

ness." It is not to be believed that the mass of the Hibernian Party—plain, blunder-headed men—realised much better than the bewildered people themselves the turpitude of the transaction; the record stands, however, to the shame of their intelligence, if not of their political morals, that of the 57 members who attended the Party meeting at which the project was disclosed all but two accepted the terms which were to be the price of their assent to the Partition of their country.\*

Mr. Dillon's subsequent complaint against the Government was that "they did not rush" the Headings of Agreement "hot-foot" as a War Emergency measure through the House of Commons as soon as the nominal assent of Ireland had been extorted. He and his confederates were not certainly open to any imputation that they did not for their own part "rush them hot-foot" through Ireland with a haste as indecent and unconstitutional as the proposals themselves. Under the constitution of the United Irish League, a National Convention was the sovereign authority in all matters of National policy. No National Convention was summoned. It was, of course, because no National Convention, however sophisticated, could have been trusted to examine the text of the "Headings of Agreement" without rejecting them with horror. The leaders refused to hold consultation in any form with the people of the three southern provinces, as though the projected mutilation of their nation was no business of theirs. The secret organisation of the Board of Erin alone was called into counsel, while the public organisation was ignored. The Party meeting was held on June 10. We have seen already on June 13 a special Convention of the Ancient Order of Hibernians (B.O.E.) was held in Dublin so secretly that the news did not become known until the small hours of the next morning and at this gathering the influence of the Order was pledged in support of the Lloyd George proposals. But even within the ambit of the secret Order, a Convention was only to be risked in the six surrendered counties, where the ascendancy of the Board of Erin was complete.

The upshot of the secret proceedings of June 13 in Dublin was the summoning of a secret Convention of the Six Counties on June 23 in Belfast. Although this Assembly was ruthlessly policed by the Hibernian Order, and the admissions so manipulated as to exclude any but a derisory minority belonging to other organisations, it taxed the most desperate resources of Messrs. Redmond, Dillon, and Devlin to conquer the instinctive repugnance of these Ulster Nationalists to respond to the appeal to stand passively by while their country was being cut up on the dissecting table under their eyes and by their sanction. Mr. Redmond, who presided, found it necessary not so much to offer reasons for the surrender as to threaten the collective resignations of Mr. Dillon, Mr. Devlin and himself, if it were not tamely submitted to. So unnatural was the sacrifice demanded that, even amongst the most fanatical of the Hibernian faithful, the murmurs rose high, until nothing short of the menaces and the tears of the leaders could have prevented them from breaking bounds altogether. Mr. Redmond, whose only sedative for his angry listeners was the pitiful assurance that the Partition was to be only of a temporary character, found his only real argument in the solemn threat with which he concluded:

"It is the duty of a leader to lead, but if my own people refuse to follow my lead, I must decline absolutely to accept responsibility for a course of action that is against my conscience. I regard the acceptance of these proposals, in the conditions I have stated, as vital to the Irish cause. As leader I point the way. It is for you to say whether you will follow me or not. If, then, this is the last time that I ever can appeal to the people of Ireland, I will have done so in obedience to the dictates of my heart and conscience."

It will be observed that his appeal was not "to the people of Ireland," but to a secret society in one corner of Ireland, and at a secret meeting of which the country

\*The two dissentient members, to their honor be it remembered, were Mr. P. O'Doherty (North Donegal) and Mr. P. J. O'Shaughnessy (West Limerick).

would have heard nothing, had not a patriotic reporter, at the risk of a fractured head, jotted down his words. That the lead was not Mr. Redmond's lead, the Convention by a sure instinct divined, for it was Mr. Dillon whose speech was half-drowned with taunts and interruptions identifying him as the true author of the unhappy tactics of which Partition was the miserable culmination. Mr. Dillon, however, continued to protest that "these proposals were a necessary measure to safeguard the National Cause" and promised to "execute himself," like his trusted leader, if the Hibernians thought differently. Even Mr. Devlin—and in Belfast he was in a small way Coriolanus in Corioli—found the accustomed pæan of "Up the Mollies!" changed for an underswell of doubt and wrath from Hibernian throats. He, too, discovered that the threat of resignation offered the only chance of turning the tide and concluded with the heroic resolve that "if Mr. Redmond went down, he, too, would go down with him." Even faced with such an avalanche of leaderless chaos, the most reliable Hibernian Assembly that the Hibernian headquarters could furnish could only be induced to do the unnatural deed and approve the "Headings of Agreement" by a majority of 475 votes against 265. It was actually on the strength of the sulky majority of 210 Belfast Hibernians—the only body of Irish opinion anywhere that was not sternly denied consultation in any shape—that the Parliamentary Party hastened to demand that the separation from Ireland of the Six Counties should be "hurried hot-foot through the House of Commons as a war emergency measure."

#### CHAPTER XVIII.—HOW THE PLOT MISCARRIED.

It might well seem there was no further obstacle to be apprehended from Ireland. On the day (June 23) when the Belfast Convention was being coerced by the leaders' threats of resignation, the only public protest against Partition attempted in the South—a meeting called by my colleague Mr. Maurice Healy and myself in the Cork City Hall—was frustrated by the ludicrous misunderstanding already related. The Lord Mayor of Dublin refused the Mansion House to Nationalists who proposed to make the indignation of the Irish capital heard. But as week followed week and the consequences of the bargain began to make themselves understood, no machinery of suppression, however perfect, could altogether stifle the disquiet which was beginning to stir in the heart of the bewildered country. On July 20, the indignation of the Nationalists of the North blazed out at a meeting in Derry which struck the stoutest of the Partitionists with dismay. The speeches sounded like the first volleys of an insurrection. They were prefaced by the reading of a letter from the Bishop of Derry (Dr. McHugh) inveighing against "Mr. Lloyd George's nefarious scheme" and adding:

"But what seems the worst feature of all this wretched bargaining that has been going on is that Irishmen calling themselves representatives of the people are prepared to sell their brother Irishmen into slavery to secure a nominal freedom for a section of the people. . . . Was coercion of a more objectionable and despicable type ever resorted to by England in its dealings with Ireland than that now sanctioned by the men whom we elected to win for us freedom?"

The Derry meeting came to a series of resolutions condemning "the proposed partition of Ireland whether temporary or permanent" pledging the Nationalists of the North "to oppose by every means any attempt to set up a separate Government for the Ulster counties," and "to resist the authority of such a Government if set up," and summoned the Hibernian members for Fermanagh and Tyrone "to oppose exclusion or resign their seats." The example of Derry was contagious. The Nationalists of Dublin, barred out from the Mansion House, ran the risk of holding a public meeting in the Phoenix Park—the first attempted since the proclamation of Martial Law in Easter Week—adopted the Derry resolutions, hooted the name of Mr. Lloyd George, and cheered to the echo the declaration of their Chairman (Alderman Richard Jones, a man of moderate opinions, who had been a steady supporter of Mr. Redmond) that the idea of the Cabinet appeared to be to bribe a whole Party, and that "if their Parliamen-

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