QUESTIONS ON THE DOCUMENT

This cartoon appeared in Freeman’s Weekly in 1891.

1. Who is the woman?
2. Explain why she is sitting like this and what the cartoonist meant by that caption which means “we will rise again”.

6.2 THE HOME RULE PARTY AFTER PARNELL
1891-1906

HOME RULE DIVIDED 1891-95

After Parnell’s death the division among Home Rulers remained:

- His supporters, the **Parnellites**, elected John Redmond as their leader and continued their fight. In the general election of 1892 they received about one third of the votes, but only won nine seats. Over the next eight years they held on to this level of popular support.

- His opponents, the **anti-Parnellites**, won 72 MPs in 1892. Led by Justin McCarthy, they were committed to an alliance with the Liberals and had no freedom to manoeuvre, so they made little impact on parliament, despite their numbers.

THE SECOND HOME RULE BILL, 1893

Gladstone won the 1892 election and at the age of 81 became Prime Minister for the last time. He at once announced that he would bring in his second Home Rule Bill. The Conservatives mocked that he was ‘an old man in a hurry’.
His new Bill differed only slightly from the 1886 Bill. This time it passed the House of Commons but was defeated in the Conservative-dominated House of Lords. Gladstone wanted to lead a campaign to reduce the Lords’ power, but his party had had enough and they forced him to retire in 1894.

1895-1905 THE CONSERVATIVES IN POWER
Many other Liberals were less enthusiastic about Home Rule than Gladstone had been. In the general election of 1895 they played down Home Rule, knowing that it was not very popular with British voters.

They lost anyway and the Conservatives returned to power. They remained in office until 1905 and during these years, Home Rule was out of the question. Instead the Conservatives introduced many important reforms in the hope of winning the Irish away from Home Rule (see pages 116-118).

THE DIVISIONS AMONG HOME RULERS GET WORSE
In 1895 McCarthy retired as leader of the anti-Parnellites. There was a leadership struggle between John Dillon and Timothy Healy. When Dillon won, he pushed Healy out of the party.

That meant that at the end of the 19th century there were three quarrelling parties instead of the one, disciplined and effective party that Parnell had led. It is no wonder that many young nationalists grew dissatisfied with politics and turned with relief to the new cultural movements that were just beginning (see chapter 9).

WILLIAM O'BRIEN AND THE UNITED IRISH LEAGUE
Around 1900 the demand for unity grew. The man who achieved it was Parnell’s former lieutenant, William O’Brien. In 1898 he founded a new land movement. In honour of the centenary of the 1798 United Irish rebellion, he called it the United Irish League.

Its aim was to persuade the government to buy up big farms and re-distribute the land to small farmers in the west. O’Brien believed that these farmers could make a decent living from farming if they had more land.

RE-UNITING THE HOME RULE MOVEMENT
The United Irish League spread quickly. It attracted members of all factions of the Home Rule movement. O’Brien threatened that if they did not re-unite, his movement would take over both of them. Redmond and Dillon realised that the voters were weary of their quarrels. With Davitt and O’Brien acting as mediators, they opened negotiations for unity.

Early in 1900 an agreement was reached. Although Dillon’s faction was bigger, he let Redmond become the leader in the interests of unity. O’Brien’s United Irish League took over from the National League as the party’s organisation in the country.

Even Timothy Healy joined the new party, but not for long. Within two years he and a few followers broke away and formed a separate party. From then until the Home Rule Party was defeated in 1918, there were about ten ‘Healyite’ MPs in parliament. They also had the support of the newspaper magnate, William Martin Murphy (see page 212). His Irish Independent constantly criticised the leadership and tactics of Redmond’s party.
A NEW LAND AGITATION
By 1901 the United Irish League had over 100,000 members. They demanded land purchase. A new Chief Secretary, George Wyndham, who was appointed in 1900, supported a proposal for a conference of landlords and tenants to work out a joint proposal. The 1902 Land Conference drew up a land purchase plan which became the Wyndham Land Act in 1903 (see page 122).

O’BRIEN LEAVES THE PARTY
O’Brien was delighted by the success of the Land Conference. He suggested that other issues like education, and perhaps even Home Rule, could be solved by similar conferences.

John Dillon was horrified. He disliked the Wyndham Act because it was too generous to landlords. Now he argued that only a Home Rule parliament could solve Irish problems. Everything else must wait until Home Rule was won. Redmond sided with Dillon and a disappointed O’Brien left the party and joined forces with Healy.

THE ‘DEVOlUTION CRISIS’
Some southern unionists also thought that conferences could solve the Home Rule problem. Led by Lord Dunraven, who had been involved in the Land Conference, they went for advice to Sir Anthony MacDonnell, the head of the civil service in Dublin Castle. He drew up a plan to run Ireland through elected councils which would have some tax-raising powers. Called ‘devolution’ it was like what Chamberlain had proposed in 1885.

Devolution was a long way short of Home Rule, but even so it outraged Ulster unionists. They were already deeply suspicious of the concessions the Conservatives had made to the nationalists and this plan, coming from a civil servant who was a Catholic, was the last straw. They forced Wyndham to repudiate it and he had to resign.

During the ‘devolution crisis’ Ulster unionists set up the Ulster Unionist Council. It was later important in orchestrating the unionist resistance to the third Home Rule Bill.

1906: THE LIBERAL LANDSLIDE
Late in 1905 the Conservative government was defeated. A general election was held early in 1906. It produced a landslide victory for the Liberal party. At first there was great rejoicing among Irish nationalists, but it soon became clear that the Liberals were in no hurry to re-introduce Home Rule. Many of them were less than enthusiastic about it and with their huge majority there was little Redmond could do to push them along. It was to be several frustrating years before Home Rule finally became an issue once again.

Sir Anthony MacDonnell (1844-1925):
Born in Mayo, MacDonnell had a distinguished career in the British civil service in India. In 1902 Wyndham appointed him Under Secretary (head of the Irish civil service), the first Catholic to hold the post. A liberal and a Home Ruler, he believed in reconciliation and reform.