

## The Hunger Strike

A LARGE number of persons arrested for alleged violation of law and confined in Mountjoy Prison, Dublin, have entered upon what is called a "hunger strike," a form of resistance to law which received much prominence in England a few years ago in the case of the disorderly women suffragists. The prisoners refuse to eat any food. Continuing such refusal for a number of days they gradually become very weak and are in danger of dying of starvation. In the presence of such a situation some writers in the press cry out that merciless injustice is being practiced. Mr. Bonar Law, speaking in the House of Commons for the Government, declared that the prisoners would not be released. Then, a day or two later, it was announced that many of the prisoners had been released on parole. There is an apparent conflict between Mr. Law's statement and the action of the prison authorities in Dublin. There is an impression that the release of the prisoners is the outcome of the appointment of Sir Nevil Macready as military commander in Ireland, who is believed to be anxious to make a further trial of conciliatory measures before resorting to others. From this view-point the release of the prisoners is serving a good end. Let us hope that conciliation may yet be found possible and effective in the treatment of the Irish question.

But let nobody hasten to condemn the situation that produces the hunger strike. That men and women in the prisons should be dying of starvation is of course a dreadful thing to think of. But those who are shocked by the thought, and whose sympathetic hearts move them to plead for the release of the prisoners, may well be asked, what kind of treatment they would apply to such cases?

If anarchy is not to be produced, if order is to prevail, there must be means of punishing those who break the law. Whether the law is a wise one does not affect the case. It is always possible for differences of opinion to arise as to the merits of any law. But good citizenship requires that the law be observed even by those who may not approve of it. Without a recognition of this principle there will be chaos where there should be order. Offenders, then, must be imprisoned. Humanity demands that they shall be treated decently and supplied with abundance of wholesome food. What more can the authorities do? If a prisoner in Dublin, charged with what may possibly be regarded as a political offence, can resist the operation of the law and obtain release by refusing to partake of food, a prisoner of any other class may do likewise. Once admit that such a course can succeed in defeating the ends of justice, by obtaining the release of a prisoner, and a temptation is held out to every offender who is jailed to enter upon a hunger strike. How is a hunger

strike to be prevented, except by justice abandoning all its power and authority? Surely, if the authorities provide a prisoner with comfortable accommodation and plenty of good food they have done all that can be expected of them. If the prisoner refuses to eat, how can anybody else be blamed for that?

## Britain and France

IN considering the friction that, unfortunately, has arisen between Great Britain and France respecting the occupation of German territory, it is well to remember that while in a sense the "Allied and Associated Powers," as they are called in the treaties, have a common interest in the matter, and therefore should act together, it is a fact that France, by reason of proximity, has a particularly keen interest which may in some degree excuse exceptional action on her part. An old proverb tells us "it is aisy to bear another man's toothache."—The Prime Minister of Great Britain, sitting in his office in London, with every desire to do right, cannot be expected to feel as keenly as the Prime Minister of France, sitting in Paris, concerning the movements of German troops near the French frontier. We may as well recognize the fact that there is and must remain a bitter feeling between France and Germany. Peace treaties and negotiations between the representatives of the two nations may pretend that there is a condition of peace, but beneath them all, and very thinly covered, is the warlike condition to which we have referred. For more than forty years after the war of 1870 there was a nominal peace between Germany and France, but in reality the Frenchmen were all the time sharpening their swords for the fight which they felt must one day come. Now the situation is reversed. Germany, the victor of the former period, is now the conquered country, and Germany cannot be expected to do otherwise than lie in wait for the opportunity to strike back. France, knowing this well, will at all times endeavor to be ready to fight again. Hence, the French statesmen watch with exceptionally sharp interest every German movement. When, in spite of the sections of the Treaty of Versailles prohibiting the presence of German soldiery in the Rhine region, the German Government began to move troops into the neutral territory, on the pretence that they were needed to maintain order and prevent Bolshevism, it is not surprising that the French Government treated the reason as a mere subterfuge, proposed resistance by the Allies and, impatient of delay, sent in the French troops to occupy Frankfurt and other German cities.

It is gratifying to have the assurances of both the British and French authorities that the crisis brought about by these events has been tided over. France is to be forgiven for her hasty action, and advised that

she must not do it again. She must be more patient and be content to await action by the Allies rather than rush in on her own account. But the action that France felt obliged to take in this case will probably serve to make the Allies more energetic in enforcing the treaty.

## The "Outlaw"

ORGANIZED labor sometimes takes action which many in the community regard as extreme and unjust. But there are times when organized labor renders a very substantial service to the community in restraining those of its members who are disposed to act unfairly. The gravest features of the industrial troubles of today are the revolts within the ranks of the workers, revolts led by men who manifest none of the sense of responsibility which all citizens should have, and which many of the labor leaders, to their honor be it said, have shown in a marked manner in times of crisis. The railway strike that is now almost paralysing traffic in some parts of the United States is not the movement of organized labor, but a revolt against the labor authority that has hitherto been very generally recognized. Beginning with a strike of the switchmen in the railway yards at Chicago—a strike undertaken in defiance of the authority of the brotherhood to which the strikers belong—the movement spread rapidly. The brotherhood leaders have made all possible efforts to check the movement and some success is attending these efforts. But much harm has already been done by the strike, not the least part of which is the spreading of the idea among the workers that they need pay no attention to the law or to regulations or agreements made by their leaders. Nearer home there has been a similar exhibition of this revolt within the ranks of labor. The publishers of the Montreal Star have a contract with their printers which has several years to run. Some time ago the publishers voluntarily gave an increase of wages that the contract did not call for. The International Typographical Union, which for many years has been the recognized authority representing the printers, was quite satisfied with the publishers' action. Nevertheless a large number of the Star's workers, in violation of their agreement and in defiance of the authority of the International Union, demanded increased pay and left their work without notice.

These movements of what are being called the "outlaw" unions, revolts against the authority of the leaders of organized labor, are the most dangerous features of the industrial situation both in Canada and the United States. The public should not fail to notice that in these matters organized labor is not responsible for the trouble that exists, but on the contrary, in its higher and more responsible ranks, organized labor stands for law and order and fair dealing.