

## *IRISH DYNAMICS*

AT this juncture, St. Patrick's-tide, 1920, being the hundred and twentieth anniversary of a Union which without uniting Ireland to England has come near to disuniting totally the whole English-speaking world, it is best to consider the Irish question not as theory or sentiment, but in the light of cold dynamics.

There is no certainty in political forces ; but the economical approach the status of an exact science. Enthusiasms, hatreds, friendships, agreements, disagreements may be transmuted or evaporated between nations over-night. Journalism can play a great part in creating friendliness or arousing hatred, but, as its name implies, its influence must be ephemeral unless some material event or economic tendency pin it down. A good instance of this was William Hearst's power to fill the United States with a hatred for Spain, but which required the sinking of a warship to materialize. Idealisms may blaze up for the moment. They may even flicker for centuries like will-o'-the-wisps on the fringe of the world's thought, but they can never be reduced to practice without the conjunction of economical laws which are as blind and ruthless as those of Nature herself.

The Irish Question has been so long drawn out because the laws of economy have militated against Ireland. The balance between a coal-bearing industrial country must bear against a turf-burning agricultural one. Any friction must be of the nature of the friction between an iron and an earthen pot. The concessions England has made to Ireland have been due not to economical laws or financial pressure so much as to Parliamentary violences and obstructions. These tactics have been clearly proved capable

## *Blackfriars*

of bringing about anything for Ireland except the least form of self-determination.

The Sinn Fein movement has placed its trust on external rather than domestic politics, on International influences rather than a limited appeal to Nationalism at home. It is no longer necessary to argue whether Sinn Fein is just or unjust, agreeable to Catholicism or not, acceptable to England or not. All that is material is whether it is directly or indirectly supported by the new economical forces loose in the world or not. The Turk apparently stays in Europe, not that the sentiment of Christendom is not strong against him, but because the fall of the last Islamite sovereign would disturb India and the English commerce of the East. While the Empire is largely Moslem, England must abide the Grand Turk. Likewise, while a part of the American population is Irish, England must come to deal gently and generously with Ireland. Her concessions to Turkey will be in ratio with her interests in India, and her final concession to Ireland may be accurately gauged by the economic pressure she is beginning to feel from the United States.

That England will be compelled to give Ireland more in peace than in war time is due to the fact that during the war she was unable to estimate accurately the power of the Irish in the States, whereas events since the Conference in Paris have shown that that power cannot be long minimized or withstood. During the war the British Government took the view that America ought to come into the war as a kindred British people. America was really more kind than kin, and the Government made the miscalculation that America could be brought in over the Irish sentiment and purely on England's own merits. The truth was that America came in on Germany's demerits in so far as they affected America. Then a

## *Irish Dynamics*

great deal of gush was written and spoken about the return of a sister to a sister's bosom, and earnest propagandists from the Old Country addressed mixed audiences containing Jews, Niggers or Germans as fellow-Britons. This was harmless, except so far as it riled the Irish-American. The true policy after the entry of America into the war was to use the ground gained to conciliate the Irish at home and abroad. It is useless now to recall the proposals which the far-sighted then proposed towards securing the institutions of liberty under an American guarantee to Ireland, an Irish Brigade in the field and a general clearance of feeling towards a permanent Anglo-American understanding. Suffice to say that they were thrown down on the unfounded supposition that the war had killed the Irish movement in America.

As every visitor to America knows, it became the one vital, virescent and virulent cause which came out of the war in the American mind. As the mists of the war rolled away, the Irish cause was found to be in a new and more powerful position in America than ever. It was allied with the American sentiment in a number of directions, and with its Allies proved capable of defeating the Treaty in the Senate. It also made the efforts of two such first-class minds as those of Lords Reading and Grey of null effect, and left their empty berth about as pleasant to occupy as that of a British Commander in Cologne, perhaps less pleasant, for the lonely British commander on the Rhine is resting on a victory, whereas Washington is the scene of the greatest British diplomatic defeat ever incurred.

While the pressure from the United States was a sentimental one, it could be deftly avoided, but when the United States became not only a commercial and naval rival, but a gigantic creditor of England, the situation became very complicated. It is not necessary

## *Blackfriars*

to discuss the reasons, but it remains a fact that the Irish share in American politics is a predominant one. The Irish Boss is preferred by those bossed to the Boss of Jewish or German extraction, and the Irish Boss produces wonderful results. The almost unanimous vote of the Senate in favour of Irish self-determination was a powerful achievement. It might have remained like a flash from the blue had it not soon been reinforced by certain economical movements which further fell upon British apprehension. The pound lost its value compared to the dollar, and so far from financial relief being granted, the United States decided to close down any further loans to Europe. It became obvious that the financial hegemony of the world had passed from London to Washington, where it might be subject to an indirect Irish influence which would have been impossible in Europe. As a symbol we may take the signature of a Connaught Burke on dollar bills, which corresponds to the Bradbury token on English notes. It is obvious that there is not a politician in America with an Irish vote who will not make it as hard as possible for the British pound to make a recovery.

A more serious matter is the naval question. Admiral Sims, one of those indiscreet friends from whom England may pray to be delivered, has been making it plain on investigation that the naval aid given by America during the war was at least faint-hearted for some unexplained reason. Since the war there has risen a cry in America appealing to very different elements for naval disarmament with the open threat that if there are to be big navies in the future, America has every right to the biggest. On her enormous sea-front this is obvious, and what is more to the point, she is the only power to-day who can afford the biggest Navy. Some very significant figures appeared in *The Times* of March 11, showing

## *Irish Dynamics*

that, whereas the capital ships of Britain were to-day twenty-eight to America's nine, according to programme by 1925 America would have twenty-seven to Britain's twenty-nine. The programme of an immediate supreme Navy has been kept back in Congress, but in ten years it is obvious that America at her present rate will have achieved that end and will have out-distanced Britain and Japan together. This does not entail war, but it does entail the relentless and silent pressure of economical laws which will be felt in the commerce and shipping of the world.

It is quite obvious that the British Government has begun to scent a possible danger in advance. Mr. Long has deprecated any naval competition, which Americans point out is always the position of the country which already has the biggest navy. But his words show that he has sniffed a possible enemy. Many straws show that the Cabinet realize that American enmity is not worth the candle. Sir Edward Carson has obliged them to the extent of cancelling the Ulster Covenant, and historical Unionism has been scrapped. Significant was the act of Sir Auckland Geddes, who before leaving for America found it prudent to encourage his female domestics to assume the shamrock on St. Patrick's Day, and to allow the fact to be borne to amused American notice by the solemn trumpeting of *The Times* !

It is obvious that very mighty economical influences are at work in Ireland's behalf, and only the greatest prudence, wisdom, and generosity to Ireland is likely to avert their consequences.

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