

## CARDINAL O'CONNELL AND THE IRISH CAUSE

(By SHANE LESLIE, in the *Irish World*.)

Thrice within seven months has Cardinal O'Connell spoken with austere deliberation and unflinching resolution on behalf of Ireland. Early in November he addressed the Government and especially the Catholics of England in the person of the Bishop of Northampton. The British visitors were his guests, and rather than infringe the Irish Sacrament of hospitality, he referred to the Irish cause in the minimum. Freely and faithfully he offered the olive branch. From England no one had the courage to answer. The Armistice came, and with the less stifled atmosphere the Cardinal was willing to carry the cause afield into America. At New York's stupendous gathering of December 10 he appealed to the American Government as represented in the American President. He gave him the superb title of "Wilson of the World," a title of which the President has since allowed himself to be robbed. Only the silent Pontiff can now claim to be of the whole world, whose bruised orb he lifts to a silent heaven. To the Cardinal's New York gesture embodying the demand of a united American hierarchy and of a united Irish-American phalanx there was vouchsafed hardly more than "May I not!" and the people of Ireland and of Irish homes beyond seas forgot Mr. Wilson and only remembered the Wilsoniana—the 14 points.

### Stupendous Aftermath of New York Appeal.

But the Cardinal had stung the conscience of the people of America, and the aftermath of the New York appeal was no less stupendous—the Convention of Philadelphia and the action of the United States Senate. It was only right that the Cardinal who had thrown down the challenge afield should soon signal the victory at home. On June 10, in Mechanics' Hall, Boston, six months exactly since the hosting at New York, he restated the Irish cause without episcopal gloves, and drove the Irish claim on American gratitude to the hilt. Then a third time he appealed in the plenitude of the position thrust upon him—appealed to neither Government, but to the plain English people as represented in Labor. No Cardinal has appealed directly to the advance rank of English Labor since Cardinal Manning put himself at their head and won the London dock strike against the employers.

### Appealed to the Plain People.

In previous utterances the Cardinal never went outside a generous gravity, a studied fairness in his allusions to England and the English power in Ireland. This time he used an unsparing truth and chiselled his rhetoric to a veridic nakedness. His plainness of denunciation paved the way for his later appeal to the plain people. At least he had used terms they could understand. The Senate of the American people had spoken, "Senatus Populus Que Americanus"—and it was supremely fitting that a member of the Senate of the Church should respond to their action and carry out their words into an appeal to the English people. They spoke in a conglomerate body, buoyed by the wishes of the people they represented. The Cardinal spoke out of his loneliness, advised of none and advising none, following his own line like an eagle solitary from the heights.

After defending American idealism from the absurdity of Quixotism, of which so many would wish to advantage themselves, he set forth Ireland's "divine hope of final liberation" as apparent in the American mind. And he used certain very stark and strait phrases in so doing. As he contrasted the secular griefs of Ireland with the ephemeral agonies of Belgium and Serbia, he was wrought to high pitch and soon after he had cried aloud Ireland's share in American freedom

he was seen in his emotion to stop and fall back into a chair. He continued to speak *ex cathedra* amid the hushed reverence of the myriads. Once again he stood up and once again the scarlet-pinioned eagle seemed beaten to earth. But by a supreme effort he raised his towering figure to utter the peroration. With one single upright gesture, resembling that of the Statue of Liberty—with right hand aloft and the light flashing from his opal ring—he uttered his solemn appeal as a Prince of the Church and the honorary head of the house of O'Connell to the people of England that they might hear, where rulers had shown themselves criminally deaf. He turned to the Labor Party of England as representing the people of England. In recalling Ireland's griefs he remembered bitter English sorrows. "Neither the Pope nor the Irish have anything whatever to do with the present squalor of the London slums nor the child labor in the factories." He spoke universally, not locally, and pronounced the tremendous sentence—"The cause of the Irish people is at the same time the cause of the English people."

### Irish Cause, Labor Cause, and Christian Cause in One High Plane.

It was not only an Irish pronouncement, but it was also a Labor pronouncement, carrying the Reconstruction Letter of the Bishops into the Public Tribune, hurling their prudential monitions in the form of a bolt, thunderous rather than fiery. It was the plea of the Bishops countersigned in the Senate of the Church by one who was unafraid to do so. No Prince of the Church has in this generation struck harder at the iniquity of monopoly and greed and exploitation. In sentences short and sinuous, sinister to minds of darkness and reactionalism no doubt, but sublime to the Christian and the humble and the idealist, he succeeded in gathering the Irish cause, the Labor cause, and the Christian cause upon the one high plane. And he ended with a solemnity as though they were his last words upon earth—"To Christ, for whose eternal triumph Ireland has sacrificed her all; to the Church, in whose equality and impartiality all the oppressed among the nations have trusted for their defence; to the great brotherhood of those who labor, Ireland commits the justice of her claims; and though the heavens fall, these three united can never fail!"

So ended the Cardinal's third and final speech. It is now for England to make play on the old chess-board. The Cardinal said check! at New York, and the Senate have made it check-mate! The game seems to go to the Gael. Alleluia!

### Irish Cause Lifted Into Very Eyrie of Heaven.

It would be difficult to estimate the height to which the Irish cause was brought by this simple paragraph. The cause which was abandoned by the unthinking, overawed by the callous and trampled by the propagandist into the dust seemed lifted by strong hands into the very eyrie of heaven—and set whence it can never be dislodged save by folly or crime. And to those who babble of reconstruction without religion, and who build up a world peace and enlist Leagues of Nations without prayer in their councils or the name of God in their script, there was proclaimed a Trinity, which they will yet learn to respect, of Ireland and the Church and Labor. Yet are we forbidden to say that these in their social truth are three causes, but one cause shown in three phases—the cause of organised but unarmed Right against the Might and Materialism of the world. And the Cardinal promised that in unison they shall not fail though the sky crack and the heavens fall. Against Ireland neither the gates of Imperialism nor of Bolshevism shall prevail. *Ruat Coelum, fiat Hibernia!*

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