

drawal of strangers."

The right of the people to be present at the deliberations of Parliament is now so generally recognized that the power to exclude strangers is rarely or never exercised. Occasionally, on some question of procedure or something of the kind, the House at the beginning of a sitting discusses the matter before opening the doors, but the almost invariable practice now is to admit the public immediately after prayers. If some champion of popular rights arises who, as a matter of principle, insists on the people's right to know even how their representatives pray, he will probably win out, for in these days of popular government the rights of the people are not easily limited. However, thus far the members of Parliament are permitted to offer up their prayers without the intrusion of "strangers."

The passing of a formal resolution to hold a secret session of the House of Commons of Canada is a step without a precedent in our history. Probably most of the information that the Government were able to give the House at the secret session was already in the possession of the members, for the vigilance and enterprise of the press, despite the censor's restrictions, have kept the public pretty well informed in the progress of the war. Nevertheless, the presentation of the main facts in such an official and impressive way was well calculated to give the members a clearer view of the gravity of the situation, while the very fact that the holding of the secret session was deemed advisable could not fail to make the people generally realize more thoroughly the need of Canada's continued and increased efforts to support and strengthen the armies of the Allies in France and Flanders.

The Sacrifice

THE aims and plans of military leaders in war-time are, of course, concealed, as far as possible, but there are times when their purpose makes itself pretty evident to all. Two things seem clear in the case of the tremendous battles now in progress in France and Flanders. The first is that the Germans have reached the conclusion that they must force a favorable decision this spring or be prepared for a general defeat that is certain, and that cannot be much longer delayed. Hence, the battles are being fought on their part with desperate disregard of the slaughter of their men which such fighting makes inevitable. The second point that seems clear now is that the commanders of the armies of the Allies are so planning their campaign as to conserve their men and let the Germans waste their strength in their reckless way. Ground has been given by the Allies which possibly might have been held, where the cost in human life would have been greater than the value of the territory. As Mr. Lloyd George says, nothing vital has been given up. To yield at all is not a thing that the British soldier likes, and the British citizen at home, having the same feeling, will at first dislike the retirement of the Allies from ground that had previously been held against many assaults. But the question "whether the game is worth the candle" must arise in military affairs as in others. If the sections in question were not of paramount importance, it was better that they be evacuated than that they be held at a tremendous blood-cost. Discretion, in such a case, certainly is the better part of valor. At the right moment, from the most suitable vantage ground, General Foch's armies will strike back, when we may hope that objectives that are material will be gained

without the enormous loss that would have been involved in more rigid resistance in the recent battles. While the ground gained by the Germans, though of some importance is, we are assured, not vital, we know that in winning it they have sacrificed hundreds of thousands of their men. Gains of that kind are not victory, but are a heavy loss.

Home Rule at Hand

NEXT in importance to the war itself—indeed, a material part of the war question—is the subject of Irish affairs. The Irish question had been an acute one just before the war. The breaking out of the war had the good effect of stopping the dissension that had become so alarming. The Irish leaders, sharing the patriotic feeling of the nation, agreed to lay aside the vexed question of Home Rule, and co-operate with the Government in the prosecution of the war. The conduct of the late John Redmond in this respect won the admiration of the British people everywhere. The Home Rule Act, which had been passed after a long Parliamentary battle, was suspended. If Irishmen generally had been as patriotic as John Redmond, all would have been well. Unfortunately, the group known as the Sinn Fein took advantage of the suspension of the Home Rule Act, to start up another agitation of an extremely anti-British character. Conciliatory measures adopted by the British Government failed to satisfy these extremists. Goaded by the leaders of this movement, misguided Irishmen indulged in the Easter Monday rebellion in Dublin, which once more plunged Ireland in crime. Repressive measures which the Government deemed necessary in the presence of such revolt were made the excuse for further disorder. The Government, still desirous of meeting Irish public opinion sympathetically, and avoiding further conflict, again employed moderate measures, and arranged for the holding of the Irish Convention, with the result that they were bitterly assailed by their own friends in Parliament. Here is a picture of the Irish situation as it was a few weeks ago, given by that stalwart Unionist leader Lord Salisbury, in a speech in the House of Lords:

"Every kind of crime was being committed now, and it was gradually getting worse in extent and in type. Disorder of all sorts was rampant—raiding for arms, cattle-driving, seizure of property in broad daylight, firing into dwellings, throwing of bombs, murder. These were crimes against the country—insult to the National Anthem, the victimization of soldiers because they were soldiers—(cheers)—the preparation of maps and drawings against a new rising for the purpose of destroying bridges, defiance of magistrates in open court, and demonstrations in favor of an Irish republic. He read an extract from the letter of an Englishman resident in Ireland, who described how in a journey he saw a train full of Sinn Feiners, many with rebel flags. They fired revolvers from the windows and at every station they shouted 'Up the rebels!' and the police did not interfere. These were very serious matters—(hear, hear)—which were condemned by all right feeling men not only in England but in Ireland. They were also condemned by prelates of the Roman Catholic Church. Most of all had the state of Ireland been condemned by impartial judicial authorities. It might be thought that Clare was the plague spot, but the Government had neglected matters so long that it had spread

far beyond Clare. He was informed that the worst counties were Limerick, Tipperary, Kerry, Galway and Clare. The thing was general, and unless the Government showed the stiffest back would become more general. They had allowed matters to go so far that it might be difficult to restore order without a great deal of trouble. Attention had been called at assizes to the state of lawlessness and anarchy prevailing in many parts of Ireland. When he was told that the state of things was much worse than the public were permitted to know, he ventured to say that there was not any Englishman outside official circles who, until the facts were disclosed the last fortnight, had any notion of the state of complete anarchy which existed in so many parts of Ireland. It was due to one circumstance only—administrative feebleness.—(Hear, hear)."

This, according to Lord Salisbury, was the situation in Ireland at the moment when the Irish Convention was drawing its deliberations to a close.

Events have since moved rapidly. The Convention reported, admitting its failure to come to a final agreement, yet showing important points on which past differences had been composed. The need of more men at the front led the Government to decide that conscription, from which Ireland had hitherto been exempt, must now be applied to Ireland. At the same time Mr. Lloyd George declared that the Government would assume the responsibility of bringing forward a new Home Rule bill.

Now the situation is this: The Irish Nationalists are violently denouncing conscription and organizing to resist it. For this purpose they are meeting the Sinn Fein men and the O'Brien-Healey faction in conference. Sir Edward Carson, while supporting the Government in the conscription movement, renews his former assaults on the Home Rule schemes. But there are many moderate Unionists who have at last been brought to a recognition of the fact that peace in Ireland will never be brought about without the concession of some measure of Home Rule to that country. The fact that Mr. Balfour, Mr. Bonar Law, Mr. Walter Long and other leading Unionists remain in the Government, in the presence of Mr. Lloyd George's announcement, may be fairly taken to indicate that they have reached that conclusion. Mr. Austen Chamberlain, who has again joined the Cabinet, is one of a committee to prepare the Home Rule bill. There will, of course, be some division on the subject, no matter what form the bill may take. But with the influences thus at work it is pretty safe to believe that at an early day a new bill will be agreed upon, which will receive the support of all except Sir Edward Carson and a few of his Ulster friends, and even they, we think, will be content with a protest against that which they will no longer be able to successfully resist.

The House of Commons will pass the bill. Then the House of Lords—what of them? If we are to judge by past events the Lords will refuse the bill. But the world—even the House of Lords—moves. If men like Lord Curzon and Lord Milner, who are still in the Cabinet, are brought to the conclusion that Home Rule is the right thing, the Lords will no longer block the way. The Home Rule bill, if it can be quickly completed, will in all probability be passed through Parliament with a rapidity that will be surprising. What effect that will have on the Irish hostility to conscription will then become a most interesting question.

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