

REDMOND AND DILLON IN BELFAST.

A monster meeting, under the auspices of the executive of the United League, was held in Belfast recently. The greatest enthusiasm was displayed, judging by the reports which appear in our exchanges received this week from which we take the following extracts of the speeches of Messrs. Redmond and Dillon.

Mr. John Redmond, who was the recipient of an enthusiastic ovation, addressed the meeting. He said: "It would be impossible for words to exaggerate the importance which I attach to this meeting to-night, or the value which I set upon the kindly welcome which you have given to me. This completes a series of meetings which I have had the honor of addressing in the chief towns of Ireland since the reunion in the Irish Party. These meetings were held in Dublin, Cork, Limerick, Waterford, and now in Belfast, and those meetings showed me conclusively, what indeed I have no doubt about at any time, that the Nationalists of these cities of Ireland are thoroughly united in their support of the National League. This fact speaks well for the patriotism of the Nationalists of these cities, and it speaks well also, I think, for their political intelligence. I may say, without evoking any invidious comparison, that I attach more importance, if possible, to this meeting in Belfast than to any of the meetings in the other cities. Every visit that I have ever paid to Belfast has been a source to me of mingled pleasure and pain. My mind when I came here was always filled with recollection that one hundred years ago this city of Belfast might be said almost to have been the heart and centre of Nationalism in Ireland, and endorsement from the Nationalists of Belfast at this time of our history must always be to a politician a source of pleasure and of pride, because from the days one hundred ago, when this was the cradle of the great Irish movement, as you have been told, and when it was to a large extent the heart of the National movement in this country, down to this moment the Nationalists of Belfast have been the most steadfast and the most loyal to their cause of any set of men in Ireland. But, the conditions have changed, and one is confronted by the fact that this city of Belfast is to-day, notwithstanding the devotion and loyalty of its Nationalist citizens, not the heart or the centre of the National movement, but to a huge extent is the one and sole remaining obstacle which stands in the way of Ireland in the achievement of her national rights. That is the reason why I say my heart has always been filled when I visited this city with mingled feelings of pleasure and pain, and I have always asked myself when I visited this city are we, the National Party in Ireland, to any extent responsible for the fact that Belfast stands to-day as the obstacle in the path of freedom for Ireland. I am afraid that some of the Irish politicians who fall into the delusion that the National cause of Ireland is merely a Catholic cause. The cause to which we are devoted is a National cause, and those are enemies of the National cause who attempt to give it such a tinge or such a complexion as is likely to drive away from it the descendants of the men of one hundred years ago—the Protestant Irishmen who laid down their lives for the liberty of Ireland. The bane of this country has been these insane and religious discords which have kept men asunder in this corner of the island. Ah! our idea of an Irish nation is a glorious one and a generous one. It is not the ascendancy or the triumph of any class or of any creed, but it is the representation and the freedom of the nation made up of all of her sons, Catholic, Protestant, and Presbyterian, whether in their veins there flows the ancient Celtic blood of the original Irish race, or whether in their veins there flows the blood of those who came from other lands, and mingling with our people became more Irish than the Irish themselves. These, you, no doubt, might be inclined to say to me are thoughts for the future, and in view of the acute crisis that has arisen in the political life of Ireland to-day you may expect me to direct your attention more closely to matters of actual concern for the moment. What I have to say in that matter is very simple, and, no doubt, it will be open to the charge of refutation, because in speaking on this subject throughout Ireland I have necessarily been obliged to repeat myself. I say in the political condition of Ireland at this moment there is no room amongst honest Nationalists for any discussion. I am one of those who attach no magic whatever to the word "unity." Unity may be a very good thing or it may be a very bad thing, but unity and apathy and indifference is a very bad thing. Unity upon wrong lines or upon false principles is a very bad thing. I say at the present moment there is no difference of opinion, judging by the public declarations of the leaders of the people. There is no difference of opinion as to the objects we have in view or as to the principles we advocate, and further, there is no difference of opinion as to the necessity of the United Irish League as an organization. There is no public man in Ireland to-day who differs from us, or the objects we have in view. There is no public man in Ireland who differs as to our principles, and I have heard no public man in Ireland dissent from the scheme of the organization of the United Irish League. So far as I have seen no man has denied that the

organization of the United Irish League is thoroughly democratic. No one has denied that in this organization every constituency will be its own master in the selection of its own members, for the control of its own funds within its borders, and for the control of the policy of the organization. No one has denied that, no one, therefore, disagrees with this organization, and, that being so, I say there is no room for discussion in the public life of Ireland to-day. If principles were a stake, we could understand differences and dissension. Where there is no element even of difference with the principles or formation of the organization I say there is no room in the public life of the country for dissension. There are differences, but they are differences of a purely personal character. There are differences of opinion as to procedure, as to form, and to some extent as to method, and perhaps as to men. But all these things are differences of the most trivial and unimportant character, and I say deliberately that any man who is dissatisfied with the objects, and the principles, and who cannot find substantial fault with the organization, and who still upon this trivial and unimportant issue, jeopardises the unity of the country, jeopardises the future of our cause, ought not to be tolerated by the people of Ireland.

I have preached toleration in every speech I have made in Ireland since the reunion, and God knows I ought to preach toleration for minorities, because for a long time I was in a small minority, and I say that when the majority separates itself from the majority, not in point of principles, but in point of some personal or trivial issue such as I have described, then I think that the public opinion of the country ought to demand from that minority that it should show some toleration for the views of the overwhelming majority. If Ireland realizes the magnitude of the issues that are at stake, I believe that for once the country would not tolerate any obstacle in the way of the complete reunion of the people. Let the country for a moment consider what these issues are. Without unity and organization in Ireland you can have no powerful popular movement in this country, and everybody knows that without a powerful popular movement in this country you cannot obtain any concession from any English Government. The whole history of the connection between the two countries goes to show that we can hope to get nothing from English benevolence or from good-will towards this country. I don't say that by way of reproach, for all patriotism is to a large extent selfishness, and the masses of the English people have got problems of their own working-classes, of I might say, almost the existence of their toilers, sufficient to occupy all the attention of the Imperial Parliament, and it is only human nature that they should direct their attention to these English problems rather than to Irish reforms, unless these Irish reforms and principles be backed by a vigorous movement in this country. Therefore, it is not by way of attack, I say, you ever have got anything, and you ever will get anything from England by a powerful and menacing popular movement in this country. Similarly you never could have any influence or power in the House of Commons unless you had there an Irish Party, not united merely in word, but united in the bonds of comradeship and discipline, so that you will be able to count upon them acting in every matter of large and small importance, and that arises absolutely as one man.

Now, what are your prospects, in the next Parliament? If you have no organization in this country, no united organization, and if you have no united and powerful party in the House of Commons then, of course, your prospects are gloomy indeed. Your earnest hope under these circumstances to obtain any concession of your rights, is gloomy. If you build a united and powerful organization that will be menacing to England, and if you send to the House of Commons a united body of Irish members, then, speaking advisedly, knowing only too well the narrow limits within which the Irish Party can do anything for Ireland in an English Parliament, still I say you may obtain in the next Parliament enormous benefits for the Irish people and for Ireland. As far as one can foresee the future it is pretty certain that the next Parliament will witness the introduction of a compulsory land purchase scheme. The land purchase scheme is inevitable, and it is inevitable by reason of the fact that the two parties concerned in the land question, the tenants on the one side, and the landlords on the other, are utterly dissatisfied with the present system of land laws in this country. The question is one which affects not merely the tenant farmers of the country, but it affects the other classes, also, in a special way, the prosperity of every town in Ireland.

People have criticized the United Irish League, and said it is an agrarian movement, and not for the benefit of the towns. Why, every thoughtful man knows that what is going on at present in Ireland—the ruin of the tenant farmers and steady drain of emigration from this country—must have the effect of steadily diminishing. If emigration goes on as it has been doing of recent years every town in Ireland will in the end feel the drain upon it, and in the interest of the workers in the towns themselves the wisest thing they could do would be to adopt the United Irish League and strengthen

the hands of the Irish members in pushing the compulsory land purchase upon good terms, and thus taking efficacious steps to promote the prosperity of the country. You may take it for granted that the land purchase scheme will be introduced, and the price that the tenant will depend upon the action of Ireland for the next few months or weeks. I would be glad to see a land purchase scheme carried out upon such terms as would not injure a single landlord in Ireland. I would not desire to see the extermination of any class in the country, and if England chooses out of her plentiful land during the next few weeks. On the question of Home Rule I am not going to speak here to-night, except to say this, and I wish my words of protestation could be received and accepted by our Protestant fellow-countrymen of this land. Home Rule as we mean it does not mean the ruin of any class or creed. People of recent days in Ireland sometimes sneer at Thomas Davis's dream of the Irish nation of the future. It may seem far from realization; it may seem a long day from now to the moment when our Protestant fellow-countrymen in the North of Ireland will join hands for our common country, but I, for my part, will never abandon the hope that that day will come. At any rate, that is the ideal that I believe we should hold before our minds—the ideal of a Parliamentary united party, which men of all classes and creeds will join together for the benefit of the common country.

"Start not, Irish born men, If you're to Ireland true; We need not race, nor creed, nor clan, We've hearts and hands for you." It is in this spirit we have to face the general election, and it is in this spirit of broad toleration and broad patriotism that I would appeal to the people of Ulster, without reference to class or creed, to join with their fellow-countrymen to banish for ever and trample under foot those hateful religious animosities which have made our country a byword all the world over, and which, I may say, are a disgrace to our common humanity, and to join their brothers in an effort to dignify, to emancipate this loved isle, this land that has been made rich by the blood and sacrifices of unnumbered generations of our forefathers, and which we all believe was designed by the Creator of the universe to be the home of a free and happy people.

Mr. John Dillon's Speech.

Mr. Dillon on being introduced received an ovation. He said in part: "I do not know of any body of Nationalists, either here or across the seas, who have a better right to rejoice at the restoration of National unity in Ireland than the Nationalists of Belfast, because I know of no body of Nationalists in Ireland amongst whom during the past ten years of sorrow and of division in Ireland there was less division and less bitterness in whatever division there was than amongst you here in Belfast. You have always held that the restoration of unity in the National ranks was a vital essential to the vindication of the liberties of Ireland, and throughout all the years that have rolled over us of discouragement, and in some parts of Ireland almost of despair, the fact that the Nationalists of Belfast in the ultimate re-establishment of that unity has never wavered, and to-night you are rewarded by being present at this meeting and by rejoicing in the consummation of that great desire. I on my part, speaking here to-night amongst so many old and true friends—and I will say that I do not believe that any political leader has ever had in history truer and braver friends than I have had amongst the Nationalists of Belfast. In years of difficulty and of danger, when friends were badly needed, and when they were put to trials and to tests unknown in happier times, and therefore it gives to me a peculiar personal pleasure to be here to-night and share in your triumph, and I think I may, speaking for myself, make this claim, that I have kept, and faithfully observed, the pledge which I have often given to the Nationalists of Belfast, that if the moment ever arrived when reunion in the National ranks appeared to be possible, that no personal claim of mine would be allowed to stand in

the way as an obstacle to the great national object. Well, now, let me go over some few words on a subject which was touched upon at some length in the eloquent and masterly speech to which we have just listened from the Chairman of our party. It is, after all, the subject which has engaged, ought to engage, all the attention of Irish Nationalists at the present moment, because, as the chairman said, there is little difference about principles. At other times when no election was pending we have discussed the reforms we desired and the principles of Irish Nationality, but now we are face to face with a great crisis in the history of our movement, and the fate of our movement hangs in the balance, and to a great extent of the constitutional movement for many years to come. And until the minds of the people, of the Nationalists of the country, are directed to the great questions which will be settled for many a long year to come—questions, I am afraid, if they are settled unfavorably, they shall be the last for the lifetime of some of us who are getting old and grey in the service. The fate of this movement during the last ten years, the movement, within the next few weeks, in all probability the time is upon us, the time is at hand when the constituencies of this country will be called upon to give their solemn verdict at the polls and to select their representatives—representatives who will be entitled to speak for Ireland in the British House of Commons, it may be, for six years to come—an awful responsibility, a responsibility which, if it is not discharged with a full sense of all the mighty issues that are hanging on it, may consign, after all that has happened during the last ten years, the constitutional movement in Ireland into the same slough of despond in which it was in the year 1853, the year after the great betrayal, when, recollect, it took twenty-five years— one quarter of a century—before there arose in Ireland any body of constitutional and Parliamentary politicians who could obtain any hold whatever on the confidence of the Irish people.

The question is, and we ought not to shut our eyes to it, whether at the coming election a party will be returned which will act together, if necessary, stamping out dissension, and fighting the battle of Ireland on the old fighting lines. What are the principles to keep that object in view? What are the tests that ought to be applied to candidates coming before the National constituencies? What are the principles the electors ought to keep in mind? The first test, of course, it is easy to state, that is, with candidates, their record should be looked into, and they should be selected as men who, judging from information placed before the electors, are honest men, are sincere men, and are in their hearts Nationalists who, by instinct, will fight the battle of Ireland in the House of Commons, and resist every form of influence to which Irish members are subjected, that they may be trusted to put in the forefront of their political action the assertion of the National right of Ireland. About the second principle I think there is absolutely no difference of opinion, and I need not dwell upon it; but this alone I will say in reference to that and it is that there are men in the present party who do not satisfy that test. I could give many instances, illustrations of what I mean, but I do not think it is necessary. That is a question that must be judged by the constituencies themselves. I will only give one illustration, and it is this—I do not believe that a man ought to be accepted as a sincere Irish Nationalist who gives his first vote after his election to the Irish Party, and in favor of an increase of two millions a year to the British army. I think such a man ought not to be taken as a sincere Irish Nationalist, and I do not think that he ought to be tolerated in the National Party. I could give other instances, but it is unnecessary, let me come now to what appears to me to be the question of vital and supreme interest. After you have put those tests of principle to candidates at elections in Ireland, ought the electors to stop there and say that they are satisfied that man is a sincere Nationalist and an honest man? am convinced that a blunder will be committed, and a blunder which may result in the ruin of the Party which is about to be created, if the electors stop at that point, and if they do not put this further test to the candidates—Are you supporters of the United Irish League—(applause)—and do you accept in its entirety the constitution of the convention of June last? Now, I know it may be said that such a test as that would narrow the ranks of the Nationalists of Ireland and would lay the electors

open, or would lay such political leaders as recommended it, open to the charge of intolerance. It may be said, and has been said, that there are good Nationalists in Ireland who have not seen their way to accept the United Irish League, or the decision of the Convention. Yes, I am free to admit that there may be honest Nationalists in Ireland, and that there are, who have not seen their way to accept the United Irish League and the decisions of the Convention, but so were there honest Nationalists in Ireland in 1878 and 1879 who could not see their way to accept Mr. Parnell's policy and the policy of Joe Biggar. I am old enough in the National fight to remember when we were denounced in 1878 and 1879. We were the young men of the movement in those days. We were denounced and charged with intolerance because we stood in those days to make the support of the advanced party policy of Mr. Parnell and Mr. Biggar the test of the elections; and it was said, "If you do this you are excluding honest Nationalists who cannot go so far, practise a policy of toleration." I ask, however, with confidence, the Nationalists of Belfast, looking back to the days of 1878 and 1879, if we of those days had listened to that nonsense, if we had allowed the question of the policy of Parnell and Biggar to be pushed into the background and not to be made a test question, what would have been the course of Irish National politics of that day? And yet in those days, as in the days in which we are now living, it was said by great Irishmen and by true Irishmen, by such a great Irishman as Isaac Butt himself, it was said, "Where is the difference of principle; we are all agreed upon principle." So we were; but the difference was not a question of principle, it was a question of method, of tactics, and the difference was vital. We agreed all of us with the principles of the nominal Home Rulers, but we came to the conclusion that the small defect in their plan was that their principles were excellent but their policy was rotten, and that if they went on advocating their principles on the lines which they then were on, they might go on and at the end of a century not make an inch of progress. Precisely the same arguments apply to-day. We are told to practise toleration. We are asked whether there are not good Nationalists as good as us who do not like the United Irish League, and who do not believe in centralized organization, in a general organization, and prefer, perhaps, separate parish organizations, and who did not like the Convention, although they agree with the mass of the Convention—but I say, in my judgment, this question is so vital that it lies at the root of the Irish political situation to-day. What use is it to you or any Nationalist who means business and who is sincere in this question to take up the programme of the Convention and say: I agree with all those principles; I want to know how you are going to carry the principles into effect. I say, without a united party and the ending of any dissension you cannot make any progress, no matter how good your principles are. Therefore, I say your principles are of no concern if your policy is to assign those principles to some forgetfulness. What good is a party with excellent principles if a right arm is paralyzed and traitors are sapping the poison that circulates in its veins? The real question for us to consider in Ireland to-day is this, not what is the nature of our platforms and principles, because that matter, as I say, has been thrashed out, and we are all agreed on it. The real question to consider, as practical men, are we sincere in this business? Do we mean to have a united party in the future, and if we do mean, then are we going to take the only means by which we can secure it?

I have accepted those decisions, and I proclaim that they mean business every man who goes before an Irish constituency should accept them. Yes all that I ask in the coming election is that a clear issue shall be placed before the constituencies of the country, not only the set of principles which may be merely a catalogue of pious opinions and of desirable reforms without any indications of how those reforms are to be won—not only a set of principles, but a policy that the leaders of the people, or those who claim to represent the people, are prepared to stand by and see that they will carry them out, challenge the verdict of the constituencies on that issue, and if any constituencies decide, and they may decide—I think they will be very few—that they will return men who reject the decisions of the convention, and repudiate the United Irish League, let those constituencies



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know that their members will not be admitted to the ranks of the Irish Party, and will stand outside to do the work of the enemy of their country, not from within bringing into our backs when the enemy is fighting us. But if they object to the National organization and the convention, let them take their stand like men, and outside the ranks of the Party, in the ranks of which they would be spies and traitors—let them take their stand outside that party. It is idle for us at this great crisis in the history of our country to shut our eyes to the dangers and difficulties which beset our path, and to lull ourselves into false security and to endeavor to believe that in our blindness to those difficulties there lies safety. It is worse than idle to cry peace and toleration if we abstain from taking the only means by which a United Party can be secured for the country, if we deliberately abstain from taking the only means by which we can secure that the Party of the future will be composed of elements which can work together, and will be built on a solid foundation; and I say that that Party will never be achieved by sending into the House of Commons to form one Party men who are opposing each other on the dominant issue of Irish politics. Now, let me say this, in conclusion: The opinions which I have given are those of an individual, and of an Irish Nationalist, who claims no right to speak for any body of men or any section, and who claims no authority for those opinions except such as may be acquired by their innate soundness. They are the opinions of an Irish Nationalist, who claims no right except the right and the duty which lies upon every man in this great crisis of Ireland's history, when he is asked to address his countrymen, to tell them what in his heart he believes to be the truth. And let the country remember this, and this fact should be placarded before the eyes of every man who goes to the ballot box in the next few weeks that are to come—if the country, forewarned by the experience of the past ten years, forewarned by the great Conventions, by the organization which has restored peace and order and enthusiasm to the ranks of the Irish Nationalists—if the country with all this knowledge before it deliberately sends in men who are known to be opposed to each other on a vital issue, then, I say, if scandals and divisions break out in the future party the country will have itself, and itself alone to blame.

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