

WHY THE AMERICAN PEOPLE HATE ENGLAND

(By SHANE LESLIE, in the *New Witness*.)

The most obvious straw showing which ways the winds are blowing, next to the Dover debacle, is the account of Sir Auckland Geddes's dash home. The popularity of the British Ambassador is now apparently so great that at the suggestion of the American Foreign Department the journey was kept a profound secret, possibly lest he should be unduly incommoded by complimentary banquets, Irish addresses, oratorical bouquets, and other signs of the success of British diplomacy in promoting good relations between the two countries.

Geddes's Departure a Hasty Retreat.

Nevertheless, Geddes's departure is after the nature of a hasty retreat. It is true there is a Presidential lull. Geddes can have little further use for Wilson since his failure to deliver the goods promised at Versailles, and Harding has not shown signs of having any special use for Geddes or the diplomacy he represents. New arguments and counters are needed for the game of international poker and Harding obviously comes in with a full house. For the moment Geddes has withdrawn from the cross-roads where the jangling interests of two countries meet or fail to meet. The press has issued a hurried communique containing a list of thorny questions on which he is expected to consider with the Cabinet. Amongst them is the unexpected item of Ireland. The forbidden subject at last is to be forced on the lips of an Ambassador. For six years it has been perfectly well known that the Irish question has been the vital or fatal key to Anglo-American relations, according as it was turned. The furious and astounding flood of events before and since the armistice failed to submerge the Irish question in America, as it was hoped. While some questions have dropped out of America's ken and care, the Irish question has been emphasised. It has long been threatening a crisis, and there is no doubt that St. Patrick's Day will signal a new and possibly final phase. For, a fortnight previous to that date, Mr. Harding will have become President of the United States. It has not been realised on this side that Harding was elected with the full force and concurrence of the Irish-American vote. As a whole, Americans took much the same view of the Peace Treaty as Mr. Keynes, and they showed their contempt for a President who had been wizarded into a Tiger's belly and had barely escaped digestion.

The Power of the Irish-American Vote.

Since his election Harding has made no utterance which should suggest friendliness to British Imperialism. His message to the English-speaking peoples is a Recessional. He is impressed not by their glory, but by their duties to be "restrained, tolerant, and just." The thought of Ireland underlies the whole utterance. It is clear that the policy which thwarts Ireland's self-determination as a nation, indirectly keeps America out of the League of Nations. America is sick of Europe and sick with England. On the complications which have arisen in oil and finance there is no manifest desire to soothe British strain. On the Panama question, which Mr. Wilson gave so decidedly in England's favor, Harding threatens a complete reversal. American, but not British ships, he thinks, should be excused tolls in the Canal. Meantime a British financier is to be sent, not at American request, to discuss some alleviation of the appalling debt to which the British taxpayer is shackled. The anti-British American cares nothing for financial stability between the two countries. He sees that any loosening of funds will help England to continue the war on Ireland as well as to build a navy, equalising matters at sea or on the Panama Canal. Already before his arrival, a resolution has been placed before Congress calling for no remission or slackening of debts. These are concrete, if indirect, examples of the power of the Irish-American vote. Somebody is not only twisting the lion's tail, but his purse-strings as well, which is a much more serious thing in these times.

America More Anti-British Than it Ever Was Anti-German.

It may cause indignation to say that America is at present more anti-British than it ever was anti-German, but it is true, and Geddes knows it. Wilson dragged America into the war after winning his elections on a definite Peace ticket. To-day, if there was war between America and England (which heaven or Lord Northcliffe avert), we are credibly informed that there would be no need of a Conscription Act. The bitter Irish sentiment of political injustice and historical wrong has been working through the American forces and populace at large ever since the Armistice. The Peace Treaty, followed by the war on Ireland, fanned it to epidemic. At Harding's mass meetings it was only necessary to mention England

to rouse the disapproval of the audience. Harding has the tiny group of old Republican leaders, who used to live in the odor of British approval, but he has also received an avalanche of Irish votes, followed by sundry other nationals and the whole progressive party, led by implacable critics of England like Hiram Johnson, Borah, and La Follette. If they were of Harding's opposition, the British Embassy might breathe, but they are of his counsels.

The Irish Difficulty at Boiling Point.

For four years there has been a steady suppression of diplomatic truth. Impolitic propagandists have been sent from England and polite Americans have been entertained in England, who have both conspired to a pretence that the Irish issue is dead in America and wholly exploded in American eyes, thanks to the dud pro-German plots which the British Government reveals at intervals of several years. Meantime the Irish-American difficulty has simmered and boiled until the whole of American political life has been affected and has passed from the simmering to the boiling point. All relations with England, commercial, financial, and naval, have in the political whirlpool become colored and distempered.

Will Geddes Tell the Truth?

Finally, Geddes retreats precipitately. Will he tell the truth or be allowed to? The myth may still be necessary to keep up that America is a purely Anglo-Saxon community and civilisation, dying for alliance with England, but always unexpectedly thwarted by American domestic politics. False diplomacy and false Americans combine to uphold the myth. Incredible harm is done to the relations of the two countries by the ex-Americans, who are encouraged to pour contempt on America in English circles. Foolish representatives report that Ireland is not seriously considered in America. In any case, we are told what do the Americans want? Why cannot they mind their own business? Ireland is a domestic question, etc. But Americans reply that Panama also is a domestic question, and the size of the American navy is a domestic question.

England Has Completely Lost the Public Opinion of America.

There can be little doubt that the truth is that until there is a reasonable, generous, and honorable Irish settlement there can be no financial alleviation with popular American assent, no hope of permanent disarmament or prospect of American entry into the League of Nations. An Anglo-German entente would be easier to negotiate at the present time than an Anglo-American one involving any appeal to the American people and Congressional action. Harding's party has all the appearance of a strong naval party. It also shows every sign of being in sympathy with Ireland.

Geddes is no doubt aware of the truth; but whether he will be allowed to open the eyes of the much-bluffed and long blind-folded British public is another matter. Bryce could afford to blink at the truth in days of peace. Spring Rice discovered it and died in his efforts to meet it. Reading discovered it and wisely retreated. Both Reading and Grey reported the truth, though Reading's speech to the Reform Club was carefully kept out of the press. When their suavity had failed and good manners were believed to be at a discount in American diplomacy, Geddes was sent out on the same principle that the butler is sent to argue with an unconvinced cabman. It is almost inconceivable that such being Anglo-American conditions, the Government should have irritated the Irish sore to eruption. Not only has Ireland been divided from England thereby, but a gulf has been created between England and America which our generation will not see or hear the last of. Yet in the United States, as in Ireland, the majority of the people wish to live at peace and in self-respecting harmony with the English people. But the English Government is one that the American will not touch, even at the other end of a League of Nations. Any friendliness between the two peoples has been postponed out of political sight. England has completely lost the public opinion of America.

England Stinks in American Nostrils.

The change which has taken place in American sentiment within two years is almost incredible. The Armistice found America anxious to make up generously for her delay in entering the war. Germany was anathema. The Kaiser alone was the personified enemy of America, democracy, and small nationalities. Now Lloyd George, Carson, and Hamar Greenwood have succeeded to his base position in American public opinion. No English Minister could any more speak in an American city to-day than Hindenburg or the Crown Prince could in Belgium. If England's Machivellian enemies had been given a free hand to work out their toils, they could not have obtained direr results than the present Cabinet have presented to them. The object lesson of Ireland has brought about