

PROTESTANTS IN IRELAND

THE IRISH QUESTION NOT RELIGIOUS.

The following is an extract from a recent speech of Dr. Cotter in Ironton, Ohio, U.S.A.:—

What is the meaning of this lying about a religious war in Ireland? Why, if it means anything, it is this, that the Catholic is fighting for Ireland's freedom and the Protestant combats to the death the idea of liberty—that, in a word, the Protestant, though born in Ireland, wants the land of his nativity enslaved.

Surely this is a reflection on Protestant manhood, on Protestant patriotism, and yet for all the Protestant world remains passive under the impeachment that the Irish Protestant lacks patriotism and in so far is lacking in the common natural virtue that prompted the pagan writer to declare that "it is sweet and glorious to die for one's country."

Away with the foul aspersion on the Irish Protestant's character? Were I a Protestant as I am, thank God, a Catholic; and were my love of country thus impugned, I would answer the calumniator of my honor, not with a word, but with a blow. The Protestant of Ireland is not a traitor to the land of his birth. He fought for Ireland as did the Catholic with whom he marched to the music of patriotic principle. He died for Ireland, and, though not worshipping at the same altar, his blood, commingling with Catholic blood, crimsoned the great altar of a common country."

Behold the magnificent array of glorious souls, Protestant in Faith, and the national ideals of the grateful Irish people—Molyneux, Grattan, Flood, Dean Swift, Wolfe Tone, Lord Edward Fitzgerald, Gavan Duffy, Robert Emmet, Curran, Mitchel, Thomas Davis, Smith O'Brien, Isaac Butt, and Parnell. These great leaders (nearly all, except O'Connell and Redmond), either on the field, in Cabinet or country, in rostrum or literary sanctum, were every one champions of the Irish cause, and are hallowed names in the mouth of Erin's sons. All these stood for Ireland being the nation that God Himself made and bounteously endowed with everything calculated to conserve her nationhood and to help her reach her own destiny in her own high way.

And yet we see, in to-day's dailies, Sir Hamar Greenwood's pious hope that Ireland will be united. The dear, solicitous champion of murderous discord in Ireland has never read that 81 per cent. of the Irish people, perforce Protestant and Catholic, voted for (and re-confirmed their votes for) the Irish Republic. The biggest liar in Europe, Greenwood, coolly covers up his atrocities in Ireland with execrable falsehoods, and now with consummate hypocrisy "dons the livery of Heaven to serve the devil in." You might as well ask Satan for an opinion of Christ as to question Greenwood for an estimate of a land that his cruel character has devastated. Well, God's in His Heaven, even if the Devil's in his London!

Despite the fact that England's Government has planted Orangeism's hateful bigotry in a small section of the North of Ireland, called it religion and sustained the infamy there by making Carson, its leader, Attorney-General; though there is no such Ulster as that marked by the lines drawn by Lloyd George—lines as imaginary as the Equator; though the English Government continues to forge fake bulletins of Dail Eireann as it forged misrepresentations of Washington in his day, trying to knock the heart out of fighters for freedom; though the American journalists are ordered out of Ireland so that England's villainy may have savage license to interfere with the people's exercise of the franchise in the coming elections; yet, for all, truth will eventually come to the people abroad, and they will learn with indignation how the English propaganda has dared to deceive them regarding the "religious question in Ireland," and every other question that appertains to Irish affairs—avenging the insult given to our glorious land in making it a vomiting ground for England's falsehoods.

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PROGRESSIVE AND INTENSE REPRESSION: MR. ASQUITH'S INDICTMENT

Mr. Asquith made another attack on the Irish policy of the Government in a speech which he delivered on April 9 at a meeting of the Women's National Liberal Federation at the Central Hall, Westminster. Mrs. Walter Runciman presided.

The resolution moved by the Liberal leader was "that this meeting declares its abhorrence of the British Government's policy and methods of coercion in Ireland. It calls for an immediate truce and amnesty, and for the withdrawal of the Auxiliary forces from Ireland, and urges the Government to enter into immediate negotiations with the elected representatives of the Irish people."

For nearly a year, said Mr. Asquith, the Government's policy of progressive and intensive repression had been in full operation, and by every test that could be applied, and by their own confession it was a complete, abject, and humiliating failure.

Lucid Intervals.

There had been lucid moments when the Government had brought themselves to see that what confronted them was not a mere conspiracy of cut-throats, but a formidable, growing, and authentic national movement. There was the nebulous adventure of "Mr. Edwardes," whose precise relations with his official patrons was still a matter wrapped in the obscurity of night.

Quite recently there had been an interview which he regarded as more important because it was more hopeful of potential result—an interview which must have taken place with the presumed connivance of the Government between Sir James Craig and de Valera.

These comings and goings and interchanges were somewhat difficult to reconcile with the murder gang theory.

Mr. Asquith referred to the burnings, lootings, and other crimes, and said these things were denied, condoned, and then deplored. Reprisals now were officially recognised and regularised.

A Foul Stain.

"What is the result?" asked Mr. Asquith. "The name and fame of Great Britain has been smirched with a fouler stain than has ever rested upon it before. The Sinn Fein movement is stronger than ever, and in the course of this very month, by universal acknowledgment, it is going to carry all the seats in a Parliament in which the members elected will contemptuously refuse to sit."

It was a situation that called not only for heart-burnings and heart-searching, but for action. Even now it appeared to him that if the Government were frankly and openly to proceed on the lines of the resolution before the meeting a way of escape would be found.

Let there be a complete, reciprocal, and unqualified truce—and after that amnesty. If ever there was a case for amnesty it was this case of Ireland. What would then follow? (A voice: Justice.)

Something more than justice was to follow. They were to give to Ireland—for they would then have in these two bodies which were being called into existence people who had gone through the form of popular election—that same status of nationhood, self-government, and Dominion autonomy which had been in every quarter of the globe the real nexus of our imperial unity.

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