote: I regret that I cannot be present at your meeting on the 24th, but I sincerely hope it will be a success. Responsible politicians inside and outside the House of Commons have come to admit that persecution for conscience sake by law under Home Rule is unlikely, and the fear of it only a bogey. They have abandoned what was but the coinage of diseased brains. Those among Protestants who still harp on that string are a dwindling race of politicians who trade in religious and racial animosities. It is certain that under a Home Rule Government the places of power and trust are not to be enjoyed almost exclusively by the political successors of the ascendancy party. But, if these are to be largely disestablished, to call that persecution for the sake of religion, could only mean that persecution for the sake of religious belief has been the order of the day ever since Ireland became part of the British Empire, as the three-fourths of Irishmen have been continuously excluded for generations from a share in the government of their country. The section of the religious community of which I am a member cannot possibly, under Home Rule, have a less share in the Government of Ireland than it has had during the centuries that are past.

The Right Hon. Thos. Shillington, Portadown, wrote: I regret I am unable to attend the meeting of

Irish Protestants in Dublin on Friday evening. It is sincerely to be hoped, both in the interests of religion and of enlightened progress, that the ill-judged and sinister efforts that have been recently made in the country to associate exclusively one side of political and party opinion with the name of Protestantism may be abandoned. It is most humiliating to many Protestants to have it to appear to the world that politicians have captured Protestant churches, and are exploiting them for their party purposes.

Sir Hugh Mack, Belfast, wrote: I am very sorry indeed that I shall not be able to attend the meeting of the Irish Protest Committee in Dublin on Friday next. I have carefully read the three resolutions to be proposed at the meeting, and thoroughly agree with every word contained in them.

Professor R. H. Henry, of Belfast, wrote: I had hoped, by my presence, to fulfil a duty which it seems to me is incumbent upon every Irishman, to endeavour to frustrate an organised and deliberate attempt to poison the springs of our national life.

The following also sent letters of apology—Lord Dunraven, London; Rev. J. O. Hannay, Westport; Mr. Harford Montgomery, Belfast; Col. Sir Hutcheson Poe, C.B.; Lord Rosemore; Mr. John A. Duncan, J.P.; Rev. T. Bartley, Presbyterian minister, Ballycary; Rev. W. E. Vandeleur, Magency; Rev. J. A. Bain, M.A., Presbyterian minister, Westport; Maurice Talbot Crosby, Rev. P. O'Sullivan, Co. Antrim; Jos. Hosford, J.P., High Sheriff of Co. Cork; J. L. Johnston, U.D.C., Thurles; James Pomeroy, R.D.C., Banteer; Professor C. H. Oldham, Arthur W. Metcalfe, Belfast; Thos. Taggart, Ballymoney; George Henderson, Randalstown; W. Archer Kennedy, Belfast; Stanley Harris Knocklong; Thomas Macalister, Bushmills; Thos. H. Rutherford, Tipperary; A. W. Barnard, Macroom; Ernest Brown, O'Brien's Bridge, Co. Clare; W. J. Leslie, Cahirciveen; Samuel P. Harris, Knocklong; R. W. Evans, B.L., Doneraile; R. Walsh, Armagh; Frank R. Morrow, Belfast; Wm. C. Carr, Killyleagh; Stephen O'Mahony, Dublin; Sir Hugh Lane; The O'Mahony, D.L.; Mr. Thomas Henry Webb, Dublin; Lord Fermoy, Mr. W. Halliday, J.P., High Sheriff, Limerick; Sir Anthony Weldon, D.S.O., Athy; Rev. S. L. Maxwell, Ardcanary Rectory, Limerick; Sir F. W. Barrett, John A. Duncan, J.P.; Rev. T. W. Rudd, The Rectory, Castleblayney, Rt. Hon. Lord Headley, Miss McCutcheon, Rev. Canon Courtney Moore, Mitchelstown.

## OTHER SPEECHES.

Dr. Douglas Hyde proposed—'That this meeting earnestly protests against the suggestion that Irish Protestants would suffer any curtailment of their civil and religious freedom by reason of the granting of Self-Government to Ireland.' He said he had long wished to see such a representative assembly of his co-religionists so that they might expressly disassociate themselves from the lurid and blood-curdling pictures that had been drawn of their 'plight'—drawn by men whose advocacy he, for one, would gladly do without. 'I have,' declared Dr. Hyde, 'an unshakeable belief, founded upon experience, in the sense of fair play, in the justice, in the spacious toleration, and in the entire absence of religious bigotry on the part of my fellow-countrymen. I would be blind to the teaching of history, I would be blind to all I had seen around me since I came to the years of discretion, I would also be what is worse, unspeakably ungrateful, if I did not declare that I am convinced that, whatever the merits or demerits of a Parliament in College Green, it will never dream of interfering with my religious freedom, or abating one jot my religious liberty, because I do not happen to be the same creed as the majority of my fellow-countrymen. Finally, he said if the old Irish race were a people of that suspicious, mean, rancorous, narrow, persecuting spirit attributed to them, why hadn't they showed these ugly qualities in the past, because it was always in their power to do so at any moment if they so desired. They had the power to do it now, and always had it. How was it, then, that Protestant shopkeepers and traders grew fat in every town in the South and West? It would have been

Wm. R. Kells

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