

IRELAND'S PROBLEMS SEEN AT CLOSE RANGE BY AN AMERICAN

**Sinn Feiners Control, Yet Dare
Not Mention the Names of
Their Directing Heads.**

OBEY WITHOUT QUESTIONING

**"Murders" to Them Are "Kill-
ings Under War Conditions"—
Disorders Coldly Calculated.**

WHOLE COUNTRY PROSPERS

**Observer Can Find No Economic
Reasons for Discontent—"The
Object Is Patriotic."**

By CHARLES H. GRASTY.

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TIMES.

LONDON, Aug. 1.—I am just back from Ireland, whither I went to gather impressions of the present conditions there. My mental attitude was impartial and I shall try to report facts and opinions as I encountered them in my visit. If in transcribing my notes, made as I went along, the Sinn Fein viewpoint stands out less than the opposite one, it is because "of low visibility" on that side of the fence.

The Irish Republic is an invisible republic. Its supporters are carrying out a secret program and talking is strictly against the rules. Most of the people I met were Sinn Feiners, and they were all most hospitable and obliging to me as an American. No American who leaves controversial matters severely alone need have any fears in visiting Ireland. In fact, the person of every American is sacred, for America is now the chief cornerstone of Sinn Fein hopes. They shoot pretty freely, but shoot straight and do not often kill by accident. A typical Sinn Fein gunman would put his own brother out of the way, if ordered to do so. He would believe it was necessary for the cause and would not take his personal grief to heart, provided the victim first had absolution.

Murder Domesticated.

In Sinn Fein Ireland murder has become domesticated. Indeed, they do not consider it murder at all. It is "killing." Except in cases where advantage is taken of the general laxity to pay off personal grudges, the whole business is purely mechanical. In the minds of Sinn Feiners connected with this branch of activity there is a state of war, and any patriot would shoot a traitor in the back or any other portion of his anatomy just as freely as a French or English soldier would shoot a German during the war.

In the face of this, general conditions in Ireland are peculiarly unfavorable to the kind of movement which is now at its high tide. Ireland is a relatively prosperous country. The Sinn Feiners do not admit this, and tell you that in Dublin there are 20,000 families each living in a single room. Nevertheless, Ireland, especially in the rural districts, is enjoying conditions which certainly have not existed since the famine of 1846. Land, for which there is a universal lust, has been divided or is in process of division on extraordinarily favorable terms, and whenever these terms do not seem sufficiently generous to the "have-nots" the landowners are compelled to part with their holdings by methods not usually recognized in courts of law.

As will appear later, one of the big impelling forces in the present movement is an insatiable desire among young men for land. It is estimated that the number of young men in Ireland is now about 200,000 above the normal. They did not go to war in large numbers, and were not allowed to emigrate, and now there is a hot scramble among them to get hold of land.

Catholic Ireland, which is three-fourths of the whole population, lives under precisely the same British Government as Northern Ireland, with one-fourth of the population. The larger percentage of the three-fourths is chronically discontented and at times rebellious. About the same percentage of the Belfast district, composed of the two counties of Antrim and Down, and a lesser proportion of four of the other seven counties of Ulster are reasonably prosperous and happy under these same laws and their administration.

Purpose in Ulster's Loyalty.

If Catholic Ireland had the same character and temperament as Protestant Ireland, and had accepted in the same way British rule, Ireland would probably long ago have become one of the most prosperous communities in the world. But British rule does not suit the Irish for reasons of their own. Every concession on the part of Britain has been made the stepping-stone for new demands. As some one has put it, Southern Ireland's attitude seems to be: "'Caresses have their charms,' says the mastiff in the fable, 'but the chain is there still.'"

Ulster accepts the rule that the rest of Ireland despises, works under it, prospers under it, and seems to be as happy as the limitations of that dour Scottish breed permit. Ulster plays for all it is worth her devotion to the Union, but in my visit there I formed the impression that the love of Britain was less potent with them than fear and hate of Catholic Ireland and apprehension of the results that would follow Dublin rule.

It is clear, therefore, that the demand for independence is not due to the causes which usually set off explosive popular

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movements. There is neither general poverty nor dire oppression. Losses of life in the late war were not suffered to any ruinous extent by the element now rebelling. On the other hand, war profits, mainly drawn from agriculture, were large.

At the time of the open rebellion at Easter, 1916, which was the genesis of the present big movement, none of those conditions seemed to exist which ordinarily arouse passions and invite rebellion. The Home Rule act had been passed and was on the statute books, to be put into effect after the war. Response to the call for voluntary enlistment had been meagre, popular sentiment was largely pro-German, and conscription was impossible. Britain was facing almost insuperable difficulties in the World War. There was the old, undying hatred of her, but it was latent.

How Rebel Calculations Succeeded.

I found in Ireland an almost universal opinion that the organizers of the present movement saw in these conditions the long-awaited opportunity to strike for Irish freedom and went deliberately to work to produce the necessary ferment throughout the country. What was lacking was some fresh action on the part of the British Government that would set aflame the smoldering antagonism.

This was a new method of calculated planning in Irish rebellions. Plans were made carefully and cold-bloodedly and systematically carried out. The object was to draw the Government, never tactful nor wise in handling Ireland, and now sorely perplexed by its war difficulties, into some stupid blundering

which, to the Irish, would wear the aspect of British tyranny and thus rouse the people to action.

If, as is believed, this was the purpose for which the rebellion of 1916 was launched, it succeeded almost beyond their expectations. It is undoubtedly true that those who engaged in that rebellion were boys and young men brought in from the country to Dublin, who had not the slightest idea up to the last moment of what they had come for. It seems clear that there was no notion in the minds of the leaders of immediate success of the rebellion as such, but they got what they wanted.

A series of blunders by the deeply preoccupied Government in London supplied the needed issue of fresh tyranny, and from that time on the Republican movement has grown in extent and intensity.

Like methods have been pursued, consistently ever since. Power has been concentrated in the hands of a few men, and nobody can be certain who these men are. Invisibility is strictly maintained. Every move bears the stamp of cold calculation and well considered planning. At last Irish politics is controlled by an organization on the general lines of Tammany Hall.

Dare Not Mention Names.

I noticed in Dublin that no one dared to mention names in connection with this omnipotent secret power. Everybody knows and discusses the nominal heads like De Valera, the figurehead "President," and Arthur Griffith, "Vice President and acting President." It is known that there is a Dail Eireann, who the members are of this Irish Parliament, that they have their secret meetings, and that there is an active going Ministry.

Everybody, regardless of religion and politics, lives in a state of mental servitude so far as the program of killing is concerned. Men are dragged from street cars in the centre of Dublin and shot to death. No passenger on the car, nobody in the crowded street, will move a hand to interfere. Not one

will go near the victim or inform the police or give testimony in court. All elemental instincts are paralyzed by the certainty of punishment that will be visited upon any act that might compromise the secrecy and efficiency of the program now being put into effect.

Executives of the organization give an order; it reaches those who are to carry it out through channels far removed from the source, and the thing desired is done with mechanical sureness.

Nothing succeeds like success. What is ordinarily called moral sense is in a state of stupefaction and there is little audible protest.

Members of the constabulary and others are marked for destruction in accordance to their value to the Government and with an eye to "getting the nerve" of the whole body of the police and bringing home everywhere a realization that resistance means sure and swift punishment.

How Assassination Is Defended.

The constabulary are nearly all Catholics, but that makes it worse for them because they are regarded as traitors. "We are at war for our country," runs the argument, "and traitors must be disposed of without mercy."

The deadly efficiency with which the program is executed, with hardly a single setback from the British Government, has had the effect reckoned upon by the leaders of the movement. There is a temporary suspension of moral forces which usually check such methods.

Nobody will or can specifically defend shooting in the back, but one hears in highly respectable quarters that while the methods are violent and brutal the object is patriotic. This is war, and war is always hell, they say.

And so the movement has progressed and thrived from week to week. It is stronger now than ever. Neutrals are constantly being drawn into the Sinn Fein ranks and many originally antagonistic are becoming neutral.

The Catholic hierarchy and priests, who were at first aghast at the violence, are less and less outspoken in condemning it; and when they do speak their condemnation is more general and equivocal.

I have roughly outlined the state to which Ireland has been brought, but before a balanced judgment can be

formed on the situation there are other matters to be considered. What shall be said of the British Government, which has permitted things to go from bad to worse? If one searches for excuses there are plenty of them. Lloyd George's political difficulties at home are of a kind to entangle him in dealing with Irish conditions. If he adopted strong measures, it may be doubtful whether he could hold together the parliamentary coalition upon which he depends for his official existence. There are so many and such conflicting opinions on Irish settlement that any Home Rule bill seems sure to be reduced to impotence by discussion and compromise.

Suppression by force is a policy repugnant to the Prime Minister's instincts, as it is to the instincts of the general British public. And so there has been the policy of drifting. If there had been nothing else to do but handle Ireland, Downing Street would probably have handled it. But probably no Prime Minister in history has ever been confronted at one time with so many dangers and perplexities. It is not alone in Ireland that the British Empire is threatened. It is threatened in the Near East and India. There are signs of conflict and difference of opinion and interest between Britain and its closest ally, France. There is the question involving inevitable differences of how to bring the war to an end and set Europe again on the path of industry and prosperity, and the chief responsibility for this solution lies with the British Prime Minister.

These are but the chief burdens which rest upon the shoulders of the man who has been carrying greater responsibilities for a longer time than any other Government head. For four years there has not been a single moment when a serious mistake by him might not have meant disaster and ruin to his own country and to the world. But the fact remains that the Irish situation has been neglected and mishandled and opportunities for settlement wasted. Lloyd George has recently, in the labor situation presented to him as a part of the Irish question, boldly asserted the character in which he has in so many other things shown in the last four years that he is at home and can be strong. From this starting point he may find his way to the solution of the present problems in Ireland.

This is the first of a series of articles by Mr. Grasty on Ireland. The second will be published tomorrow and others on Monday and Tuesday.