

an armed cruiser used for the transport of munitions under the disguise of a harmless passenger ship. This statement is warranted by an account of what she actually had on board when torpedoed—an account quoted from a New York paper of strong British leanings. The Germans allowed the ship to come close to land, and when they fired at her they were confident that she would sink slowly and that all on board would be easily saved. But to their consternation a second explosion followed that of the torpedo and the huge floating mine of ammunition was blown to pieces by the ignition of her dangerous cargo. The German writer rightly contends that it was cruel and criminal for both the British and American Governments to allow passengers to travel on such a ship, and he points out that German officials warned the public of their danger before she sailed from New York. The enormity of this crime is increased by the hypocritical denunciations of the Germans after the event. It is said that the incident was used by Wilson as an excuse for bringing the United States into the war, but he and his Government were far more guilty of causing the loss of life than were the Germans. The latter were known to be ready to sink ships carrying munitions of war, and knowing this, to permit civilians to travel by the "Lusitania" was exposing them to great danger. Yet the British and American Governments not only did that but they also failed to guard the ship effectively during her voyage. Probably they reckoned that the now admitted humanity of the Germans would allow them to employ safely this means of transporting munitions in a passenger ship. And, from what Admiral Sims admits and from what the Germans tell us, it is likely that the cowardly and ignoble scheme would have succeeded had the Germans had the least suspicion that the torpedo launched at the steamer would have exploded her cargo and thus sunk her so rapidly. Apart from all considerations of humanity, the Germans, about whose cunning we used to read so much a few years ago, would have known that for their own interests nothing worse could happen than the drowning of the civilian passengers on board. And, all things considered, we find our opinion expressed at the time amply confirmed now. The evidence proves that whatever blame attached to the submarine crew, far greater blame attaches to the Governments of the two countries between which the steamer was trading. She was an armed ship and a munition transport, and thus, being a fair mark for an enemy submarine, she had no right to have passengers on board, and it was criminal and inhuman to allow them to travel by her. Whatever our daily papers said at the time, there can be no doubt as to what the verdict must be when the facts are known. The whole incident is one more example of the shameful propaganda work which Sims exposed recently; one more example of the base methods to which alleged civilised nations descend when their passions are roused by war and the thin veneer of hypocritical convention is removed.

Ireland

Reports from Ireland inform us that the country continues fairly quiet, although there have been a few sporadic outbreaks of violence here and there, especially near and in Dublin. The Free State Government has published extracts from letters of prisoners who admit that their lot in prison is on the whole satisfactory. A report from the International Red Cross Society also testifies that life in the prisons goes on under such conditions as might be expected under a humane administration. The authorities describe as a lie a statement to the effect that shots were frequently fired through the prison windows. That there may have been isolated instances of harshness we are ready to believe, but the evidence goes to show that on the whole the complaints were purposely exaggerated for propaganda results.

In an interview with an American journalist, de Valera asserts that his peace proposals were sincere, and that the letter published by the Government to

discredit his sincerity was the work of a boy of sixteen. He protests that it is the Government, not himself, that is opposed to peace at present. This is his way of interpreting the victorious party's refusal to accept the terms of the vanquished. However, he has now acknowledged defeat, and the order has gone forth from Frank Aitken, the Chief of Staff, commanding the Republicans to dump their arms. To justify this step de Valera assures his followers that they "have saved the nation's honor and kept open the road to independence," and that "laying aside arms now is an act of patriotism as exalted and as pure as the valor in taking them up." Few people will disagree with that pronouncement, but many will regret, for Ireland's sake, that this patriotic idea did not dawn on him many months earlier.

Signs of the improved conditions are evident in the lives of the people who are reported to be moving about in a state of delight at their present security. Dublin has begun to cast off its gloom and to wear its old-time smiles again. Old motor cars have been resurrected and new ones purchased in large quantities. May the sunshine of the early summer days be a harbinger of the sunshine of peace and prosperity for the whole nation! The Government is settling down to serious tackling of the problems of reconstruction which are neither few nor negligible. Financial problems are discussed, and land purchase is again brought into prominence. The resumption of real business is a further healthy sign of the times. Among the problems remaining for solution, not the least grave is the question of the release of some twelve thousand prisoners, with the question of unemployment thereby entailed. The latter difficulty will be accentuated by the demobilisation of the army. But, with roads to remake, bridges to rebuild, and industries to revive a satisfactory way out will surely be found.

James Larkin's return to Ireland was a source of anxiety not only to the Government but to the public at large. Since his arrival he has visited many parts of the country and expressed his views at public meetings. Peace is the dominant note of his addresses, which are all tuned to a note of conciliation with all parties. It is satisfactory to find that all the weight of his great influence is thrown on the side of peace, and there is sound wisdom in his gospel of reconciliation all round. On no other basis can a lasting peace be built, and the sooner all parties recognise this the better for the country. Without such a foundation the present lull in the storm will be of brief duration. He protests against the dismemberment of Ireland, which is Lloyd George's bequest of woe to the country, and there again he is sound. We recall that an Ulster Bishop complained that neither Republicans nor Free Staters seemed to care much what happened to their brothers in Ulster. We find much reason for that complaint, for neither the Treaty nor de Valera's paper scheme attempted to solve the problem which, in our opinion, ought to have been the first plank in the platform of the Dail Eireann. During the time of the negotiations, it was somewhat of a surprise to us to find that the bone of contention was the oath rather than the question of united Ireland; and while we believe now as we did then that between the oath of Fidelity actually sanctioned and that of Document No. 2 there was only a question of verbiage, we have not changed our opinion that unfaithfulness to Ulster was the real defect of the plans of both parties. On paper, as we said, Document No. 2 provided a solution, but the admission in the same document that Ulster must not be coerced made the paper solution futile and reduced it to the level of the arrangement of the Treaty.

Taxation on Betting

The English Government's suggestion to tax betting raised a storm among the super-righteous Protestant parsons, and among the outcrites, was the voice of a certain Christchurch busybody whose small but never still voice was included in the piffle sent to us by the cableman. In the *Catholic Times* we find the question criticised in the light of morality and common sense