‘Meeting of Dublin Suffragists’, *Irish Times*, 10 Aug. 1912.

FURTHER SCENES IN THE PARK

THE POLICE AND FREE SPEECH

Uproar and considerable interruption was a leading feature of a meeting held by the advocates of the women’s franchise movement in Phoenix Park on Saturday afternoon. The scenes witnessed were almost a repetition of what took place at some recent gatherings of a similar character in the city. But for the exception of the throwing of a missile at one of the speakers, all attempts at molesting the women or their friends were checked by the police, a large force of whom were present.

The gathering took place near the Nine Acres, where, upon the arrival of the suffragists, a huge crowd assembled, and from the outset displayed a hostile attitude. Several attempts were made to rush the platform which consisted of a seat under a cluster of trees, but were frustrated, and the speakers of whom there were three, were more effective in their campaign than they have been form some time past, because they succeeded in having the major portion of their observation heard.

It was noticed that in addition to the women there were present in the crowd many male sympathisers with the movement, but of those openly identified with it the following were the principals – Mrs Emerson, Miss Bloxham, Mrs Evans, Miss Laird, Miss Keevy, and Mrs Sheehy Skeffington.

Vigorous hissing, booing, and groaning greeted the speakers at almost every stage of the proceedings, which were opened by the police taking the precaution of forming a wide space between the mob and the position taken up by the suffragist.

While this movement was being carried out Superintendent Gordon, who with Inspector Lowry was in charge of the police force informed those present that it was his intention to uphold the right of free speech for the parties addressing the meeting. He pointed out that if the conduct indulged in on the previous Saturday were repeated he would order his men to use their batons, and would also prosecute those who tried to put own free speech by noise, interruptions, or my other overt acts of hostility. This warning was received with cries of – “There is no freedom of speech in Belfast”.

In the course of further interruption there were cries of “We want Skeffy” and “Home Rule” and “Shut up.”

Miss Bloxham said they should be ashamed of themselves, and the interrupters sang with great lustiness. “A Nation Once Again.”

Miss Bloxham – The man who wrote “A Nation Once Again” would be ashamed of you if he were here. Your behavior is sufficient to make him turn in his grave. When you sing that song you are degrading the nation.

A MISSILE THROWN

These words were uttered with great determination, and the crowd retorted with prolonged groaning, and from one portion of it a sod was thrown, which, however, missed Miss Bloxham, and landed on the face of an individual a short distance away who was prominent amongst the interrupters. A good deal of excitement followed, and the police had considerable difficulty in repelling a rush on the part of the people.

Shortly afterwards the name and addresses of some persons who appeared to be ring leaders were taken by the police, with a view, it was stated, to a prosecution.

Mr Sheehy-Skeffington then stood up, and was accorded a very hostile reception, which he appeared to regard with a considerable satisfaction. His opening words were – “Ladies and gentlemen, and members of the Ancient Order of Hooligans”. He

proceeded to deal with the Home Rule Bill, but owing to the continued howling it was almost impossible to hear his words.

At one period the people became so excited that their efforts to storm the platform were only thwarted by the police after using a good deal of force, and further names and addresses were taken of persons who were prominent as interrupters.

THE PHOENIX PARK MURDERS

The singing of "A Nation Once Again" was the next form of interruption to which Mr Skeffington was subjected, but he said – "I hear some people talk about the hatchet, but I would ask did they ever think of what was done not very far from here in another cause."

A Voice – "That was done for a nation".

Mr Skeffington – There is a man here who defends that crime, and says it was done for a nation. We should remember that when the men of Ireland were in a state of revolution they stopped at nothing – not, even at assassination. The women of England were in a state of revolution now, and let them take care and not drive the women of Ireland into a state of revolution. They were not in that state yet, and so far the movement was not embittered so much as it was in England, but they should not be exasperated as the women in England were, for in time their patience would be exhausted, and "I warn the Government and the Irish party in time," he said, "to concede the just and constitutional demand of Irishwomen."

Loud cheering and hooting marked the closing observations of the speaker, and amidst, the din the announcement was made that a meeting would be held on the following Saturday at 3.30 o'clock.

The proceedings then concluded, and a Mr. Skeffington passed through the crowd escorted by a large body of police, he was the object of a very hostile demonstration.

On gaining the highway he mounted his bicycle and rode off, and as he did so he appeared to be highly delighted with the situation, and bade adieu to those who had protected him by waving his cap back at them.

In the meantime, the women were protected by the police until some male companions appeared on the scene, and conveyed them to safety out of the Park, but the police in no way relaxed their vigilance until they were convinced that all danger of molestation had passed away.