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## Light in Ireland

In the midst of the darkness of the Irish situation—and the latest news from Dublin has a very dark side—there appears a ray of light. The one hope of anything like a peaceful settlement of the Irish question is that moderate Home Rulers may break away from the Sinn Fein party, which has for several years dominated the situation, and be willing to consider the very generous measure of Home Rule that all British parties are now prepared to grant. A great change has come over the people and public men of England in relation to Irish affairs. It will be a thousand pities if Ireland does not avail herself of the new situation that is placed before her. Hitherto at every stage Ireland and Ireland's friends have had to battle for Home Rule. The great Conservative party of the nation resolutely fought against any form of Home Rule. It was not a question of terms. The party led in turn by Lord Salisbury, Mr. Balfour and Mr. Bonar Law took their stand squarely against any change of the relations between Ireland and the rest of the United Kingdom. English Liberals who began to feel that some concession along the line of self-government ought to be made were at once assailed as enemies of England. When Gladstone, with his splendid vision, saw that in some form of Home Rule lay the only hope of a successful management of Irish affairs, and so declared his mind, he was bitterly assailed, not only by his political opponents, but also by a powerful section of his own friends. Chamberlain and a host of others broke away from the Liberal party and united with the Conservatives in forming a Unionist party

whose chief motto was "No Home Rule for Ireland."

The Unionist party remains, but the motto is no longer paraded. A Government which includes Arthur Balfour and Bonar Law and Joseph Chamberlain's son offers Home Rule to Ireland. The pity is that these gentlemen are so late in reaching the conclusion that Gladstone reached thirty years ago, when acceptance of the Home Rule principle would have wrought a happy settlement and avoided all the conflict and misery that have since marked the controversy. But that these eminent Unionists and their associates now admit that some form of Home Rule is inevitable is a tremendous fact for Ireland and for the Empire.

No party in England will consent to allow Ireland to become an "Irish Republic". If that and that only will be acceptable to the Irish people then the world must look forward to a continuance of the dreadful condition that has prevailed in Ireland for some months past. Disorder and crime are met with lawful punishment in some cases, and in others with unlawful reprisals in which the innocent and the guilty alike suffer. Sir Hamar Greenwood, the Irish Secretary, tells the public each week that crime is being checked and order restored, and too often his announcement is followed by a new outbreak on one side or the other. Even though Ireland be made, in a larger degree than at present, an armed camp, it is safe to say that peace and order will not be re-established by force alone.

Unless the Irish majority becomes willing to entertain fair terms of Home Rule for an Ireland within the Empire there can be no peace. Every effort should therefore be made to obtain the sympathy and co-operation of those to whom we have referred as moderate Home Rulers. That there are many such is well assured. But the influence of the extremist section—the Sinn Fein party—has hitherto seemed too strong to permit these moderates to declare their views. Now comes the announcement that a very important body—the Dublin County Council—which has in the past owned allegiance to the Irish Republic has rescinded its former resolution on that question and placed itself again in communication with the British Government; and close upon this it is stated that the Galway County Council has taken a similar course. These are the first important moves of the kind. Let us hope that they are the beginning of an effort, from the viewpoint of the Irish majority, to get away from Sinn Fein control.

## The Conference

Occasional conferences between Ministers of the Imperial Government and Ministers of the Dominions are desirable, inasmuch as they afford opportunities for the inter-

change of information and opinion concerning matters in which all parts of the Empire are interested. Even though no specific question be set down for consideration, and even though no formal resolutions be passed, such meetings of the statesmen of the Empire may be productive of much good. Sometimes the Ministers so assembled make the mistake of assuming that to justify their existence it is necessary to discover grievances and pass resolutions on various subjects. Occasionally there is a real question deserving of consideration and on it a resolution is adopted which leads to some useful action. But in more than one case it has been found that there was no grievance to be remedied and that the resolutions adopted were of such little practical value that they were soon forgotten.

There are always in England some fussy people who desire to have such conferences and to use them for the promotion of some faddist ideas about which the multitude of people care nothing. These folk have been clamoring for the holding of an Imperial Conference in 1921. The idea was received with so little favor in some of the Dominions that the holding of the conference seemed to have been abandoned. Now, however, the plan has been revived. With apparent official authority it has been announced that the conference will be held in London during the coming summer. The faddists have hailed the announcement with satisfaction and have begun to talk of the great constitutional changes to be made. This seems to have alarmed Mr. Lloyd George, who has taken pains to declare that it is not contemplated to propose any change of a constitutional character. The fussy folk in England will deplore this declaration and once more proclaim that the Empire is going to the dogs; but the timely warning of the British Premier should have a reassuring effect on the minds of people who, misled by the agitation of the faddists, sometimes see great danger of an oppressive Imperialism.

## Militarism in France

Before the war there was no question that was more disturbing to the public mind in France than that of the period of military service. There was always a military party which, fully persuaded that France must one day fight Germany again, constantly pressed for military preparations, including a large army recruited by compulsory service. Yet such service was by no means popular. The mass of the people chafed under a system which required heavy expenditure and took the young men of the nation away from their avocations for two or three years. More than once disputes concerning the period of service created a ministerial crisis. If the whole system of compulsory service could have been abolished there would have been many Frenchmen