

## THE DRIVE ON THE POPE

(By SHANE LESLIE, in America.)

It has always been a great mistake to try to drive or drag or even divert the Pope from the balance which his position has acquired during the centuries. The Papacy is the only existing institution which has faced in the past what the modern States are now facing. The Papacy preceded them and the Papacy will survive them. To be true to its warrant the Papacy must also be above them.

This paper is not to call attention to the anti-Papal drive which the gross folly of a few newspapers have adopted as a substitute for a successful one in the military field, but to point out the brilliant vindication of the Papal position which has been published by the Anglican Society of SS. Peter and Paul from an anonymous pen. One does not expect to find a defence of the Pope from George Street, Hanover Square, but nevertheless, it has appeared and in the ironic manner of the Oxford school, which touched its highest level under Newman.

Under the title of *No Small Stir* the author discusses "What the Pope really said about the great war," taking as his text from the Acts of the Apostles, "Now as soon as it was day there was no small stir among the soldiers what was become of Peter." Which we can possibly paraphrase to-day in such words as "The belligerents became very excited as to what the Pope was doing!"

The Pope apparently still counts in the mind of the world. What he thinks is important and what he says is even more important still. Possibly the Pope's cell is the only sane portion left in the world's mind. The world, like a fireship adrift, is aware of no immediate anchorage save in the anchorite of the Vatican. Other anchorage there may be, but the fires may have destroyed the ship first. When the time comes for peace to be discussed it seems that it will be difficult for statesmen to refuse the historical availability of the Pope. It must be understood that the Pope has the right to suggest peace, as he has the right to be neutral.

Our anonymous writer takes the meanest of war-cries that partisan or publicist has in stock, "The Pope Pro-German!" and shows that because the Pope stands on higher ground than even the Allies it is a fatuous argument to accuse him of being on the entirely lower levels of Prussianism. The amazing idea has been propagated that the Papal system of authority is the complement of militarism rather than democracy, and that the prefix of *holy* is all that is required to make the German Empire accord with the mightiest concept of the Middle Ages, the twin rule of Pope and Emperor! People forget that the Popes had enough difficulty in ordering one Emperor. They are not likely to wish to associate themselves with *two* in any scheme of world-dominion such as Pan-Germanism involves.

One of the results of the war is that the all-obtrusive prefix "pan" is dead. Pan-Germanism died in Belgium three years ago. Pan-Slavism perished on the barricades of Petrograd. Pan-Anglo-Saxondom expired as a myth when the polyglot draft-lists were published on this side. Even Pan-Americanism has apologetically made itself the handmaid of the "League of Nations." The selfish or exclusive ideas masked under the prefix of "pan" have been sunk in the general pandemonium.

Amid the chaos only one organisation retains its universal claim and influence. The importance of the Papacy is that it still directs a Pan-Church. Its only rival is the Pantheon of the sects, which having the caputular advantage of the Hydra can line up not only its children, but its different heads on the different sides which the geography of the great war may compel. The children of the Church are no less on different sides, but having only one head they must agree to his neutrality.

The neutrality of the Pope is the only fixed stake in Christendom, the only security that the maelstrom will slowly lessen, the only hope that peace, when it comes, will be less furious than war. The Vatican is a Noah's Ark, politically and spiritually floating on the raging flood. As Noah kept company with all manner of animals it is only right for the Pope to keep in touch with all manner of nationalities. His only ambassador must be the dove.

To those who most violently demand that the Pope should abandon his neutrality and sit in political judgment over the battling Governments of Europe our anonymous writer suggests: "This argument is a very strong one, if those who employ it are ready to stand by their premises. Are they willing to restore the Pope to the position he held in the Middle Ages?" In other words, the critics of the Pope cannot have their cake and eat it at the same time. They cannot exclude the Pope from his position as universal referee in the moral law and then resent that he has made no Hildebrandine judgments. Under his guiding principles the Pope cannot become a political asset of the Allies any more than he can be a tool of the Germans. Because he declines to be the one it is a poor argument to accuse him of being the other. Such moral decisions as he has been led to make have, however few, been irreproachable of political intent and have moreover tended towards the principles, if not to the objects of the Allies. The Papal morality is of higher moral value to the Allied cause than if the Vatican had mobilised the Swiss Guards on Belgium's behalf. Our pamphleteer inquires, "What neutral power except the Pope has officially condemned the violation of Belgian neutrality at all?"

That the Pope remains in touch with Germany and that pro-Germans frequent the Roman Curia no more stamps the Pope as pro-German than it convicts a judge of bias who permits counsel for both sides to appear in court. The Papal reprobation of the invasion of Belgium was the only purely disinterested one issued in the world and it had a superior moral value in that the Pope had judiciously heard both sides. It may be useful even at this hour to recall Cardinal Gasparri's words to the Belgian Minister at the Vatican:—

"The violation of the neutrality of Belgium carried out by Germany on the admission of her own Chancellor contrary to international law was certainly one of those injustices which the Holy Father in his consistorial allocution of January 22 strongly reprobated."

The pro-German influences were not very successful in averting this statement at least. The Holy See is open to any good influence provided it is brought to bear in the proper way. It is due to the Germans to acknowledge with our pamphleteer that "The Germans have always had the sense to recognise that the Vatican is a European Power and should be approached as such."

If at times the Pope has been misinformed by one side it is always open to the other side to appeal from the Pope *male informatus* to the Pope *bene informatus*. The Allies are liable to suffer from the awkwardness of their relations with the Vatican in the past. They have a just and an undimmed cause, but they often expect the Pope to do more than the circumstances which they have created themselves will permit. The Vicegerent of the Prince of Peace was excluded from the Peace Conferences. Carnegie was more influential than Cardinals at the Hague. The moral jurisdiction, apart from the theological, was ignored. And to-day there is an unbalanced appeal to the former. It has been accepted that theological disunion is no bar to the progress of civilisation. But moral dissension without a means of central appeal or a rectifying standard, which is spiritual rather than commercial, seems likely to prove fatal. Something is lacking in the modern State. Otherwise so excellently provided, it has been found to have no breaks. It can only move in one direction and cannot reverse even to avoid a collision. There are no breaks available in the secular outfit. In the supreme medieval time the Papal