

**THE PARNELLITE SPLIT: OR,
THE
DISRUPTION OF THE IRISH
PARLIAMENTARY PARTY**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649163168

The Parnellite split: or, the disruption of the Irish Parliamentary Party by Various

Except for use in any review, the reproduction or utilisation of this work in whole or in part in any form by any electronic, mechanical or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including xerography, photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, is forbidden without the permission of the publisher, Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd, PO Box 1576 Collingwood, Victoria 3066 Australia.

All rights reserved.

Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.
Cover @ 2017

This book is sold subject to the condition that it shall not, by way of trade or otherwise, be lent, re-sold, hired out, or otherwise circulated without the publisher's prior consent in any form or binding or cover other than that in which it is published and without a similar condition including this condition being imposed on the subsequent purchaser.

www.triestepublishing.com

VARIOUS

**THE PARNELLITE SPLIT: OR,
THE
DISRUPTION OF THE IRISH
PARLIAMENTARY PARTY**

THE PARNELLITE SPLIT:

OR,

THE DISRUPTION OF THE IRISH
PARLIAMENTARY PARTY.

FROM

The Times,

WITH AN INTRODUCTION.

LONDON :

GEORGE EDWARD WRIGHT, THE TIMES OFFICE, PRINTING-HOUSE-SQUARE;

AND

GEORGE ROUTLEDGE AND SONS (LIMITED), BROADWAY, LONDON, E.C.,

AND GLASGOW, MANCHESTER, AND NEW YORK.

1891.

DA
95
P2148

INTRODUCTION.

On the 17th of November last, the jury in the divorce action of "O'Shea v. O'Shea and Parnell" pronounced their verdict. They found that the charges against the respondent and the co-respondent had been proved, and that there had been no connivance on the part of the petitioner. Ten months had elapsed between the issue of the writ and the trial, and it is impossible to suppose that during this long interval the effects of a decision adverse to Mr. Parnell were not a subject of speculation to many persons actively interested in public affairs. The decision itself was very generally anticipated by those best qualified to judge, and practical politicians of all parties must have foreseen that it might seriously modify the complex relations then subsisting between Mr. Parnell, the Irish Parliamentary party, and the British Gladstonians. Yet it may be said that the political consequences of the trial came as a surprise to even the most intelligent observers of current events. No accurate forecast of those consequences had been made, because the *data* for such a forecast were, in fact, inadequate. The existence of the two forces which have proved to be the determining factors in the situation created by the verdict was indeed known, but there were no means of calculating the strength of the one, or the probable direction of the other. These forces were the disaffection of the Irish Nationalists towards their leader, and that curious moral entity, "the Nonconformist conscience." Persons moderately acquainted with Irish politics had long been aware that the Nationalist ranks contained elements bitterly hostile to the supremacy of Mr. Parnell. They knew that he had a band of personal enemies within the Irish Parliamentary party. They knew, too, that the Irish priesthood disliked the leadership of a Protestant, and that prominent members of the old Land League nourished fierce resentments against the chief of the "constitutional" party. But the force and volume of the disaffection

1129945

cherished by these several sections of the Irish Nationalists towards the common leader of them all, were wholly unsuspected. They were concealed by the iron discipline of the Parliamentary party, by the professional timidity and reticence of the priests, and by the sense of their own impotence entertained by the discomfited Land Leaguers so long as they remained without allies. The power as well as the existence of "the Nonconformist conscience" were well known, but its idiosyncracies are so inscrutable, its operations in the sphere of Irish politics have been for many years so abnormal and so erratic, that any confident prediction of its action under novel conditions was impossible. On the one hand, it had always professed to base its political judgments on a rigid and unflinching obedience to the precepts of the Decalogue. On the other, it had condoned the flagrant and systematic breach of many of those precepts by the Irish Nationalists for years. To foretell its view of Mr. Parnell's delinquencies was a problem, as events proved, which "passed the wit of man."

Little, however, as the political consequences of the divorce action had been foreseen, they constituted nothing less than a political catastrophe. Nothing like it, either for the dramatic interest of its development, or for the effect it promises to exercise on the fortunes of political parties in the United Kingdom, has occurred within the memory of the present generation. It is believed, therefore, that a permanent record of these events will be acceptable, not only to students of history and politics, but to all who take an interest in public affairs, whether at home or abroad. Accordingly, it has been determined to republish in the present volume the letters, manifestoes, and other documents issued by the several parties to the conflict, together with the reports of the meetings of the Irish Parliamentary party during the crisis. Some portions of the "Interview" with Mr. Davitt of November 26, and also one or two passages of the debates in No. 15 Committee Room, have been omitted, as they appeared to be devoid of permanent interest, and some trifling alterations of a verbal nature have been made in order to preserve the continuity of the narrative. With these exceptions the whole of the present volume has been reprinted from the reports which appeared from day to day in the columns of *The Times*. All the documents quoted have been reproduced at length.

The book contains a minute account of the daily progress of the crisis from November 18, the day following the verdict in "O'Shea v. O'Shea and Parnell," down to Mr. Parnell's departure for Ireland on December 9. The first chapter covers the period from the verdict in the divorce case down to the unanimous re-election of Mr. Parnell as chairman of the Irish Parliamentary party (November 18-25). It begins with the report of the National League meeting in Dublin on November 18, gives the opinions of Mr. William O'Brien and the other delegates to America delivered the same day, and the report of the very important meeting at the Leinster Hall, Dublin, on November 20, and concludes with the unanimous re-election of Mr. Parnell as chairman of the Irish Parliamentary party on the first day of the Session, Tuesday, November 25. Throughout the whole of this period the members of that party vied with each other in expressions of unalterable devotion to their old leader. No voice was raised against him. All agreed that the verdict in the divorce action in no wise affected his public position. The American delegates announced that they stood firmly by his leadership not only out of gratitude for his unparalleled services in the past, but "in profound conviction that Mr. Parnell's statesmanship and matchless qualities as leader are essential to the safety of our cause." At the Leinster Hall meeting Mr. Justin M'Carthy himself moved the first resolution declaring "that in all political matters Mr. Parnell possessed the confidence of the Irish nation," and that the meeting "rejoiced at the determination of the Irish Parliamentary party to stand by their leader." He said that they were not going to change their leader "because of the cry raised against him." He suggested that "chivalrous and generous motives" might have led Mr. Parnell to refrain from defending himself in the Divorce Court. He asked, Were they going to set up "some wholly inferior man" in Mr. Parnell's place, because certain Tory and Liberal Secessionist papers had attacked him? "No man of common sense," he urged, would dream of doing so. Mr. M'Carthy did not fear the effect of the verdict on British opinion. The Home Rulers, he contended, would not lose the support of any honest allies. Some people, it was true, might fall away from them. He could only say, "Let them fall away. The national cause would go on without them." Mr. M'Carthy's

CHAP. I.
Nov. 18-25.

motion was seconded by Mr. Healy, and Mr. Healy's loyalty to Mr. Parnell outrivalled Mr. M'Carthy's. To Irishmen he declared, Mr. Parnell was "less a man than an institution." They had been taxed with servility to Mr. Parnell. Mr. Healy repudiated the charge. The Irish party, he observed, without their chief would be "a very pretty party in the House of Commons." It would include representatives of "the Socialists, the land nationalizers, the barristers, and, probably, the attorneys." The choice of instruments they made to guide them to Home Rule was "a matter for them and not for the English people," and Mr. Healy roundly warned intermeddlers "not to speak to the man at the wheel." Mr. Gladstone's late Attorney-General for Ireland, Mr. Samuel Walker, Q.C., warmly supported the views expressed by Mr. M'Carthy and Mr. Healy, while his colleague in office, the late Gladstonian Solicitor-General, The MacDermot, Q.C., seconded a further resolution.

The unanimity of the Parliamentary party remained unbroken five days later. Mr. Parnell's re-election as chairman was the first business at their meeting. It was proposed by Mr. Sexton, and "agreed to amid loud applause." Seceders from Mr. Parnell's faction have alleged that his re-election was a merely formal honour, and that he was not expected to accept the office tendered him. No hint of such a feeling appears in the report. It is distinctly stated that Mr. Parnell "promised that he would continue to discharge the duties of leader," in response to "the unanimous desire" of the party. Mr. Parnell plainly took the election seriously, and no dissent seems to have been expressed from his view.

CHAP. II.
Nov. 25-28.

The second chapter contains a record of the chief events which happened between the adjournment of the meeting of the Irish Parliamentary party on the afternoon of November 25, and the issue of Mr. Parnell's Manifesto on Friday, November 28. The verdict in the divorce case, it will be remembered, was given on Monday, November 17. Mr. Gladstone has stated, in a speech made at Retford on December 11, that he felt the proceedings in that case "would destroy entirely the moral weight and the moral force" of Mr. Parnell. He did not at once communicate his opinion to Mr. Parnell. He waited for a week, and in the same speech he explains the reason of his inaction. "I determined," he says, "to watch the state of feeling in this country, and I very soon

found that the Liberal party in this country had made up its mind to draw a broad distinction between the national cause of Ireland and the person and the personal office of Mr. Parnell." Sir Charles Russell insists, with candour yet more damaging, on the fact that considerations of political expediency alone, and not of outraged morality, wrung from Mr. Gladstone his condemnation of Mr. Parnell. Speaking at Braintree on December 5, he said that "it was not until Mr. Gladstone saw the rising, overwhelming tide of public opinion that he felt bound, in the interest of the party he led and of the cause he advocated, to convey to the leader of the Irish people that his continued leadership must have a chilling effect upon the enthusiasm of many staunch friends." Mr. Gladstone's investigations into the state of feeling in the country were doubtless materially aided by the reports he received from the meeting of the National Liberal Federation held at Sheffield on the Thursday and Friday after the verdict, at a moment, as Mr. John Morley told the delegates, when the country was "peculiarly stirred by anxious incidents and painful disclosures." On Sunday the "Nonconformist conscience" spoke from a hundred chapels, and on Monday Mr. Gladstone announced to Mr. Morley the conclusion to which his studies of the "rising tide" had brought him. It was that Mr. Parnell's continuance "at the present moment" in the leadership of the Irish party would be disastrous to Ireland, while it would render his own leadership "almost a nullity." The Irish members learnt the contents of this document soon after they had unanimously and enthusiastically re-elected Mr. Parnell as their chairman, and had received his pledge that he would continue to discharge the duties of his office. They held a second meeting the same evening, but, as Mr. Parnell had gone home, they adjourned without coming to any decision. Mr. Parnell presided over their deliberations next day (November 26). Mr. Barry and Dr. Commins at once pressed him to resign. Mr. Justin M'Carthy quite forgot his objection to setting up "some wholly inferior man," and seconded their exhortations. Mr. Sexton and other members agreed with Mr. M'Carthy, while Colonel Nolan and Mr. John O'Connor urged Mr. Parnell to stick to his post, and "not to permit himself to be dictated to by Mr. Gladstone." Mr. Parnell, "who throughout the proceedings had maintained

CHAP. II.
Nov. 25-23. the attitude of a listener, closed the proceedings by simply leaving the chair."

The meeting adjourned from Wednesday, November 26, to Monday, December 1. On the Wednesday night Mr. Davitt pronounced a severe condemnation of his old confederate, taxing him with trickery and falsehood, declaring that he would have nothing more to do with him, and suggesting that the leadership should be put into commission.

CHAP. III.
Nov. 28-
Dec. 1.

The third chapter contains the Manifesto issued by Mr. Parnell to "the People of Ireland" on the night of Friday, November 28, the replies of Mr. Gladstone and Mr. Morley published on the following day, and the telegram and manifesto of five of the six American delegates, pronouncing Mr. Parnell's retention of the leadership to be impossible. In his Manifesto Mr. Parnell alleged that the integrity and independence of a section of his party had been "sapped and destroyed by the wire-pullers of the English Liberal Party"; that Mr. Gladstone's letter claimed "a right of veto" on the Irish party's choice of their own leader, and contained a menace that resistance to this claim would involve an indefinite postponement of Home Rule. To enable the Irish people to measure the loss wherewith they were threatened unless they threw him, their leader, "to the English wolves," Mr. Parnell purported to describe the kind of Home Rule Mr. Gladstone was ready to grant. Mr. Parnell declared that he had obtained his information from Mr. Gladstone himself, when on a visit to Hawarden in November, 1889. He said that Mr. Gladstone told him that in his own opinion and in that of his colleagues, the Irish representation in the Imperial Parliament must be reduced from 163 members to 32, that the land question must be reserved from the control of the Irish Legislature, that the Irish constabulary must remain under Imperial control for an indefinite period, and that the appointment of "judges, resident magistrates, &c.," should be kept in the hands of the Imperial authority for some ten or twelve years. Mr. Parnell next stated his own views upon these alleged proposals of Mr. Gladstone's, and, after mentioning certain negotiations he had had with Mr. Morley on questions of Parliamentary strategy, went on to assert that Mr. Morley had lately asked him whether he would be willing to accept the Chief Secretaryship for Ireland himself, or would allow any other member of his party to do so; and that