

Kilkenny People June 10 1916

The Voice of the People.

It is one of the amazing paradoxes of Irish history that at a time when martial law reigns supreme in the land, and when the ordinary constitutional guarantees are in abeyance, when the Press is muzzled by a Military Dictator, when political meetings can only be held by his permission or that of his deputies, and when, in effect, the country is being administered as if its people were incapable and unworthy of exercising the rights of citizenship, the framing of a new constitution for Ireland should be regarded by all political parties as one of immediate practical necessity.

If the limited and partial measure of self-government which is contemplated by our rulers is intended to satisfy the people, it is clearly the right of the people to express their views in free and open assembly on its provisions and scope. This they are prohibited from doing while martial law is in operation and while a Military Dictator has unlimited power to interfere with the right of free speech and the liberty of the Press. We suggest, therefore, that the first thing to be done is to abolish martial law and to restore the constitutional guarantees.

Meanwhile, if we are not to be deemed guilty of lese majeste, a form of offence hitherto supposed to be duly punishable in Germany, we should like to offer a word or two of comment on the proposed Home Rule settlement; and first thing we should like to say, basing our judgment, of course, on the semi-official pronouncements that have appeared in the Press, is that it is not Home Rule at all, and that it can settle nothing, though it will probably unsettle a great deal. The Home Rule Act is to be torn up like "a scrap of paper," Ireland is to be partitioned, and six Irish counties, including two with a clear Nationalist majority, are to remain subject to and at the mercy of the hereditary enemies of our race and creed. It is a lawyers' settlement—the people being under martial law can only express their views by permission of the Military Dictator—and the case against Ireland, let us admit, is being ably conducted by Sir Edward Carson, K.C. (instructed by Mr. David Lloyd George; solicitor. It is a judicial separation that is being forced, and the aggrieved partner is expected to be solaced by an increased allowance of alimony. What God hath joined together Carson and Lloyd George propose to put asunder.

At the beginning of the war Mr. Asquith came over to Ireland and asked for "the free gift of a free people." Tens of thousands of Irishmen fought and bled in France and Flanders and Gallipoli in defence, they were- unblushingly told, of the "Rights of Small Nationalities." and to restore the independence and integrity of Belgium. They now find — those of them that survive—that the integrity of their own country is about to be destroyed and the Home Rule Act treated as a "scrap of paper." Mr. Lloyd George, in order to induce us to swallow his pill, offers a bribe in the shape of ,an increased grant— let us call it thirty pieces of silver; but in a couple of years he will receive back that increased j grant many times over in the shape of extra taxation.

So "Ireland, long a province" is to be, not one province, but two provinces, in future.