

negotiations. While the great labor organizations, which now have a large part in creating public opinion in Great Britain, have in the main gone hand in hand with the Government, there may be detected in their most recent deliverances a disposition to listen to any peace proposals that are not too far from British ideals. There are increasing signs of the co-operation of labor interests in all the countries to resist the development of militarism. Out of these conditions there will certainly grow, in the British Labor party, a larger desire for peace and a greater disposition to find a common ground of action. Leaders in all the countries will for the present feel bound to show a firm front to the enemy, but, as Lord Lansdowne suggests, the people may take a more active part in moulding the policies of their respective countries and in bringing about a cessation of hostilities. Peace of the kind that Germany has been talking of will find few, if any, friends within the British Empire. But the German people may yet oblige their Government to modify their declarations, and when this takes place there will be a larger disposition among the British people to find a ground upon which may be built a clean and lasting peace. To maintain firmly the standards of justice which have been raised, insisting upon reparation for all wrongs, but at the same time be ready to meet any desire for an honorable peace that may be manifested by the people of the enemy nations, must be the attitude of the British people and their allies. Until evidence of such desire is clearly in sight, the only thing to do is to "carry on."

Uncle Sam and the Irish Question

IT WAS widely reported in the American and British press that the United States Government had made representations to the British Government as to the great importance of a happy settlement of the question of Home Rule for Ireland. In the British House of Commons, in reply to a question, a representative of the Government gave a broad denial to this report. Now Sir Edward Carson, in addressing his Ulster supporters, has devoted some attention to the subject and has argued that, for various reasons, the report as to the American action could not be correct.

No doubt these denials are well founded. Such official action as was alleged to have been taken by the United States would have been highly improper and would have been justly resented by the British Government and people. Nevertheless, it is more than probable that in an unofficial way, in a very informal way, through the medium of people who knew how to do the thing without having it take any official shape, British public men have been given to understand that a happy settlement of the Irish question would go far towards strengthening the bonds of union now formed between Great Britain and the United States. The grievances of Irishmen—whether real or fancied—have on many an occasion served to promote an anti-British feeling in the United States. Whenever any cause of difficulty between the two countries arose a large part of the numerous Irish population of the Republic fanned the flames of discord. Nine out of ten Irishmen who came to America from the Emerald Isle during the past half century came with a conviction that Ireland had been misgoverned and oppressed by the British Cabinet. That much of this feeling was unwarranted, that whatever wrongs existed had been magnified, and that the remedial efforts

of British public men had been undervalued, was true enough, but this did not alter the fact that the Irish emigrants carried with them into the United States a bitter feeling towards England. Statesmanship must take account of things as they are, more than of things as we might wish them to be. It is a simple fact that for many years this feeling has operated against good relations between the States and Great Britain, and even against good relations between the United States and Canada. It was dislike of England, not dislike of Canada, that created the Fenian raid of many years ago. Canada was the nearest point at which the British flag was flown. Therefore Canada became a place where this Irish hostility to Great Britain might be exhibited. The situation is not so bad to-day. A large section—the great majority we hope—of the Irish American people are heartily in sympathy with the action of the United States Government in joining Great Britain and France in the war against Germany. But even now there is an irreconcilable section of Irish American citizens who are less cordial than they should be, simply because they cannot lay aside the anti-British feeling that they have cherished for many years.

All this, we may be sure, has been made clear to the public men of Great Britain. It should have much weight among all who desire to see the old Irish question settled and the present friendly relations between Great Britain and the United States strengthened. Though it may have no place on the official agenda of the Convention at Dublin, the desirability of a better sentiment among the Irish of America towards Great Britain may well be considered as forming a strong reason why a satisfactory settlement of the Home Rule question should be reached.

A Slow Reform

THE arguments in favor of what is called Proportional Representation seem to be most convincing to most of those who are not called upon to deal with the subject in a practical way. It is the theory rather than the practice that finds favor. The consequences that flow from the present system of elections for most of our public bodies are often so ridiculous that one wonders how the system can be defended at all. Under the practice of having single member constituencies, a bare majority in each case returns a man to Parliament, and it is possible, by having this bare majority in each constituency, for fifty one per cent of the voters to elect a complete House, leaving 49 per cent of the people without any representation at all. This has not yet happened as respects the whole Dominion, but it has actually happened as respects more than one Province. Inequitable conditions only less extensive have arisen from almost every election. A few years ago the Province of Nova Scotia elected the whole eighteen members from the Liberal side of politics. At the same time British Columbia elected a full Liberal ticket. In both Provinces there were large bodies of Conservatives who were left entirely unrepresented. In Ontario, when little more than one half of the people were of one political faith, they elected more than three fourths of the members of the House of Commons. In the recent general election 62 out of 65 of the members returned from Quebec were Liberals opposed to the Government. There is no doubt that the general sentiment of the people was against the Government, but it would be folly to claim that the extent of the Government's support in the Province is fairly represented by three members out of sixty five.

Results like these seem to call for some re-adjustment of the election machinery. The system of grouping members, proposed by the advocates of Proportional Representation, holds out the hope of a fairer representation of the people. Yet the new system makes little progress.

Proportional Representation belongs to the class of legislation usually called "progressive." It ought to find favor among those who stand for democracy. That it does not do so has just been forcibly shown in England. In dealing with the new Representation Bill, which includes the enfranchising of millions of women, the House of Commons refused to adopt the system of Proportional Representation. The House of Lords, the body naturally inclined towards conservatism, surprised the people by adopting, by a decisive vote, an amendment to enact the system of Proportional Representation. Now the House of Commons has again rejected the proposed change and insisted that generally the old system of single member constituencies shall be continued.

The chief cause of the failure of Proportional Representation to make more rapid progress is, we believe, that the system is somewhat complicated and not easily explained to the "man on the street." If the system could be seen in actual operation, in all probability it would find general favor. Some enterprising citizens of Ottawa succeeded in obtaining public approval of the system by a direct vote of the electors, but the Government and Legislature of Ontario decided that such rash disregard of time honored election methods could not be allowed! So the efforts of the Ottawa reformers were promptly snuffed out. As a compromise the British House of Commons has agreed to allow the proposed method to be employed in a number of constituencies. There is every reason to hope that this step will lead to a better knowledge of the system and a wider adoption of it at no distant day. Even the Government of Ontario may awake to a knowledge of the fact that the world moves.

The Supreme Court

THE business of Canada's greatest court is practically at a standstill owing to lack of a quorum of judges. The Registrar has telegraphed far and wide to the lawyers that, except in cases where by agreement both parties are satisfied to proceed without a quorum, it is not worth their while to go to Ottawa, as no business other than cases so agreed upon can be taken up. One of the judges is laid aside by illness. Another has been commandeered from the business of the court to sit as an appeal judge under the Military Service Act, a work likely to keep him busy for a long period. Although the present circumstances are peculiar, it is not the first time that the business of our highest court has been stopped for want of a quorum. There is urgent need of an amendment to the Supreme Court Act which would provide for the appointment of a temporary judge to sit in case of such emergency. Provision should be made for the calling in—probably by the Court itself—of the services of one of the judges from the higher Provincial courts, either the Chief Justice or a senior judge, or a judge of the Exchequer Court. The wisdom of taking away judges of the Supreme Court for extra-judicial duties when such action may stop the Court's business, is open to question. But if such a practice is to be allowed, there certainly should be provision for the appointment of another judge to meet emergencies.

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