

LETTER TO THE *MUNSTER* *NEWS.*

By Edward Thomas O'Dwyer.

**Originally published on November 12, 1915. Republished in the
Gaelic American, November 27, 1915.**

Sir,

The treatment which the poor Irish emigrant lads have received at Liverpool is enough to make any Irishman's blood boil with anger and indignation. What wrong have they done to deserve insults and outrage at the hands of a brutal English mob? They do not want to be forced into the English army and sent to fight battles in some part of the world. Is that not within their right?

They are supposed to be freemen, but they are made to feel that they are prisoners, who may be compelled to lay down their lives for a cause that is not worth 'three rows of pins' to them. It is very probable that these poor Connaught peasants know little or nothing of the meaning of the war. Their blood is not stirred by the memories of Kossovo, and they have no burning desire to die for Servia. They would much prefer to be allowed to till their own potato gardens in peace in Connemara.

Small nationalities, and the wrongs of Belgium and Rheims Cathedral, and all the other cosmopolitan considerations that rouse the enthusiasm of the Irish Party, but do not get enough of recruits in England, are far too high-flying for uneducated peasants, and it seems a cruel wrong to attack them because they cannot rise to the level of the disinterested Imperialism of Mr. T. P. O'Connor and the rest of the New Brigade.

But in all the shame and humiliation of this disgraceful episode, what angers one most is that there is no one, not even one of their own countrymen, to stand up and defend them. Their crime is that they are not ready to die for England. Why should they? What have they or their forebears ever got from England that they should die for her? Mr. Redmond will say a Home Rule Act on the Statute Book. But any

intelligent Irishman will say a ulacrum of Home Rule, with an express notice that it is never to come into operation.

This war may be just or unjust, but any fair-minded man will admit that it is England's war, not Ireland's. When it is over, if England wins, she will hold a dominant power in this world, and her manufactures and her commerce will increase by leaps and bounds. Win or lose, Ireland will go on, in her old round of misgovernment, intensified by a grinding poverty which will make life intolerable. Yet the poor fellows who do not see the advantage of dying for such a cause are to be insulted as 'shirkers' and 'cowards,' and the men whom they have raised to power and influence have not one word to say on their behalf.

If there is to be Conscription, let it be enforced all round; but it seems to be the very intensity of injustice to leave English shirkers by the million go free, and coerce the small remnant of the Irish race into a war which they do not understand, and which, whether it is right or wrong, has but a secondary and indirect interest for them.

I am, dear sir, your obedient servant,

EDWARD THOMAS,

Bishop of Limerick.

10th November, 1915.