

# IRELAND AND THE WAR.

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## I.—OUR ATTITUDE.

‘What is your attitude?’ ‘Do you accept Home Rule?’ ‘England will sacrifice her last man and her last shilling before she will let us go. What can we do, anyway?’ These questions are put to us, and we reply: (1) Our attitude is that Ireland should realise there will be a re-making of the map of Europe; that her place will depend on her readiness to fight for it and that that place must be her recognition as a nation among the nations, secure for ever. (2) The putting of the Home Rule Bill on the Statute Book is a deception. Sir Edward Carson declared in the name of Ulster that Ulster would not have Home Rule. Mr. Asquith subsequently declared in the name of the Government that he would not countenance the coercion of Ulster. This simply means that the Government has torn up the Home Rule Bill. We must, therefore, reconsider the whole question. (3) England will threaten anything if bluster will serve. If she finds it safer to take our terms, she will take them and call it a victory. (4) That eternal ‘what can we do’ we are familiar with as a slave-question. But others ask it, eager for fight. Taken thus seriously it raises many issues. We shall discuss them carefully from week to week, leaving nothing unconsidered. This article is by way of a preface.

## II.—IRELAND A NATION.

Whatever the final treaty of peace Ireland will make with England, we can only discuss it from the standpoint of Ireland, a separate entity, Ireland a Nation. Whether we determine to have ultimately an alliance with England or to break with England for ever, we must consider Ireland as a separate nation, self-contained, self-reliant, independent.

The very nature of the case makes the discussion on those lines inevitable.

### III.—ENGLAND'S DIFFICULTY.

We have no intention whatever of basing Ireland's claim on an eternal England's difficulty. It would be the wildest absurdity. But as there are people abroad afraid to make any claim at all, it is of moment to emphasise England's present difficulty. Even if the Allies destroy Germany—which is becoming more and more doubtful—they are bound to fight furiously among themselves. Already mutual jealousies have appeared. If Germany goes down England must face Russia. She will have to continue the fight for her life, when that life is weaker even than it is now; and she cannot do just what she pleases with us.

### IV.—A TREATY OF PEACE.

If twelve months ago Ireland, as an independent nation, were to state her own terms of peace to England, it would be considered a wild proposal. But the situation is changed now. We submit the successful German sub-marine attack on English cruisers has transformed the situation at sea. Consider what happened. A single sub-marine left its base, sunk three large cruisers in quick succession, and returned untouched to its base. Of course it is minimised. But it, conceivably, could be repeated on a larger scale, and, if successful, might reduce England to a desperate position, one in which it would be fatal for her to have Ireland at bay on her flank. In such a moment she will be in a mood for honourable peace. We admit that moment has not yet come. But those who would undertake the responsibility of judging for Ireland at this crisis should calculate what may happen by what has happened. If England should come safely out of this war, and should then turn on us with her old bitterness and hostility, we shall meet her with the old spirit and survive the battle. But we should be prepared for a chastened mood in England: already it is on her. And while we train to pursue the game of war, we should have our minds clear as to

the terms of peace. We make a simple proposal. We ask no restitution for the plunder of the past; but this: let England as a slight compensation deliver to us free a quarter of a million Lee-Enfield rifles, latest pattern, with bayonets, and ten million rounds of ammunition. We will provide heavy guns at our own expense. And thus armed we will hold Ireland—for Ireland—against all comers. And we guarantee to England that this country will not be used as a base of operations against her. She is entitled to this—no more. On our side we demand the recognition of our independence. We will take no less. In her desperate need England will have to forego her plunder to save her liberty. We give her the way. We have said we are ready for war, but we are also ready and shall be happy to make an honourable peace.