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LONDON, SATURDAY, MAY 19, 1917

RUSSIA

Affairs in Russia, so far as we have reliable information on which to base a judgment, appear to be in a chaotic state. Since local self-government had long been enjoyed, and the Duma had given the whole country ten years of experience in limited Parliamentary Government, it might have been expected that the Revolution would adapt itself without very great difficulty to existing institutions; and that these institutions would lend themselves to the necessary inclusion of powers hitherto exercised by the autocratic and bureaucratic system.

However, it may help materially to understand the present situation, its possibilities and its difficulties, if we have a clearer notion of those Russian institutions as they existed before the Revolution.

All are familiar with the Duma; it corresponds, more or less, to the British House of Commons. The House of Lords has its Russian counterpart in the Council of the Empire. The Duma, however, is very far from being representative of the masses of the Russian people; and while under the old regime this may have been an element of strength, it must now be its chief element of weakness. The Duma consists of 442 members elected by an exceedingly complicated system, so manipulated as to secure an overwhelming preponderance for the wealthy and especially the landed classes, and also for the representatives of the Russian as opposed to the subject peoples. The members are not elected directly by the people, but by electoral colleges, and under actual conditions these are controlled by the very conservative elements, a certain minimum number of each class, however, must be returned. But as the peasant members, for instance, are selected by the reactionary landowners, they are not likely to represent fairly the opinion of the peasantry. That there are any really democratic elements at all in the Duma is due to the special franchise enjoyed by the seven largest cities—Petrograd, Moscow, Kiev, Odessa, Riga, Warsaw and Lodz. Although in these, also, special advantage is given to wealth, the other classes have the opportunity of selecting their own restricted number of members.

The Zemstvos, of which we have lately heard a good deal, are of two kinds—district and provincial. They correspond roughly to our county councils and provincial legislatures. But their members, like the members of the Duma, are elected by the wealthier classes. In fact it is on the Zemstvos that the electoral system of the Duma is modelled. The one really democratic institution in Russian local self-government is the Mir. The assembly of the mir consists of all the peasant householders of the village; they elect a headman (starosta). A number of mirs unite to form a volost, or township, which has an assembly of delegates elected by the mirs. These local institutions enjoy a remarkable degree of self-government. The mir is an immemorial institution and is governed largely by traditional local customs. The mir assumed only a communal responsibility for taxes, and determined for itself the incidence of taxation on individuals. Likewise if, say, twenty men were required for the army, the mir selected the individuals who were to make up that number. In recent years encroachments have been made or attempted on the time-honored rights

and privileges of these peasant communities; a fact that does not now make easier the gigantic task of reorganizing the government of a country, three-quarters of whose vast population belong to the peasant class. It will be easy to understand how the illiterate peasants with their immemorial rights of self-government could regard with affection and reverence the Czar as their "Little Father." Those whom they feared and distrusted were nearer home. Hence it may be that the reactionary forces would find their greatest strength in the peasantry.

The bad old order of bureaucratic repression bred a sort of liberal and radical hardly distinguishable from the anarchist. And while the vast mass of the Russian peasantry concerns itself only with local conditions these extremists have an unduly large voice in present conditions.

The Duma, if it really represented the Russian people, would be the natural organ of government. But the Duma, constituted as it is, does not possess the confidence of the people, who, moreover, have a very imperfectly developed national consciousness. Class interests, not national considerations, govern the various classes, nationalities, races and creeds of the two hundred millions of people suddenly released from the only system of common government they ever knew.

The task of the Provisional Government is, therefore, colossal. With an army electing its own officers, abolishing the "slavish Sir" and the salute on the part of the emancipated private, the Provisional Government has neither the physical nor the moral power necessary to assert its authority. Claiming to speak for the Russian Empire it is powerless even in the very capital itself. It would seem that a Constituent Assembly representative of the whole people, is the only body that could frame a constitution and establish a government that would possess the confidence or claim the obedience of the whole people. The fact that the Provisional Government has seen fit to allow the disintegrating forces to gather strength rather than call a constituent assembly seems to indicate that this way, also, lie untold dangers.

One great reason for hope is that during the War the Union of Municipalities co-ordinated the effort of the various local bodies and supplied the armies in the field with billions of roubles worth of equipment of all sorts when the corrupt bureaucratic Government had shown its appalling incapacity. And the head of this great work is now the head of the Provisional Government.

DEVELOPMENTS IN THE IRISH QUESTION

The patently absurd argument that there are two nations in Ireland has received its most crushing answer in the manifesto of the Irish bishops. Three Protestant bishops join with eighteen Catholic bishops in calling on Irishmen of all creeds and parties to show the Government and the world that in any settlement of the Irish question Ireland must be treated as a nation, one and indivisible; that the fiction of two Irish nationalities must be taken for what it is—an impudent political device to cover the breakdown of parliamentary government and conserve the interests of a powerful and unscrupulous political faction.

From the fact that bishops of close Nationalist affiliations refused to sign the manifesto, there is good reason to believe that county opinion is the basis of the negotiations, on the outcome of which depends the off-postponed Government announcement.

On the heels of the bishops' momentous manifesto comes the result of the South Longford election by which this safe old Nationalist constituency, long represented by our own Edward Blake, returns a Sinn Fein prisoner as its representative in the House of Commons.

Naturally Irishmen and friends of Ireland are asking themselves how all this will affect the cause of Home Rule. Frankly we think it has, like a thunderstorm, wonderfully cleared the air. With regard to the action of the Irish bishops and its effect on the situation the following comment of a Dublin correspondent seems particularly well-founded and well-phrased: "Such is the position of Ireland today. It is one which English and American friends of this country will

hardly contemplate without deep disappointment and even dismay. Undoubtedly it is a dangerous situation.

"The outlook, however, is not wholly dark. There are still opportunities for statesmanship. In one sense the bishops' manifesto is a knockout blow. In another it is a portent, hopeful of its kind. It ends a chapter of Irish history, but promises to open a far better chapter. Eighteen Roman Catholic and three Protestant bishops have united publicly in allegiance to the principle that Ireland must be one and undivided and this is nothing less than a signpost of revolution in the social and political life of Ireland. It means that two of the most separated, two of the most representative and two of the most influential bodies of the country have been brought together by pressure of national necessity. I am convinced that under the apparent hopelessness of the superficial situation the same forces are at work among the whole body of Ireland Unionist, Nationalist, Roman Catholic and Protestant. I believe it is working slowly but surely, even among the Unionists of Ulster."

If the Irish members were disposed to agree to the exclusion of any part of Ulster it must have been because they knew that, resting as it does on a basis of transparent pretence, such exclusion, while giving the Carsonites an opportunity to save their faces, could in the nature of things be only a temporary expedient. It may be, too, that the Nationalists were given secret assurances that such would be the case. But, as usual, concessions came too late. And bearing in mind that the whole Ulster difficulty arises out of the sordid and selfish interests of the parasitical ascendancy class, and that this class is closely allied with the classes in England which see their privileges and prerogatives in deadly peril from the resistless march of democracy, the instinct of a distrustful people may be a safer guide than the judgment of their representatives in a decadent parliament. The powerlessness of parliamentary government to carry out its own decrees, the weak and dishonest attempt to shuffle off its responsibility finds its answer in the South Longford election. In so far as it is the voice of the Irish people it declares that they are done with constitutional methods. There will be no question in the minds of civilized peoples as to where lies the guilt of this retrograde step.

At the conferences of the world's democracies like Banquo's ghost sits Ireland. Smooth and adroit though they be, phrases can not lay it. The conscience of mankind demands something more than shuffling evasions. One of these evasions is given its quietus. Ireland is one nation, not two. To give a small faction of this nation the right to thwart the will of the people is to give the lie to the democratic professions of England's representatives. The situation is unbearable and indefensible. The Irish question must be settled. A just, generous, statesmanlike measure would give untold strength to the moral forces fighting on the side of England; further paltering with the question is treason to the cause which half the world is helping her to win.

QUEBEC AND THE WAR

That the Province of Quebec has not taken its proportionate share in Canada's effort in the great War is a fact that would be useless to deny. The ranting of certain Ontario papers and speakers has not tended to help matters. Quebec gave a goodly number of valiant fighting men to the Canadian army, how many is a matter of dispute. But while in the other provinces the British-born rushed to the colors at the first opportunity, a vigorous campaign of education appealing to every conceivable interest, instinct and sentiment was necessary to recruit any large number of native born Canadians of English speech. And this in spite of the enthusiasm created and the impetus given to recruiting by the magnificent example of the former class.

In Quebec the conditions are different. The people are of another race, another language and, a fact that is often given an ugly emphasis, another religion. And while it may seem natural to expect that France and England together at war should make an especial appeal to French-Canadians, it must be remembered that the shameless persecution of the Church by the atheistic Government of old France had alienated the sympathy of Catholic Quebec.

Then the population of the province is largely agricultural, a class which, even in the English provinces, gave a small proportion of recruits to the army.

All these things considered, it would seem that exceptional measures would have been taken to educate the province of Quebec, to stimulate interest, to arouse enthusiasm. That idea seems to have only just now occurred to those responsible for the Government of Canada and charged with the conduct of Canadian participation in the world War. The Government is supported by nearly one-half of the representatives from the Province of Quebec. It has the usual French-Canadian representation in the Cabinet. Yet mean and paltry political considerations have impelled a partizan press to put the lion's share of the blame on Sir Wilfrid Laurier. True, Sir Wilfrid had publicly pledged himself, if ever such an emergency as the present should arise, to stump Quebec in the interest of recruiting. Whether or not he has redeemed that pledge is a question for the people to decide. But in any case it is a poor excuse for those charged with the responsibilities of government to make for neglecting the duties imposed on them by the will of the people.

There is need of plain speaking in the matter, for things have now come to that pass when the peace of Canada and even the stability of Confederation are menaced.

Now when the War is nearly three years in progress, that systematic campaign so long carried on in the other provinces is just begun in the Province of Quebec. Apart from disturbances at the meeting in Montreal the belated effort shows encouraging indications of success.

At Sherbrooke Father Simard, of the Cathedral clergy, was present on the platform and addressed the meeting. The Globe thus reports what he said: "Father Simard summed up the views of the clergy by saying: 'We are at war, and it is our duty to take part in the burden, but before we can tell a man to enlist we must have the proper authorities indicate who should enlist.'"

The remark was greeted with loud applause. "I devolves on me," said Father Simard, "to speak of what I think is the real opinion of the clergy. The Church forbids us who are men of peace to take up arms or to go to war and shed blood. You will find that priests in this country are formally exempted from service. It is not the part of the clergy to go through the country preaching recruiting. There are others who are set apart for that purpose."

"What you may demand of the clergy is the expression of a fair opinion on the duty of the people. 'No one can say that any opinion has been expressed by the clergy unfitting to the occasion. Our Bishop has been teaching you that the duty of all citizens is the strictest loyalty to the country. This War is a just one in which our country is engaged. Can one hesitate to admit that we should take part in it?'"

In thanking Father Simard, Col. Blondin said: "His presence here established what has not yet been made known, the support of the clergy, and to-morrow the whole of the Dominion and the world will know it."

Despite the fact that Colonel Blondin's expression of gratitude to Father Simard indicates what may be considered elsewhere a painful lack of enthusiasm on the part of the French-Canadian clergy, Father Simard himself did not seem to resent it. He probably considered that he had sufficiently explained that attitude when he said:

"It is not the part of the clergy to go through the country preaching recruiting. There are others who are set for that purpose."

That is pretty plain speaking. There is a good deal of common sense and of justice in that way of looking at things, however reprehensible it may seem to those non-Catholic clergy who preach recruiting sermons from the pulpit.

Perhaps more significant is this: "Before we can tell a man to enlist we must have the proper authorities indicate who should enlist." And the remark was greeted with loud applause.

If Father Simard voices the opinion of the French clergy in general does he not clearly intimate that conscription would be, if not welcomed, at least loyally accepted by Quebec? If so has not the moral cowardice of politicians sheltered itself behind a Quebec bugaboo of their own making? It was high time at any rate that the recruiting campaign should be extended to Quebec. More than moderate success can hardly now be hoped for; but even moderate success will be positively disappointing to some people.

NOTES AND COMMENTS

THAT THERE is something to be said for the theory that in time of war more males than females are born into the world, and that the inevitable wastage of man-power consequent upon the clash of arms is thus providentially provided for, seems to be borne out by the recently issued report of the English Registrar-General. The births recorded in England in the year 1915 numbered 814,614, of whom 415,205 were males and 399,409 females, the ratio for the whole year being 1,040 to 1,000. The year 1916 shows substantial increases in this ratio. For the quarter ending March 31st it was 1,050 males to 1,000 females; June, 1,051 to 1,000; September, 1,045 to 1,000; December, 1,050 to 1,000, or, for the year taken as a whole, 1,049 to 1,000. Statistics for other countries involved in the War are not available, but there are sociologists who claim that the rule has universal application. Disbelievers in Divine governance of the race cannot derive much comfort from such statistics or from the theory built upon them.

NOTWITHSTANDING the late disorders in Ireland and the resultant unrest, crime continues to decrease in that country. The report of the Irish Prisons Board for 1915 shows that the number of committals in that year was 19,399, a decrease of 3,823 as compared with 1914, the lowest up to that time on record. There are at the present time only 202 convict prisoners in Ireland, of whom 15 only are women. And when it is borne in mind that of the committals named a very large proportion was for petty offences, and that in many places assize juries were dismissed immediately for want of cases, friends of Ireland may take comfort in the thought that under normal circumstances she has proved herself to be practically crimeless.

A JUDICIAL ruling which may prove some day to have created a doubtful, even a dangerous precedent, has just been given out by judges of the Supreme Court in Scotland. In order that men may not be diverted from occupations of vital importance to the country at this time it has been decided to discontinue trial by jury in all civil cases. Trial by jury has for centuries been regarded in all English-speaking countries and in many others as the great bulwark of popular liberties. That it should be set aside in any one of them, even as a temporary expedient, is like laying profane hands upon the constitution itself, and the question naturally arises whether, after the War, difficulties may not be encountered in reverting to the status quo ante.

THE SCARCITY of paper throughout the world, and especially in European countries, is making itself decidedly felt in newspaperdom. Government regulations, brought to bear at the outset of the shortage upon weekly family and technical journals is now being felt by the big dailies in Great Britain and Ireland, and those which have not been actually discontinued now appear greatly reduced in size and on paper of inferior quality. The shortage of paper itself might have been overcome, but so many other uses have been discovered for it consequent upon the War, which, combined with import restrictions, has created a problem of great gravity for the whole newspaper world. Our overseas Catholic exchanges have been welligh eliminated.

THERE DIED recently in Rome a grandson of the poet Wordsworth who was himself a poet of decided gifts but through what he regarded as fortuitous circumstances, quite unknown to fame. His eminence as a scholar and an interpreter of nature was known to a select few, but the fact that he bore the same name as his grandfather, William Wordsworth, seemed to him too great a handicap, on which account he steadily refused to publish any of his poetical writings. He was prevailed upon to issue a volume of sonnets privately some years ago, but not even the judgment of so high an authority as Matthew Arnold (who described one of these sonnets as the finest in the English language) could move him from his resolution to withhold his poetry from the world. Now that he has gone some enterprising publisher may do this for him, overcoming the handicap by some manipulation of the name. That the name as it stood was in some sense a misfor-

tune who can doubt. What chance, for instance, would a new "William Shakespeare" have with the great world?

THE FEAR of famine in Argentina appears to rest upon some foundation. Advice from the great South American Republic indicate that the failure of the last crop and the doubtful prospects for the new have created what constitutes a situation of great gravity for the coming year. The Diario Illustrado of Santiago, Chile, which is described as the official organ of the Archbishop of that city, and noted for its judiciousness and conservatism has sounded the alarm in no uncertain tone. Notwithstanding the alarmist story of impending famine would appear like a hasty exaggeration were it not for the supporting evidence which, according to the same authority, is everywhere apparent. The Government certainly must have been awake to the possibilities when it issued without delay its decree prohibiting the exportation of grain on any pretext whatever.

ARGENTINA INCLUDES within its limits varying degrees of climate. This ordinarily provides a safeguard against national disaster, as each extreme provides what is required by the other. The main productive zone, however, upon which the country chiefly depends for its sustenance, and for its export trade, and which includes within it one of the world's greatest wheat-raising areas, is the northern portion above latitude 40, especially the districts watered by the rivers La Plata and Parana. The total failure of the harvest in this section it is that has alarmed the authorities, and instigated the restrictions as regards exports which, until the truth became known, caused some misunderstanding and irritation in Europe. It must be remembered that up to this time the Argentine Republic's contribution to the sinews of war, in the form of enormous shipments of wheat, had made it a powerful factor on the side of the Allies. The sudden stoppage of this source of supply necessarily caused concern. It is upon Canada and the United States, therefore, that the nations of Europe now mainly depend for their food supply. Which fact lays the greatest possible emphasis upon the necessity for increasing the productivity and conserving the energies of this northern continent.

ON THE BATTLE LINE

SOUTH OF THE Souchez River, in the Lens sector, the British lost and regained their new positions, the enemy casualties being heavy. Between Gavrelle and the Souchez the Bavarian Crown Prince hurled attack after attack against the British line. Liquid fire was used, but the British artillery and machine guns hurled the enemy back with gaping holes in his ranks. Yesterday morning a third attack forced the British, after three hours' fighting, to yield ground along a portion of the new front. Later the enemy was driven out and the British hold all their old positions.

WEST OF Fresnoy, near Arleux-en-Gobelle, a strong attack was made on the British positions, but the enemy was repulsed with heavy loss.

HINDENBURG'S TRAPS for unwary Allied armies, of which the world heard so much in the days of the big Somme retreat, have failed to materialize. G. H. Ferris, the British Official Eyewitness at the front, says the new German line fulfills none of the expectations held out by the German apologists for Hindenburg's "strategic retreat." It is rigid, not elastic, and in this fact Mr. Ferris discerns the reason of the immediate difficulties of the Allies, as well as the surety of their ultimate success.

HINDENBURG is pinned down, says the British Eyewitness, and forced to fight under conditions that cost him dearly in loss of reserves. The same authority, cabling from the French Headquarters, believes Hindenburg is in a tight place, and will find it extremely difficult to repeat the Somme retreat.

ON THE LAON Plateau, around Cerny-en-Laonnois, the Germans attacked the French positions on two sides of the village. The main waves of attacking troops never reached the French trenches, melting away under the fierce fire from artillery and machine guns. Some enemy troops gained a footing in an advanced trench, but were driven out.

IN THE United States, British Labor delegates sent over by the Government at the request of Samuel Gompers, American Labor leader and Chairman of the War Committee on Labor, will on Tuesday next meet four hundred representatives of employers and labor organizations. The British visitors will tell of Britain's achievement in the mobilization of industrialism for war purposes.

IN THE ADRIATIC thirteen Austrian submarines have been sunk in the last few weeks by Italian patrol boats.

MR. BALFOUR gazed upon the statue of liberty for the first time yesterday, when he visited New York. He was greatly impressed by "the whole-hearted exhibition of enthusiasm" with which New Yorkers greeted the veteran statesman. It was a day memorable in the new-born alliance of English-speaking nations. The Mayor of the city, a grandson of John Mitchell, the Irish rebel of 1848, received Mr. Balfour at the City Hall.

THE MILITARY age for voluntary recruiting in Britain will soon be extended to include men up to fifty years old, both single and married.

LABOR UNREST in Britain has drawn from the Government a warning that munition workers cannot be permitted to impede out-put by strikes. It reminds all concerned that under the Defense of the Realm Act those who incite to strikes are liable to life sentence or less punishment.

THE MUNITIONS trouble in Britain is due to the dilution of labor and the fears entertained by engineers, who are now on strike, that the War conditions would be permanent. A conference has been held at which Ministers have given the assurance that the dilution of labor and the suspension of trades unionism are only emergency war measures. The conference supported the Government in deprecating strikes.—Globe, May 12.

T. P. O'CONNOR'S LETTER

CONFERENCE IN PARIS

PETAIN THE GREATEST GENERAL AND MOST ACCOMPLISHED SOLDIER IN FRANCE

Special Cable to the CATHOLIC RECORD (Copyright 1917, Central News)

Paris, May 12.—The Congress of the United States has been invited to send representatives to confer with the delegates of England and France, and to form a part of the Inter-Allies Parliament committee here. This committee, formed a year ago against considerable official obstruction to confer on matters pertaining to the relations of the Allies in the war, has grown into a body that is to-day of international importance, and its recommendations are listened to very carefully by both the British and the French government. The delegates from these two countries have now been joined by representatives of the Italian and the Russian Governments, with Prof. Paul N. Milukoff, Foreign Minister for Russia, president of his section.

Serious and important matters have been discussed at the meeting this past week, the Russian representatives alone being absent from the conferences. The deliberations have been aided not a little by the frank and free discussions in private, in which all the representatives have talked over informally all the problems of the war. Each nation has its own difficulties, but the submarine peril is common to all. It is agreed that this peril requires intensified action by all governments opposed to the Central Powers, and above all, unity of direction in the efforts that are being made to overcome it. There is, among the conferees, a reliance upon America since her entrance into the War, everybody believing that she can make a vital contribution to the means employed to overcome the menace through the inventive genius for which that country has always been famous, and that the rapid construction of ships which the United States will be able to accomplish because of her extraordinary facilities, to carry food across the ocean, as well as steel and the other commodities so necessary to the cause of the Allies, will be invaluable.

The constant rumors that Germany and Austria are about to make peace proposals has been discussed, of course, but every delegate, without a single exception, joined enthusiastically in a declaration that no peace proposals would be listened to until the Allies had won a complete and decisive victory.

It was our pleasure to welcome to the conference Prince Colonna, the Mayor of Rome, who, it will be remembered, forced the hand of Giolitti when he presided over the great popular demonstration in Rome in favor of the Allies. The Prince and I have been selected to address the meeting, which will gather at the famous Strassburg statue at which will be declared publicly the inflexible resolution of Britain, France and Italy, at least, to demand from Germany as one of the terms upon which peace shall finally be declared, the full restoration of the provinces of Alsace and Lorraine to the French Republic.

The weather here is lovely in its spring freshness. The temper of the people in the city seems un-affected by the War, and the streets are more crowded than they have been on any of my previous visits to the French capital since the fighting began, though the throngs are dotted here and there by black-robed figures of women who mourn the loss of some relative on the fighting line. Conversing with the citizens, I found among them a resolution that seems to grow firmer each day, to continue the War until the German forces