

THE LATE SIR MARK SYKES AND IRELAND.

Many have held for the last two or three years that Sir Mark Sykes would have been an ideal Chief Secretary for Ireland (says the London *Daily Chronicle*). Though he was a Conservative by classification, he was singularly open-minded, and he enjoyed the confidence of Liberals.

Son of Sir Tatton Sykes, the Anglican church-building squire of Sledmore, he took his religious creed from his mother, and was a zealous Catholic; but it was a Protestant and indeed predominantly Nonconformist constituency which returned him to Parliament repeatedly from 1911 onwards by great majorities.

Ireland would have welcomed him more cordially than any other British politician has been received in that country since 1886, for, though he was opposed to Home Rule, he was a warm champion of the Irish people, and in the end he did, in fact, advocate a system of federal Home Rule for the United Kingdom. The mishandling of the Irish question in the course of the war caused him much grief, and he wrote:

"The political division in Ireland is an enemy asset. The martial instinct and the intense enthusiasm of the Irish people are the two British assets which, by hesitation, prejudice, and folly, we have succeeded in stifling and curbing until almost all that is left of them are the little crosses which mark the Irish graves in France and Flanders."

The April number of *Lloyd's Magazine* has a very striking sketch of Sir Mark, written before the tragedy of his death, by Mr. James Douglas. We quote a passage:—

"The Irish question is an 'acid test' of statesmanship. Sir Mark Sykes, in November, 1916, was present at the Requiem of the Irish Guards in Westminster Cathedral. When he returned to his house he sat down and wrote an indignant protest against a leading article in the *Morning Post*. It is creditable to that incurable and incorrigible journal that it published his letter. Sir Mark said that every line of the article must lacerate the hearts of the Irish soldiers, among whom he had stood with *sacra indignatus* such as Swift himself cannot have endured. A Prince of our Royal House was in the cathedral. 'As I looked about me,' wrote Sir Mark Sykes, 'and saw the tears standing in the eyes of those thousands of Irishmen, each wearing the King's coat, many scarred with honorable wounds gained in the King's service, many bearing on their breasts distinctions granted them by the King's will, I could not help wondering: Are there none here whose hearts are searched and sorely tried when they think of the relations which subsist between this country and Ireland?'"

The world's history is a divine poem, of which the history of every nation is a canto and of every man a word. Its strains have been pealing along down the centuries, and, though there have been mingled the discords of roaring cannon and dying men, yet to the Christian philosopher and historian—the humble listener—there has been a divine melody running through the song which speaks of hope and halcyon days to come. History is but the unrolled scroll of prophecy.

—James A. Garfield.

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