

ENGLAND'S TITLE TO IRELAND.

In a letter which he has addressed to the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, the distinguished author, Mr. Barry O'Brien, writes:

I address this letter to your Lordship because you represent the Government of England in Ireland. I do not think that you will take amiss what I have to say. Were you allowed, you would, I believe, discharge the duties of your office in sympathy with the National aspirations of the people you have been sent to rule; to say less would be to impeach your character as a governor with constitutional instincts. "All government," it has been well said, "without the consent of the governed is the very definition of slavery." You certainly do not desire to govern without the consent of the governed. Yet, in honest truth, you do govern, so far, indeed, as it can be said that you govern at all. Your Excellency's position is an impossible one. You are a "constitutional" ruler in a country where there is no constitution. You represent a monarchy which rests on a Parliamentary title. But your office has survived Parliamentary institutions in Ireland. The English monarchy is the embodiment of English nationality; the Irish Viceroyalty is the very negation of Irish national sentiment. Were you the representative of an absolutist sovereign, your position would be consistent, and might be strong. As the representative of a constitutional king, it is inconsistent and hopelessly weak.

An absolutist ruler draws his strength from an oligarchy, but there is no oligarchy behind you. A constitutional sovereign draws his strength from the people, but the people are not behind you either. Forgive me, my Lord, but I cannot help saying it; the "Irish" Government—queerly so-called—is the most grotesque thing on earth. There is nothing like it, to paraphrase the words of Sydney Smith, "in Europe, Asia, Africa, or Timbuctoo." Honest and intelligent English administrators, who go to Dublin Castle, find out the incongruities—the impossibilities of "Irish" government sooner or later. They think that they are practically going from one part of England to another, but they ultimately discover that Ireland is a discontented English dependency of distinct national growth—not an English shire, bound to England by ties of race, religion, and history. This discovery sometimes does the administrator good.

"What made you a Home Ruler," I asked the late Sir Robert Hamilton. He answered: "Soon after I came to Ireland, a report was sent in from some district giving an account of an unsatisfactory state of things there. I really cannot recall the details. I was anxious not to act without further investigation. I said to the clerk, 'Who is the member for this district?' He gave me the name. I asked the clerk to write to that member, asking if he would kindly call on me to talk the matter over. 'Oh!' said the clerk, 'there will be no use in doing that; he would not come.' 'Why?' I asked. 'Oh!' he replied, 'no Irish member could come to the Castle; they would not have anything to do with us.' I was amazed. What I had asked him to do was the ordinary thing in England. To ask a member of Parliament to give you his views with reference to some statement affecting his constituents is the most natural thing in the world. In fact, it is a very helpful way of carrying on the administration. But I discovered that this way could not be employed in Ireland. Those responsible for the administration of the country could not communicate with those who represented the people of the country. Here was a wall built up between the government and the governed. The thing struck me as absurd. I felt it could not last, and that something would have to be done to bring the government into harmony with the popular wishes. Talk of the government of the people, by the people, for the people, no such government existed in Ireland."

A sympathetic "Irish" Secretary, on one occasion, invited a distinguished Irish member to dinner at the Chief Secretary's Lodge, to have a private talk on a matter of urgent public importance. "You asked me to dine with you," replied the Irish member, "at the Chief Secretary's Lodge. Where is the Chief Secretary's Lodge?" "I would lose my character," I once heard an Irish member say in the House of Commons, "were I seen in the Castle Yard."

The King of England is above all parties. His health is drunk at public assemblies in England where men of all parties come together. It is a national toast. The Irish Viceroy is always a party man. His health is not drunk at National gatherings in Ireland. It is not a National toast. The health of the King of England himself is not drunk at National gatherings in Ireland. It is not a national toast there. There is nothing personal in all this; far from it, so far as the English sovereign is concerned, for men regard him as a ruler animated by just and humane sentiments in his dealings with nations. "... That the Irishman should not love the English..." says Robert Louis Stevenson, "is not disgraceful to the nature of man, rather, indeed, honorable; since it depends on wrongs ancient like the race, and not personal to him who cherishes the indignation."

Why do we cherish the indignation? To answer this question I must ask another, perhaps, even two questions:—1st. What is England's title in Ireland? 2nd. Does it rest on moral grounds? In answering these questions we shall get at the root of the whole subject; but I must beg your Lordship's indulgence, for I have to appeal to history; a tribunal from which English statesmen, in dealing with Ireland, shrink, but which, I believe, your Lordship has the courage and the sense of justice to face. "Politics," says Professor Seely, "are vulgar, when they are not liberalized by history." The Irish politics of the English statesman are not so liberalized. The occupants of the front benches in the House of Commons are present to my mind. There are scarcely three of them who could pass a respectable competitive examination in Irish history. I knew the late Mr. Gladstone. He devoted himself earnestly to the cause of Ireland in the latter years of his life; but he knew little of Irish history. He was frank, he was courageous; he would not deny the fact. He once said to me:—"I am bound to say that I did not know as much about the way the Union was carried when I took up Home Rule as I came to know afterwards. If I had known so much I would have been more earnest and extreme. The union with Ireland has no moral force. It has the force of law, no doubt, but it rests on no moral basis. That is the line which I should always take were I an Irishman. That is the line which, as an Englishman, I take now." And again, he said:—"You know we thought that the Irish question was settled (in 1870). There was the Church Act and the Land Act, and there was a time of peace and prosperity, and I frankly confess that we did not give as much attention to Ireland as we ought to have done."

Mr. Gladstone was the foremost Englishman of his age. He had entered the House of Commons in 1832. He must have heard the remarkable debates on Ireland which took place in 1833-34. He must have heard the equally remarkable debates which took place during the Melbourne Administration, 1835-1841. He lived through the Repeal movement and the Tenant League agitation of 1850-55. Yet he scarcely gave Ireland a thought until 1867-68. That a man of such just and generous instincts as Mr. Gladstone, filling responsible positions in the administration of public affairs, should have remained for all those years in ignorance of the urgency of the Irish question is a fact of extraordinary significance. Mr. Gladstone represented more faithfully than almost any man who has sat in the English Parliament since 1832 the current of practical thought in English legislation. That he should have deemed Ireland unworthy of his attention, for the best part of his public life, is the strongest proof we can have of the neglect—the criminal neglect—with which Ireland has been treated by the responsible statesmen of England. I have before me a list of the Prime Ministers of England since 1832. There was not one of them who could have passed a successful competitive examination in Irish history. There were only two of them who, in any degree, possessed the confidence of the Irish people, or who tried strenuously to do anything for Ireland—Lord Melbourne (1835-1841); who was kept in office by the Irish vote; and Mr. Gladstone, whose interest in Ireland was first awakened by the Fenian organization, and re-awakened by the Land League, and who was placed in office by the Irish vote in 1868 and kept in office by the Irish vote

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from 1893 to 1894. I have also before me a list of "Irish" Lord Lieutenants and Chief Secretaries since 1832. There were in all some twenty-three Lord Lieutenants, not one of them, of course, was a Catholic, for to this day any man professing the religion of the nation cannot be the governor of the nation. There were only three Irishmen—tame Irishmen, out of sympathy with the people. There were only two of the entire number who possessed the popular confidence—Lord Mulgrave (the choice of Lord Melbourne in 1835) and Lord Aberdeen (the Home Rule Lord Lieutenant of 1886). Of some thirty Chief Secretaries five only were Irish, tame Irish; none were Catholics. Two only possessed the confidence of the people—Lord Morpeth (the Melbourne Chief Secretary), and Mr. Morley, the Home Rule Chief Secretary. The noble figure of Thomas Drummond overtops all the Irish administrators. He strove strenuously (1835-1840) to govern the country in accordance with popular opinion. From the day of his arrival to the day of his death he was denounced by the English Ascendancy. Drummond perished in the service of Ireland, struggling to the last to stem the torrent of injustice, ignorance, and folly, which ultimately swept him away. The story of his life is a proof of the hopelessness of any man attempting to rule Ireland in accordance with Irish opinion while he holds office at the mercy of an English Parliament. Suppose, my Lord, that England had been conquered by Spain in 1588, and that between 1832 and 1904, at the end of centuries of dominion, England had, in the main, been ruled by Spanish Grandees, all Catholics, out of sympathy with the people, ignorant of their history, indifferent to their wants, disregarding their cherished traditions, despising their national aspirations, ignoring their religion, and refusing to do them justice, except under the pressure of fear, what would the world think of Spain? What would the English do?

The following is not a description of a dependency of Spain or Russia, but a description of a dependency of England given 700 years after its "conquest." "I do not believe," said Mr. Chamberlain in a famous speech in 1885, "that the great majority of Englishmen have the slightest conception of the system under which this free nation attempts to rule the sister country. It is a system which is founded on the bayonets of 30,000 soldiers encamped permanently as in a hostile country. It is a system as completely centralized and bureaucratic as that with which Russia governs Poland, or as that which prevailed in Venice under the Austrian rule. An Irishman at this moment cannot move a step—he cannot lift a finger in any parochial, municipal or educational work without being confronted with, interfered with, controlled by an English official, appointed by a foreign government, and without a shade or shadow of representative authority." The conqueror of whom this can be said, centuries before the conquest, stands condemned before the tribunal of history. The English show much wisdom in the management of their affairs all over the world. Why are they such utter fools in Ireland? "Irish writers," says Mr. Richey (I quote the substance of his words), "are fond of charging the English Government with tyranny and violence. But that is not the charge that I bring against them. The charge that I bring against them is imbecility."

What then is England's title in Ireland? Conquest—a bad title priori, for it rests on physical force. Conquest by physical force I admit, may ultimately come to have moral sanction—the only good title to the existence of any government. But has the government of the English in Ireland this sanction? That is the rub. The plea of the

conqueror is always a specious one. He is not honest. He is not truthful. He says to the people whose national existence he means to destroy: "I do not come to injure you; quite the contrary. I come to make you happy. I come to destroy the bad government under which you live. The men of your own nation do not know how to govern you. I can govern you. I understand you. I am your friend. I come to establish law and order, to civilize you, to elevate you spiritually, to enrich you materially, to make you blessed, prosperous, and free. You will find me a guardian angel." That the people should reply: "Angel or devil, we don't want you. We want to be left to ourselves, to develop on our own lines, to work out our own destiny, in our own way"—that the people should say these things does not affect him. He replies: "But it is good for you that I should come," and he comes and he kills and he plunders and he stays, and he says to the conquered: "You must have my laws and my institutions, my religion, my language, my dress, my customs, my manners. You must do all things as I do them, and if you refuse I will break you on the wheel."

I do not say that there are not exceptions to this general rule of the conqueror's plea. There is a notable exception, which recent events have brought to our minds—the case of Russia and Finland. Russia conquered Finland in 1809; it was called the "cession" of Finland to Russia—a pretty diplomatic phrase. This conquest obtained moral sanction by treaty rights. The compact between the two countries was a common sovereign, and, for the rest, political autonomy. Finns, representing the public opinion of Finland, administered the affairs of Finland, Finnish laws and customs were observed, the Finnish religion was respected and recognized, the Finnish language was the language of the Finnish State and the Finnish people. The Finns were loyal to the Russian connection; they were happy, prosperous and free. For nearly a century this compact was honorably kept. Then in a moment of madness it was broken, to the shame of the Russian Government. "The case of Russia and Finland was, I say, a case of conquest obtaining moral sanction by treaty rights. But the treaty has now been broken, the moral sanction is gone, and the whole civilized world would hail, and ought to hail with joy the destruction of the Russian power in Finland. How far the conquest of Ireland by England has ever received any moral sanction will form the subject of the succeeding letters."

AUTHOR OF THE "ADESTE FIDELIS."

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Montreal, January 9th, 1905.

Society Directory.

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THURSDAY, JANUARY 26, 1905.
LIFE AMONG THE CHILDREN OF L...
(By Miss May Quinlan, in Tablet.)
(Continued.)
JACKY.
In a huge ward of the London Hospital lay a wasted little creature so small that it was difficult to find him. But just waved a thin little arm in invitation.
"I see'd yer afore yer see was his greeting, and his eyes led with pleasure.
"Ain't yer got no books asked presently.
I held up a volume, when eager hands closed over it, left the hospital he took the home with him, and in the back room of the tenement to read them to his mother could not read, and to the brown-eyed Mary whom he remembered the tiny boy where they all lived, the father, mother, Jacky and Mary.
bed wherein they all slept which the cripple lay all day an hour have I spent in the tenement room with the window shut and the vermin crawl the ragged coverlet.
When I did not go the mother to send for me with the "the child do be askin' "Yuss," she continued, "Mother," sez 'e, "think as to-day?"
"Mebbe," sez I, "jes' ter like, 'an when the days yer ain't come, e's brok'er see," she used to 'ave 'em ain't nuthin' fur 'im to 'cep' the walls, an' times '—pore Jacky," and the mother would fill with tears. So sit by his bedside with a shawl on my knee.
"Now, Jacky, what shall the question always brought into the tired childish eye to send for me with the "the child do be askin' "Yuss," she continued, "Mother," sez 'e, "think as to-day?"
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