

Part II.

POLITICAL
ORGANIZATIONS,
SECRET
SOCIETIES, &c.

The Ulster Volunteer Force and Unionist Associations were inactive during the Month.

On the Nationalist side little activity was displayed by the Constitutional Societies. The Ancient Order of Hibernians (Boards of Erin) is well organized and a great many members of the United Irish League belong to its Insurance branch.

There was little doing in the United Irish League, and the National Volunteers, without either organization or training, are negligible as a military force.

The bulk of the Nationalist population support these 3 Societies.

A new combination, the Irish Nation League, originally called the Anti-Partition League, has come into existence as the result of an anti-partition meeting in 'Derry on 20th July this year. Its founders appear to be newspaper owners in Omagh. It professes to be independent of the Irish Parliamentary Party - in fact it would seem to be a revolt of some Constitutional Nationalists against Mr. Redmond and his colleagues. Although supported by many of the Roman Catholic Clergy, it made but moderate progress during August.

It has now 29 Branches and a membership of about 1,000 in the Counties of Donegal, Londonderry, Fermanagh, Down, and Tyrone.

The Police report that in the Provinces no Branches of the "Repeal League", another new organization promoted by a Dublin weekly paper - the "Irish Nation" - , have come under notice.

The Sinn Fein or extreme group comprises the Irish Republican Brotherhood, an old secret society of which only a few circles are known to still hold together; the Cumann na M Ban, a society of female extremists; the controlling element of the Gaelic League and Gaelic Athletic Association, together with a considerable portion of their membership; the Ancient Order of Hibernians (Irish-American Alliance); and the Irish Volunteers. Collectively they are much inferior in membership to the Constitutional Societies, and for the past two years they have been merged in the Irish Volunteer movement for the establishment of Irish Independence by physical force.

Since the rebellion public processions, political gatherings, drilling, and the carrying of arms without a permit have been forbidden by the General Officer Commanding-in-Chief, and the Irish Volunteers are unable to continue their drills and military preparations for insurrection. At Limerick and one or two other places they have commenced to hold meetings in their halls, but the Police have no power to interfere with indoor meetings on mere suspicion that they are held for seditious purposes.

Gaelic Athletic Association hurling and football matches usually held on Sunday, and Gaelic League Feis,

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afford frequent opportunities for the meeting of Sinn Feiners and the dissemination of sedition. Large crowds assemble on these occasions; Irish Republican badges are conspicuously worn, and when at the Railway Stations where it is difficult to identify them, the disloyal element give vent to their feelings by rebel cries and singing seditious songs.

As I suggested to Government in a special report, it would help to curtail these opportunities if the Railway Companies could be forbidden to run Sunday excursions during War time.

Since the rebellion the Irish Volunteers have been eulogised by public men and in the Press as martyrs, heroes, and clean fighters; it is believed that the recent efforts to settle the Home Rule difficulty were the direct result of their action, and that to their threats of resistance is likewise due the exemption of Ireland from the Military Service Act. Many who were opposed to them before the rising are now in sympathy with them, and if these Volunteers were permitted to openly resume organization it appears certain that their numbers would be largely increased.

The majority of the interned rebels have now been released and it would appear from their hostile demeanour, and from confidential information concerning them and their correspondence, that their rebellious spirit is in no way subdued by internment.

Throughout Ireland, although the farmers are busy making money, there is a restless desire for some settlement with regard to Home Rule - whilst among young men the

revolutionary

revolutionary spirit appears to have spread.

The failure of the Home Rule settlement proposals has been urged with some effect against Mr John Redmond by the Sinn Fein Party and a section of the Press, and has apparently shaken his influence to some extent in the country, although at the time his supporters, outside the province of Ulster, did not seem to be much concerned about the exclusion of the six Ulster Counties.

The Irish National Aid Association and the Irish Volunteer Dependents' Fund were amalgamated during the Month at the instigation of two American delegates - J. A. Murphy and J. Gill - who brought over a contribution of £5000 collected under the patronage of Cardinal Farley of New York. The amalgamated fund now amounts to £28,000. The Lord Mayor is a member of the Committee but seldom attends. The Joint Secretaries are extremists; so also are three of the four Joint Treasurers. Therefore it may be assumed that it is under Sinn Fein control.

A reliable informant in Ireland reports that there need be no fear of another insurrection without German aid, which he says is not expected; that the revolutionists lack funds, equipment, and leaders, and that their present plans are to take advantage of Gaelic Athletic Association and other meetings for the purpose of re-organisation, knowing that they will have help and sympathy from America.

But according to information received from America the Clan-na-Gael and Germans are intent on causing another Irish rising if possible, and with a view to making preparations and finding out on the spot how things stand, four emissaries

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were sent over in July, viz :- J. A. Murphy, Thomas Gill, T. H. Kelly and J. Smith.

As mentioned in my report last Month Murphy and Gill arrived in Ireland and were watched by the Police, but Kelly and Smith being known as Clan-na-Gael agents were not allowed to land at Liverpool.

These men have all returned to the U. S. A., and it is now ascertained that their passages were booked by a member of the Clan-na-Gael Executive.

Within the past few days intelligence from another source has been received that a large quantity of arms and ammunition has already been smuggled into Ireland, and that the Irish Sinn Fein party has reported to Berlin that they are ready in increased force to rise again at any time.

There is no reason to believe that any arms have been smuggled into Ireland as alleged, and it is difficult to conceive that a fresh rising could be attempted having regard to the disorganized condition of the rebels and the number of troops at hand.

The country is, however, very unsettled, and enough has been stated to demonstrate that any relaxation of repressive measures or withdrawal of military force would be highly dangerous.

W. D. O'Connell
Deputy INSPECTOR GENERAL.

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