

AMERICA AND IRELAND

BY FRANK DILNOT

THE best minds in America are earnestly desirous of a closer and more vital relationship between America and Britain. At this moment there is a distinctly less friendly feeling toward this country among wide circles of the American people than existed at the time of the armistice. That is the situation just now. It is true that, taking the nation as a whole, it is vastly more sympathetic toward Britain than before the war; yet a combination of circumstances, in which there is one outstanding factor, has produced a fluidity of feeling — feeling which in the next few months may tend either further away from us or toward us. The leading American statesmen of both parties are not merely friendly, but cordial toward Britain; but the American people are less influenced by their leaders than any other democracy, present or past. That is putting it mildly. European governments — and this especially applies to the British — would do well to avoid banking heavily on the effect of the support of American statesmen and the American press — sincere and determined support, which may well be forthcoming. Such confidence is very likely to be calamitously upset. To be noted in passing as one of the adverse influences in recent months so far as Britain is concerned, is the absence of an authoritative voice for this country in the United States.

In this and in other ways it is imperatively necessary that there should be quick and strong action if it is desired to widen and deepen the now

existent channel of desire among leading Americans for the coöperation of the Anglo-Saxon race in the guidance of the government of the world. In the present state of affairs we may very easily drift away from an opportunity probably never to be regained. It is the matter of Ireland which above all others requires courageous and prompt decision. Ireland is at this moment poisoning feeling toward Britain among the majority of the American people.

When I first went to America two and a half years ago, and for some months afterwards, I was inclined to take the view, held by many friendly Americans, that there was much exaggeration about the power of the Irish in the United States and the extent and influence of Irish-American feeling. Longer experience, with the development of recent events, has forced upon me the deep-seated conviction that the future relations of Britain and America depend to a commanding extent upon the settlement of the question of Irish government.

The main facts as to the Irish-Americans can be quickly summarized. The descendants of the Irish immigrants are to be found principally in or around the great cities. They claim to number twenty millions, and, although this is probably an exaggeration, their numbers certainly run into millions, and their influence extends to at least double their own figures. The majority are descended from the generation who came to America in the middle years of the last century, and probably not one per cent of them have seen

either Ireland or England, but the hatred of England carried to America in those black times has been transmitted from father to son and to grandson, and the very real injustices and hardships of bygone days have not been lessened, but magnified, as the years have passed. The transformation in Ireland in the last quarter of a century is ignored or scoffed at. Constitutional Home Rule is treated as a will-o'-the-wisp raised by successive British governments. England remains the tyrannical oppressor, and, amid floods of malignant rhetoric, it is stated that Irish industries are still being crushed by jealous England, that military oppression prevails, that England, mercenary as well as brutal, is sucking large and disproportionate revenue from Ireland.

I dare say that description sounds distorted and farcical to some English readers. As a matter of fact, it is an understatement rather than an overstatement of the colossal propaganda which is sweeping the United States. What is argued for and aimed at, with both fierceness and sincerity, is the formation of Ireland into a separate country. It should be recognized that the Irish-American claim is meeting with wide volumes of sympathy from multitudes of Americans who are not of Irish extraction.

It may be asked why Americans, a shrewd and practical people, are influenced to such an extreme view. There are several answers. The first is, that they do not know it is an extreme view. They believe there has been continual misgovernment of Ireland for centuries; believe that a large majority of the people, as evidenced in the recent election, want freedom from Britain and a republic of their own; and they see no valid reason why she should not have it. Comparisons with the American revolutionists of one

hundred and forty years ago are frequently pressed home. On the other hand, there is silence when it is suggested that the Sinn Fein movement has singular points of resemblance with that of the Secessionists in the American Civil War. It is felt somehow that there is no analogy.

One great advantage which the Irish-American movement possessed for years, and still holds to a considerable extent, has been the prevalence, among nearly all classes of Americans, of suspicion, shading into hostility, toward Britain. It was largely a traditional attitude, born of the Revolutionary War, fostered by different events, and perpetuated by the elementary school books. The past five years have done much to eliminate that feeling, certainly among the educated and traveled Americans; but its complete disappearance is, of course, impossible all at once. In the big cities, especially among what we should call the workers, the old prejudice is still to be found. It flourishes particularly among descendants of immigrants from countries other than Britain, whose forbears had not the slightest connection with the American Revolution. Still, it is present also in real American circles. Here, then, was the fruitful field for Irish hate.

During the war the growing respect for Britain on the one side, and, on the other, the more than suspected sympathy of prominent Sinn Feiners for the Germans, altered feeling a good deal. There was, moreover, the biting knowledge that Ireland was exempted from conscription while conscription was being enforced in the United States. Thus it was that the Sinn Feiners kept pretty quiet in America during the war. They were not inactive, however, behind the scenes.

There are many overlapping spheres of mood and opinion in America, even

about Ireland, but it is possible to give distinctly the tendencies about the latter in the people as a whole. Radiating from millions of Irish-Americans who hate England and want separation is an influence which reaches in greater or lesser degree all the American population, who, with few exceptions, believe that Ireland has been misgoverned in the past and ought to have self-government. Probably very few of these Americans who are not Irish would make any sacrifice to turn Ireland into a separate country — though they might give the idea lip-service. Nevertheless, they feel strongly, though somewhat vaguely, that Ireland ought to be presented a chance to govern herself. I should say that that expresses the opinion of 70 per cent of Americans, the other 30 per cent including the malignant Sinn Feiners, their silent allies, the German-Americans, the indifferentists, and the out-and-out conservative Americans, who think Ireland ought to be content as she is.

It would be folly to regard the American public as indifferent when in three separate cities — New York, Boston, and Chicago — audiences of 20,000 assemble to acclaim enthusiastically De Valera. Those gatherings were an indication, but their purport should not be overestimated. Sober Americans who have sympathy with Ireland laugh at the idea that the United States could ever be driven into war with Britain on the Irish question. They are probably right, but there is, nevertheless, a danger — none the less grave because it is indirect. While there can be no question — let us say — of America declaring

war on Britain in order to secure the independence of Ireland, yet the Irish-Americans, by their continuing agitation, may exacerbate feeling against Britain; indeed, they are doing it already in some degree, and produce a state of mind in which some other cause of disagreement may in the future be fanned to extremity. I am certain that this is exactly what some of the extremists in America would be glad to see. I do not know whether Mr. Hearst, of the New York *American*, wants war, but the persistent policy of his papers, circulating in millions each week, is toward estrangement from England. He steadily piles fuel on the Irish fire. (In one way or another Ireland is vibrating throughout American politics.) It may be said that the Senate's recent vote of sixty to one in favor of Irish independence — for that is what it came to — was but an attempt to catch the Irish vote. If that is so it is pretty good evidence of the influence of Ireland on American voters — that is to say, on the American population.

Effective Home Rule will open America's eyes. It is the only thing to change her mood — the mood of the people, not of the leaders. Propaganda of the ordinary kind is useless. Action is the one thing America will understand. I believe the settlement of Ireland under a scheme of self-government will bring the United States into more cordial relationship with Britain than at any time during her history. Without that settlement there may be troublesome times ahead for both Britain and America. Estrangement will perhaps not come soon; it will always be in sight.

The Observer

ARE WE TO LOSE ITALY?

BY HENRY FRANKLIN-BOUILLON

I HAVE just returned from Italy, where I had been making preparations for the forthcoming meeting of the inter-Allied Parliament.

I wish to inform public opinion of my grief and anxiety.

A year ago, July 14 was celebrated everywhere as an Italian national holiday. Enthusiasm for France showed itself so strongly and with such unanimity, that the brotherly alliance between the two countries, on which the future of Latin civilization in the world depends, might almost have been considered definitely realized.

But the diplomats at the Peace Conference have undone all that. Eight months of their efforts have brought about results one might almost have expected. Never, even in the days of Crispi, has the mistrust and hostility of the Italian nation shown itself so clearly.

That is the truth which must be bluntly told our country, so long kept in systematic ignorance of foreign affairs by the government censorship.

How did such a situation arise? What can be done to remedy the evil? Let us listen to what our Italian friends have to say.

Italy, after affording us by her neutrality invaluable assistance in the dark days of 1914, came into the war on our side on specific conditions laid down in a treaty. She fulfilled all her engagements and sacrificed to the common cause half a million dead and eighty billions of francs. To-day peace is signed with Germany, but the Allies — except in regard to her north-

ern frontier — have decided none of the vital questions affecting Italy.

No solution has been found of the Adriatic question, or of those concerning the colonies and Asia Minor. Still worse, Smyrna, which had been formally promised to Italy, has been given to Greece; and, as a crowning disappointment, Italy has been excluded from the guaranty treaty concluded by France, Great Britain, and America.

Finally, there has been no solution of the economic problem, which grows in seriousness every day and threatens to put a stop to the very life of the nation.

The fact is, no country had perforce to suffer so many restrictions during the war as had Italy; and now no country is so gravely menaced by interior disorder on account of lack of food, coal, and raw materials. In every district of Italy there exists a violent agitation against the high cost of living.

At Rome nearly all the shops are shut. Soldiers or policemen are on guard at the doors of those which are left open. In many of the towns the labor unions have taken in hand, with or without the approval of the authorities, the price and distribution of necessities.

On the majority of the closed shops the following notice has been posted: 'Key at the Labor Bureau.' No detail could be more significant.

So, these numerous disappointments in foreign policy, together with these formidable difficulties at home, more