

ULSTER TO-DAY AND TO-MORROW

DAY TO DAY PAMPHLETS

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ULSTER TO-DAY AND TO-MORROW

HER PART IN A GAELIC CIVILIZATION

A STUDY IN POLITICAL RE-EVOLUTION

DENIS IRELAND



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**Fanaticism will one day be killed by radicalism in Ulster,
but the struggle is not yet near its end.**

L. PAUL-DUBOIS: *Contemporary Ireland* (1908)

AUTHOR'S NOTE

PORTIONS of this study have already appeared in the form of letters and articles in the Irish Press, notably in the *Irish Statesman*, *Irish News*, and *Northern Whig* ; and in two pamphlets, privately printed and circulated in Northern Ireland, under the titles *Ulster Politics As I See Them* and *An Ulster Protestant Looks At His World*.

D.I.

Belfast,
April, 1931.

ULSTER TO-DAY AND TO-MORROW

[Throughout the following pages the word "Ulster" is used for the sake of convenience, and with more cultural than geographical accuracy, to denote the miniature state of Northern Ireland; that is, the area of the six counties of Antrim, Down, Armagh, Fermanagh, Tyrone, and Londonderry.]

I

CERTAIN happenings and developments in the post-war world, at home and abroad, mark unmistakably the beginning of a new era. The triumph of the Labour Party at the last general election in Britain, the growing stability and prestige of the Irish Free State, the increasing shadow which the American Colossus casts over Europe, all divide us from the pre-war mentality by an insurpassable gulf. "Nothing," wrote Mr. J. L. Garvin of the General Election of 1929, "will remain the same after the last Thursday in this month . . . whatever happens we shall have finished with the domination of the pre-war mentality, and a new era will begin. This election, quiet and dull beyond example for half a century, or more, will have all-changing consequences. On Thursday, twenty-five days hence, the years which history must call the 'post-war period' of British annals will come to an end. A normal influence on the life of men and women will resume its sway. That influence is the imagination of the future overcoming the power of the past."

Those words are profoundly true of Great Britain and the Irish Free State. In those States there is tangible evidence that the "imagination of the future" is at least grappling with the "power of the past." Not so in Northern Ireland. Here the pre-war mentality is *more firmly than ever in the saddle. Pre-war mentality remains, pre-war reality has vanished.* Age, in Ulster, is triumphant, and youth acquiescent.

This curious reversal of the normal rôles of youth and age reveals itself on examination as the outward symptom of a deep-seated inner disease. Northern Ireland, in fact, presents to-day a problem in political pathology, baffling as any in Europe. The atmosphere is uneasy, like that of a Balkan State. On all fundamental political subjects there is a suspicious silence between intimates, a soreness, an avoidance of certain topics—small things, but significant, the line of foam which (in an historical sense) marks a meeting of the tides.

What are these historical tides, and which way are they running? What is this struggle of the deeper currents of which every one is aware and of which nobody speaks? On the surface everything appears serene. The "Ulster" Unionist machine—an organisation which could have given Tammany (even in its palmyest days) a run for its money—is apparently supreme in the Six Counties. The membership of the House of Commons of Northern Ireland consists to-day of thirty-seven Unionists, three Independent Unionists, eleven Nationalists, and one Labour-Socialist; obviously then there is no immediate likelihood of Unionism suffering a snap defeat.

Nevertheless, the Government is unhappy—and with reason. Unionism in Northern Ireland is between the devil and the deep sea. On one side lies the increasingly (and inevitably) socialistic tendency of English legislation, on the other Irish Nationalism—and to admit for

a moment that legislation conceived in urbanised Britain is not immediately and necessarily applicable to predominantly agricultural Northern Ireland is to destroy the very Ark of the Ulster Unionist Covenant.

Faced with this predicament, the "Unionist" Government of Northern Ireland has cheerfully abandoned its last pretensions to a political philosophy, and is prepared (with the assistance of the British taxpayer) to outbid all comers in the matter of Public Assistance. It remains Unionist, throws Conservatism overboard, and hoists the standard of Orange Socialism in place of the old "true blue."

As a political manœuvre this is neat, but unimpressive. Small wonder then that with the year 1930 Ulster Unionism has begun to lose its grip upon its traditional reserves in the ranks of the younger Protestants, that the so-called leaders are plainly bogged, and that the slightest disturbance of the existing political (and religious) balance may lead to a political landslide.

II

To the sociologist the explanation of the growing insecurity of Unionism and the failure of Liberal-Unionism in Ulster lies in the common denominator of the two creeds. The hall-mark of Ulster Unionism and Liberalism is the attempt to think in English terms on Irish soil. Such efforts are the legacy of the century and a quarter of English rule, and contain within themselves the seeds of their own failure. Their persistence in Northern Ireland might be attributed by the sociologist to the sham system of English education which still conceals the realities of Ulster and of Ulster's historical background from the Protestant Ulsterman. Educationally the Protestant youth of Ulster is still persuaded that he is a "happy English child," and that the history of his native province began with the Act of Union. Secure in this belief, it has been the custom of generations for him to become a Unionist in politics and to swallow without reservation the implications of contemporary English Conservatism.

The Act of 1920¹ changed all that. Not immediately, or drastically; but painfully and slowly. In fact the realisation of what has happened to him is only now beginning to dawn upon the political "Ulsterman"; and whether the rising generation of Ulster Protestants will subscribe unanimously and whole-heartedly to the political creed of their fathers is extremely doubtful. They may indeed come in the fullness of time to subscribe to the creed of their forefathers—a very different matter.

¹ *The Government of Ireland Act*, granting separate legislatures to Northern and Southern Ireland.

What is happening then beneath the surface of everyday life in Ulster is nothing less than a spiritual and cultural revolution. Or perhaps it would be more accurate to call it a re-evolution. Nothing shows as yet upon the surface, and only an observer reared and trained in the Ulster atmosphere could detect the signs of disturbance. Our nineteenth century mentality still holds, and the deeper currents of our political life take a long time to show upon the surface. But a cultural battle has begun; a battle which—for those who see far enough—is big with significance for the western world. The battleground is not the hustings (for in Ulster votes may go one way and minds another) but the sub-consciousness, the *psyche*, of the Protestant Ulsterman. There “political Ulster,” that product of British policy in Ireland, is engaged in a life and death struggle with the real Ulster which has grown out of the soil of the most deeply Irish province in Ireland.

The real inner drama, then, of the North is that blinded by his own nineteenth century industrial success, misled by a false and inadequate system of English education, and torn by a new industrial revolution which as yet he only partly understands, the Protestant Ulsterman remains unconscious (or more disturbing still, only half conscious) both of his own historical background and the depths of his own nature. Unconscious of his history, he finds himself without bearings in a swiftly changing world, and his difficulty in orienting himself in the new century is correspondingly increased.

It may be argued, of course, that if Protestant reaction is imminent in Ulster (and Unionists themselves are aware of its imminence, as their oratory and publicity show) it must necessarily be a reaction in the direction of English Liberalism or Socialism; that there exist no other channels. An appreciation of the fallacy underlying such a theory, a theory implicit in the utterances of public men in Ulster and in the Ulster Unionist Press, is the asses' bridge to the understanding of the

Northern Irish consciousness. *Protestant reaction in Ulster may take the direction of radicalism*—a radicalism which is historical, of the soil, and utterly opposed to the current conception of radicalism in England. In order to understand the nature of this native Ulster radicalism and its relation (or lack of relation) to contemporary politico-economical tendencies in Europe, it is necessary to fix the position of Ireland (of which Ulster, in spite of her denials, forms a part) upon the map of Europe. Ireland and Russia form, as it were, the wings, or poles, of the European continent—collectivist Russia balanced against fiercely individualist Ireland; and neither of these countries subscribes fully to the European system. Russia, with her outlook over Asia, and Ireland, with her outlook to the Western Ocean and the New World, have always insisted upon certain mental reservations which make them unintelligible to the average foreigner. The minds of Ulstermen, in brief, have been coloured by residence in a country which is unique in Europe, which does not fully subscribe to European (or English) scales of national values, and which draws a mental sustenance of its own from the winds of the Atlantic.

Add to this isolation from Europe intimate trade relations between Ulster and America, long continued emigration from Ulster to America, and finally historical connections with the American War of Independence, of which the modern political "Ulsterman," with his sham English education, is superficially ignorant but fundamentally aware—and there is obtained a mental orientation almost entirely, but more especially in economic matters, distinct from the English.

In these circumstances the latent historical radicalism of Ulstermen may assert itself in a time of crisis. The form of that radicalism may be to a certain extent explained if it is pointed out that to an Ulsterman English economic radicalism would appear, if isolated

from its political context in Great Britain and disentangled from his hatred of the Nationalist "enemy," as a kind of political insanity leading to suicide. The deeper causes of this economic outlook have already been examined. A more immediate and a simpler explanation lies on the surface. Behind and surrounding Belfast and the industrial area of the Lagan valley lies agricultural Ulster, *and behind agricultural Ulster lies Land Purchase*. The Belfast industrial employer is frequently himself the son of a farmer, if not of a peasant proprietor; his workmen sons of farmers. When he looks out of the window of his office he sees, most likely, cattle being driven to the markets or the docks, and no matter to what social heights his family may aspire he will use on occasions—to the intense annoyance of his wife and daughters—agricultural expressions. If you were to define private capital as the "manure" of industry, he would probably shake you warmly by the hand. More important still, nine out of ten of his workmen would, at any rate in private, agree with you. In such an atmosphere English economic radicalism does not thrive.

And yet it is just these industrial employers who are the strongest supporters of an Ulster Government whose main function is to reproduce automatically English socialistic legislation—thereby piling fresh burdens upon Ulster industry. How long this strangely contradictory attitude can be maintained it is impossible to foretell, but it is unlikely that it can be maintained indefinitely; and the moment that it ceases to be maintained, then the Ark of the Ulster Unionist Covenant has been blown sky-high.

III

"THE Huguenot of Ulster," wrote George Bernard Shaw, a quarter of a century ago, "is a coward only when he breaks his own backbone by taking the part of a foreign country against his own. Shut him up in Derry with an English King besieging him, and he does not shriek for the Germans to come and help him as if the thumb-screws of the Spanish Armada were already on his hands: he chalks up 'no-surrender' merrily, and puts up one of the famous fights of history. After all, what is the use of protesting that you will not be governed from Rome if the alternative is to be governed from London? The great Protestant Irishmen have been all the more powerful because they loved Ireland better, not only than Rome, but than England. Why was it that the priests had no power to impose a Roman Catholic leader on the Home Rule movement instead of Parnell? Simply because Parnell was so proud of his Irish birthright that he would rather have been one of even a persecuted minority in an Irish parliament than the premier of an English cabinet. He was not afraid of his countrymen: he knew that Protestantism could hold its own only too well in a free Ireland; and even if he had not known it he would have taken his chance rather than sell his birthright and his country. It is the essential dishonour of their position as a foreign garrison where they are not foreigners that makes the position of the Orangemen so impossible. . . ."

Mr. Shaw was right, with the appalling rightness of the satirist and the prophet. Protestantism *could* have held its own only too well in a free Ireland, had Irish Protestantism chosen at various junctures in recent Irish history to play the man. It chose, however, on various occasions

within living memory to become the willing dupe of English policy (and the worse kind of English policy) in Ireland. And thereafter, with the appalling certitude of which the satirist and the prophet is only the seer, there came into operation a slow, immutable, historical process, a law which may be expressed with the finality of a physical law as follows:—

Where within the natural boundaries of a geographical unit, there exist two cultures, one immigrant, the other native, at the same general level of human consciousness, the native culture must be persuaded of the necessity of the immigrant culture to the national life. Failing such persuasion, the immigrant culture must then of necessity adopt one of three courses: it may abandon the geographical unit; it may unite with the native culture to form a new compound; or it must fall back upon an attitude of pure defence, with consequent certainty of stagnation and decay.

Such a law has been in operation in Ireland to our conscious knowledge for at least a millennium, and those who ponder it will, I believe, find that they have passed the *pons asinorum* of Irish history.

Meanwhile the Huguenot of Ulster, ignorant of the history of the country in which he has chosen to live, still clings to the third and fatal course, with results that are becoming only too sorrowfully apparent. Once hard-headed, clear-thinking, and intellectually fearless, he is grown obscurantist and reactionary, a creature of blind moods. Once outstandingly liberal in politics, he is now reduced—after a bout of provincial Prussianism—to the purely negative and suicidal policy of sticking spokes in the wheels of Irish evolution as a whole. . . . Truly the rising generation of Ulster Protestants have inherited a “tumbled house”; they have but to continue the ways of their fathers for another generation and the final mental, moral, and material collapse of that house of cards known as political “Ulster” is as certain as to-morrow’s rising sun.

IV

HISTORICAL parallels, though fascinating, are apt to be misleading. History repeats itself, but with variations. Ulster, for instance, found herself plunged in industrial depression in the period following on the Napoleonic Wars; the manufacture both of cotton and linen was in a state of stagnation; shipbuilding had not yet arisen as an industry; and the revolutionary principle of steam applied to the spinning and weaving of textiles (which was to galvanise industrial Ulster to new life) was still below the industrial horizon.

Dr. D. A. Chart describes the period (1820-1830) in his *History of Northern Ireland*:—

“Though the linen output was stationary this was only because it had not yet adopted the new machinery. Great as was the extent of the linen manufacture it would probably have perished if domestic methods of spinning and weaving had still persisted. The period between 1820 and 1830 was a turning point. Cotton was beginning to languish. The linen trade was suffering from the depression and stagnation which had followed the great war with Napoleon. Its product, being now somewhat of a luxury, for the cotton shirt had begun to be the alternative to linen, experienced a slackening in demand when money was scarce at home and foreign nations were impoverished. Furthermore, the trade lost in 1827 its State assistance with the abolition of the Linen Board.

“Curiously enough, the following year saw the initiation of the policy which was to resuscitate the threatened industry. Messrs. Mulholland, of Belfast, having had their cotton mill destroyed by fire, seriously considered

whether, in view of the severity of Lancashire competition, it was worth while to restart it on the former lines or, perhaps, to adopt some different venture. Eventually they decided to abandon the production of cotton altogether and rebuild their premises as a mill for spinning flax by power, the first of its kind in Ireland. This bold step was rewarded with success. The York Street Flax Spinning Mill, which was first in the field with this new process, prospered exceedingly, and has since developed into a world-renowned firm, the York Street Flax Spinning Company."

So much for 1830, and the first industrial revolution in Ulster. To-day, exactly a hundred years later, twentieth century Ulster faces the problem of the Mulhollands on a larger scale. History repeats itself—but never exactly. The same fundamental problem (of adaptation) is posed under different conditions. In 1830, after the destruction of their mill by fire, the Mulhollands were already making their brilliant contribution to the industrial history of Ulster. Their problem had been: hand power versus steam power—and they proceeded to solve it boldly, as individuals.

The word "individuals" should be underlined. For it is just here, over this inter-related question of individualism and coal that the historical parallel takes its usual disconcerting twist. The Mulhollands were able to buy coal as individuals for the embryo of the York Street Flax Spinning Company because there were other individuals whose business it was to sell coal and to mine it. But were the Mulhollands here to-day, facing the second quarter of the twentieth instead of the nineteenth century, they could not buy electrical power from individuals at a rock bottom price, for the excellent reason that it is not within the capacity of individuals, or even of corporations, unless subsidised by the State, to provide power over a wide area at a rock bottom

price—but only for the State itself operating with full national resources, and, it should be added, with the enthusiastic co-operation of every citizen of the State.

In other words, just as the founders of the York Street Flax Spinning Company confronted the passing of the hand spinner, so must we confront the passing of the coal age—not as individuals, and above all, not as political parties, but as a community. Obviously the passing of the coal age (to select only one of the issues raised by the new industrial revolution) deals a knock-out blow to our inherited Ulster *laissez-faire*.

But the revolution in the material driving force of the industrial machine is only an outward and accompanying manifestation of a deep-seated change in the whole mechanical structure of society. Dynamos may drive the looms and spindles, but what drives the men behind the dynamos? Is it public or private interest?

“The West,” wrote Mr. Philip Kerr in a recent number of the *Observer*, “will certainly never follow the example of the Russian Revolution any more than Europe followed the example of the French Revolution. It will never surrender its political and individual liberties; it will never substitute a purely ‘proletarian’ culture for the heritage of the ages; it will never transfer its economic life to the control of politicians and bureaucrats. But the challenge which the Russian Revolution has made to the basic doctrine of modern capitalistic civilisation that the economic well-being of the community can be best attained by making private profit-making the main impulse behind all economic enterprise, has come to stay. How are we to substitute public for private advantage as the driving force in business, as we have already done in politics, while at the same time allowing full play for individual initiative, enterprise, and success—that is the central problem of this century.”

There, succinctly stated, is the challenging principle of the New Industrial Revolution. How does it affect us in supremely individualistic Ulster?

The answer is that habit is tenacious in Ulster, as in Lancashire. Possibly more so. The contemporary Ulster industrialist seems almost incapable of re-orienting himself in the changing conditions of the twentieth century. He is vaguely aware that the bottom has fallen out of something, that things are not what they were. For this he is inclined to blame Mr. Lloyd George, as if Mr. George (considered from the angle of pure economics) were a condition and not merely a symptom of English industrial disease. Industrially and culturally the eyes of Protestant Ulster remain fixed upon Westminster, never on the ground under its feet. The reasons for the cultural exile of Protestant Ulstermen from the land of their choice have already been examined; with the industrial employer of Northern Ireland these reasons become reinforced by others in the realm of his own industrial materials. As Mr. J. W. Good remarked of the manufacturing North in his *Irish Unionism*:—

“Its main industries—textiles and shipbuilding—not only import their raw materials, but export their finished products, with the result that those who control those industries have in their everyday life no intimate relationship with the mass of their fellow-countrymen, and not unnaturally come to feel themselves in Ireland rather than of it. Economically, their outlook has not advanced beyond that of the later Victorians, and remains a curious blend of the arrogant individualism of the Manchester school combined with a belief, of which nowadays Mr. Horatio Bottomley is the high priest, that the world will be saved only in so far as it places dictatorial powers in the hands of the ‘business man’.”

That reference to the "business man" was a shrewd one. With the setting up of the Government of Northern Ireland in 1920 there was to be inaugurated a period of "business government"; the "practical man" who had made a fortune of his own was now to make the fortune of the "State." Unfortunately for the "practical men" they fell upon a time of social, economic, and (in their own country) cultural readjustment that would have strained the heart and moral perception of a Lincoln. Lacking a "hearth of thought" of their own, they encountered first principles without recognising them. Their cardinal error was to take over a form (no matter how attenuated) of national government where there was in fact no nation to be governed.

This pathetic helplessness of "practical" people strayed from their own province is well described in W. E. Woodward's *George Washington, the Image and the Man*.

"Practical people," he writes, "are excessively bored by any discussion of principles; they hate abstractions. The result is that their mutual understandings hardly ever get to the root of anything. They like to take up each question as it comes along and decide it superficially and temporarily in respect of its immediate material consequences. Abstract principle is left far behind, and comes trotting along after events as a dog runs after a wagon, without ever quite catching up. The result of this propensity is that large questions, left in the hands of practical men, are almost invariably tangled into hopeless snarls. In all communities of practical people the race of lawyers thrives enormously; they are needed to elucidate the misunderstandings of practicality."

All this has its bearing on the "business government" of Ulster. Having taken over in 1920 a form of self-

turning the temple. The first industrial revolution built us up because there was—while it lasted and during the era which it foreshadowed—a harmony between our character and our achievements. The second may conceivably destroy us through the very defect of our qualities, unless and until we can evolve a new type of Ulsterman; or, perhaps more accurately, until we can re-evolve a type of Ulsterman which will appear as a startling innovation to those unacquainted with Ulster history.

V

SURROUNDED then as she is by political and economic blank walls, which way will "Ulster" turn? One avenue of escape from a petty provincialism lies open to her. Paradoxically it leads backwards into the past before leading forward again. In this there is nothing remarkable. Phases undoubtedly recur in the development of individuals and communities when progress can only be made by turning inwards and backwards. "It may fairly be said," wrote Georg Brandes, "that a revolution to be successful must be a reaction—that is, it must be a *return* to an organic historical sequence, which for some reason or other has been interrupted." No one contemplates revolution in Ulster, other than mental revolution, but there is here a profound truth in the light of which it may be valuable to review the Irish scene as a whole.

The interruption in the "organic historical sequence" of Irish development as a whole was—in modern times—the Act of Union. Exactly how and why that Act was passed does not concern us for the moment; we are concerned at the moment with the past only in so far as it may illuminate the future. The root causes of Ulster progress during the nineteenth century and of southern decadence during the same period lie also outside the scope of the present examination. It may, however, be remarked in passing that the belief, prevalent amongst Ulster business men, that Ulster owed her industrial supremacy largely, if not entirely, to the Act of Union will not bear investigation. The root causes of that supremacy lay primarily in the character of the Ulster people, and secondarily in certain economic conditions peculiar to the northern province—such as the "Ulster custom," that security of tenure which during the seventeenth

and eighteenth centuries allowed the Ulster farmer to accumulate capital sufficient to set himself up as a linen weaver, or to buy improved implements for his farm.

The modern Ulster business man, in fact, clinging to the carcass of a dead policy, has allowed what he regards as his "vested interest" in Irish industry to become disguised as an intellectual conviction—a perfect example of the *post hoc, propter hoc* reasoning and the deductions from second causes so beloved of the business mind; and his real case against re-union with his southern neighbours rests, in a final analysis, upon political, educational, and religious prejudice, not upon economic advantage.

What does immediately concern any attempt to forecast the Irish future is the fact that the eighteen years preceding the Act of Union (1782–1800) formed a miniature golden age of Irish history, a period when Ulstermen looked upon themselves as Irishmen first and foremost, and Ulstermen afterwards.

This point has been emphasised by Stephen Gwynn in his *Famous Cities of Ireland*. In a chapter devoted to Belfast he declares:—

“The real importance of the Act of Union has been that it succeeded in destroying the movement towards unity which was making itself felt, especially in the North of Ireland. It estranged most completely from the Catholic population that element in the Protestant admixture which showed most tendency to a political fusion. The last, and by far the strongest, citadel of resistance to national self-government is found in the Presbyterian community [of Belfast] which was really the cradle of the United Irish organisation. Several other towns in the United Kingdom have shown as remarkable an industrial development; none other has been of at all the same importance in political history.

“The Act of Union marked no change in the spiritual attitude of Catholic Ireland. Its population after the

Union, as before it, was confined to the helot status; the struggle for emancipation and for restitution went steadily. No new principle was introduced, except that the redress of grievances now rested wholly with an assembly outside of Ireland; and the chances of success by constitutional means appeared to be, and were, consequently more desperate. For the landlord class also and for the Established Church, to which it mainly belonged, there was little change involved. As landlords, as receivers of tithe, as holders of almost a monopoly in power and place, they defended after the Union as before it a privileged position. By heredity, by temperament, and by interest they were committed to the side of authority; they and theirs stood to lose by any change. But the very existence of those privileges had tended to unite the Ulster Scots with the Irish. The division between Episcopalian and Presbyterian was not merely religious; it was largely racial: on the one side descendants of the English colonists, on the other descendants of those Scots who were very largely of the same blood with their Catholic neighbours. Even to this day the commonest Presbyterian names have a Celtic prefix. But, more than that, the very form of their religion predisposed them to a Liberal view. Sympathy with America, sympathy with France, had been almost universal among them. When they turned their back on the principles of the United Irishmen,¹ they needed to find a spiritual reason for what looked like surrender.

“They found that justification in a vehement indictment of the Roman Catholic religion. Self-respect demanded that they should keep alive and dwell on the memories of Scullabogue and Wexford Bridge. They had consented to send Orr² to the gallows; they had failed to support McCracken² at Antrim; unless they were

¹ “To unite the whole people of Ireland, to abolish the memory of past dissension, and to substitute the common name of Irishman in place of the denominations of Protestant, Catholic, and Dissenter.”—From the *Articles of the United Irishmen*, as drawn up by Wolfe Tone.

² Leaders of the northern United Irishmen in the rebellion of 1798.

to convict themselves of cowardice they must renounce" those ideals of Union among Irishmen for which Orr and McCracken had stood and died; and the ground for that renunciation was sought in a tenacious assertion that Catholic Irishmen were unfit to be trusted with liberty, and harboured a conspiracy against the life of every Protestant.

"There was no looking back. Belfast accepted the Union heart and soul; and every step in the material progress it has made has convinced it of its own wisdom. The least attractive feature in Belfast's history has been its proneness to exult not merely in its own success, but in the failures of the rest of Ireland. Yet this is explicable, even if one does not care to admit the explanation as a point of honour. It is possible to justify a refusal to associate the fit with the unfit.

"Belfast's case rests on the assertion that every Catholic is, as such, hampered for economic life and for the work of the citizen; and every fresh proof of Belfast's superiority strengthens that case and adds to the self-respect of those who make it.

"There is no use in arguing with an attitude of this kind or pointing to a successful Catholic country, such as, for instance, Belgium. One can only wait and hope for some turn of events which will enlist the pride of Belfast on the side of the pride of Ireland. Then, and not until then, will the genius of a strong democratic community flow in its natural channels."

The crucial moment has arrived; the tide has turned; and Belfast's superiority is no longer evident. By an historically sudden reversal of its current southern Ireland has become the *positive*, Ulster the negative, pole of Irish life.

One is reminded of that dark saying of Mr. Yeats that "there is nothing so passionate as a vested interest disguised as an intellectual conviction."

When even the "vested interest"—except in the negative and derogatory sense of English doles—has

melted away and the intellectual conviction of superiority remains, one entertains no very high opinion of the *realism* of the so-called Ulster Scot!

But perhaps the severest measure of how far the modern political "Ulsterman" has fallen below the standard of his forefathers in real independence of spirit (and in the toleration which springs from it!) is contained in the following passage from a *History of Belfast*, by D. J. Owen:—

"The question of Roman Catholic emancipation also began to attract the attention of the Volunteers, and the people of Belfast were, as usual, foremost in expressing their sentiments on this subject. In this respect the Belfast people seem to have gone to *extraordinary lengths* (the italics are mine!), for on Sunday, the 30th of May, 1784, the unusual spectacle was witnessed of the Belfast First Volunteer Company and the Belfast Volunteer Company parading in full dress and marching to mass at St. Mary's in Chapel Lane, then the only Roman Catholic chapel in the town, where a sermon was preached by the Rev. Hugh O'Donnell, and a handsome collection made to aid in defraying the expense of erecting a new 'Mass House' as it was termed. Great numbers of the other Protestant inhabitants, it appears, also attended, and the Roman Catholic congregation afterwards returned their grateful acknowledgments to the Volunteers and to the townspeople at large for having so generously assisted towards the construction of a handsome edifice for the celebration of Divine worship."

Here we are still a long way from *divide et impera*. Anti-Catholic riots, the stoning and drowning of Catholic shipyard workers, and other triumphs of British policy in Ireland were to follow in the more enlightened nineteenth and twentieth centuries!

This essential historical background of the eighteenth century—essential, that is, for his understanding of himself—is carefully concealed from the political “Ulsterman” of to-day by a system of general education which resembles the system of Bible teaching in the State of Tennessee, not only in method but in result, inducing in the unfortunate victim a kind of political as opposed to a religious Fundamentalism. All reference to an organised society in Ulster prior to 1800 is carefully excluded; is in fact considered rank blasphemy; and the youth of Ulster is permitted to conclude that its native province (like an infant Hercules) sprang into existence fully armed at the stroke of 1800.

The object, of course, is perfectly clear. Ulstermen must be persuaded that they are in reality West Britons condemned by the sins of their forefathers to live in a rude island beyond the seas. For this reason a little doctored Irish history is better than no Irish history at all—because no Irish history might lead to curiosity. And so a little doctored Irish history results. The eighteenth century is carefully excluded—much as that (from the English point of view) inglorious episode, the American War of Independence, is carefully excluded from English school history—and the youthful mind of Protestant Ulster is taught to peer back beyond this gaping hole in the historical tapestry, beyond the equally uncomfortable gap of the Plantation, to a time when Ireland was full of turmoil and petty kings. This, then, is how the Irish behave—this race of cattle thieves. . . .

The thing has been cleverly done. Cattle thieving (common at the period to all countries) is magnified, and as little emphasis as possible placed on the fact that Irish manuscripts are preserved to this day as far to the eastward as Vienna; that Ireland during the Dark Ages was the mainstay of Western civilisation. Brian Boru was, of course, a great and good man, but not nearly so good as Alfred of the Cakes! *Und so weiter!*

This lack of continuity, this deliberate cutting of the roots and deliberate divorce from the environment in which he has chosen to live, probably explains a curious fact about the Ulster Unionist, the fact that he produces no native literature—at least not in his capacity as an Ulster Unionist. The cultured Protestant Ulsterman with a literary bent either goes to London and submerges himself in the stream of English literary life, losing all real contact with his native soil—or he stays in Ireland and becomes a Nationalist. There seems to be no halfway house.

And the same, *mutatis mutandis*, applies to politics. No philosophical defence of Ulster Unionism has ever been produced, for the excellent reason that there is (and can be) no philosophy behind it. Statistics—those big drums of political philosophy—were once in favour—the tonnage clearing from the port of Belfast, the number of yards of linen exported, the cases of aerated water, etc. etc.—all these clearly proved the superiority of the Ulster Unionist; but now that southern Ireland can show statistics equally impressive and is actually proposing to electrify her railways, statistics have suddenly been abandoned.

But the deadliest prick in the Unionist balloon was the War. As that brilliant Irish journalist, the late J. W. Good, pointed out in his *Irish Unionism* (a study in political pathology which has never received due recognition):—

“To the eyes of the ironist, the spectacle of the Bonar Laws, Milners, and Carsons blessing the legions that went forth to fight for the rights of democracies and of subject races was as piquant as would have been to an eighteenth century Irishman the appearance of Castle-reagh or Fitzgibbon in red caps of Liberty declaiming the phrases of Danton and exalting Tom Paine amongst the Prophets. Whatever view one might take of the sincerity of the transformation, it was clear that the priests

of the Unionist Baal had effectively destroyed their own altars. In practice their creed might still survive, but any logical or intellectual basis that it had retained was hopelessly shattered. . . . The war revealed Unionism to some of its former admirers as a political philosophy, differing only from the most abhorrent varieties of Prussianism in that its champions, unlike the Germans, have never been able to formulate a philosophic defence of their beliefs. . . .”

But worse entanglements were to follow. How, in 1930, is one to describe an Ulster “Unionist” Prime Minister who openly declares his firm intention of proceeding “step by step” with an English Labour-Socialist Government, and is prepared to secure himself in office by prolonged saturnalia of “bread and circuses”—largely at the expense of his beloved England? Or an Ulster “Unionist” Government which declares itself bankrupt of any ideas save those which emanate from Poplar?

Ulster Unionists, it seems, now worship at a new altar, labelled on one side “Public Assistance,” and on the other “Orange Socialism,” and the old altars have been not only overturned but defiled.

But in spite of an unpleasant odour of corruption pervading the Ulster atmosphere, there is to-day an Ulster tragedy—the tragedy of all individuals and communities with purely negative ideals; the trouble with negative ideals being that when pursued far enough, they end merely in *one's not getting what one does not want*. Ulster did not want Home Rule, and she was prepared to see to it that the rest of Ireland did not get Home Rule. To keep Home Rule off the statute book certain northern extremists were prepared to “march to Cork through blood.”

Let us see how this attitude has worked out in practice. Ulster to-day has not got Home Rule. Neither has she

Westminster Rule, but a kind of British hotch-potch of both, the shadow of Home Rule without the substance. At first circumstances appeared entirely favourable to Northern Ireland. By a species of financial jugglery—which no one unacquainted with the mutual secrets of the British Exchequer and the Ulster Ministry of Finance can hope to understand—the “social services” of Northern Ireland were maintained at or near the level of the corresponding services in Great Britain.

This was good party politics on the part of the present administration of Northern Ireland; but good party politics sometimes make bad statesmanship. No amount of financial jugglery can conceal the awkward fact that Northern Ireland is prevented from embarking upon deep and far-reaching schemes of national reconstruction by her lack of national status, area, and taxable capacity; that in other words it is possible under present conditions for Northern Ireland to “keep in step” with English pauperising legislation, but not with the accompanying English schemes of industrial reconstruction (i.e. rationalisation)—nor indeed, on a comparable scale, with Free State schemes of agricultural reconstruction. The palliative and negative portions of English legislation are retained, the positive rejected—such are the effects of the Northern Irish compromise.

In other words, it grows daily more obvious *that six largely agricultural counties, carved out of a comparatively poor country, and artificially magnified into a “State” cannot “keep in step” with over-industrialised and over-populated Britain in anything except pauperisation.*

Financial chaos, then, is already visible on the political horizon in Northern Ireland. The absurd assumption underlying the Ulster Unionist interpretation of the *Government of Ireland Act of 1920*—namely, permanent Tory ascendancy at Westminster—has now proved false. The results for the Tory ascendancy in Northern Ireland

are likely to be disastrous, for it is the peculiar weakness of the present system of Ascendancy Government in Northern Ireland that it can function smoothly or at any rate with a degree of assurance only so long as its friends remain in power in England. So long as a Tory Government remains in power at Westminster, no awkward questions of finance are permitted to disturb the primrose path of Northern Ireland—this in return for the support of eleven Ulster members at Westminster. But with the return of a Labour-Liberal or Labour administration in England, truth re-emerges from the well, and Northern Ireland immediately sinks to the level of a "poor relation."

With these considerations in mind let us return to the problem of those diverging or converging (or parallel!) lines of Irish political development. Mr. Waller, in his *Hibernia, or the Future of Ireland*, categorically denies the possibility of union between a republican-tending Free State and a Unionist Ulster. Stated in another way, he lays it down as an axiom that a semi-republican Free State and a Unionist Ulster, if produced ever so far in either direction, will never meet.

No one will quarrel with Mr. Waller's statement of the proposition, as he conceives it. It is obviously sensible. Nevertheless it is dangerous to apply these strictly geometrical methods to the solution of human problems, and beneath the surface of Mr. Waller's reasoning lurk fallacies which invalidate his findings.

The first of these fallacies consists in Mr. Waller's tacit assumption that Irish Republicanism is incapable of learning. For some inexplicable reason it is assumed that an openly republican southern Ireland would not be contained within the same cast-iron limits of geography and economics as a covertly republican Free State. When due allowance has been made for the usual fanfaronade of young and untried politicians, the whole tendency of Fianna Fail during its period of opposition in the Dail is evidence to the contrary; the closer it

approaches to power the more evidently is it conscious—without in any degree abandoning its constitutional republicanism—of insuperable geographic and economic limits.

The second fallacy—not only underlying Mr. Waller's reasoning, but that of a large body of opinion in Ulster and Great Britain—is one which we have already considered, the fallacy of assuming that Ulster's development in the twentieth century must necessarily be along the lines of her development in the nineteenth century. Such assumption entirely ignores the large Nationalist element, and obviously assumes an Ulster composed of a solid *bloc* of Unionists. It is true that Ulster Nationalism has not yet found its proper channel of expression, nor the secret of attracting Protestant elements to its side, but it exists, and in some form or other it must be reckoned with—especially when it is considered in conjunction with potential Protestant reaction.

Lastly, such assumption of a continuity of nineteenth century development in Ulster ignores the cause of potential Protestant reaction—the fact that Ulster Unionism is caught in a trap of its own making, a trap from which there is no escape without abandoning the essential portions of its creed. The mainspring of that trap was from the beginning the fundamental immorality of Irish Unionism in selling its birthright, in denying the soil from which it drew its sustenance.

The trap itself was clearly seen, and the inevitable end-result definitely forecasted, a quarter of a century ago by Mr. Shaw in the preface to *John Bull's Other Island*. What Mr. Shaw must have foreseen but did not categorically state was that one of the jaws of the trap would be a semi-Socialist England¹.

¹ Or, more accurately, a Social Service England; that is to say, an England where the enervating expedients of muddle-headed, slack-brained Socialism are retained, and the energising principles of real Socialism omitted.

Similarly it is impossible to foresee the exact nature and direction of Ulster's lines of evolution in the future. Theoretically the present opens "as many vistas to the future as there are points to the compass." In actual practice, however, it is safe to assume that when the way forward is no longer clearly seen, human beings, and, in a larger sense, human communities, are apt to retire within themselves. In so doing they discover sometimes depths of which they were formerly unaware. At such a stage of self-examination stands Ulster at the moment. The young men are beginning to ask questions. That the questions are not as yet particularly intelligent is not the fault of the young men, for the reason that—to paraphrase a recent English historian—a province unconscious of its past is like a man smitten with loss of memory. But the historical depths are there, to draw upon in time of need.

Out of those depths might be drawn an economic radicalism in the true sense of the word, which would send Ulster forward again upon a path of fresh development. That such economic radicalism implies, and would almost certainly be accompanied by, a measure of constitutional radicalism is but to extend that general forward movement to the Irish scene as a whole. Northern Ireland and the Irish Free State would then be evolving along lines which, if not actually similar, would be at any rate parallel—governed by similar climatic, historical, and, eventually, economic conditions. Whether the two States evolved separately for a generation or two generations would matter little; mature development would render their final union only the more complete and stable.

This conception of the conditions governing a fruitful Irish Union is based upon the probability of a liberated Protestant radicalism in Ulster—a postulate not without a certain justification when the immediate industrial future of Ulster is examined. The Free State may shortly find itself in a position to supply hydro-electrical power

for industrial purposes *right up to the boundaries of Northern Ireland*. If the price of such industrial power is maintained at a rock-bottom minimum, if special concessions are offered to manufacturers, and if the government in Dublin sets its face against the piling of fresh burdens of socialistic legislation upon productive industry in slavish imitation of England—it is obvious that the industrialists of the North and all those with fresh capital to invest, whether in Ireland or elsewhere, will do some radical thinking. The southward drift of industry in England and in the United States is a phenomenon of the century—a phenomenon apparently unnoticed in Northern Ireland, where it is evidence of the extraordinary paralysis of the popular will and the stagnation of political thought that neither Government nor Opposition has made the slightest pronouncement upon so vital an issue.

It is obvious then that radicalism may invade the mind of "Ulster" through economic channels. The effects of such invasion upon the present pantomimic régime in Northern Ireland can be imagined. Pious hopes would have to be replaced by constructive policies, and vital issues faced. The expensive and unproductive bureaucracy—fashioned upon the English model—would be thoroughly investigated and pruned; and here in weeding out the hired army of the garrison would consist one of the first constructive actions of a liberated Ulster radicalism. The judiciary of Northern Ireland—to take only one example—would suffice for the whole country. Gradually, as Ulstermen came to realise how neatly they had been tricked, how in fighting the battles of foreigners in their own country they had betrayed themselves,¹ and had merely succeeded in blocking the avenues

¹ "When the Orangeman sacrifices his nationality to his hatred of the priest and fights against his own country for its conqueror he is doing something for which, no matter how bravely he fights, history and humanity will never forgive him: English history and humanity, to their credit be it said, least of all." GEORGE BERNARD SHAW: Preface to *John Bull's Other Island*.

of their own advance in the new century, economic radicalism would be followed by constitutional radicalism, and the era of parallel development with southern Ireland would begin.

In the preliminary struggle it is probable that Unionism—as the Unionist Prime Minister has been careful to foreshadow—would fall back upon its last line of defence, the attempt to stir up sectarian bitterness. In this Unionism would have the tacit approval of the salaried bureaucracy, fastened leech-like upon the economic life-blood of the province. Dublin Castle would then fight its last rearguard action in Ulster, with the same weapons with which it fought in the south, snobbery, obstruction, and the attempt to divide its enemies—and with the same eventual results.

VI

WITH a government in power in Belfast whose main concern was the economic advantage of Northern Ireland rather than the automatic duplication of English legislation, it is probable that Ulster's attention would then turn towards an agreement with the South. A period of prolonged bargaining would be inevitable because there are many points where even a profoundly radical Ulster would fail to see eye to eye with a republican-tending Free State. Compulsory Gaelic, for instance, would never be regarded by Protestant Ulster as anything but retrograde, but the difficulty might be surmounted by reserving the province of education in Northern Ireland to the northern legislature.

More important still would be questions of industrial power and tariffs. It is obvious that with the inclusion of the industrial North the whole tariff question would have to be re-opened and viewed from a fresh angle. But a preliminary fiscal conference between North and South, far from proving a kind of economic Donnybrook Fair, might indeed prove a boon and a blessing. Many minds in Northern Ireland are already moving in the direction of the selective protection of minor northern industries (soap, tobacco, matches, etc.)—excluding, however, from the field of their speculation the heavy industries, shipbuilding and linen. Lord Craigavon himself makes excellent Sinn Fein speeches wherein he exhorts his Ulster "Loyalists" not to spend an unnecessary sixpence outside their own province, and the Ulster Industries Development Association recently published a Sinn Fein pamphlet which must have grati-

fied the soul of Arthur Griffith himself,¹ now gathered with his peers, the warriors and statesmen of Ireland, to the Land of Tir-na-n'Og. In the economic field, therefore, there are no insuperable obstacles to negotiation.

But apart altogether from questions of politics and economics, a psychological barrier would remain to be broken down between North and South. Before any such fiscal conference can take place, it must be borne in upon the northern industrialists that industrial ability is no longer confined to the northern side of the Boyne, and that while they slept (or, for political purposes, dozed), the Cosgrave administration was quietly and patiently laying the foundations of Ireland's industrial and commercial future. It will be a bitter pill to swallow after a century of overweening confidence. But along with the pills there will be plums for Ulster in the legacy of the Cosgrave administration, and both Ulster and the Republican party in the Free State will be exceedingly unwise if they refuse their portions.

Premature fusion, however, even if it proved possible, would be dangerous; too much explosive would still lurk in the immaturity of the contracting parties; and the solution of our fundamental Irish problem will probably be found in federalism. Canadian Confederation, for instance, proved the solution of language and religious difficulties apparently as insuperable as our own. Moreover, Confederation transformed many ancient Canadian feuds and issues out of all recognition. After 1840, and again after 1867, magic casements opened for Canada upon the perilous but sobering seas of international politics, with immediate benefit to the stuffy

¹ The directing brain of the *Sinn Fein* movement; the correct translation of the Gaelic words being not "Ourselves Alone" but "We Ourselves"—a very different matter.

domestic policies of the prairies. As Sir Charles Tupper remarked in his *Recollections of Sixty Years* :—

“Union (that is, Canadian Confederation) will give us broader questions of a character infinitely more elevated than those which at present divide our public men. The want of such a field has exercised a most baneful and pernicious influence in these colonies.”

For these “colonies” read “this island”—more particularly, “this colonising island”—and one is presented with a powerful argument for Irish Confederation.

There has been in the past, of course, a certain amount of tinkering with the idea of Irish Federalism on the part of Irish well-wishers and idealists, but their conceptions never passed beyond the preliminary stages of an advisory “Council.” On several occasions, notably in 1917, leading Irishmen actually foregathered in Dublin to discuss the “unity of Ireland.” What was lacking, however, was the kernel of the whole matter, the power or the capacity to set up a sovereign central legislature. Obviously a “Council of All Ireland” which either because it has been convened before its time cannot possess—or through a misunderstanding of the guiding principles of Federalism does not possess—any real power to bind the several members of the intended Federation is a waste of time and money. In *Canada and World Politics* Messrs. Corbett and Smith, outlining the evolution of Canadian Confederation, insist upon this necessity for the sovereignty of the central legislature:—

“The essence of a true federal government is that it should have the power to act directly through its own agencies upon all the individual citizens of the federation. If it can do no more than address itself to the various governments of the member States and request

them to take some action, then it is nothing more than an advisory council without any power inherent in itself. That is the difference between the United States under her present constitution and the short-lived Confederation which was set up in 1781. The first attempt proved to be a total failure because of the lack of any real power in the central authority."

As a preparation for Irish Confederation therefore Partition is a blessing in disguise, for the excellent reason that it checkmates and re-educates extremists on both sides of the border. With Partition in being, Mr. de Valera, returning to earth after a bout with the higher mathematics, discovers with a mild surprise that, in politics as in physics, every action calls forth an opposite and similar reaction—that, in other words, he must make up his mind between a completely isolated and independent Irish Republic and a possibility of the inclusion of Ulster.

Lord Craigavon and his northern extremists discover daily, on the other hand, that the policy of the Rich Uncle, the policy of dependence on Westminster, has its disadvantages. Rich uncles, it seems—and the contingency might have been foreseen by a political babe in arms!—sometimes fall on hard times, find themselves faced with internal elections, change their minds, cut down allowances, and behave generally in a most surprising fashion to their poor Tory relatives—a painful discovery for Ulster Unionists.

This slow process of re-education in Irish political and geographical realities (and in the realities of human nature!) is at any rate what the Russian thinker, Anton Tchekov, would have called a "plus"—a definite if costly advance in which the North re-discovers something of which it was perfectly aware before the Union, the width and significance of the Irish Sea, while conversely the South discovers its narrowness!

While, therefore, complete fusion is ruled out for at least a generation, a federal arrangement which while resurrecting the single economic unit of Ireland would reserve certain disputed matters (e.g. education and compulsory Gaelic) to a reduced Ulster legislature, or council, is not beyond the bounds of possibility.

The details and final fashioning of this economic structure lie in the future, but already those who look deep enough into the workings of the Irish mind may observe the preliminary thought-stages which may lead ultimately to federation. The first faint stirrings of economic Sinn Fein in Northern Ireland, the franker recognition upon the part of the South of the benefits conferred on Ireland by her membership in the British Commonwealth of Nations, both point in the direction of converging rather than diverging lines of development.

But whatever the nature and duration of the preliminary period of federalism, it is obvious that Ulster, once committed, will be wise to throw her full strength into the central legislature. What was once for special purposes and during a period of transition Ulster *radicalism* might then conceivably become in the new circumstances *Irish* conservatism, and as such might play an important part in conjunction with other elements of Irish conservatism in controlling Irish destiny as a whole. The titles and grouping of the parties in the new Irish State would matter little; for the first time in a century and a quarter Ireland would be completely rid of the mischievous distinction into Nationalism and Unionism—of which the first was, in Mr. Shaw's illuminating phrase, merely the "agonising symptom of a suppressed natural function," and the second is to-day merely a refusal to look facts in the face. The final removal of these unnatural divisions will undoubtedly clarify and revitalise Irish politics, both internal and external.

VII

THROUGHOUT Irish history the erection of a ring-fence or Pale has been a confession of moral defeat and failure. Like the drums and banners of the Orangemen (excellent as historical pageantry, but religiously inept, in fact the negation of true Protestantism), a ring-fence is fundamentally an expression of distrust in one's power to impose, to conquer, or even to meet on equal terms.

Such is the real significance of the Ulster Pale to-day. Far from being a triumph either for the culture of the Saxon or for Protestantism, it is in reality an admission of defeat. Ulster backed the "British case" in Ireland, accepting that "case" entirely without examination, merely because on superficial grounds it appeared to substantiate and reinforce her own industrial and material advantages. Unfortunately, however, for both the "British case" in Ireland and for "Ulster," world opinion to-day endorses the plain words of Mr. Robert Lynd—that there never was a British case in Ireland which "an honest man could state." Here we touch the real essence of the Ulster question to-day, the moral bankruptcy of her political motives. Ulster's "case" collapsed simultaneously with the "British case," and thereafter her only hope became the material collapse of the Irish Free State, a collapse which has not occurred. By such purely negative ideals one can measure the moral bankruptcy of her politicians, for she has no statesmen.

But the outlook for the clique of politicians, who by continuing the British policy of "divide and conquer" *ad nauseam* have merely succeeded in driving Ulster on a financial lee shore and possibly irreparably damaging her industrial prospects, is even blacker than it has already been painted. They might have succeeded in

the purely negative sense of their ambition had the Free State collapsed in ruin and had the "Ulster" of their imagination been the purely English province which for their own purposes they declared it to be. Unfortunately for the negativists the first contingency did not arise and the proposition of the "English province" is untenable in the face of the facts. Far from being an English province, Ulster is one of the most deeply Irish of the divisions of Ireland; as foreign to England in its sense of ultimate values, the basis of all nationality, as it is to Germany. As for the area of the Northern Pale itself, as opposed to the old historical Ulster which still underlies and embraces the whole, time and tide are already beginning to disclose the rifts in the Ulster-Saxon lute, the true cultural Pale now beginning to reveal itself as by no means co-extensive even with the predominantly Protestant areas of "Northern Ireland." In a final analysis the area of the true cultural Pale still remaining in Ireland might be defined as consisting of Trinity College in the South; the Ulster and Union Clubs, Belfast; and a number of scattered townships and districts, such as Banbridge, Hillsborough, and the southern shore of Belfast Lough. Here remain the vestiges of English and Anglo-Irish rule in Ireland, isolated and increasingly on the defensive.

VIII

FUNDAMENTALLY then what one might call the "mechanics" of the political situation in Northern Ireland closely resemble those of the remainder of Ireland throughout the nineteenth century. The famous "Irish question" has moved north and the now familiar drama of nineteenth century Ireland is being re-enacted upon a smaller stage—with one important difference, the fact that the Protestant Ulsterman (as distinct from those northern vestiges of Anglo-Saxon culture enumerated above) is becoming only slowly and reluctantly conscious of the unsuitability of his machinery of government, based as it is upon English assumptions.

The discovery is a painful one; is indeed bound in the nature of things to be painful. A whole working rule of life that has lasted more than a hundred years, and has proved itself abundantly successful in certain spheres of human activity, has been challenged, and successfully challenged. A Catholic, it seems, may be a useful citizen. Worse, he may even control an industry.

Faced with these alarming discoveries, so directly contradictory of what his leaders have always maintained and asserted, the Protestant Ulsterman sees his universe crumbling into dust; abroad he sees the futile, indeed ludicrous, attempt to enforce economic unity in an "Empire" which is not an empire; at home he beholds the curious spectacle of a so-called "Ulster" "Unionist" Government automatically adopting English, so-called socialistic legislation and at the same time fulminating against so-called Socialism. Small wonder then that confusion grows daily worse confounded, and that the average citizen of Northern Ireland has lost all sense of political direction. The only direction in which he

can turn with any sense of security and continuity is backwards towards that past of which his political tradition of the nineteenth century has taught him to be ashamed, back to that sequence of constitutional and political development which was interrupted in 1800, which sprang originally from the soil of Ulster, and from the *roots* of the historical Ulster tradition—back, in other words, to the *radicalism* and sturdy Protestant *republicanism* of his forefathers.

And here, in this painful dilemma which he has brought upon himself by denying the soil from which he has drawn his sustenance and serving the cause of the foreigner within his gates, we must leave the Protestant Ulsterman for a few years to come.

Nevertheless, in the inability of Protestant Ulster to progress forwards without first turning backwards into the past lies the key to the Irish future. Seen in this light, Partition, far from being a crippling deformity in the body of our country, appears rather as a stroke of genius on the part of the Time Spirit.

Without it Irish unity could never have been brought about.

IX

PENDING Irish Confederation then the central problem in Irish external affairs remains and will remain the relationship of Ireland to the British Commonwealth of Nations. Upon the solution or non-solution of that problem to-day and to-morrow depends largely the future of Ireland herself, and to a lesser extent the future of the Commonwealth—with possibly, lurking in the shadowy background, the tremendous issue of the maintenance of peace between the English-speaking peoples of the world. “The future of Europe,” wrote Emil Ludwig in a recent number of the *Spectator*, recalling a remark of Lord Balfour, “depends on the internal development of Germany.” Not less certainly the future of Anglo-American and to a lesser extent of European-American relations will be coloured and influenced by the internal development of Ireland, that “facing-both-ways” nation of the Atlantic. In the duality of her national outlook (spiritually towards the east, materially towards the West and the New World) and the logic of her geographical position,¹ Destiny would appear to have cast her for the rôle of link and intermediary between the Old World and the New.

Meanwhile the Republican Party in the Free State, correct as it may have proved itself in gauging the constitutional mind of the country, is at present doing its best to obfuscate the external situation. The British Commonwealth of Nations is represented as Imperialism run rampant, thereby repeating the fatuous assumptions of Lord Beaverbrook and the English Yellow Press from another angle. It remains, however, difficult for the

¹ With its logical corollary, the development in the near future of an Atlantic terminal sea-and-air port at Galway.

practical mind to perceive exactly wherein the external policy of Fianna Fail, or the Republican Party in the Irish Free State, will differ materially from the extremely practical and statesmanlike external policy at present being pursued by President Cosgrave. The policy of Fianna Fail assumes for one thing an "Imperialism" which no longer exists, a figure of straw resembling the "Capitalist" of the English Socialists. For another it postulates an isolation in the Atlantic which the dynamic movement of civilisation will soon render impossible. Far from remaining "an island beyond an island" Ireland may very shortly become, in the prophetic words of Cardinal Newman, a "road of passage and union between two hemispheres, and the centre of the world."

The truth is that Mr. de Valera if returned to power to-morrow would find it very difficult to implement his promises. He may harp in opposition upon alteration of the Treaty by "peaceful negotiation," but in power he is likely to discover that there is little to be altered. The logic of events, of geographical position, of economic facts, will prove too strong for him. There is no fundamental Irish circumstance which the mere alteration of a name or a constitutional term can affect. He cannot, for example, tow Ireland further into the Atlantic and anchor it there. Neither he nor any other leader of extreme Irish nationalism can alter the relative geographical position of an island where four-fifths of the inhabitants are engaged in the industry of food-production with that of another island where four-fifths of the inhabitants are engaged in industries other than that of food-production. The proposition is absurd. What he might and will do is to institute a searching enquiry into the whole subject of Irish banking, its relations to English banking—and beyond that again into the whole function of banking in relation to society in the modern world. Here, as a progressive statesman, he would be anticipating the trend of world opinion, and at the same time laying the foundations of that real Irish economic

independence of which he rightly dreams. But the belief that at the waving of a wand the Irish farmer will be persuaded to relinquish his trade in cattle, beef, horses, bacon, and eggs with his neighbours across the Channel, or that by the result of a poll Ireland will become a self-sufficient economic unit, is merely a pipe-dream, without foundation in reality.

So much for internal policy. When we come to external policy, the leader of an extreme nationalist party temporarily dominating the Dail might succeed within the next decade in obtaining the withdrawal of the small English garrisons at Cobh and Lough Swilly, and in modifying (in the direction of abolishment) the expensive, occasionally embarrassing, and to the ironical Irish eye at all times mirth-provoking draperies with which John Bull has sought to cover the republican nakedness of the Irish Free State. With a Labour-Liberal government in power in England it is almost certain that two out of three of his requests would be granted—and who will say that in these matters an English Labour-Liberal government would be wrong, *the paradox of Ireland being that the more she is nationalised, the less she is anti-English*. Irishmen themselves, aided by a brilliant band of foreign writers, have never tired of pointing out this elementary truth of Anglo-Irish relationship, and it is probable that enlightened opinion in England to-day is beginning to realise the terrible mistakes of the past and the infantile nature of English policy in Ireland during the last century and a quarter. But whatever concessions—if wisdom be labelled as concession—any leader of extreme Irish nationalism may obtain from whatever English government, Ireland remains inexorably, for purposes of trade and life itself, in peace and in war, within the British Commonwealth of Nations.

X

So far we have been dealing with the position of the Irish Free State within the British Commonwealth of Nations. There remains a final question. What would be the significance for Britain and the Commonwealth of a united Ireland?

It is a question easily answered. Already, even with a truncated Ireland, the advantages to England since the Treaty are obvious to any one acquainted with international politics. Instead of a traditional enemy lying between herself and the Colossus on the other side of the Atlantic, England has now a traditional link with that Colossus. The advantages to world peace are enormous, as any one must realise who studied the last presidential election in the United States.¹

In the event of a united Ireland the advantages are still more obvious. England's ocean flank would then be guarded by an increasingly prosperous nation *supremely interested in the maintenance of the existing order*, a nation which in the event of world disturbances adversely affecting England's prosperity and purchasing power would be economically ground to powder. Further, as Adam Smith pointed out to the astonished Tories of his time, increasing Irish prosperity and stability spell increasing markets for Britain.

Lastly, as a granary in time of war Ireland is indispensable to Britain.

¹ "The Presidential Election occurs a week from to-day without having shown the slightest trace of the old-time American sport of twisting the lion's tail.

"It is one of the amazing facts of the campaign that, although Mr. Al. Smith is the idol of the Irish-American Catholics, not a single anti-British gesture had been made by him, nor any effort made to capitalise the Anglo-French Naval Agreement to capture the Irish vote."—*London Evening Standard*, October 30, 1928.

These are the factors which not only Irish but also English statesmen will be well advised to bear in mind, the dominant note throughout being the economic interdependence of Ireland and Great Britain. That the elementary truth of their economic dependence has been acknowledged from their side by the representatives of the people of southern Ireland, and that the attitude of the Irish Free State in the event of European war has been defined in a resolution of the Dail to England's military advantage, are facts which English and Northern Irish scaremongers carefully ignore. They are, moreover, facts which no succeeding administration in the Free State can ignore with safety in the present predominantly realistic mood of the Irish people.

XI

BUT in any event discussion of the significance for Britain of a "united Ireland within the British Commonwealth of Nations" is in the last analysis purely academic. In the light of reason—and reason, after the lapse of a century and a quarter, once more applies to Irish affairs—the phrase is unnecessarily long-winded. There cannot in the nature of things be a united Ireland outside the British Commonwealth of Nations. Ulster, even a radical Ulster, stands in the way.

There may, however, arise within the lifetime of men who are no longer children an *Irish Confederation* within which—impelled by a recaptured vision of Irish reality—Ulster, betrayed by and disgusted with the politics of negation and division, will play once more the part of the foremost Irish province. The choice lies with Ulster. She has but to call the tune within reasonable limits, recognising at long last that she has duties as well as rights in Ireland, and a nation will spring up at her bidding; a nation at once experienced and youthful, threatening no one, astride the main route for traffic and intercourse between two hemispheres—a nation with a bright and promising future, to which there would immediately fall a useful and beneficent rôle in international politics, not only as keystone in the structure of the British Commonwealth of Nations, but as link and interpreter between England and America, between the Old World and the New.

Not for nothing was Ireland christened by the ancient seers and prophets, Innisfail, or the Island of Destiny. Will Ulster play her part in the fulfilment of that destiny, or will she hold upon her present course towards isolation and stagnation? By holding upon her present course

and seeking to perpetuate the mock throne on the Lagan, she is merely prejudicing her own industrial future and damaging the larger causes which she, or at any rate the humbler portion of her citizens, has sincerely at heart.

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THE END