

IRELAND'S EASTERTIDE

(By CANON WILLIAM BARRY, D.D., in the London Catholic Times.)

It wants only a few years of 15 centuries since Patrick, the Apostle from Rome, kindled the Paschal fire at Tara which announced that Ireland should be a Catholic nation for evermore. When we name Tara we call to mind the Easter joys and hopes of a people whose faith shines undimmed in the twentieth century as in the fifth; and whose claim to freedom is consecrated by ages of martyrdom heroically borne. We are still St. Patrick's children, touched to the heart whenever we think of that first bright Irish Easter, and resolved to keep our beautiful old religion inviolate now more than ever. Ireland must look sharply to it that her schools be not secularised under pretence of State education. She will acknowledge no teacher whom St. Patrick would not bless, or St. Bride of Kildare own. Tara stands in history for a wonderful reconciliation of the Irish genius with Roman dogma; and will it be said that the charm or the spirit of the Celt underwent any loss after baptism at the hands of the Apostle? This, then, is the abiding and victorious message that comes to us from Tara of the Kings, which was at once Ireland's royal city and her religious birthplace. No capital, whether the centre of an alien Government like Dublin, or a dreary treadmill of commerce like Belfast, will stir the imagination as do the forsaken raths and mounds near the Boyne of sad remembrance, while we contemplate our country's claims on mankind. We are loyal with an unshaken loyalty to that first Eastertide. What, from such a meeting-place of Heaven and earth, do we owe to England? Nothing at all. But we owe to ourselves duties not easy to fulfil.

Dublin Free—Belfast Let Alone.

We owe England nothing, I repeat, exactly as the Allies owe nothing to Germany, and for the same reasons: we are the party aggrieved. This I will maintain not less absolutely than the sturdiest among Mr. De Valera's followers. But as the Allies cannot avoid making peace with Germany in the world's interest, so we are compelled to discover some practical and sure means of a settlement with our hereditary oppressor, by which Ireland's future shall be happier than her past. One prime article is soon stated. Dublin Castle must cease to exist as an administration, and the Irish Secretary with it. "Home Rule," said *The Times* in its leader of March 26, 1919, "has passed beyond the scope of discussion. While its character, its extent, and its limitations have to be reviewed afresh, we are all Home Rulers to-day." Dublin, therefore, passes out of English into native hands, the powers of local government, no longer controlled from Westminster, and including police, customs, and revenue, are transferred to an Irish Parliament. But what of Belfast, of "Ulster," as the North-east corner is oddly termed? Some there are who would run the risk of compelling it to come in, of course with abundant safeguards against injustice. Honestly, I do not believe any safeguards necessary: Belfast will always take care of itself; but neither do I believe in coercion. Does any Home Ruler seriously propose that Belfast and its district shall be welded by force of arms into a United Ireland? The thought is incredible. British Ministers have given pledges that public opinion would never allow to be violated. Home Rule is one article of settlement; no coercion is another. Both I hold equally essential if Ireland is to enjoy prosperity and peace. We ought to keep them steadily before us. It follows that Ulster should be called upon to vote, county by county, on the question of joining Home Rule Ireland or staying outside; and a period, suppose five years, fixed after which a new referendum might be taken. From a variety of indications I judge this to be the line of least resistance, on which all except the few irreconcilables, Orange or Catholic, would agree. The outstanding section would require a government of its own; but under no circumstances should it become an enlarged

English "Downshire." It is no more English than the Highlands of Scotland.

The Magnetism of Home Rule.

An interim arrangement like the foregoing has many advantages. It respects the principle of self-determination in the whole and the parts; it clears alien authority out of the land once for all; it gives time during which the true Irish Parliament may and surely would prove by facts that it was a benefit to the country; and while not forbidding the unity which it was every day helping onward, it would inflict on the reluctant section a double sense of isolation, salutary though bitter. For, after all, Belfast is Irish; and names like Charlemont, Wolfe Tone, and Mitchell remind us how keenly patriotic was the Protestant North in days gone by. To divide Ireland by an everlasting law is what no sensible statesman would propose. But so strong has ever been the attraction of a national Parliament that, given one however imperfect or even corrupt, it will be sure to reflect the people's judgment and to develop a care for their well-being. So it was with Swift's "Legion Club," in the eighteenth century, which listened to Flood, followed Grattan, and showed an honorable minority whom Castlereagh could not bribe. Let Ireland get her Parliament under whatever passing hindrances, provided the English Government quits her shores. In no long while Ulster will be asking admission; and that on motives loftier than finance or commercial aim.

Tara Restored.

But some of us dreamt, after John Redmond's immortal hour on August 3, 1914, a dream of United Ireland which we have not given up. We saw the old historic provinces—Ulster, Leinster, Munster, and Connacht—restored, each with its capital city, its university, its local assembly, its self-development; and in Royal Meath, at Tara, the Parliament of Erin held its session, binding in one the old Milesian ages with the medieval centuries and our modern time. We dreamt of a resurrection which was to be a New Birth. Will it ever come? I look for it hopefully, but on these conditions: that the English garrison go back to their own country; that Catholic and Protestant Ireland live unmolested side by side during a few years of Home Rule; and that there be no whisper of coercion and no State-tyranny. Then St. Patrick's blessing will descend anew upon the land he won for Christ.

What a multitude of people are watching for to-morrow. "To-morrow I shall be better," murmurs the invalid. "To-morrow I shall have better luck, shall do better work, shall be happier in my bargains, shall beware of former mistakes," thus say the unfortunate, the careless, the speculative, the remorseful. Yet commonly, to-morrow becomes to-day only to find the invalid dead, the unfortunate utterly ruined, the speculator desperately disappointed, the sinner deeper in his crimes. We are too much inclined to "reckon without our host" in regard to the illusive "to-morrow," and we dispose of it in advance, as though it were our own, whereas there is naught on earth so uncertain as that mysterious day that lies so near us in the future.

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