

his friends, the more *terre à terre* Covenanters to whom he had handed over the Six Counties, had in Committee gerrymandered the constituencies of North-East Ulster to their sweet will, and added two Orange Wards to his own constituency of the Falls Road, thereby ensuring his ejection from the Imperial Parliament at the General Election. In the last stage of his decadence the paladin, who had once summoned the police and military to make a ring for him in Belfast for a fight to a finish with the Orangemen, quitted Belfast as soon as he was taken at his word, and his constituents were falling by the hundred under the bullets of the unloosed Orangemen, and he subsided thenceforth into the poor role of "asking questions," feebler and ever feebler at Westminster. The only personage of any consequence in the group, Mr. T. P. O'Connor, confined his attention to the atrocities of the Black-and-Tans of Turkey in Armenia and with tears in his voice gave to that interesting people the eloquence he would once have devoted to the Bashi-bazouks of Sir Hamar Greenwood.

We may be fairly challenged to name our own exploits in the emergency. Frankly, there were none. Unlike the Hibernian leaders who on the morrow of their overthrow at the polls predicted that "before six months" there would come a Reaction which would re-establish their power, the All-Ireland League, as a corporate power, had definitely ceased to exist before the General Election. For fifteen years, we had fought the losing battle against the ever growing power of a corrupt Hibernian ascendancy to prevent the majority of our countrymen from hearing anything except the most fantastic misrepresentations of our views and actions. We had an unshaken conviction that time was bound to vindicate, as the only stable basis of a benign National settlement, an agreement by consent of every element of strength, Gaelic or Norman or British, Catholic or Protestant, Democratic or Conservative, which constituted the actual Irish nation, such as History had bequeathed it to us, as opposed to the destructive programme of everlasting enmity towards "our hereditary enemies," "the black-blooded Cromwellians," "the Orange dogs," and "the rotten Protestants," in pursuance of which a majority of the constituencies tragically ignorant of what they were being led to do, had repulsed every conciliatory advance from far-sighted Protestant Irishmen and forced a million of their countrymen to hail Sir E. Carson as their deliverer. The vindication of our measures for allaying the fears of the Protestant minority and our unconquerable aversion to Partition had, indeed, come already, and was to be within a few years acknowledged by every school and section of Irish Nationalists, including our most bitter maligners and by every English Party as well, who eventually found salvation around the conference-table of which we had set them the example fifteen years before at the Land Conference. We had lived to receive the admission of the Prime Minister that we were "fundamentally right," and were presently to hear the head of the new Revolutionary movement, Mr. de Valera, protest as passionately as ourselves his de-

volution to the rights of "our hereditary enemies" who had given us our Grattans and Wolfe Tones and Emmets, and to find the President of the new "Irish Free State," Mr. Arthur Griffith, in his first proclamation, publish our doctrines of unwearying conciliation of the Protestant minority as the foundation stone of his Government. We were to have the consolation such as it was of finding the Irish Hierarchy publishing in 1922 (eight years too late, alas!) their solemn judgment that "the deadly effect of Partition has been to ruin Ireland"—the Partition which was unanimously consented to by the Hibernian Parliamentary Party, and for making the sole protest against which (while there was still time to avert the catastrophe) we were anathematised as traitors.

But we had no longer any power to hasten the consummation of the enlightened principles soon to be crowned with universal assent. Nay, it was certain that our disappearance would be the surest means of removing the last obstacle to their triumph, by removing all pretext for the old jealousies, and leaving the new generation unfettered to follow up the good work in the plenitude of their fresh energies and spring-time hopes. *Sic vos non vobis* seems to pronounce irrevocably the fate of the pioneers and we cheerfully bowed to the decree. On the other hand, even if our collaboration had been invited (and it never was) we should have shrunk from the responsibility of flinging our young countrymen all but weaponless, against the colossal armaments of England under conditions of which we knew nothing. All the more, that we were still persuaded, Parliamentary methods had proved ineffective, not because they were the Parliamentary methods of Parnell, but because they were not, but were the methods of corrupt bargain and sale which had sacrificed the interests of the nation to those of an English Party. But the new men were the solitary hope of redeeming the country from a state of political rottenness which moved Mr. T. P. O'Connor himself to cry out that the place-hunting members of Parliament "were making a commonage" of Mr. Birrell's room in the House of Commons, and if they were to be trusted at all must be armed with all the undivided strength the nation could give them. To the new men, consequently, it became our cardinal principle to secure the same generous mandate which had been given to Parnell against the less degenerate followers of Butt and under no circumstances to say or do aught that could enfeeble their arm.

On two occasions only, up to the date of the Truce, was our silence broken. The first was when a protest in the *Times* was wrung from me by the devastation of our own little town of Mallow. In the rage of the Crown forces under a defeat which was a perfectly legitimate act of war, they turned a place which had been a sylvan Arcadia of peace and mutual tolerance into a furnace of vengeful passions on both sides in which the nights grew horrid around us with the rattle of gunfire, the crash of bridges blown into the air, and the glare of burning mansions and of burning cabins. My only other intervention was one that seemed to be forced upon me as an elementary duty

of humanity as well as patriotism. While the war was already furiously raging and spreading, but before it had yet nearly reached its climax, I received a communication from one of Mr. de Valera's most intimate confidants—although not, so far as I know at his desire, or, perhaps, even with his knowledge—which could leave no room for doubt that peace might at that moment be had on terms which would have spared the country two years of appalling bloodshed and sufferings and which Mr. Lloyd George would have paid a kingdom's ransom two years later if he could go back to. The substance of that communication I took the responsibility of communicating to the Prime Minister in a correspondence which will speak for itself, and which there is no longer any reason for withholding:—  
*Confidential and Secret.*

July 5, 1919.

Dear Mr. Lloyd George,

Enclosed extract may be relied upon as indicating what the attitude of Sinn Fein will be towards any definite offer of Dominion Home Rule. For that reason, and because I can guarantee the writer's good faith and very special sources of information, I consider it a duty to send it to you. From his report it may be deduced with certainty that Sinn Fein will not block the way of any offer of New Zealand or Newfoundland Home Rule provided (1) that it comes from the Government itself, (2) with a guarantee that if accepted by an Irish Referendum it will be put into operation, and (3) that neither the *Times* nor Sir H. Plunkett is allowed to exploit the concession to the prejudice of the elected representatives of Ireland, whose concurrence (tacit if not active) will be essential if any practicable settlement is to be effected within my time or even within yours. I will not waste your time adding another pebble to your mountain of glory: there is only one triumph more amazing and more blessed you could have and it would be in Ireland.

Sincerely yours,

WILLIAM O'BRIEN.

The Rt. Hon. D. Lloyd George, M.P.  
Prime Minister.

(Enclosed Extract)

*Confidential and Secret.*

"I have had an opportunity of seeing —, who is a really fast friend of ours and is the right-hand man of Mr. de V. I have also met a large number of leading people in Dublin and the country and I'm quite convinced that 99 per cent. of the Sinn Fein body would gladly accept Dominion Home Rule as a settlement, but will have nothing to do with Plunkett's scheme or with any other scheme of the same nature until such time as the Government place all their cards on the table.

"I am agreeably surprised at the good sense displayed by the people, and the most determined of the young men as well as the more experienced. There is more common sense and more resolution than was ever before known in our history. Every person I met was willing to close with an honest Dominion Settlement, including all but a handful of the extremist Volunteers, but all are determined not to give way one inch