

THE RIVAL POLICIES.

By Éamonn Ceannt.

From *The Irish Volunteer*, October 31, 1914.

Up to the eve of the Convention almost 170 companies of the Irish Volunteers had taken their stand by the constitution and the original Provisional Committee. This result is little short of remarkable in view of the forces of misrepresentation and suppression levelled against those who refuse to be bribed or cajoled into standing in with the British Empire. Many companies are still neutral and many Volunteers are yet in doubt as to the real issue.

The honest advocates of Mr. Redmond's recruiting policy are few in number. The bulk of his present followers adhere to him from a feeling of loyalty towards him for past services. But the issue is not Redmond versus MacNeill or Constitutional agitation versus Sinn Féin.

The question is one of rival policies.

The newly created National Volunteers who acclaim Mr. Redmond as their leader and their prophet hold that Ireland, having obtained a promise of Home Rule, without recourse to force or violence, will do well now to depend once more on British promises. By becoming loyal to England the great heart of the British public will be stirred, and a satisfactory Amending Bill will be forthcoming 'after the war is over.'

The fallacy of their argument is the assumption that England has ever in fact redressed an Irish grievance before the Irish people had made clear their determination to take the law into their own hands. The land of Ireland was not wrested from the English planters by pious resolution, but by organised and determined illegality. The Irish Church was not disestablished by the desire of the British democracy to prove its great-heartedness. Its disestablishment was accomplished by the Fenian conspiracy; such, at least was Gladstone's

explanation. Catholic Emancipation was won as soon as Wellington perceived that it was a question of that or civil war. The placing of Home Rule in its present comparatively satisfactory position is due immediately, if not primarily, to the silent threat of the Irish Volunteers. The gun-running at Howth on July 26th tore up King George's Proclamation against the importation of arms by Irish Nationalists—a vile piece of coercion procured by the connivance and consent of Mr. Redmond and his Party.

These few facts will help to burst up the fallacy that so-called constitutional agitation is Ireland's best weapon. When that weapon broke in Mr. Redmond's hands, the new-old weapon of physical force—to wit, the Irish Volunteers—was quickly forged, and its quiet forging served Home Rule.

And what policy do the founders of the Volunteers put forth against the new recruiting departure?

They claim to have countered Carsonism; to have roused a National spirit in Ireland; to have made clear that they were determined on Home Rule—at least—whatever the pledge-breaking Liberals might say or do.

They argue that Ireland owes no gratitude to England; that Home Rule is not yet a fact; that England's difficulty IS Ireland's opportunity; that Ireland needs all her men to stand up to a victorious England or to DEMAND its rights from a beaten England.

Mr. Redmond claims that England, victorious, will be generous to a 'loyal' Ireland, even though such 'loyalty' will have cost Ireland 50,000 men. History belies Redmond's claim.

The Irish Volunteers maintain that a strong and armed Ireland will get better terms from England. History and commonsense support the Volunteers.

Mr. Redmond holds out to the people of Ireland the dreary prospect of no Home Rule during the war; 50,000 Irishmen dead or dying for England on the battlefields of France; and finally a 'satisfactory' Amending Bill—perhaps.

This inglorious result is to be achieved by a badly armed but very much controlled Volunteer Force loyal to England; by the packed Convention, a machine-made public opinion and a Shame-Squire Press in alliance with Dublin Castle and in constant touch with the War Office.

The Irish Volunteers, on the other hand, relying on the National instinct of that considerable minority who are unaffected by Freeman's Journal felon-setting, by bribery, corruption and intimidation, invite the people of Ireland to demand that Home Rule be put in force without the alteration of a comma and without a day's delay. They invite the manhood of Ireland to pledge itself against Redmond's proposed partition of Ireland, and they declare war to the bitter end against the enactment in Ireland of any form of compulsory military duty in the service of England or under the control of the War Office.