

IRISH NEWS

GENERAL.

Mr. de Valera has given formal and emphatic denial to the statement that communications have passed between him and the Government with regard to the situation in Ireland. The thing, he said, "was too ridiculous to discuss. There have been and there are no such negotiations with reference to the government of Ireland or any other question."

The following letter from Colonel Laurence Roche, of the "Munsters," has been published in the Irish papers. Colonel Roche is a cousin of Mr. de Valera, M.P.:—Sir,—To-day's issue of your paper contains an article taken from the English *Daily News*, commenting on the action taken by the officers of the Irish Brigades—who took part in the great war—in forwarding a petition to his Majesty the King asking that the claims of Ireland to national self-government should be determined by the Peace Conference. As one of the officers who signed the petition, I take exception to the following: "That the support of Sinn Féin was not desired by the signatories." To my mind we are all united in proclaiming that Ireland is a nation, one and indivisible.—Yours faithfully, LAURENCE ROCHE, R.M.F., late 47th Irish Brigade, Bruree, Co. Limerick, March 10, 1919.

EDUCATION IN BELFAST.

Sir Edward Carson, in his speech in the House of Commons recently, dwelt on Irish educational requirements, referring especially to Belfast, where the school accommodation for the Protestant children is bad and insufficient (says the London *Catholic Times*). There were, he said, thousands of children for whom accommodation was not found. The teachers were not receiving the treatment that ought to be accorded to them, and the conditions were generally far from satisfactory. The Government should allow an education rate to be levied.

Mr. Devlin, the speaker who immediately followed, said: How long has the right hon. gentleman been asleep? He constitutes himself to-night the vocal Rip Van Winkle of British politics. How long have teachers in Ireland been badly paid?

Sir E. Carson: Haven't I often asked for better payment?

Mr. Devlin: But you were the master of the situation. We had no power. You were the master of successive British Ministries. The late aide-de-camp of the right hon. gentleman, the late Marquis of Londonderry, was Minister of Education in England, and the right hon. gentleman, the Leader of the House, was Chancellor of the Exchequer. If he could have secured the services of the Leader of the House to assist him in his Ulster campaign, surely he would have sufficient influence with him to endeavor to extract from him some of those golden British sovereigns that would have brought some comfort to the shivering children, and some advantage to the bad schools. May I point out to the right hon. gentleman, because I think I am justified in making the position of the Catholic minority in Belfast perfectly clear on this educational matter, that the Catholic schools in Belfast are as good and well equipped as you would get in any of these islands.

Sir E. Carson: Not all of them.

Mr. Devlin: I know some are imperfect. I am taking them on the whole. In addition to that, there are no Catholic children in Belfast who have not got school accommodation. They got that accommodation, and they are the poorest element in the community, by putting their hands in their pockets and paying for it. Why do not the rich constituents of the right hon. gentleman do the same? They could raise money to organise a rebellion, but they cannot raise money to educate their children. Every farthing that can be secured for improving Protestant schools, for securing the attendance of Protestant children, for making the schools more sanitary, for enlarging the playground accommodation, for paying the teachers better salaries,

for developing everything of which an educational system can be composed, will have my hearty support. But one thing will not have my support, and that is that Catholic schools in Belfast should be controlled by the Belfast Corporation.

Sir E. Carson: I never asked for that.

Mr. Devlin: That is all the better. The right hon. gentleman may rest assured that I am not making that statement without good reason. There is a sanatorium and school for tuberculosis children a few miles from Belfast, controlled by the Belfast Corporation, in which 56 per cent. of the children are Protestants and 44 per cent. Catholics. A vacancy occurred for a teacher, and they appointed a Protestant. Nobody objected to that. There was a vacancy for another school teacher. A Catholic was proposed, but she was defeated. So two Protestant teachers were appointed at this school, although 44 per cent. of the children were Catholic. I am very glad to know that one of the most notorious bigots in Belfast, when face to face with the Corporation the other day, was compelled to get up and say he was ashamed of it. But do not imagine that where the religion of the children is so sacred to the parents of the children in Belfast and in Ireland we are going to allow the religious interests of the Catholic children to be put at the mercy of the Belfast Corporation. I tell the right hon. gentleman that any attempt of that character will receive the most violent hostility from those who constitute nearly 30 per cent. of the population, and not only that, but a large percentage of the toiling masses of Belfast, whose labor and whose toil have done much to build up its greatness.

FAITHFUL IRELAND.

The Right Rev. Mgr. O'Riordan, Rector of the Irish College, Rome, in a sermon he preached last St. Patrick's Day, pays this tribute to the steadfast faith of his countrymen:—And their supernatural life has become also the mainstay of their national life. The soul of a nation can never die, except of moral corruption. Brute force may grind to powder the material elements that compose it, but if it rests on the moral law it will revive and put out its activity again. A nation that lives in God, lives by purity, by justice, by fortitude, by hope. It may have to pass through its winter of bleak distress; but its spring and summer are sure to come round, and it will bloom again like every tree that grows. That leads us into the secret of this striking fact. By the middle of the eighteenth century, the Catholics of Ireland had been reduced to about two-thirds of the population. By the middle of the nineteenth they were in a majority of six to one. In spite of the consequence of the Famine of 1847—a famine not because there was not food, but because it was taken from those who produced it, and under the sanction of the law—in spite of wholesale evictions, of the dispersion of families, and other causes of the continuous depopulation which has been going on for the past 70 years till now, the Catholics are still in a majority of three to one. There has been a systematic design to destroy the race; and yet the race lives on. There may be more than one cause of that striking phenomenon, but the chief one has its root in the faith of the people. The teaching of the Divine Motherhood of our Blessed Lady, which St. Patrick took to Ireland as it came fresh from the Council of Ephesus; the ideal of her virginal purity, which that teaching stamped on the souls and hearts of the women of Ireland, reverence for the sanctity of the marriage state: these have saved Irish Catholics from those two growths of our fashionable civilisation—the divorce court and the suicide of race. Their faith has saved them from that filth. Their faith is not a mere philosophy; it is a life. They live by their Catholic faith; they hold by their national ideals which that faith has helped them to form and to keep. And they have never been forgiven for it—no, not from the day when Giraldus Cambrensis lied in the twelfth century, to the politician and the news correspondent who lie to-day without scruple and without shame.