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LONDON, SATURDAY, MAY 20, 1916

WHAT IS SINN FEIN AND WHY

Now that the Sinn Fein "rebellion" has taken its place with the Young Ireland rising of '48 and the Fenian movement of '67 as an incident in the chequered history of Ireland many of our readers will be interested in knowing the genesis of the movement which reached its futile climax in the recent abortive insurrection.

Mr. Joyce Kilmer, a contributor to the New York Times, sought out Padraic Colum, an Irishman, now in New York, who was in close touch and sympathy with founders of Sinn Fein:

I asked Mr. Colum to tell me something about the origin of Sinn Fein, the organization which was the soul of this revolution.

"Sinn Fein," said Mr. Colum, (and, by the way, this word is pronounced as if it were spelled Shin Fane), "was really originated about eight years ago by Arthur Griffith, editor of The United Irishman, and by the young men who were associated with him as contributors to that publication. To the United Irishman, most of the young Irish writers contributed—Thomas MacDonagh, Seumas O'Sullivan, Joseph Campbell, and a number of others, including myself. To it William Butler Yeats contributed the first essays about the Irish Theatre. The first published work of James Stephens, who wrote 'Here Are Ladies' and 'The Crook of Gold,' appeared in The United Irishman."

"Griffith's idea was that Ireland would get results by a policy of passive resistance. He thought that Ireland should send no representatives at all to Westminster, but should organize Parliamentary assemblies at home. Sinn Fein, you know, means 'ourselves.' Griffith thought that the Irish should make Ireland, and not England, the centre of all their activity, political and otherwise. He wanted representatives elected in the different parts of the country and sent to Dublin to make laws for the government of Ireland. These laws would not be binding, of course, but they would have a powerful moral effect. He wrote a brilliant pamphlet called 'The Resurrection of Hungary,' in which he showed that Francis Deak, Louis Kossuth's lieutenant, had reorganized the Hungarian people on a similar basis. Griffith changed the name of his paper to 'Sinn Fein,' and the name was given to the organization of the people who worked for the success of his plan. In the course of time it came to be applied loosely to all Irishmen who desired Irish freedom and were opposed to the Parliamentary Party and the policies of Mr. Redmond, although a great many of them are not actually in sympathy with the policies that actually belong to Sinn Fein."

Most of the leaders and founders of this Sinn Fein movement were men of letters closely identified with the Gaelic revival.

Padraic Pearse (whose father was an Englishman) wrote poems and plays in English and Irish. Thomas MacDonagh published four volumes of verse and wrote a play which was produced at the Abbey Theatre. Most of the others likewise were of literary tastes and achievement. James Connolly, Mr. Colum tells us, was "a revolutionary in the Continental sense of the word—a representative of the proletariat." He was a friend and co-worker of James Larkin who for a short time was very prominent in Dublin labor troubles a few years ago. Connolly also was a writer and published a volume "Labor in Irish History."

Eoin MacNeill was a professor in the National University and in his writings was opposed to physical force, as indeed were all the original Sinn Feiners.

Another distinguished Irishman, Canon Hannay (George A. Birmingham) refers to Sinn Fein in an article on "Recruiting in Ireland To-day" in the Nineteenth Century. Precisely because it was

written six months ago the references are of vivid interest to-day.

"Almost at once it was found that there was opposition, of a kind much more definite and better organized than any that had been met in the early days of the War. Sinn Feiners increased and multiplied in a most surprising way. They carried on a vigorous propaganda, interrupted meetings, hooted speeches, and even tried to insult Lieutenant O'Leary, who since he won the V. C., has been something of a hero in Ireland. The history of the Sinn Fein party is interesting, and must be told in outline if the meaning and value of the party's present opposition to recruiting is to be properly understood. Originally it was a small party composed chiefly of intellectuals in Dublin. It was vehemently nationalist, and looked forward to founding an independent Irish Republic. The leaders did not advocate actual rebellion. They recognized an appeal to physical force was useless. Their policy was based on a misunderstanding of the course of events in Hungary when the Magyars were struggling for independence. It was a case of idealism in politics. The party made high demands on its members and offered uncommonly little in the way of reward. It made little or no headway except among clerics in various government offices."

This is interesting in the light of recent events when it was found that many leaders in the rebellion were civil servants.

"Sinn Fein was looked on coldly by the Church, which controlled, indirectly, a good deal of the wealth of Ireland, and was detested by the orthodox politicians who controlled, also indirectly, most of the rest. The result was that only an idealist, or a man whose salary and position were guaranteed to him by the Government he proposed to destroy, could afford to be a Sinn Feiner."

"Gradually the party forgot the Hungarian history which it had somewhat laboriously learnt and gave up most of its constructive policy. It became merely a centre of opposition to Mr. John Redmond and the Parliamentary Party. It was the old animosity between the extremist and the constitutional agitator."

"The activities of this newly augmented Sinn Fein Party are causing a certain amount of anxiety, and men are to be met with who regard them as serious and dangerous. I do not think there is any real cause for fear."

That the outbreak of the War should send all the malcontents, socialists and shirkers into the ranks of Sinn Fein is not surprising. Nor is it to be wondered at that honest men should be misled by the agitators. The old ranking sense of injustice had been revived by the events of the Carson campaign in Ulster.

"There were two phases," says a vigorous writer in Ireland, "of his campaign. One was a defiance of the Imperial Parliament and the British power. The other was the actual prosecution of civil war against the Catholics of Belfast. This latter was not an affair of fire and sword, of rifle and machine gun; it was an affair of steel billets, with whose aid the Catholic workmen in Belfast shipyards were ejected, battered and maimed, from the places where they had gained the daily bread for their families. It was not their employers who drove them forth. In the case of the largest shipyard, the chief owner was a Home Ruler and he wanted his Catholic employees to remain. Carson's henchmen it was who assailed, who injured, who cast them out; who closed all avenues of employment to them and forced them to go to towns and cities in Scotland to get work. It was civil war, save only for one feature. For fear of endangering the chances of Home Rule, then being fought for on the British arena, the friends of the injured Catholic workmen went under voluntary restraints and did not strike back."

"The men who committed these assaults went unpunished. The law made no attempt to vindicate its majesty. And after working hours, and on holidays, the men who perpetrated the outrages were organized into a military body under military leaders, openly challenging the authority of Great Britain, and being in no way interfered with. Sir Edward Carson became their spokesman and counsellor. He defied the authorities. He invoked the aid of the Kaiser in case of need. He brought arms from Germany. He locked the police in their barracks. He defied the navy, and the navy failed to interpose any effective barrier to his law-defying enterprises. He destroyed the morale of the officers of the British army. He brought about a mutiny among the officers in the principal centre of British armed power in Ireland, the camp at the Curragh. He was not interfered with. On the contrary, he was made a hero in London."

"British Toryism played with fire, toyed with rebellion. The very papers which now demand the overthrow of ministers for not dealing with rebellion in its incipient stages, then threatened the same ministers with destruction if they dared interfere with Carson or put an end to his open and defiant treason. He was aided and abetted in every officer's mess."

"If Mr. Asquith wants to fix responsibility, here is where the responsibility

lies, at the door of one man, and of those who were misled by him or intimidated by him. Home Rule was held up for fear of a Carsonite rebellion. Holding it up has produced an attempt at revolution, planned on the Carson model, executed with more than Carsonite daring by men who saw Carson taken into the Cabinet while Home Rule was still held out of operation. Whoever may have planned, whoever may have fomented, whoever may have made actual this rebellion in Ireland, Carson is the author of it, Carson is primarily responsible for it, Carson must bear the blood guilt of it. Whoever escapes the responsibility, he must bear it. He is guiltier than Casement, for he has yielded to the young men who have yielded to counsels of folly, for he first showed them the potency of rebellion and then made them feel that rebellion would be justified if it rid Ireland of him. The blood shed in the streets of Dublin is on his head, and all his present declamation of loyalty, all his asseverated desire to crush the rebels, cannot wipe out the stain."

Any investigation into the causes of the Dublin trouble which does not go down to its origin in Ulster will outrage mankind's awakened sense of justice. Any attempt to govern Ireland short of practical Home Rule will be the sheerest folly.

One great statesmanlike and generous act now would put an end forever to the Irish question. Is Carson big enough to meet the crisis? If he has enough genuine Irish generosity he can make easy the great act of statesmanship which would make "The United Kingdom" a reality.

WHY DO PEOPLE NOT GO TO CHURCH?

"Why people do not go to church" was the subject of a sermon preached by Rev. W. Irvine in Unity hall. He said that "it was but reiterating a truism to say that people did not go to church." The question was one of great interest in conferences and assemblies to-day. It has been estimated by a writer that 75% of the British people were out of touch with organized Christianity while on the continent of Europe the people of Britain were considered a church-going people."—The Albertan.

The Calgary Albertan has been giving a good deal of space to the discussion of this question of perennial interest to our Protestant friends. Ministers preach sermons and correspondents write letters dealing with the causes of the trouble, but they all agree as to the facts.

In his analysis of the problem Mr. Irvine quite unconsciously throws a good deal of light on the reasons why people do not go to church.

"In finding an answer to this question we must realize the transition period through which the church is passing. It stands today at the parting of the ways."

No doubt the reverend gentleman is quite honest and quite sincere. "The Church is in a period of transition." "It is at the parting of the ways." It has got to be quite the thing for Protestants of all sects to speak of "The Church"; the use of the singular conveniently glosses over the disagreeable fact which a correspondent comments upon as one of the reasons why people do not go to church. He points to "the disunion of the so-called Christian churches, the multiplication of sects and the cruel persecution of one sect by another." The man in the street—when he ought to be in church—is not deceived by the term "The Church."

Then the vague promise of what "the Church" is going to be, what it ought to be, what it must be in the future, does not impress the unchurched. Rather is it their justification.

The hungry sheep look up and are not fed. They are told that sometime in the future the shepherds will know what to do; the teachers will know their own minds; the Gospel message will be revised and brought up to date.

But we are still "at the parting of the ways." A profound philosophical remark which makes things quite clear.

"On the one hand is its traditions and its history, involving principles of great moment to our forefathers, while on the other hand there was the road to progress, to untrammelled freedom of thought, and spiritual achievements fitted to our age. While standing thus irresolute and undecided the church appears at her worst and we must be careful not to pass hasty judgment."

This is the parting. We must abandon the "principles of great moment to our forefathers" and take the "road to progress, to untrammelled freedom of thought." Just now "the church" is "standing irresolute and undecided." Don't judge rashly though, she may come out all right.

"The church has lost its attractions because she has failed in adaptation to the spiritual need of our time. While ministers were asking why the people don't go to church, the people are asking why they should go?"

Now here when this profound philosopher leaves aside his grandiloquent references to progress, untrammelled freedom of thought, and the great changes that have come over the heavens and the earth in our time, he seems to put the question quite plainly and sensibly.

Why should people go to church to hear a preacher without a message?

Why they do not go, Mr. Irvine indicates pretty clearly when he says:

"The church has never recanted from its impossible orthodox position. The average man judges the church by these doctrines and perceiving them to be unreasonable, in many cases, at variance with science and with all, impracticable, he does not attend."

"Even though the preaching of to-day is not doctrinal, in the sense of creeds, yet there is an evident lack of conviction in the modern ministry. They lack the vision of leadership and the enthusiasm of their predecessors. They have lost the old note of divine authority, and have not yet been able to strike the new. Insofar as this is true the church is to blame for not having the confidence and devotion of the masses."

Orthodoxy, doctrine, creed, these deadly sins, Mr. Irvine gratefully admits, "the church" has pretty well shaken off.

Now why should people go to church to listen to a "modern ministry" evidently lacking in conviction, which disclaims all divine authority and which relegates the supernatural to the limbo of outworn creeds and superstitions?

Does the "modern ministry" think that men are vitally interested in their futile strivings to bring their anaemic religious emotions into harmony with the spirit of the world which is ever opposed to the spirit of Christ?

IS THINKING BECOMING A LOST ART?

This may seem a strange question to ask in this age of boasted enlightenment, when universities are being endowed on every side, when new schools with the latest equipment are springing up in every town and hamlet throughout the land. Yet if we examine the matter closely we will find reason to doubt if intellectual development is keeping pace with material progress.

"By their fruits you shall know them" is a very sound axiom to build upon. If our primary and secondary schools are really developing the intelligence and imparting a liberal education, we should see evidences of it in the tastes and ideals of the people. Let us examine some phases of our national life to see what light they throw upon the question. Take first of all, literature. A good education should develop a taste for good reading. But have even the majority of the graduates of our universities acquired a taste for good literature? We think not. They have read along certain prescribed lines in order to get their degrees; but you will find few of them enthusiastic about the classic literature even of their own tongue. Not long since a writer bemoaned the fact that our good old English authors were but gathering dust in our libraries, while the people are feeding upon the latest froth that appeals solely to the imaginations or the passions. What is the reason for this? It is evident. Either the people have not acquired habits of thought or are unwilling to use their brains.

Take again the matter of public lectures. There was a time when a good speaker was a drawing card; but there are now many towns in Ontario where a modern Demosthenes or Burke would not draw a sufficient house to pay expenses. The only kind of a lecturer that succeeds now is the one who amuses the people, tells witty anecdotes, appeals to the imagination or perhaps the prejudices of his audience and makes outlandish and often irrelevant statements, without ever attempting to prove them. This is the key to the popularity of Billy Sunday. We heard recently at a recruiting meeting a speech by one of the Dominion Cabinet ministers that was really a masterpiece. He was followed by a gentleman who indulged in some rhetorical fireworks and hackneyed appeals to patriotism. In the judgment of several persons within our hearing the former was no good, but the latter was grand. Why this? Because the one appealed to the intelligence of his audience, while the

other did not call into play any brain action.

In the histrionic art, also, we notice the same phenomena. Shakespeare has been supplanted by vaudeville and the movies. The latter sometimes make the claim of being educational. "The Birth of a Nation" is especially heralded as such. In many towns the school children were given a half holiday to enable them to see it. Curiosity led us to be present at a matinee performance. The music was good—at least they say it was good. The scenic effects were all that could be desired. But as we viewed the mob, battle, and love scenes and the evolution of the negro from an untutored slave in the cotton fields to a gentleman, dressed in a smart uniform and playing tennis on a college lawn, we thought to ourselves: Is this instructive? Is this true history? Again we thought what a contrast the birth of our own nation would be to this. Would that the pageants at the Tercentenary of Quebec which were lauded by Professor Wrong of Toronto University as being "highly instructive, true to history, and calculated to create a better understanding between the two races in Canada" had been perpetuated by the cinematograph! What an epic we would have if Cartier and Champlain, LeCaron and Brebeuf, Laval and Frontenac, Huron chiefs and Algonquin braves, Indian children and devoted nuns, Coureurs de bois and Voyageurs, LaSalle and Hennepin, Dollard and Madeleine Vercheres, Montcalm and Wolfe were made to pass before us in their right perspective amid the historic scenes of long ago! But this is aside. When we came out into the street and met the people coming home from work, it took us some time to get our bearings, to remember where we were, what day it was and what time of the day; and we decided that the movies are destructive, not only of sane thinking, but of normal habits of life.

There is another sphere in which this intellectual hysteria manifests itself, viz., our recreations. The games that attract are not those that require skill, but those that furnish excitement. We can understand people going to see a good hockey or lacrosse match, but the poorest exhibition will attract a crowd, simply because it gives them a chance to yell or screech, as the case may be. Many of those who snatch a short vacation from a busy life, will, instead of communing with nature, "find tongues in trees, sermons in stones and books in the running brooks," in a word, instead of recasting their souls and bodies, spend the greater part of the night in dancing and other amusements and then sleep away the most beautiful hours of the day.

Nor are Catholics wholly free from the above indictments. In a neighboring city across the border, a number of gentlemen belonging to the "Committee on Religious Prejudices" sent out a request that their Protestant fellow citizens should provide them with a list of their objections against the Church. To them we would say: "The Church is opposed to enlightenment; and as a proof of this the list of entertainments as advertised in the diocesan papers was dances and card-parties and only one-tenth of an educational character. Of course this argument proved too much. The Guardians of Liberty, who are strong on lectures, would, according to this reasoning, be great friends of enlightenment. Yet we must admit, however, that this incident affords our co-religionists some food for thought."

We may conclude that there are two weapons that murder thought. The first is the defect in our educational system above referred to. The second is lack of faith or a bad conscience. When Protestantism undermined faith it undermined reason. The Catholic Church is today the great bulwark of reason, for she sees things in their right proportion and never gets excited. Men with a bad conscience do not court self-inspection and avoid it by a continual round of distractions. No wonder the Scripture says "With desolation is the world made desolate, because there is no one that thinketh in his heart." It were well for them if they were forced to do so.

If they were made to sit by the rivers of Babylon perhaps they would remember Zion.

"THE GLEANER."

Tears are the safety-valves of the heart, when too much pressure is laid on.

NOTES AND COMMENTS

THAT THE insolent and insinuating tone of the Toronto Globe's recent reference to Premier Asquith's audience with the Holy Father, is not in harmony with enlightened public opinion in England may be seen from the Morning Post's comment thereon. The Roman correspondent of that journal, who may be presumed to have written with knowledge, had this to say: "As Great Britain has had a mission to the Holy See since December, 1914, it was only proper that the Premier who appointed it should when he found himself in Rome ask for a Papal audience." From this it may be seen how far removed from fact was the Globe's assertion—dictated no doubt by ingrained Presbyterian animosity to all things Papal—to the effect that "we may be sure the audience was of the Pope's seeking."

THE FURTHER comment of the Morning Post's correspondent is in the light of the foregoing instruction: "No unprejudiced person acquainted with Rome," he says, "can, after the experience of the last sixteen months, doubt that it was an excellent stroke of policy to send the Mission here. Sir Henry Howard and his coadjutors have rendered a great service to their country by putting the British case before the Pope, who was previously in the position of a judge hearing (from no fault of his own) only the counsel of one party. Since the Mission came the tone of the clerical press in Rome towards us has almost entirely changed, while the Minister's kindness and interest in his British fellow-subjects, quite irrespective of their religion, have been specially useful at a season when unusually large numbers of British soldiers have been in Rome, and when all Britons living here feel that blood is thicker than water." It is fortunate for British interests generally that during this grave crisis the reins of government are in the hands of a man whose largeness of mind and statesmanship rises far superior to the petty sectarian politics that obtain so frequently in the Globe office.

OUR YOUTHFUL BUT vigorous and promising New York contemporary, Ireland, contains in its last issue an estimate of Sir Roger Casement by the young Cambridge poet, Shane Leslie, which those who wish to acquire some degree of understanding regarding this latest storm petrel in Irish history will do well to study carefully. Its gist is shown in one sentence: "We believe Sir Roger's mind has been truly and terribly set on one cause only, and that Ireland is the cause for which he has gone out of his way and out of his mind in order to sacrifice his life." Or: "If the Irish in America demand a hero let them take him if they will. Let them contrast what is good and what is not good in what Casement has done. And then let them contrast what is not good and what is good in what John Redmond has done. . . . Which is best for Ireland? The man who made Home Rule possible or the man who endeavored to make it impossible. The Irish must choose their hero. We have chosen ours"—a choice which is shared by an overwhelming majority of the Irish race throughout the world.

THAT THE PROGRESS of the War has not been allowed to interfere with industrial and agricultural development in Great Britain is evident from the bulletins and other reports which continue to be issued by the Boards of Trade and Agricultural societies throughout the country. One of the latest of the latter has to do with the discovery of bacterized peat as an intensive cultivator of food and other products of the soil. Professor Bottomley, of King's College, London, who has given much attention to the subject has recently made an offer to the Corporation of Manchester in connection with his discovery of the capabilities of "homogen," the name he has given to the peat product treated in his laboratories.

THE CLAIM made is that by treating ordinary peat with bacteria a substitute for manure is produced which is fifty times more valuable than the manures now generally in use. This claim seems to have been already substantiated in large measure. Experiments have shown that five hundred weights of bacterized peat applied to an acre of land will nearly double a crop of wheat. The Corporation of Manchester, which owns

enormous quantities of peat on the Moss and Carrington estates, has been considering the suggestion that its exploitation is desirable and with this in view has entered into negotiations with Professor Bottomley which are expected to lead to very important results.

THE OPENING of these peat deposits is urged for several reasons: (a) as a means of utilizing an otherwise almost useless material in the preparation of a highly nutritious plant manure; (b) as a means of fertilizing existing waste lands on the city estates; (c) as a source of revenue to the city by the preparation (according to Bottomley's method) and sale of the manufactured material; (d) as affording a means of providing employment for discharged soldiers and others.

AT A lecture not long since the Professor stated that there are seventeen million acres of waste land in the United Kingdom, most of which is used as sheep runs. This exceeds the combined areas of agricultural land in Holland, Belgium and Denmark, and gives some idea as to the important bearing the discovery of peat bacterization is likely to have upon the food producing capabilities of the country. Ireland, too, is vitally concerned as it has been shown that in Green Island alone there are thirty-three million tons of peat, the bulk of which under the Bottomley method could be converted into an ideal fertilizer.

COMING DOWN to particulars, it is shown that at Kew Gardens and the experimental station at Lea Valley, plants apparently dying have been restored to more than normal growth. Four potato sets weighing a few ounces in all, placed in a small box of moss litter and watered once a week with the extract from bacterized peat, produced three pounds of potatoes in eight weeks. One tomato plant so treated had 16 pounds of tomatoes on it at one time. At Lea Valley, 18 cucumber plants treated with manure and bone meal yielded 148 pounds of fruit, while 18 others grown in nine parts of ordinary soil mixed with one of bacterized peat, gave 224 pounds of fruit and marketed 71 pounds before a single cucumber was ready from the other bed.

THIS BEING so it is not to be wondered at that "homogen" has already become commercialized, and even that the demand is greater than the supply. At present the plant available for producing the fertilizer is limited, and as ordinary fertilizers are also scarce it is not surprising that the new product easily brings £15, or \$75 per ton. In face of present conditions resulting from the War the hope is entertained in Great Britain that homogen will soon be available in sufficient quantities to help in increasing home food supplies. We presume that the authorities in Canada also have the matter in hand. There are said to be vast deposits of peat in this country, and it is therefore a question only of initiating experiments with a view to demonstrating their degree of suitability for fertilizing purposes under the Bottomley method.

ON THE BATTLE LINE

LONDON, May 12.—That the long prepared German offensive against the British front is at most but a few days off, if it has not already begun, is the almost unanimous opinion of military critics here to-night, following the announcement of the German attack at Hulluch.

This offensive will mark the abandonment of the attempt to take Verdun, which is now beyond all shadow of doubt a failure, and will mark what will in all probability be the last desperate effort of the kaiser's armies on the battlefield.

Before the British front are massed 500,000 Germans with guns, many of which have been and are still being brought from Verdun.

Against him are at least a million British troops, including the Canadians and Australians, with artillery, outnumbering greatly that of the enemy.

Military men here declare there is absolutely no chance of a German success.

After eight days of heavy fighting on both sides of the river the French hold practically the same lines as they occupied a week ago, save on the northern slope of Hill 304, where the enemy have made a slight gain. The gain is so unimportant that the French have not considered it necessary to waste life in efforts to recover the lost ground. The occasional capture of a few French trenches encourages the Germans to keep on trying for Verdun, and the longer the German offensive lasts the better pleased "Papa" Joffre will be. He does not