

England, and the Prime Minister who had a foible for pushing his admiration for brave enemies to the length of despising friends down on their luck, frankly threw over the disreputable auxiliaries in Ireland and began to see an unexampled opportunity opening up before him of seeking an Irish victory in a precisely opposite direction, which was very likely more welcome to his heart of hearts.

If he could not (in the pretty Black-and-Tan jargon of the day) "do in" Sinn Fein, he must e'en parley with it, and for that he had advantages unknown to any of his predecessors. To begin with, a King (it would be churlish to forget) whose yearning for an Irish appeasement was a factor of the first importance in mollifying the most ingrained English prejudices. Next, both Mr. Bonar Law and Sir E. Carson, who had made him Prime Minister, and made him their prisoner, were now removed from the active scene. That co-operation of English Parties, for which Gladstone sighed to no purpose was ready to his hand. Not altogether—may it sans immodesty be hinted?—without a share of influence from labors of our own for many an unregarded year, the hesitations of the Unionist Party in particular—of fine Elder Statesmen of the stamp of Mr. Walter Long, as well as of the rising hopes and brains-carriers of the Party like Mr. Austen Chamberlain and Mr. F. E. Smith (now Lord Birkenhead) and Lord Robert Cecil himself had given way to bolder notions of Irish liberty. None but a pathetic handful of ancient Tory impossibilists any longer stood in the way.

On the Liberal side, Mr. Asquith, again at the head of his "Wee Free" following in the House of Commons, was arraigning the atrocity-mongers in Ireland with the noble eloquence which was always his, and was advocating, as with a father's pride, a most opulent measure of that Dominion Home Rule which he had quite overlooked in the days of his Premiership. The Labor Party were to a man for Ireland's deliverance, the more complete the better. The Irish Unionists outside the Six Counties, who might have been a political force of the first magnitude, had they asserted themselves before they were deserted by Sir E. Carson and contemptuously ignored by the Parliament of England, did at last find voice to claim kinship with the aspirations of their countrymen. The Anti-Partition organisations of Irish Conservatives of capacity and high integrity like Lord Middleton and Sir Horace Plunkett, late comers though they were into the vineyard, did bring a substantial accession of strength to Mr. Lloyd George in the daring change of front he was meditating.

That he did not enlist the aid of Sir James Craig as well was the capital mistake of the Prime Minister in his new peace negotiations. The Ulster leader was never an incorrigible enemy of a *modus vivendi* with his Southern countrymen. Like so many of the higher Orange type, if he was an irresponsible being for half a dozen mad "anniversary" days, he was for all the rest of the year a kindly neighbor, a fast friend, more honest of heart than complex in the convolutions of his brain matter, but in all things, flattering or otherwise, as irredemably Irish as the granite ribs of Cave Hill.

At this moment, Sir E. Carson had gone off to the House of Lords, throwing the squalling baby Parliament in Belfast on his hands under circumstances which could scarcely fail to try the temper of the deserted Covenanters. Sir James Craig had besides been mellowing down into a popular officer of the King's Household, and would, we may be sure, have found more congenial work in gratifying the King's dearest desire than he had ever found in qualifying to be one of his Majesty's rebels. It would not have been difficult, with his good will, to enlarge the "National Council" of the Act of 1920 into some real bond of National Unity, such as would have made it the pride of Ulster to be represented in the National Parliament, while retaining in any desired measure the local liberties she enjoys in her Belfast assembly. That no objection would have come from the Sinn Fein side is made clear by President Cosgrove, who declares that had Ulster accepted the Treaty of Downing Street as it stood she would still be in possession of her particularist privileges in as ample a measure as the All-for-Ireland League had ever proposed.* Sir James Craig had already given proof by his perfectly courteous conversations with Mr. de Valera and Mr. Griffith that he was not averse to those more cordial understandings that nearly always follow personal contact.

To leave such a man out in the cold while "the murder gang" were being welcomed to Downing Street was to invite suspicion among Sir J. Craig's touchy lieges and indeed to give it full justification. Yet this was what actually happened. The Ministerial plan of campaign, I am afraid it will be found, was first to favor Sinn Fein by cheating "Ulster," and next when that portion of the programme broke down to cheat Sinn Fein by calling in "Ulster." While the Treaty of Downing Street was under discussion at the Dail there was held a secret sitting at which full shorthand notes of the conversations between the British Ministers and the Sinn Fein delegates were communicated to the members under the strictest precautions as to secrecy. Members were not only specially pledged to regard the information as confidential, on pain of an instant renewal of hostilities by England, but measures were taken to prevent any written notes on the subject from being conveyed out of the chamber. Until the full official record, which must be still somewhere preserved, sees the light, the truth as to the most important Irish transaction for a century must still remain obscure and any enlightened judgment regarding the responsi-

* "It is not generally understood," President Cosgrove said in the Dail, "by the man in the street that had the Northerners elected to remain with us they would be guaranteed in perpetuity every acre of territory that for the moment is under their control. They would have retained their Parliament of the Six Counties and their separate judiciary and their Governor, according to their pleasure . . . and would have had under the Constitution of the Free State, a representation of 51 members in the Free State Parliament, instead of 13 members who now represent them at Westminster."

bilities for the Treaty and for the Civil War that followed must be postponed until the secret part of the story comes to be divulged. My own information on the subject—derived though it is from three separate participants in the Secret Session—can only be made public under every reserve.

There are some details, however, which are not to be doubted. The first is that the Ministerialists contrived to shift the discussions at the Conference from the straight issue of the Integrity of Ireland by leading the representatives of Sinn Fein to believe that the same end was to be more astutely attained by means of a Boundary Commission. That, I think, will be found to have been the cardinal error of the capable but inexperienced Irishmen who found themselves pitted against the most subtle intellects the Empire could select. They allowed the debates to be diverted from the supreme rights of Ireland as one indivisible nation, on which nothing could defeat them, to paltrier controversies as to whether this or that county, barony, or parish might not be swapped from the Protestant to the Catholic side of the frontier and so ensuring that what remained of "Northern Ireland" must in the nature of things follow. The notion came (my information goes) from the ingenious brain of Mr. Winston Churchill whose position as Colonial Secretary gave him a more commanding influence than ever in his ill-fated incursions into the affairs of Ireland. He, with the express authority of Mr. Lloyd George, conveyed to the Irish delegates an assurance that the Boundary Commission would be so arranged as to ensure the transfer to the Irish Free State of the counties of Tyrone and Fermanagh, the City of Derry and the important town of Newry, and that "Northern Ireland" thus virtually restricted to three counties, would find itself compelled to throw in its fortunes with the Free State. In one of his impulsive moments General Collins blurted out in a public speech the announcement upon Mr. Churchill's authority that, under the Boundary Commission stipulated for in the Treaty "vast territories" would be transferred from the Six Counties to the Free State. This was the first news of the arrangement which reached Sir James Craig. He promptly and indignantly announced that with a Boundary Commission of such a character he would have nothing to do. Mr. Churchill, when brought to book by a question in the House of Commons, denied that he had ever promised "to Mr. Michael Collins" the transfer of "vast territories" by means of the Boundary Commission. The reply was technically true, but was essentially false. It was not "to Mr. Michael Collins" he had given the promise; it was to Mr. Michael Collins' intermediary. How responsible Ministers could ever have hoped that such a transaction could be secretly carried through, behind the back of Sir James Craig, in violation of the solemn pledge given to him by the Imperial Parliament of the integrity of his territory under the Act of the previous year, passes comprehension; but, unless three different testimonies which have reached me from trustworthy sources are to be discredited, the promise was undoubtedly given, and was only violated when General Collins'