<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Title</strong></th>
<th>Ireland, The Nation and the Woolfs, Part 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Author(s)</strong></td>
<td>Byrne, Anne</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Publication Date</strong></td>
<td>2019-09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Publisher</strong></td>
<td>Virginia Woolf Society of Great Britain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Link to publisher's version</strong></td>
<td><a href="http://www.virginiawoolfsociety.org.uk/virginia-woolf-bulletin/">http://www.virginiawoolfsociety.org.uk/virginia-woolf-bulletin/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Item record</strong></td>
<td><a href="http://hdl.handle.net/10379/15992">http://hdl.handle.net/10379/15992</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Some rights reserved. For more information, please see the item record link above.
Virginia Woolf Bulletin
of the
Virginia Woolf Society of Great Britain
Hon. President: Dame Eileen Atkins

Issue No. 62, September 2019

Virginia Woolf, Geraldine Jewsbury
and Susanne Howe
Letter to Miss Howe

Abigail Burnham Bloom 3
Virginia Woolf 4

Orlando: That ‘masterless house’ of Fiction
Sue Roe

7

Virginia Woolf’s ‘Kew Gardens’:
The Allegory of the Snail and the Green Insect
Emma Wood 20

Virginia Woolf and Byron
Hilary Newman 31

Books received

43

‘black, but enchanting’ Revisited
Stuart N. Clarke 44

Ireland, The Nation and the Woolfs, Part II
A Proposal of Irish Settlement
Leonard Woolf 63

The Guilt of the Government
Leonard Woolf 67

Cecil James Sidney Woolf (1927–2019): Tributes
Jean Moorcroft Wilson 73
Paula Maggio 75
Vanessa Curtis 77
Marion Dell 78
Sarah M. Hall 79
Anne Byrne 79
Gill Lowe 80

Report
DallowayDay 2019: Queering Dalloway
Sarah M. Hall 81
IRELAND, THE NATION AND THE WOOLFS, PART II

Anne Byrne

In The Nation editorials of 9 October 1920 reproduced here, Leonard’s succinct, clear writing style, consummate storytelling ability, and forceful declarative statements come to the fore. The opening paragraph of ‘A Proposal of Irish Settlement’ is unequivocal, claiming and naming Ireland as an independent nation state, rejecting a compromised version of dominion status and demanding that the British government acknowledge the existence of ‘a state of war between it and the people of Ireland’. Leonard wrote these articles as the recruitment and deployment of the Black and Tans and the elite corps of ex-officers, the Auxiliaries, increased significantly; the Restoration of Order in Ireland Act (9 August) passed into law; and the Government of Ireland Bill was being prepared. The Nation reported on the progress of the bill and the debate in Parliament, having published ‘The Bill and the Reckoning’ by ‘Our Irish Correspondent’ earlier in the year (10 April). The period of Leonard’s polemic-style editorials coincides with extensive domestic and international press reporting on the ruthlessness and lawlessness of the Black and Tans, experienced in war but inexperienced in counter-insurgency and policing. Described as ‘rough’ and without discipline, recruits received minimum police training and were stationed alongside their Irish counterparts in Royal Irish Constabulary (RIC) barracks at the centre of the fiercest fighting (Leeson 377).

A two-pronged argument can be discerned in these editorials. Though slight attention is paid to paramilitary attacks by the IRA, the emphasis is on the physical horrors of military violence and breaches of the code of war by

---

1 My sincere gratitude to Stuart N. Clarke for kind advice and generous editorial guidance received, to Mark McCarthy, GMIT, for helpful historical overview, to Wayne Chapman for guidance on sources for Nation articles by Leonard Woolf, and to Anne Marie Hantzig for the gift of a bibliographic reference.

2 Permission to reproduce these articles has been kindly granted by the New Statesman and by the Society of Authors as the Literary Representative of the Estate of Leonard Woolf. Copyright © The Estate of Leonard Woolf, 2019.

3 H. A. L. Fisher had responsibility for drafting and guiding the bill (1919), otherwise known as ‘The Partition Bill’, through the House of Commons. In an effort to placate Ulster Unionists, the Act (1921) established partitions with separate parliaments, north and south. According to his biographer, David Ogg, the consequences of partition were ‘one of Fisher’s many political disappointments’ (Ogg 102).

4 Fisher was implicated in sending the Black and Tans to Ireland. He wrote in his autobiography that ‘It was not without cruel misgivings that I gave my assent to the decision which led to the police war. Yet I believe it to have been one of those hateful necessities which in exceptional times must be accepted as the lesser of two grave evils’ (Fisher 129).
Crown forces, while advocating a peace settlement deploying influence, negotiation and parliamentary means. Unofficial reprisals are foregrounded; riots and pogroms against Catholics in Belfast are detailed; the ‘sack’ of Balbriggan is highlighted as an example of troop lawlessness; and accumulated evidence of the responsibility of the British Government for ‘savagery’ in Ireland is brought to the attention of the British reading public. Leonard’s persuasive and partisan writing is epitomised in ‘The Guilt of the Government’.

We have tried many ways of governing Ireland. We destroyed her land system; we stole her commons; we cut down the forests of which Spenser wrote with such beauty in the ‘Faerie Queene’; we set up a foreign religion; we planted her province with colonists, as Prussia did Poland; we stifled her industries. We have governed by penal laws; by a religious ascendency; by Orange violence.

As backdrop to these editorials, a brief overview of political developments in Britain and Ireland from 1918 to 1922 may be helpful. The December 1918 elections were the first in which women over thirty and men over twenty-one were enfranchised by the Representation of the People Act 1918. Following the conscription crisis and the German plot in Ireland, the electoral reforms transformed Irish political representation. A majority return for Sinn Féin endorsed the appeal for independence for the island of Ireland and a commitment to abstain from the Westminster parliament. Nevertheless, Travers opines that, despite the enlarged electorate, in England ‘the new voters showed a marked preference for the status quo’ (Travers 329). Lloyd George and the Liberals were victorious in the 1918 elections, by compromising on a coalition with the Conservatives (which nevertheless split the Liberal Party). Though the coalition won 478 of 707 seats, in effect the Conservatives held the balance of power. The implications for Ireland were clear: ‘Lloyd George could and would never adopt any Irish policy that did not command unionist support’ (Fanning 526). Threats to the unity of the empire remained a concern. Ulster Unionists were promised that they would not be forced into a settlement with an all-Ireland parliament and were reassured that an Irish republic would not be countenanced.

The result was also a compromise, this time on partition. Lloyd George presented the Government of Ireland Bill to the House of Commons on 22 December 1919. It guaranteed a parliament for the six counties of Northern Ireland and a separate parliament for Southern Ireland. Founded on the mistaken belief that an acceptable form of self-government was still possible, Home Rule had remained on the statute books since the outbreak of the First World War. The idea of a Southern Irish parliament, with self-government within a commonwealth of nations, continued to prevail. For example, The Nation reported on an Irish delegation of businessmen to Lloyd George (7 August 1920) and on the Dublin Conference of ‘moderate Irishmen’ composed of Ulster Unionists, Liberals and Home Rulers (28 August) who supported and demanded Dominion Home Rule. The bill became law in December 1920; King George V would later perform the ceremonial opening of the Parliament of Northern Ireland, with an in-built Unionist majority, on 22 June 1921, thus endorsing partition. Lloyd George and Bonar Law (Leader of the Conservatives) both understood that this fell short of Sinn Féin’s call for self-determination and that it would not be acceptable to many republicans or ‘new liberals’ (who supported self-government in Ireland) as represented by Massingham’s Nation. Havighurst cites H. W. Nevinson, a Nation journalist, who noted that when the Government of Ireland Act became law Massingham ‘was burning with rage’ (Havighurst 284).

Having secured the partition of Ireland, Lloyd George would now negotiate with Sinn Féin. A truce to end the War of Independence was called on 11 July 1921. Conducted under the ever-present threat of the resumption of hostilities between Crown forces and the IRA, the Anglo-Irish Treaty negotiations began. The controversial agreement (6 December 1921) led to the establishment of the Irish Free State as a dominion, permitting self-government while preserving a fraught relationship with the British Empire. The terms of that treaty divided nationalists and precipitated the Irish Civil War, fought over competing ideologies and visions of independence in a united Ireland.²

²To maintain the supply of British troops for the First World War, conscription for unmarried men was introduced with the passing of the Military Service Act in January 1916, with Ireland initially excluded. Heavy fatalities in France, prompted the British Government to extend conscription to Ireland. The attempt to introduce conscription was met with widespread political opposition (including from H. A. L. Fisher, MP) and militant resistance; it was partly responsible for the downfall of the Irish Parliamentary Party, who supported the war effort. The German plot, based on an alleged alliance between Sinn Féin and German collaborators, led to the internment of over 150 Sinn Féin suspects on 17 and 18 May 1918. Many of those interned, including Éamon de Valera and Constance Markievicz, subsequently stood for election and were in prison when elected (see Travers 323–9).

³Background to a report by Walter Long for Lloyd George, November 1919 (see Fanning 526).
⁴See Peatling 57 on the ‘new Liberal Irish obsession’.
⁵The Irish Civil War commenced on 28 June 1922 between the pro-Treaty National Army of the Free State (under the command of Michael Collins) and the anti-Treaty Irish Republican Army. Combatants, previously united in the War of Independence, were now bitterly divided in a fratricidal conflict that divided families and communities for many decades. The war concluded on 24 May 1923 with a no-compromise ceasefire ceding control to the Free State. The Republicans were defeated; imprisonment and executions followed. A Civil War legacy of ideological divisions reverberated throughout Irish politics for decades, as the military conflict was replaced by parliamentary contests. Post-Civil War, the state of Northern Ireland and the Free State were...
Within the context of this highly condensed historical overview, the role of The Nation editorials in shaping Liberal and popular opinion on Ireland must be considered, in addition to the range of strategies deployed by Massingham to keep the Irish question in the forefront of public discussion. As well as Our Irish Correspondent, reports on Ireland were taken from the Irish Times, The Times and more frequently from the Manchester Guardian. Leonard cites Hugh Martin, correspondent for the Daily News, who travelled throughout Ireland, providing an eyewitness account of coercion.9 Following a visit to Ireland, George Bernard Shaw’s observations on the atmosphere of law and order in the absence of the RIC were reported on 31 July 1920 by Massingham under his penname, A Wayfarer. For the ‘average non-political Englishman’, Shaw was strangely keen to recommend Ireland as ‘a capital place for a holiday’, but not for ‘Imperially-minded Terrorists’ (549). In employing the testimony of well-known authors, Massingham offered readers an alternative to what might be perceived as anti-British editorials and articles on Ireland.10 Massingham prevailed with author-led reports, but in the case of Lady Gregory, her anonymous, published diary extracts were less anodyne, documenting the conditions of the Sinn Féin courts, and raids, arrests and shootings of civilians by the Black and Tans. The journalist J. L. Hammond contributed to special supplements on Ireland in The Nation, and these were also ‘widely circulated in pamphlet form’ (Havighurst 284).

From the first meeting of the Irish parliament, Dáil Éireann, the British and international press sent correspondents to Ireland, many of whom were sympathetic to Irish independence. Walsh writes that the policies of coercion ‘usually concealed were now being documented and described in the daily press’ (Walsh 104). The Nation, as a specialist journal, provided testimony of practices of coercion in the field and in British policy. Ireland was featured in banner headlines (e.g. ‘The Irish Republic’, 31 July 1920; ‘The Proclamation of Anarchy’, 2 October 1920; ‘The Prince of Wales as Irish Regent’, 9 October 1920); in letters to the editor; in ‘Events of the Week’; and in ‘The London Diary’, a column authored by Massingham. Books on Ireland

firmly established. Ireland became an independent republic in 1919 (Republic of Ireland Act 1918), thus formally ending membership of the British Commonwealth.

Hugh Martin, like Massingham, believed that the power of the word could alter the course of political events. ‘But no honest man who has seen with his own eyes and heard with his own ears the fearful plight to which unhappy Ireland has been brought could fail to curse in his heart the political gamble that bred it or cease to use all the power of his pen to end it’ (Martin 150). While reporting on Ireland, Martin experienced threats to his safety from Crown forces: ‘it would be well to cease telling the truth in print or to take special precautions for my own safety’ (137).

In one of the few examples of support for the Crown forces, Wayfarer was moved to condemn the ‘murders of the agents of the British government’ by the IRA, on the grounds that British support for ‘Irish liberation’ or a possible peace treaty with Ireland might be weakened (‘A London Diary’, 7 August 1920, 578).

were frequently reviewed in The Nation, and from April 1920 the ‘Politics and Affairs’ editorials inevitably contained reporting or commentary about Ireland. Leonard followed Massingham’s lead in the main: nine editorials over the three-month period from 31 July to 16 October directly concern Ireland.11 The editorials in this period also reported on the price of coal and the economic conditions of British miners, the work of the League of Nations, the politics of the ‘Near East’, the instability of the government of Turkey, left-wing politics of Socialism and ‘Labor’ [sic], French policy towards Germany, Franco–British relations, reports from Mesopotamia, and the deleterious consequences of post-war reconstruction for Germany and Austria.

Leonard acknowledged the influence of editors. In comparing Clifford Sharp of the New Statesman and Henry Massingham of The Nation, Leonard wrote that they were different in ‘temperament, style, and editorial methods, and, though, when writing for them, I was never conscious of being influenced by them, I know that my articles in the Statesman were in the image of Clifford Sharp and in the Nation in the image of H. W. Massingham’ (L. Woolf 1964 131). As regards Massingham’s influence on Leonard’s writing style, Leonard considered that ‘I was never conscious of writing differently in the Nation and the New Statesman and in my own books—I never felt Massingham looking over my shoulder or breathing down my journalistic back—but if I reread what I had written for him, I was startled to get a whiff of Massingham and Massingham’s Nation’ (L. Woolf 1967 94).

The Nation carried advertisements for the Hogarth Press and reviews of The Voyage Out (1915) and Night and Day (1919). In an unsigned review of the latter on 15 May 1920, the reviewer concluded with admiration for Woolf’s talent, and considered Night and Day as ‘the expression of an original and powerful mind’ (Clarke 2014 26). Virginia valued the criticism and her diary entry reveals her perception of Massingham: ‘A long flattering review of me in the Nation, wiping out Massingham’s bitterness, & giving me my first taste of intelligent criticism, so I’m set up—even contemptuous thinking the writer’ (D2 38, 15 May 1920).12 Virginia had not been endeared to


12D2 38 n14 identifies Irish writer Robert Lynd as the author of the May review in The Nation, although Clarke 2014 26 n28 notes that Anthony Alpers supra Katherine Mansfield as the reviewer. Irish nationalist and author of Ireland a Nation (1920), Robert Lynd (1879–1949) was an influential literary, cultural and political essayist and critic.
Massingham, a situation arising from his ‘cutting paragraph’ in a previous review of *Night and Day* in *The Nation* (D1 316, 5 December 1919). When Leonard was offered the post of temporary editor in 1920, Virginia first noted that perhaps she too might ‘drop’ reviewing, but later wrote ‘why should I slip the collar around his neck & myself spring free?’ (D2 34–5).

Despite the time taken from their own writing and publishing work, the income from reviewing and article writing would continue to be of some significance for the Woolfs until 1928. In his autobiographical reflections on the pressured nature of weekly editorial work and the ‘violent struggle’ between politics and literature for space on the page, Leonard considers the corrosive effect of the editorial mind on his thinking (L. Woolf 1967 140). This is compared to the longer time-span allowed for editing the *Political Quarterly*, for example, work he enjoyed for many years. For weekly editorial work, ‘You are perpetually thinking in terms of articles, notes, reviews, authors, and titles in relation to pages, columns, lines, and words’ (L. Woolf 1967 140). The ‘kaleidoscope’ life of the weekly editor was one that ‘bores and depresses me’ (L. Woolf 1967 140, 141). Journalism and review work, while necessary to earn a living, were not to his taste. Apart from the relentless labour of the hours involved, he was also concerned about the delusional effects of a ‘magnetic field’ of importance that surrounded many professions. The ‘occupational hallucination’ (L. Woolf 1969 143) of journalists and editors who attach undue significance to their weekly judgements on world events was of concern, and he was ‘certain that the magnetic field surrounding journalism induces the editor and staff of every newspaper to believe that his paper is much more important and influential on public opinion than it really is’. He admitted that, while editor, he too ‘was a victim of this occupational delusion’ (L. Woolf 1969 146). Despite this, he allows that journals such as the *Political Quarterly*, written ‘by experts for experts’ (L. Woolf 1967 207), with a targeted elite of political, administrative, academic and professional readers who ‘more often than not are dealing directly with opinion’ and are ‘more likely therefore to influence it’ (L. Woolf 1969 147). For Leonard, *The Nation* presumably lay somewhere in between what he regarded as the negligible effect of daily newspapers and the ‘considerable influence’ of specialist ‘professional or trade papers’ (L. Woolf 1967 208).

Sensitive to the bias of daily newspapers and perhaps the trade papers too, Virginia pondered:

how is one to arrive at the truth? I have changed the Daily News for the Morning Post. The proportions of the world at once become utterly different. The M.P. has the largest letters & the double column devoted to the murder of Mrs. Lindsay,15 Anglo Indians, Anglo Scots, & retired old men & patriotic old ladies write letter after letter to deplore the state of the country; applaud the M.P. the only faithful standard bearer left. They lament the downfall of England, which is flourishing as usual in the D.N.; hardly spotted at all in the D.H. [Daily Herald]. The heroes of the day in the Herald are the unemployed who rioted. The M.P. ignores them altogether. But the D.N. has become a vivacious scrapbook. News is cut up into agreeable scraps, & written in words of one syllable. I may well ask, what is truth? (D2 127–8).

Massingham’s influence, if any, on Leonard’s political career concerning Irish politics, is much more difficult to discern. Leonard’s journalistic work was an important part of his sense of himself as a ‘practical politician’ (L. Woolf 1967 206). An advertisement in *The Nation* for 8 January 1921 identifies Leonard as a member of the non-party Peace with Ireland Council (1920–2) along with at least fifty other members that included Sidney Webb, Ramsay MacDonald, J. L. Hammond and the Rowntrees. This was an initiative of Lord Henry Cavendish-Bentinck as Chairman (Ottoline Morrell’s half-brother) with executive members Basil Williams, Aman Bryce, Oswald Mosley and Miss E. M. Stopford. The Council was composed of a diversity of social, political and religious interests as well as ‘new liberals’. The principal aims as advertised included the dissemination of ‘accurate information on the state of Ireland’, appealing to public opinion to ‘protest against the lawless policy of reprisals’ and to provide relief against ‘distress arising from ... the struggle’ (Peace with Ireland Council 523).

Coincidentally, a few days earlier, a letter to the *Manchester Guardian*, appealing for peace with Ireland from more than fifty ‘well known authors, poets, artists and professors’, included the signature of Virginia Woolf, as well as Roger Fry, E. M. Forster, Maynard Keynes and Massingham’s son, the poet

---

13Massingham acknowledged that *Night and Day* was ‘brilliantly written’, but readers can assess the extent of his ‘bitterness’ for themselves. Massingham’s and the unsigned later review are reproduced in full in Clark 2014 15 and 24–6.

14Leonard’s figures on earnings from the Hogarth Press and their earnings from journalism and writings books from 1924 to 1939 show that 1928, with the publication of *Orlando*, was the year after which ‘we were always very well off’ (L. Woolf 1967 142, 145).

15Leonard, William Robson, Kingsley Martin, Maynard Keynes and others launched the left-wing *Political Quarterly* in 1930; Leonard worked as the literary editor until 1959. He describes the purpose of such a journal as ‘providing ideas for or influencing the ideas of a comparatively small number of “men at the top”’ (L. Woolf 1967 207).

16Earnings from review and article work in 1920 and 1921 amounted to c. £100 from the *New Statesman* and c. £100 from *The Nation*. £81 8s. of the latter were received when Leonard replaced Brailsford as the temporary leading writer for the three-month period under discussion (see L. Woolf 1967 91).

17Leonard hoped, however, that ‘a few people will be influenced by what I write’ (L. Woolf 1967 91).
The signatories wrote of ‘profound humiliation’ of the effect of British policy on Ireland.

We see our country, which, in the past and until very lately, made great sacrifices, thinking that it made them for the sake of oppressed peoples, now presenting to the world the aspect of a land hardly equalled in the past for ignorant and unavailing coercion, that coercion being practised upon a nation that co-equaly with ourselves has inherited our traditions of individual liberty. This not because of any native ferocity, greed of gain or thirst for rape in our people, but because of irresolution, incapacity, and misreading of facts by those who hold the reins of the Government.

We, therefore, call upon the present Ministry to find immediate means of arbitration or mediation between ourselves and the people of Ireland. And if the organized shedding of blood, whether by the natives of Ireland or by His Majesty’s forces, or arson, robberies, and requisitions by either party shall continue, we, the undersigned, demand the resignation of His Majesty’s Government and declare ourselves resolved in that case to leave unmade no effort to substitute one that will have for its first and most urgent business that of finding the means of peace. (The State of Ireland 6)

The Nation and those associated with it provided Leonard with a broadening network of public intellectuals and political leaders who contributed to his vision of a practical politics founded on civic service, journalism and party-political work. His biographer Victoria Glendinning writes that by the age of thirty-eight Leonard was an experienced author, editor, journalist, public speaker, political propagandist, advisor and eminence grise for the Labour Party, and ‘well-placed for any career in public life that he might choose’ (Glendinning 220). In May 1920, Leonard agreed to contest the 1922 election as a Labour Party candidate for the Combined English Universities, but ‘rather halfheartedly’, based on little chance of success (L. Woolf 1967 33). He was motivated to do so because one of the sitting candidates was the ‘respectable Liberal’ Herbert Fisher (and Virginia’s cousin). Leonard regarded Fisher as the type of politician it was ‘almost a public duty to oppose in public life’. He explained that Fisher ‘made respectable liberalism stink in the nostrils of so many of my generation who began their political lives as liberals’ (L. Woolf 1967 34). Massingham supported Leonard’s opposition to Fisher, urging readers of The Nation to vote for Mr Woolf.

The transformation in the political proclivities of The Nation journalists and, strikingly, Massingham’s turn towards Labour, provided a sympathetic environment for Leonard’s support for Labour, the party of

‘ideals and principles’, and his vision for a practical politics (L. Woolf 1967 38). The tidal wave of editorials and articles penned by Massingham and The Nation’s cadre of professional journalists and writers were directed against Lloyd George, Liberal Party members and their supporters.

Following the conclusion of Leonard’s temporary position as foreign affairs editor, The Nation continued with its campaign to influence the government. Editorials were published in response to Lloyd George’s stance on military reprisals, with provocative headlines such as ‘The Call for Public Action’ and the ‘The “War” on Ireland’. The Rowntree family and Liberal MP Arnold Rowntree were increasingly dissatisfied that the once-Liberal weekly was now dedicated to attacking the policies of the Liberal Party leader. On the face of it, Lloyd George appeared to be relatively immune to The Nation’s editorials, remaining stolidly committed to Unionist ambitions and opposed to any suggestion that Ireland might leave the empire. Nonetheless, Peatling argues that Massingham and The Nation writers were a significant force and part of the radical new liberal press who informed and influenced the British public on the extent of repression in Ireland. For Peatling, the resulting public hostility towards the British government was a ‘crucial element behind the British government’s peace overtures to Sinn Féin of mid-1920’ (Peatling 57). Some sense of Massingham’s view of the power of the printed word to influence public and political opinion on Ireland can be glimpsed in his letter of 7 June 1923 to Augusta, Lady Gregory of Coole Park in County Galway:

It is nie to know how you and others felt about the ‘Nation’, as to which I always felt it was leagues behind what it ought to have been and perhaps might have been if maternal conditions had been more favorable. However, we had a good fight over Ireland, and the victory, I am sure, is not going to be to the devil and his angels. (Iberg; see also Havighurst 284–5)

32Leonard’s 1922 anti-war election address promoted socialism, co-operation, education democracy, an inclusive League of Nations, and a ‘complete abandonment of the policy of imperialism and economic penetration’, as well as self-government for India and Ceylon (see L. Woolf 1967 35–40 for a sense of Woolf’s political manifesto). In the event, the sitting candidates, Unionist and National Liberal, were re-elected (Conway 1,993 votes; Fisher 1,009), with Leonard winning 366 votes and not quite bottom of the poll (25 568 n). Leonard learned that the university electorate was reluctant to support a Labour party candidate, not wanting to antagonize wealthy Conservative benefactors and to protect its own promotional prospects (L. Woolf 1967 46). Despite enjoying the election campaign, the life of a backbench MP in the House of Commons in 1922 would have been for Leonard ‘the acme of futility and boredom’ (L. Woolf 1967 33). However, Glendinning noted that in a TV interview he later regretted not becoming an MP (241 n5).
As we know, the Woolfs were invited to meet with MP Herbert Fisher in April 1921. Perhaps this was an opportunity for Fisher to talk about Massingham’s campaign of accusations on Ireland and his own political involvement in Irish affairs. Virginia wrote “We think he asked us in order to apologise for—everything. He said... he couldn’t be blamed for his conduct about Ireland” (D2 112). Fisher’s involvement in the Government of Ireland Act, and his role as one of the six members of the Coalition Committee on Ireland who signed off the order to send the Black and Tans into Ireland, failed to impress the Woolfs, in terms of leadership, political acumen and authenticity (see D2 112 n14 and L. Woolf 1967 34-5). Both were deeply critical of him, and their comments about him can appear harsh. For Virginia, Leonard in comparison was ‘an authority’ on world events, while Herbert was a ‘thim-shredded thread paper of a man, whose brain had been harrowed in to sandy streaks like his hair’ (D2 113). Virginia recommended that Fisher read Joyce, but he had not heard of him. Though the Woolfs frequently met with and were personally fond of Fisher, they despised of what he represented: an academic and intellectual turned ineffective Liberal politician who claimed that ‘we and everyone else who did not sit in Downing Street knew nothing about anything’ (L. Woolf 1967 35). Leonard writes scathingly of his impressions of Fisher the politician, despite his academic accomplishments, his knowledge of British politics or his recommendations to Lloyd George not to introduce conscription in Ireland. For Leonard, Fisher’s obsession with Lloyd George and Downing Street, his delusory understanding of political power, and ‘genteel intoxication’ with a ‘life of action’ in the House of Commons rankled (L. Woolf 1967 35).

In July 1922, Leonard replaced the left-wing journalist H. L. Brailsford once again as foreign affairs editor on The Nation. By 1923, the Liberal-minded Rowntrees could no longer tolerate the infiltration and weekly expression of Massingham’s Labour politics and offered to sell the journal to him. Insufficient financial resources combined with growing ill-health finally brought Massingham’s editorship, which had commenced in 1907, to a close. Maynard Keynes became the chairman of the board and Hubert Henderson was appointed editor. Leonard became literary editor, a post he would hold for the next seven years, until he told Keynes that he ‘could not stand any more of it and resigned early in 1930’ (L. Woolf 1967 141).23 As a person keen to take charge of the disposition of his own time and labour, and for whom a life of political action and influence lay elsewhere, the decision was inevitable.

23I have never after 1930 taken a paid job—I have earned my living from the Hogarth Press, from my books and from occasionally writing articles or reviews” (L. Woolf 1967 128).

Leonard’s political editorship of The Nation, the influence of Massingham on his Irish–British political editorials, his professional contacts with The Nation journalists, and his personal relations with Fisher propelled him more directly into the entanglements of public politics that spanned paramilitary and parliamentary domains. Despite this significant interregnum and brief involvement with the Peace with Ireland Council, for example, Leonard did not publicly comment or write about Irish politics from this point onwards, at least as far as we know.24 He stood once more for public election, unsuccessfully. But Leonard was an ardent believer in a practical as opposed to a professional politics, to instituting collective change over establishing a personal career in politics. Like Fisher, he too was keenly aware of the ‘tragedy of history’ as evidenced by the history of the French revolution, of Home Rule and Ireland, of war and the League of Nations’ (L. Woolf 1967 225, 226). Nonetheless, he continued with the Labour Party Advisory Committee on Imperial Affairs, working effectively behind the scenes. Leonard Woolf’s abhorrence of needless suffering and violence, his clear, unrelenting and persuasive advocacy for political independence and self-government, for example in Ireland and India, and his trenchant criticisms of imperial methods of coercive government, as first expressed in the ‘Politics and Affairs’ editorials on Ireland, continued unabated.

Works Cited


24Both Virginia and Leonard continued to be informed about Irish politics through newspaper reports, their intellectual and literary friendships and discussions with Irish writers, their reading and reviewing work, and significantly their visit to Ireland in 1934, much of which informed the background and depictions of particular characters in The Years (1937). See Laing for research suggestions on Virginia Woolf and Ireland, and Byrne and Gosling for notes on the 1934 Irish tour.


A Proposal of Irish Settlement, *The Nation*, 9 October 1920, 32–3

**Leonard Woolf**

The Liberal leaders have at last broken their silence on Ireland. Their reprobation of what British rule has recently been there is either wanting altogether, or falls short of its deserts; but their proposals to end it need to be carefully examined. Lord Grey’s proposition seems to us quite inadequate. Ireland is a Nation, and she demands her national rights on the terms we have laid down as the groundwork of British policy in Europe. It is no satisfaction of that demand to offer her, in the guise of a Dominion settlement, a continued dependence on the military and political system endured to her by the campaign of the Black-and-Tans. Mr. Asquith goes a long step farther. His tender is virtually that of a Free State. Ireland is to become the Fifth Dominion of the Empire, and to accept only as much British control as the modern Dominion acknowledges, which is moral rather than material, and functions mainly in the domain of Foreign Policy. She would have complete fiscal independence, would be permitted to raise a military or let us say a militia force, and would simply be called on to give the Imperial Navy free entrance to her ports and harbors. We believe that military authority would endorse this guarantee as ample for Imperial defence, and we have reason to think that

---

23Viscount Grey, who was Liberal politician and Foreign Secretary (1905–16), advised dominion status for Ireland.

24By 1916, Canada, Newfoundland, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa held dominion status. Therefore, the Irish Free State would become the sixth dominion in 1922.
Nationalist Ireland would accept it or even offer it of her own free will. We have but one quarrel with this statement. It is a formula; and what Ireland and England want to-day is an act of final grace and oblivion, penetrating to the heart of their estrangement. There can be no mitigation of the evils and horrors of the Irish situation until the Government performs a deed of elementary honesty to the people of this country. That is to notify them that there is a state of war between it and the people of Ireland. This declaration is necessary to the honor of England. For if the two nations are not at war, British soldiers and policemen, regular and irregular, are committing acts of murder and outrage which place them outside the bounds of the civilized order. The custodians of the lives and the property of Irishmen are destroying those lives and laying waste that property. The sheep-dog has turned wolf; the self-appointed custodian has become a thief.

It is no defence of this conduct that other Irishmen, still at large, have committed murders, of which our agents and officials have been the victims. There is the law, enforced by an armed police, the most costly and the most elaborately trained in Europe. And there are the special re-enforcements of it which Parliament has conferred upon Mr. George—including the sweeping powers of inquiry and search, the suspension of trial by jury, and the swift and secret action of military law. If these do not avail, and if, in addition, one Irish town after another is given over to terror by arson and pilage, there is overwhelming proof that a rebellion against British rule exists, supported by the great majority of the Irish people, and that this rising is being suppressed by methods repugnant to the code of war, or even of rebellion. Even if war were proclaimed, it would only be possible to defend such practices by reference to the most brutal passages in modern fighting, such as the German razzia in Belgium. But when pursued against men and women acknowledged to be subjects of the Crown, they sink to the level of the dragunades of Louvois, or the Turkish atrocities in South-Eastern Europe. Every civilized Government has the right to protest against such inhumanities, and to invoke against them the conscience to which we appealed against an enemy engaged in war.

The Government, therefore, have not dared face the truth about Ireland,

though in the revelation of that truth lies not only their hope of escape from the lash of the world's censure, but, paradoxical as it may appear, the way out of their difficulties. For the moment the people realize that there is a state of war in Ireland, they will insist on exploring every possible road to peace. No one wants another bloody encounter between England and Ireland; and none, or few, will tolerate a second '98. Home Rule doctrine of late has had a marvellous resurrection. In Ireland, the horrors of our undeclared war on her people and industries have simply wiped Southern Unionism off the political map. There are no Unionists left. There is only Orange fanaticism, and its political leader, Sir Edward Carson. And in England Home Rule has captured the great journal whose exertions kept it at bay for two generations. The moment, therefore, that the British army of occupation in Ireland is set loose as an engine of open war and destruction, British opinion will declare, almost with one accord, for an effort to end this strife for ever, and men will turn their minds to means of political amelioration.

Such means must, in our view, be of the most generous character. They must, further, be such as to impress the imaginations of both peoples, and to give them a visible witness of their sincerity and their solemn purport. In this necessity such very different observers as the 'Times' and Mr. Asquith concur, and we entirely agree with them. Being at war, and desiring peace, we are bound to make a direct approach to the enemy, through the acknowledged leaders of their forces. Therefore a proposal for a constituent assembly is neither an adequate nor an appropriate instrument for the conclusion of an Anglo-Irish Treaty. Our method must go deeper, must appeal to the political genius of our race, and bring up the reserve forces of the Constitution. It will be observed that a difference appears, not only in the form of Lord Grey's and Mr. Asquith's proposals, but in their method. Lord Grey prefers to leave Ireland to settle the lines of her future Constitution. Mr. Asquith announces a definite and a generous British policy. We think it may be profitable to combine these two methods.

In this spirit we desire to make the following suggestions:

1. That an Act of Parliament should at once be passed appointing the Prince of Wales Regent of Ireland. The appointment would be strictly limited in point of time, and would be used for the attainment of the following purposes.

---

27This is a reference to a series of reported attacks, arson and murder of civilians during the German invasion of Belgium during the First World War. The British government sponsored a commission of investigation into violations of the laws of war, detailed in the Bryce Report. H. A. L. Fisher, MP, was a member of the committee.

28In forcing a conversion to Catholicism, Louis XIV's dragunade policy under François-Michel de Tételet, Marquis de Louvois (1641–91), placed ill-disciplined soldiers in Protestant households. This led to the persecution and exile of the Huguenots population from France, some of whom sought asylum in England. The mass killings, deportation and conscription of Armenian civilians by the Ottoman Empire in 1915 amounted to a policy of mass extermination of local ethnicities.

29The 'bloody encounter' is a reference to the Easter Rising of 1916 (24–9 April) when Irish rebels declared a republic and fought to end British rule. A second "98" is a reference to the 1798 rebellion, an armed insurrection by the United Irishmen from May to September.

30Presumably a reference to The Times.

31Grey favoured the withdrawal of British troops from Ireland.

new birth in a younger world. Their union in such a task, we believe, would assuage her spirit and re-awaken her hopes. The Prince would go to Ireland charged with a mission of freedom, and as the Envoy of one Nation to another. For the period of his rule, he would be Ireland’s, not England’s, representative; bearing in mind, in his relations with the British Army, the ones that he cemented with thousands of Irishmen on the fields of France. And the Dominions would return to Ireland in the name of the Irish race, with a call to renew its ancient glories.

[We think it right to add that the proposal which we have outlined was made without any knowledge of a somewhat similar suggestion made by the ‘Irish Vigilance Society’ in the United States, a body of whose existence we were unaware].

The Guilt of the Government, The Nation, 9 October 1920, 33–4

Leonard Woolf

At this moment, the conduct of the British forces in Ireland is a leading topic of discussion in the Press of every civilized country. Never has foreign opinion been so little divided. It is a French paper that says that the atrocities at Balbriggan carry the mind back to the Middle Ages.37 But the newspapers of all countries speak in the same tone, and whether we look to Belgium or to Spain, to Holland or the United States, we receive the same impression of horror and amazement. Our rulers have the sort of standing in European opinion that the Austrian General Haynau had in 1850 when he was rash enough to visit London fresh from his exploits in flogging men and women for rebellion.38 Six years ago we set up a Commission to inquire into the atrocities in Belgium, and a member of the present Cabinet had a seat on that Commission.39 Its report was severe. What sort of report would be issued by

---

36 Information on a US-based Irish Vigilance Society is scant, but conservative Catholic forces in Ireland campaigned against immoral literature, encouraged censorship and monitored the political activity of their congregations in the 1920s.

37 According to Hugh Martin, the correspondent for the Daily News, Balbriggan was “attacked by 200 armed men on September 21. Two civilians shot and about twenty houses burned down. Reprisal for the shooting of Inspector Burke, R.I.C.” (Martin 99).

38 While visiting a London brewery in 1850, the Austrian General Julius Jacob von Haynau (1786–1853) was attacked by workers in response to his international reputation as a ruthless and aggressive commander of military forces in Austria and Italy. A plaque in Park Street, Southwark, London, commemorates the event.

39 H. A. L. Fisher, MP (1916–22), was a member of the Committee on Alleged German Outrages. The Bryce Report, with eyewitness testimony, was published and widely translated in 1915. Here Woolf directs his argument to an unnamed MP who is presumably Fisher.
a Commission appointed—not by a hostile but by a friendly Government—on the long list of outrages condoned by our Ministers in the past twelve months?

For these outrages Ministers are clearly responsible. They began over a year ago. Some people talk as though Balbriggan was the first serious atrocity, whereas the sort of thing that happened there had happened literally scores of time in different parts of Ireland. One particularly scandalous case was the second sacking of Fermoy—a reprisal for the kidnapping of a British general, not for murder or bloodshed—at the end of June. This was not a matter of slight and temporary failure of discipline. It was an organized piece of savagery in which men and officers were implicated. There was no secret about it. How did the Government act? Mr. Churchill, using language worthy of a Prussian Minister, declared, in the House of Commons, on July 27th: ‘Suitable disciplinary action has been taken. Certain officers have been censured, and a number of soldiers have had their leave stopped.’ The sort of punishment that a man gets for the mildest offence known in the Army is inflicted for burning houses and attacking civilians. An officer is liable to be cashiered for drunkenness. For leading this attack on civilians the ‘suitable’ punishment is censure. Is it any wonder that after this encouragement the system of town wrecking increased rapidly, and that in the next eight weeks forty-seven towns and villages suffered from the violence of these licensed bandits? In other words, the British Minister inflicted a punishment of such a kind as to encourage the soldiers to become what Abercromby saw they would become in 1797, ‘ruthless persecutors.’41 If Abercromby had been in the House of Commons, we know what he would have said: ‘I clearly saw that the discipline of the troops would be completely ruined, and that they would be led into a thousand irregularities contrary to law.’42 But the Government preferred that this should happen to the alternative course of abandoning coercion. They were determined to crush Ireland, even if it cost the discipline and efficiency of the British Army.

The indictment against the Government goes further. Not content with conniving at these outrages, they proceed to enlist a force to carry on a guerilla [sic] war. In March they began to recruit for the R.I.C. from ex-soldiers in England, and in June, they began to recruit the auxiliaries, a force of British ex-officers and men, for service in Ireland.43 The real significance of this departure can be judged from the fact that it was announced by the Lord Chancellor in the Lords, and by Mr. Lloyd George to a deputation headed by the Duke of Northumberland.44 These men were put into barracks or camps, where they seem to have had little to do except play cards, drink, and read the inflammatory circulars issued by their superiors.45 What had Mr. Lloyd George in mind when he enlisted this force? Did he imagine it to be specially amenable to discipline? And what steps did he take to secure it?

The answer is—NONE. No steps were taken then and we are unaware that, beyond a few words of double or weak intent, any have been taken since. Sir Hamar Greenwood made a speech to the R.I.C. last week, in which, after telling them that ‘the number of alleged reprisals is few,’ a sentence that would have served Cobbett as an example of confused English, he went on to say that reprisals would ruin the force.46 That means nothing. What we want to know is who is to be punished for Balbriggan? A hundred men do not go and sack a town, with lorrises and implements, without any sort of order or organization. Did Major-General Tudor know about it? If not, in what kind

---

40The deployment of these special reserve forces in counter-revolutionary activity quickly gained notoriety for the use of excessive and unrestrained violence against civilians, suspects and republican targets. H. A. L. Fisher, Liberal intellectual, historian and MP, as a member of the Government Committee on Ireland agreed to send the Black and Tans and later the Auxiliaries into Ireland.
41Frederick Edwin Smith (1872–1930), 1st Earl of Birkenhead, held the post of Lord Chancellor; he was a Conservative politician (known as a die-hard Tory) noted for his staunch opposition to Irish nationalism. Alan Ian Percy (1880–1930) was the 8th Duke of Northumberland.
42Frederick described the Weekly Summary reports, instigated by Major-General Sir Henry Tudor, edited and written in Dublin Castle for free distribution and official reading material for the new RIC recruits, the Black and Tans and the Auxiliaries. The Weekly Summary implicitly condoned unofficial reprisals, according to Martin. For example, the Summary contained an extract from the Morning Post from the All-Ireland Anti-Sinn Féin Society that ‘we, the Supreme Council of the Cork Circle, have reluctantly decided that, if in the future any member of His Majesty’s Forces be murdered, two members of the Sinn Féin party in the County of Cork will be killed. And in the event of a member of the Sinn Féin party not being available, three sympathizers will be killed. This will apply equally to laity and clergy of all denominations’ (Martin 108).
43Canadian-born Hamar Greenwood, 1st Viscount Greenwood (1870–1948) was the last Chief Secretary for Ireland (1920–2). Greenwood was closely identified with the aggressive use of the Black and Tans and the Auxiliaries. After the burning of the centre of the city of Cork by British auxiliary forces in December 1920, Greenwood incorrectly blamed the ‘Sinn Féin rebels’ and the people of Cork for burning their own city. Cobbett (1763–1835) is author of The English Grammar of William Cobbett. A series of letters addressed to his son with notes (1820).
of order is the force he commands? If he had been suspended immediately—as he would have been if the Government did not favor these 'reprisals'—Trim and other towns might have been saved. As it is, we are told that the Government do not countenance reprisals, and that they mean to put a stop to them. Yet day after day reprisals continue as briskly as ever. What would we think of any other Government which showed this degree of resolution and sincerity? During the war it was the custom for coroners’ inquests after a Zeppelin raid to bring in a verdict of guilt against the Kaiser. When Irish coroners’ reports brought in this kind of verdict they were suppressed. But can anybody acquit the Government of responsibility for the crimes committed by its agents, when these agents go unpunished and are not even suspended from their office? The first question to be put to a Government in such a position is surely ‘What action did you take?’ And the answer of Mr. Lloyd George’s Government is, ‘After this sort of thing had been going on for twelve months, we said in public that it could not be countenanced, and our chief executive officials in Ireland said also in public that it could not be punished: we left it at that, and the reprisals continued.’

No political society ever had a stronger case against an Administration than Ireland’s case against the British Government at this moment. For every Irishman outside the North-East corner, Catholic or Protestant, Unionist, Home Ruler or Sinn Feiner, the British Government represents disorder of the kind that the Tsar and the Bolsheviks inflicted. It is the policy of the British Government to use this policy of disorder to their own end, and to present the picture of Scotland or Wales—there would be no crime and no disturbance of Irish life and peace. We put a police force there for the purpose of which Imperialist Russia and Prussia put a police force in Poland. After months of coercion, after hundreds of Irishmen have been locked up or deported for offences purely political and unaccompanied by violence, policemen began to be murdered. The Government replies by giving policemen and soldiers the right to kill, burn, and loot at pleasure. If we were at war with Ireland, there would be precedents for reprisals, but not for these reprisals. The Manual of Military Law lays down that ‘reprisals should never be resorted to by the individual soldier but only by order of a commander.’ It also prescribes that reprisals should follow a definite complaint. The reprisals in Ireland are not so regulated or controlled. One day a man is shot because he has the same name as somebody else who is suspected; another day a boy is taken out of one house and shot because somebody in the next house is believed to have had something to do with an attack on a barracks. This is the nearest approach to method or reason in this campaign of frightfulness. The Irish authorities seemed to have formed the conclusion that Ireland can be cowed by terrorism; and in the pursuit of that purpose every kind of weapon has been employed.

When Parliament meets we hope that somebody will press for a full inquiry into the secret service, and the circumstances in which men like Hardy were released from prison. Is it possible that we have been letting loose men of the type of Oliver to do the devil’s work in Ireland? The resulting terrorism at least is so real that to our knowledge leading Irish landowners dare not complain of the burning of their property by soldiers for fear that a worse fate will befall them. We have tried many ways of governing Ireland. We destroyed her land system; we stole her commons; we cut down the forests of which Spenser wrote with such beauty in the ‘Faerie Queene’; we set up a foreign religion; we planted her provinces with colonists, as Prussia did Poland; we stifled her industries. We have governed by penal laws; by a religious ascendancy; by Orange violence. To-day we govern by a military terrorism that is drawing upon us the angry eyes of all Europe. Some fatality

44Lieutenant-General Sir Henry Hugh Tudor (1871–1965) was appointed Police Advisor to Dublin Castle in May 1920 (and promoted to Lieutenant-General) and is associated with militarising the RIC with the introduction of the Auxiliary forces. Condoning unofficial reprisals against the IRA, his response to reprisals by soldiers and police was ambiguous.

45TRIM: Attacked on September 27 by 200 armed men firing rifles and throwing bombs. Town Hall, shops and houses burned and many others wrecked. Reprisal for Sinn Fein attack on Trim barricade’ (Martin 177).

46Kaiser Wilhelm II (1859–1941). During the First World War, Lloyd George supported the move to hold the Kaiser legally responsible for crimes against humanity, for causing the war and for violations of the laws and customs of war. In evoking this comparison, Woolf is charging the British Government with moral, political and legal responsibility for acts of murder against civilians in Ireland.

47Tsarist oppression of liberty and poor land reform over many decades resulted in the 1917 Russian Revolution and a civil war in 1918. The conflict between Bolsheviks (Reds), Russian Army (Whites), Socialists Revolutionaries and others led to a massive escalation of civilian deaths. Britain supported the Whites in the Civil War.

48Published by the War Office, the full text of the excerpt from The Manual of Military Law (1917) reads: ‘455. Although there is no rule of international law respecting the matter, reprisals should never be resorted to by the individual soldier but only by order of a commander’ (305). Collective acts of punishment of the general population are ‘forbidden’, though law 458 allows for it: ‘when it may be necessary to resort to reprisals against a locality or community, for some act committed by its inhabitants, or members who cannot be identified’ (305). Reprisals ‘must not, however, be excessive and must not exceed the degree of violence committed by the enemy’ (305).

49Released from prison in 1919 after a conviction for fraud, Frank Digby Hardy, also known as John Gooding (1868–1930), was recruited in May 1920 by British Intelligence to collect information on Michael Collins. Brigadier-General Sir Ormonde de l’Épée Winder (1875–1962) directed the Combined Intelligence Service from Dublin Castle. His operatives were known as the Cairo Gang.

50This is probably a reference to William J. Oliver (1774–1827), a police informer and provocateur, also known as the Spy, who was exposed as such by the press.
seems to ordain that we shall always relapse into the morals of an earlier age when we deal with a crisis in Ireland. The devastation of Ireland under Elizabeth in the sixteenth century was carried out with even greater savagery than that which marked our treatment of Scotland in the fourteenth. To-day, after solemnly lecturing Europe on the sacred right of every small nation to its freedom in this age of democracy, we repeat the crimes against which most decent Englishmen protested over a century ago. Mr. Asquith, therefore, does not exaggerate when he calls the last nine months ‘the most deplorable and scandalous chapter even in the annals of Irish Government’ (see the Liberal Magazine, 1920). That chapter is the work of a Government, unembarrassed by an Opposition, and enjoying greater power and ampler opportunities than any Government for a century. What has the House of Commons to say to it?