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Dillon's Attack on Those Responsible for Executions

His Speech Loudly Cheered by Members from Nationalist Benches.

LONDON, May 11.—The most dangerous factor in Ireland's situation which had been recognized since the brief rising flashed in the pan was that the punishment of the rebels would cause a reaction of sympathy among the warm hearted and emotional people. This threatened danger appears to be fast materializing.

John Dillon who is one of the most respected of the Nationalists, but of ten one of the bitterest antagonists of British rule, attacked the government to-day in the House in a speech which for bitter denunciation, has not been surpassed at Westminster since Parnell's days.

Premier Asquith has personally stepped into the breach and is taking the unprecedented course of journeying to Dublin to investigate the situation on the spot and doubtless to give instructions to General Sir John Maxwell regarding the policy which the military government must pursue now that the chief civil administrators, Lord Wimborne, Augustine Birrell and Sir Matthew Nathan, have retired from office. The Premier left here to-night by the Irish mail train on his way to that city.

Mr. Asquith once before took the reins in his own hands at a crisis by assuming the secretary of war when the threatened Ulster revolt, in 1914 caused the resignation of Colonel Seely.

The Prime Minister's finest powers have been displayed in playing the part of a conciliator, and he now has a task which is likely to demand their utmost exercises. He announced that he was going to consult with the authorities in order to arrive at some arrangements satisfactory to Irishmen of all parties and no statesman ever attempted a harder achievement. He frankly declared that the present situation could not continue.

Many of the newspapers, particularly the Liberal organs, call upon the Irish factions to seize the present opportunity for settling their long standing differences.

The Marquis of Lansdowne intimated to the House of Lords that the disarmament of all Ireland would be undertaken. This would mean the disarmament of Ulster and Nationalist Volunteers, and whether that can be done depends on Sir Edward Carson and John Redmond more than any other individuals.

The House of Commons negatived, without discussion, Mr. Dillon's motion demanding that the government should immediately declare its intentions. The House of Lords adopted, without division, Lord Loreburn's motion expressing dissatisfaction with the government's management of Ireland.

Premier Asquith urged the Irish to maintain a sense of proportion, and not let sympathy for the misled insurgents cause them to forget the deaths of soldiers and civilians, and promised that in the future court martials on murder charges should be held in public.

The chief cause for the attack on the government in the House of Commons to-day was the revelation that another execution had occurred; that of a man named Kent—which was the first military execution outside of Dublin. It was charged by one of the members that many of the 1700 persons deported to England had no connection with the uprising in Ireland.

The summary shooting of the Irish editor, F. Seehy Skeffington, had aroused increased protests as the details have become known.

The text of the resolution presented in the House of Commons by John Dillon is as follows:

"That, in the interests of peace and good government in Ireland, it is vitally important that the government should make immediately a full statement of their intentions as to continuance of executions in that country, carried out as a result of secret military trials and as to continuance of martial law, military rule and the searches and wholesale arrests now going on in various districts of the country."

Mr. Dillon's resolution was voted down without a discussion. In speaking of his resolution in the House of Commons, Mr. Dillon referred to the execution of Thomas Kent in County Cork, saying it looked as though there was a roving commission to carry out "these horrible executions."

Today Mr. Tennant announced there had been fourteen executions, he continued, and added it was no wonder many viewed the matter with grave concern lest another execution had been held back from the Premier and might be brought to light later.

Mr. Dillon said he drafted his resolution in order to confine the discussion to the narrow but important issue of military executions and the

continuance of martial law. He complained that Premier Asquith was kept in the dark by the military authorities as to what was going on. He did not hold General Maxwell, British commander, and the other military authorities responsible for the execution of F. Seehy Skeffington, but pointed out that Mr. Skeffington was shot on April 26 and the military authorities did not hear of it until May 6.

"How could anyone blame the people of Dublin for believing dozens of others have been shot secretly in barracks?" he asked.

"Horrible rumours are current in Dublin, and they are embittering the population."

Mr. Dillon said that the fact that nine out of ten people in Ireland were on the side of the government, was due to the life work of the Nationalists, and now the present rule was "washing out that life work in a sea of blood."

Out of the whole of Ireland, Mr. Dillon continued, there is only four or five spots where there was insurrection, yet the whole country was under martial law and there was absolutely no trace of the civil administration. The Irish people, he declared, would refuse to accept the well known high character of General Maxwell as the sole guarantee of their liberties, and if the military rule was to be continued the government had better get ready 100,000 men to garrison the country.

If the Ulster members had not been so dense, "said Mr. Dillon, they could have had many of the rebels fighting for them in the British army—men who were misled into rebellion but of whose courage he was proud. This statement brought forth cries of "shame."

Dillon—"Who stopped them?"
Unionist members—"You did."
Dillon—"That is an infamous falsehood."

Men arrested, continued Mr. Dillon, had been threatened with death and actually placed against a wall in order to persuade them to become informers.

At present, everything conceivable, said Mr. Dillon, was being done to spread disaffection throughout the country. Limerick, Claire and Mayo counties were not in a disturbed condition and their reward was the sending down of troops to make arrests.

"If Ireland were governed by men out of bedlam," shouted Mr. Dillon, "they could not pursue a more insane policy. You are letting loose a river of blood between two races, which, after 300 years of hatred, we had nearly succeeded in bringing together. You are washing out our whole life work in a sea of blood."

This and other telling points in his speech were received with cheers from the Nationalist benches.

After declaring that the primary

object of his amendment was to put an absolute and final stop to the executions Mr. Dillon proceeded:

"In my opinion the present government of Ireland is largely in the hands of Dublin clubs. What is the use of telling me that the executive authorities acted in close consultation with the civil executive officers of the Irish government? Who are these officers? There are none; they have all disappeared. There is no government in Ireland except Maxwell and the Dublin clubs. Everybody in Dublin knows that."

"Before the civil officials took flight, the military officers treated them with undisguised contempt and from the day martial law was proclaimed, the civil government came absolutely to an end. The men of the old ascendancy part are going about the streets of Dublin to-day openly glorifying in the rebellion. They claim that it brought martial law and real government in the country. That is what makes the situation so terrible."

"If that programme is to be enforced in Ireland you had better get ready 100,000 men to garrison the country. And then what sort of appearance will you make as the champions of small nationalities?"

Mr. Dillon charged that men had been threatened with death unless they gave evidence against comrades. In one case a boy of 15 was ordered to give evidence. He said, "I won't" and the officer said, "You will be shot."

The boy replied: "Shoot away."

The boy was then blindfolded and taken away and was again asked to inform, but replied, "no."

He was made to hear the click of the rifles. Afterward the bandages were taken from his eyes and he was sent home. After describing this incident, Mr. Dillon said:

"I call that damnable and intolerable."

Relating further incidents, Mr. Dillon continued:

"Another man said, shoot me, for I have killed three of your soldiers." That may horrify some of the honored members here, but I am proud of these men. This remark met with loud cries of "shame."

The speaker went on: "I am proud of their courage, and if the English people were not so dense they would have these men fighting for them."

Mr. Dillon contrasted the treatment of Ireland with that of South Africa. It was recognized, he said, that these men were the victims of misdirected enthusiasm. What was wanted was not military rule in Ireland but a means to find a way to the hearts of the Irish people. The government would then obtain the best troops in the world.

Among the personal incidents Mr. Dillon related one concerning his son. He said:

"Yesterday my son, seventeen and a half years of age, applied for a military pass to go to Kingstown. He was asked his name and college and was grossly insulted by a British officer, who refused the pass. This son had asked permission, on his seventeenth birthday, to join the British army. I gave him leave to enlist when he became 18. He will never join it now, and there are tens of thousands of others in similar cases."

"After all it is our country, although you look upon it as a sort of back garden which you can trample into dust without consideration."

There was a lively interest at the conclusion of Mr. Dillon's speech. He was saying that the insurgents had made a good, clean fight, however misguided. He was interrupted by a member, and retorted, "it would be a good thing if your soldier were able to put up as good a fight—three thousand against twenty thousand with machine guns and artillery."

Premier Asquith opened, in grave tones, in reply to Mr. Dillon. He expressed deep regret that the member, in most parts of his speech, had forgotten some of the elementary rules of justice which ought to be a guidance in dealing with such a serious situation. The Premier appealed to the House to remember the infinite mischief done at a moment when he was still hopeful that events might lead to something like a great approximation of sympathy among all classes of Irishmen.

When Mr. Dillon spoke of the rebellion having been drowned in a sea of blood some regard must be paid to the actual facts. It was impossible, he said, to measure life for life in such circumstances, but he must refer to the actual casualties, which, in the military, were 124 killed and 397 wounded, and of civilians, 190 killed and 614 wounded.

The Premier made a feeble reference to the case of Sherwood Forester's Territorial regiment, which, while training, was suddenly called upon before its time to a "most unwelcome task at the call of duty." There was no question of revenge, he added, but these men were cut off in their prime, their youth, their homes left in mourning.

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