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Mr. William O'Brien's Latest Farewell!

It would not be difficult for a political antagonist of Mr O'Brien to find excuses for his latest eccentricity, which is probably regarded by his friends as a superlative stroke of genius. Once more Mr. O'Brien has resigned. Without being the most popular, he is certainly the most persistent "farewellist" on the Irish political stage, and as the play in which he has taken a star part through life is drawing to its conclusion, one good-bye more or less can scarcely matter. We publish Mr O'Brien's address to the people of Cork elsewhere. It unfortunately comes at a time when the public is disturbed and distracted over other matters, and when the political platform is too crowded for individual posing. In England there has been a recurrence of the naval nightmare; in Ireland an angry upheaval of submerged humanity. There is practically no room for a fresh sensation. What has happened Mr. O'Brien on the present occasion is that candidates setting out for municipal elections in Cork under the elastic constitution of his organisation have been badly worsted at the polls. In the Southern City, mainly through the tactics of Mr. O'Brien himself, civic patriotism has become obscured by Nationalist politics. Had his candidates won, Mr. O'Brien would have been one of the first to proclaim the event with bands, tar barrels, and torchlights, as a social and political revolution showing that the country has lost confidence in the orthodox Nationalist party.

His men were defeated, however; in fact his influence on the Cork Corporation has been virtually wiped out. Hence his resignation and challenge to all comers to contest the Parliamentary constituency of Cork. His impulsiveness has again made him a target for ridicule. In his "address" he says: "The situation has been seriously aggravated by the defeat of six Protestant Home Rulers (names given) all of them worthy citizens and considerable employers of labour, owing to the machinations of the sectarian secret society which has obtained control of the so-called 'National' organisation. These sinister proceedings have been followed by the attacks of drunken mobs upon the houses of inoffensive citizens to the execrable batt'e cry of 'Up with the Mollies'" It was bad enough to be beaten at the polls, but obviously it was the mere mention of the "Mollies" which drove Mr. O'Brien into a frenzy. He made the mistake of his life however, when he specified the six Protestant Home Rulers, members of his party who had been defeated. The first named of them, Miss Day, declared in an interview with the "Cork Examiner," that she was an Independent candidate, free of all parties, and would remain so until the Woman's Suffrage Question was decided. "Do you think you were beaten because you were a Protestant?" asked the interviewer. "Certainly not," was Miss Day's reply. Another of the defeated candidates, Mr. Thomas Farrington, M.A., was asked:

Have you ever declared yourself a Home Ruler? Mr. Farrington--
Certainly not. Are you a Home Ruler? Mr. Farrington--I am not.

Mr. W. R. Finnegan said:--"I certainly do not attribute my defeat to the fact that I am a Protestant, because I don't think anybody in Cork ever questioned me about my religion." Mr. Joseph Hosford, another of the alleged victims of religious persecution, stated

to the interviewer :--"I believe I was beaten by Protestant votes simply because I am a Protestant Home Ruler. I understand I got a full Catholic vote." Mr. Thomas Andrews, who by the way is the late Governor of Cork County Prison, declared :--"I don't care twopence halfpenny whether we get Home Rule or not." The last of the bunch of "Protestant Home Rulers" mentioned by Mr. O'Brien summarily dismissed the interviewer with the remark, "I decline to make any statement whatever with regard to my political views."

From this it will be seen that despite Mr. O'Brien's campaign of conciliation a Protestant Home Ruler stands no chance of election from his co-religionists while Catholic voters are prepared to sink the religious aspect of affairs for the general good of the community. That, it strikes us, is what Mr. John Redmond has been saying all along. We trust that nobody will interfere with Mr. O'Brien's pastime of tilting at windmills. The country has something more serious nowadays to engage its attention than quixotic exploits which have become wearisome from repetition.