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# **THE SACRED EGOISM OF SINN FÉIN**

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## **THE SACRED EGOISM OF SINN FÉIN**

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### **I**

#### **THE CULT OF ALTRUISM**

In this age of sacred egoisms and oppressed nationalities the drama—or melodrama—of international politics has been enriched by a variety of distressed heroines, in the shape of small nations, whose salvation has inspired professions of altruism slightly incompatible with the previous records of the rescuers as revealed to the impartial observer. The shortage of paper and man-power notwithstanding, the printing presses of the Latin and Anglo-Saxon worlds have poured forth an undiminished stream of most enheartening and uplifting sentiment relating to the rights and virtues of subject races. Prior to August 1914 small nations were happy if they succeeded in escaping the attention of their powerful neighbours, but they have now been raised from the relatively obscure fame conferred upon the more unfortunate by those sympathetic or patronizing friends of liberty who have

flourished characteristically in the English-speaking countries. What was once the hobby of select groups of forward-looking Liberals has become the prerogative of their erstwhile opponents, the orthodox imperialists and upholders of predatory patriotism. Indeed, in many instances, the professional gladiators of freedom find themselves deprived of their occupation, since their philosophy of domestic and international politics conflicts seriously with the current official dogmas. The rescuing of small nations has become a "controlled industry," and appropriate literature is issued in the shape of Blue Books and White Papers, or in the less ostentatious, if equally suspicious, form of inspired press propaganda.

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Ireland had long been a subject of melancholy reflection in those quarters devoted to international altruism of a not too personal kind. Even the British Liberal found an occasional tremor in his voice as he contemplated the state of Irish affairs, and remembered his own virtuous conduct of the case for self-government in Ireland. That voice, however, broke into sobs of indignation only when uttering judgments upon the iniquities of men further from home, and his enthusiasm for so proximate a victim of imperialism was checked by the tangible and daily proofs of his own futility, less evident where his plea concerned a more remote beneficiary. Distance lends enchantment to the Liberal view of international politics. For that reason it is natural to find the strongest expressions of commiseration for Ireland outside the precincts of the Island Race, and, in fact, the Irish people have been accustomed to derive considerable satisfaction from the manifestations of good-will which they have received from Continental countries. The sympathetic foreigner, when not an Englishman, is spared the suspicions which his ignorance of the actual facts might have earned for him, for both parties are likely to be at a mutual disadvantage in this respect. Moreover, the claim of a Frenchman, for example, is overwhelmingly reinforced by the knowledge of material assistance rendered, none being so introspective as to question the motive of those historic replies of the French nation to the call of Ireland. In return, did not Ireland alone distinguish herself in 1870 by a far-sighted rejection of Prussianism, at a time when the Hun fought for the recovery of Alsace amidst the plaudits of the politicians, statesmen, and, above all, the moralists of Anglo-Saxondom? When the Irish organized a brigade to assist France against Prussia, the obstructionist and condemnatory attitude of the British Government seemed only further proof that Ireland's real friends must not be sought in England. These reciprocal manifestations of international appreciation are the definite crystallization of a sentiment confirmed in Ireland by the fact that British and West British scholars have singularized themselves by an indifference and hostility respectively towards the language and civilization of the Irish nation. Continental scholars, on the other hand, have displayed an interest in Gaelic studies which cannot but induce in the Irish people a comforting sense of their own dignity and importance.

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Everything, therefore, has combined to give Ireland a belief in her own international identity, and, recollecting her ancient grandeur, she has felt entitled to the sympathy which her subsequent misfortunes have earned amongst all disinterested students of a history by no means negligible in the evolution of European civilization. When the great Allied crusade for the liberation of small nationalities began, and the world resounded to the cries of protest against the tyrants of subject races, the Irish people were touched by this dramatic vindication of their age-long contention. For a brief period the scepticism of centuries made way for a degree of faith sufficient to bring a number of distinguished Nationalists into the ranks of England, and under their impulse Ireland—as distinct from the West Britons—contributed what has remained her military share in the conflict. The "loyalists," of course, were relieved at the opportunity of exchanging the dubious pleasures of mutiny and gun-running for the more sonorous activities of a war for freedom. Having scotched political self-determination at home, they became seized of a praiseworthy ambition to confer that denied benefit upon the unenlightened foreigner. As for the mere Irish, they gradually realized the symbolism of this loyal gesture, the Ulster motive became apparent: the war was on behalf of the small nations, but one had been forgotten. What is one amongst so many, it may be asked? But the Irish could not rise to that level of almost divine impartiality which is the natural sphere of the Britisher when he has decided to right a wrong. The relative importance of Ireland could not be as apparent to an Irishman as to his benevolent conqueror.

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It was difficult for Ireland to reconcile herself to the thought that she, who had engaged so much sympathetic attention, was now being overlooked. Rather than risk the danger of a loyalist rebellion in the midst of England's great war, the British Government decided to put the strain on nationalist Ireland, rather than test the insistent love of the professional patriots. No doubt it would have been disconcerting to the imperialist illusion, had Ulster proceeded to stab its "mother country" in the back, when asked to accept the measure of autonomy constitutionally and democratically conferred upon the Irish people. England preferred to rely upon the good-will of her political adversaries, mistrusting the capacity for sacrifice of her vociferous friends. Even then, Ireland might have been disposed to fight for those "larger aspects" of freedom so dear to the progressive philosophers of English politics, who have never yet been thus commanded: that the charity of political democracy begins abroad. Omniscient bureaucracy, in rapid process of becoming omnipotent, so met the efforts of those Irish who would have the national character of the military alliance preserved, that the alliance did not take place. Rebuffed in her natural demand for some tokens of national recognition as a fighting unit amongst the Allies, Ireland began to realize the importance of establishing an identity which was ignored, and was in danger of being forgotten.

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Naturally resentment fixed upon the authors and mediators of the "sacred union" which had failed to fulfil itself, and its weapon was that originally forged for the defence of the conquest of a measure of autonomy abandoned under the terms of the political truce. The armed forces which had been brought into existence by the threat of a loyalist rebellion were turned to the task of asserting the existence of a forgotten small nationality. In due course the Easter Rising took place, and by a blood-sacrifice Ireland once more claimed the rights which, she had been assured, were being enforced on the battlefields of Europe. Death having become more valuable than life, as a result of the new belligerent philosophy of a world at arms, Irishmen determined to demonstrate that there are more ways than one of dying for freedom. The hopelessness of the enterprise proved its ultimate strength, for desperate courage has a peculiar influence upon the pacific civilian, to which category the vast majority of the Sinn Féin public belonged. Just as the militarist is enraged by the spectacle of defiant courage over which he has no control, so the non-combatant patriot is effected by what impresses him as mystic valour. Even official testimony now records the triumph of that insurrectionary failure, in so far as the stiffening of the national purpose is concerned.

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Unfortunately for Ireland, sentimentalism has become so fashionable in international politics, that realism, whether in thought or action, is abhorrent to minds soothed with sonorous phrases, and but dimly conscious of the facts behind the words. The mirage of glory not only obscures the material horror of war, but it conduces to a certain impatience of ideas which are not coloured by the prevalent megalomania of idealism. The Irishman who dares to bring forward the case of his own country in discussion with belligerents is regarded as an inferior egotist, whose vision is so warped and limited that he cannot realize the great issues at stake. Otherwise intelligent men talk to him of the German hegemony of Europe and, by extension, of the world, with a seriousness differing from that of the Pan-German League only in its abhorrence of that incredible ambition. The rhetorical exuberances of Teutonic chauvinists are accepted as plain statements of policy by those who would not listen to their own Jingo. The actual, or contemplated, depredations of one imperialism are not contrasted with those of another, but are used as a foil to the liberal and progressive aspirations of outraged political virtue. An inability to take either party at their own estimate is nevertheless comprehensible in a people whose scepticism of Liberalism is equalled by a corresponding doubt as to the possible differentiation of two imperialisms.

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Acute and not wholly orthodox exponents of the British international point of view have expended much ingenuity in finding a formula expressing the conscious or sub-conscious sense of rectitude which pervades the Englishman in this debate with Ireland. Britain is depicted by these critical friends as a well-meaning, if blundering, commercialist, whose imperial adventures, like the amorous adventures of races unblessed by puritan *Kultur*, must be regarded as venial sins. British imperialism, they say, is not deliberate and systematic; it aims at no hegemony, and is thereby innocent of those evils which the "free peoples of the world" are invited to destroy. As we have the testimony of several hundred years of Anglo-Irish history in refutation of this comfortable illusion, it is enough to say, for the present, that the matter presents itself with no such simplification to the Irish mind. Consequently, viewed in the light of this *Herrenmoral*, so natural in an imperial race, international events take on a significance wholly incomprehensible to the unfortunate victims of a transfigured and transcendental commercialism. Ireland, therefore, can neither understand nor make herself understood, so long as discussion is confined to the unrealities of international politics. She is obliged to grasp with pathetic gratitude at the straws of comfort blown in her direction by the winds of the European debate, wherein she serves the purposes of *tu quoque* repartee.

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In politics, as in literature and art, realism is abhorrent to the Anglo-Saxon temperament. Wherever the English language is spoken there is implanted the tradition of moral and intellectual compromise. Revolutions are blanketed with reforms, unless, as happened in 1641, they can assume the dignity of a religious crusade. Social problems are discreetly shelved by Acts of Parliament, and the facts of life delicately obscured by a literature unique in its emasculation. Thus America condemns as unpleasantly improper the only honest record of actual warfare in the trivial mass of Bairnsfatherly war books, *Le Feu*, by Henri Barbusse, a Frenchman unspoiled by the cult of anæmia. Sanctimonious reflections upon the superiority of Anglo-Saxon morals are the response to the urgent question of venereal diseases as a by-product of war. The sexual problems arising out of militarism are the commonplaces of all literature dealing with the subject, but when the English-speaking world becomes for the first time conscripted, and is faced with the military system on a broad scale, the characteristic stampede to fact-proof shelters takes place. The half-world is not to be made safe for democracy, but must be declared taboo. So man becomes chaste by prohibition.

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That the present war is at bottom a struggle between two cultures, the Anglo-Saxon and the German, is indicated by the remarkable way in which the ideals of the former have permeated the Allied world, strengthening the natural preponderance, linguistic and material, of the element represented by the United States and the British Empire. The hands that are fighting may be the hands of France, Belgium, Italy, Roumania, Serbia, Japan, China, America, and San Marino, but the voice is the voice of Britain, whose most admirable mouthpiece is Dr. Woodrow Wilson. The result is the reaction of the world to the stimuli of recent history in the perfect British manner. When the Russian Revolution occurred there

was but little response to the revolutionary contagion, which had, nevertheless, affected Europe on the previous occasions of similar social upheavals. England, of course, was the great buttress of reaction against the French Revolution, which could not recommend itself on religious and moral grounds to the great Empire of respectability. Yet, France did succeed in infecting Europe with revolutionary ideas. Russia, on the other hand, has evoked only the response of the strikes in Germany and Austria. Elsewhere the reception of this dramatic transition from official words of freedom to popular action has been mixed and lukewarm. Nobody who understood the fundamental abhorrence of real liberty in the English-speaking countries could have been surprised at England's unconcealed chagrin, and the subsequent hostility of all but a handful of the people to the progress of revolutionary government and diplomacy. What a relief when Germany finally imposed silence—and her terms—on Russia!

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The prevailing tone of sentimental idealism in international affairs is, therefore, unpropitious to those who, like the Russians and the Irish, insist upon interpreting *au pied de la lettre*, the pious phrases which adorn the discourses of altruistic statesmen. Be the victims of oppression only far enough away from immediate Allied control, then their wrongs bedim the eyes of the professors of Liberty, whose vision becomes too blurred to distinguish the close presence of political phenomena which demand attention. In consequence, Ireland's movement of self-assertion did not receive the good press which the occasion might normally have warranted. America, though neutral at the time, denounced the "disloyalty" of Sinn Féin in the best Colonial style, leaving to the American-Irish the hyphenated distinction, shared with their American-German fellow-citizens, of displaying a very natural sympathy with their kin in "the old country." The racial ties of these two sections of Americans were, until intervention replaced benevolent neutrality, the only evidence of resistance to that anglicization of Allied opinion which has already been noted. Once, however, Dr. Wilson had declared his intention of making the world safe for democracy, repressive measures soon eliminated those manifestations of opinion. They had been denounced, but tolerated, only so long as it was legally impossible to suppress freedom of speech without injuring the interests of the highly articulate Allies and their friends.

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The unsophisticated Irishman in the United States had to reconcile himself to the paradox of the American denunciation of the Easter Week Rising, as if the analogous revolt of the founders of that great plutocratic Republic had not differed only in so far as it was successful. The American separatists were alike untroubled by the representations of the unionistic minority, and the preoccupation of England with the war against her commercial rival of the period. But the Irish separatists made not even a romantic appeal to a people whose appetite for uplifting sentiment may be gauged by their profound conviction that the "moral leadership of the world" had been thrust upon them, after the outbreak of war, by an appreciative Destiny. It is true that, during the two years when this particular megalomania possessed the soul of America, her energies were exclusively concentrated upon the supply of munitions of war, with occasional humanitarian homilies, addressed to the Hun, and emphatic protests against the Allied blockade, which was denounced as illegal and unjust, but has become much more stringent under Wilsonian auspices. It is hard to decide which of these two not wholly unrelated phenomena is the greater tribute to the triumph of Anglo-Saxon culture; America's condemnation of the Irish Republicans as "traitors," or her reinforcement, when a belligerent, of blockade measures previously described as indefensible.

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## II

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### REALISM IN IRISH POLITICS

In this most intellectually belligerent of neutral countries the political mind has become realistic and critical, just when the combatant nations have taken refuge in an uncritical and remote idealism from the sordid and dreadful realities of war. Amongst the belligerents, it is true, there is talk of imposing ideals which, if ill-defined, have nevertheless called forth generous sacrifices from the inarticulate, plain people, who accept the formulæ officially or officiously provided for their guidance. But the mere fact of mobilization tends to emphasize the abstract quality of the formulæ in which the combatants have summed up, in almost identical words, their allegedly conflicting purposes. The individual is obscured by the anonymity of the device emblazoned upon the banner under which he is engaged. The mind is mobilized no less than the body, so that it is difficult to discern the personal emotion which must lie behind the self-immolation of so much bravery. Indeed, when collectively expressed in official utterances, the motives seem so abstract that President Wilson once confessed his inability to distinguish between them. It was not until he ceased to be a spectator of the conflict that he himself coined a phrase almost cynical in its bland inhumanity, coming from a country where the rudiments of real democracy are scarcely perceptible.

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In so far, however, as it is possible to read any intelligible meaning into the word "democracy," as currently employed, it must be prefixed by "political." The world must be made safe for the political democracies, that is to say, those countries which have provided themselves with the "democratic institution" of parliamentary government. A couple of centuries ago the blessings of political freedom preoccupied the minds of those countries which have ever since accepted the attainment of that end as a substitute for the liberty of which it seemed the simulacrum. Those were the happy days when the discovery had not yet been made that political power is determined and conditioned by economic power, the former being useless without the latter. The gradual realization of this has been accompanied by a widespread disillusionment with party politics, popularly summed up by Mr. Belloc in his book, *The Party System*, which put before the general reader criticisms heretofore confined to Socialist literature. The domination of politics by capitalism became an accepted truism, and it was no longer possible for intelligent men to consider their "representative assemblies" with that seriousness so necessary to the dignity and comfort of the political mountebanks. In short, without prejudice to the theoretical virtues of parliamentary government, the conviction was established that, under the régime of profiteering industrialism, political democracy is an impolite fiction, and that the politics of capitalism must be party politics, with all its inherent corruption and dishonesty.

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This process of disillusionment was not without its counterpart in Ireland, since Irish politicians were part of precisely that political machinery whose workings were being exposed in England. Moreover, within the past quarter of a century Irishmen had begun to perceive that, by relying upon themselves rather than upon their representatives at Westminster, they could get things done instead of being talked about. They also observed that the most flourishing industrial and intellectual movement in the country advanced amidst the indifference, when so fortunate as not to arouse the active hostility, of the politicians. It required very little, then, to arouse the suspicion that nothing more could be obtained for Ireland by political action in England, and the ignominious fate of the Home Rule Bill came as the final confirmation of a slowly accumulated scepticism. There was, of course, much of the inevitable ingratitude of the mob in this revulsion of feeling against a system which had been accepted by the Irish people, and had, within its limits, procured them undeniable advantages. Ireland, being eighteenth century in its retarded political mentality, believed, and still believes, in the marvels of political liberty, so that the Parliamentary Party was naturally outraged by the fickleness of the anti-parliamentarian campaign. Electors and elected equally believed in party politics, and the Irish Party could show, with reasonable pride, a record of definite parliamentary achievement, unequalled by any other minority party in the British House of Commons.

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The truth is, the Nationalist Party was accused of the vices inseparable from the parliamentary system by those who very humanly imagined that such vices were not inherent in the system itself, but were peculiar to British parliamentarianism. In all criticism there was lacking any suggestion of the possibility of similar defects in a purely Irish parliament. That is natural for two reasons. First, because the political development of Ireland makes it as premature for her to doubt the wisdom of her own elected assemblies, as it would have been for revolutionary France to question the practical value of the Declaration of the Rights of Man. Second, because the immediate cause of dissatisfaction with constitutional nationalism was the evident impossibility of its ever realizing the true aims of nationalism. Consequently, it is in vain that the Nationalist Party appeals for recognition of its actual services. A generation has arisen which accepts as a matter of course the fruits of a hard struggle, and insists upon the one vital and essential fact, namely, that the Irish members at Westminster have not brought Ireland a step nearer independence, and in the very nature of things, they cannot do so. Meanwhile, the burdens of over-taxation and misgovernment press every year more heavily on the country. Party achievements are dismissed as of slight importance by impatient and perhaps ungenerous critics, who assert—and rightly—that the Nationalist Party did not represent merely a section of public opinion in the House of Commons, but represented the Irish nation. Therefore, the test of party politics cannot be allowed. To which it is open to the apologist of constitutionalism to reply: you cannot participate in the game of party politics and then refuse to recognize the rules of that game. It is no more reasonable to believe that the Irish nation can be represented in the British Parliament, than to believe that the British nation is represented there. In both cases the elected persons vaguely correspond to actual phases of popular opinion, elicited, as a rule, under conditions which would make it difficult for a crowd of philosophers to express their judgment, not to mention a semi-educated, newspaper-fed mob.

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We can observe over the same period a gradual disintegration of confidence in elected representatives both in England and Ireland, though the operative causes have not been the same, to the superficial glance. Intelligent Englishmen have been driven to doubt the efficacy of parliamentary government by the exposure of party corruption, and by the realization of the fact that political power is the shadow of which economic power is the substance. Irishmen, on the other hand, having being baulked of the opportunity of arriving at the same conclusion as a result of actual political experience in Ireland, found themselves, by force of national circumstances, confronted with evidence of the futility of Westminster politics. They have reached the stage of disillusion, but are unable to see clearly the intervening stages, owing to the thwarted and abnormal political evolution of the country. If it seems a paradox to claim that a country which has demanded a parliament of its own is

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dissatisfied with the parliamentary system, it should be recalled that there is no necessary obligation upon the Irish people to set up in Dublin a legislature upon the English model. The national political institutions of Ireland, as competent authorities have pointed out, are susceptible of meeting the needs of a community, whose social and intellectual conditions are quite unlike those of England. Moreover, as our national economists, Molyneux, Berkeley, Swift, Lalor, and Connolly have shown, the Irish case against government from Westminster has been based, from the beginning of modern history, upon this fundamental necessity for a combination of political and economic power, without which there can be no freedom. If one aspect of the question has been over-emphasized, the fault is common to more countries than Ireland, and is peculiarly comprehensible in a people whose political development has been interrupted and delayed.

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The perversity of the fate which governs the relations of England and Ireland obtrudes itself once more in this connection. It might be thought that the simultaneous movement of revolt against the sham of politics would lead to sympathetic understanding of the Sinn Féin point of view. It is true, to some extent, that during the pre-war years of constant Sinn Féin activity, friendly references were made in certain English quarters to the regenerate nationalism which was manifesting itself in literature and industry. Under less ominous names the Sinn Féin spirit had developed and spread until, at the outbreak of the war, the country was apparently absorbed in various enterprises which had received the benediction of benevolent commentators, relieved to find Ireland at last in a practical mood. But the war has changed all that. Not only have these innocent undertakings been revealed as part of the malign machinations of Sinn Féin, but the term itself has become associated with an event undreamt of in the essential pacific and economic philosophy of those who expressed some twelve years ago the growing tendencies in the direction of national self-help. Sinn Féin did not repudiate the task which destiny thrust upon it in Easter 1916, but accepted the hitherto rejected theory of physical force, at the cost of the platonic affection of many who had previously smiled approvingly at the programme of social reconstruction contemplated by the founders of the Sinn Féin movement.

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It is doubtful, however, if the Sinn Féin policy could have continued, after the war had broken out, to escape the hostile attention of England. Political realists ceased to recommend themselves to the favourable notice of a people embarking upon a crusade for the Good, the True, and the Beautiful, and whose minds were glamoured by the idealisms so prodigally proclaimed since August 1914. In a burst of enthusiasm the "free peoples of the world" undertook to restore the right of small nations, and since they knew of only one transgressor, they could not wait to consider their own possible sins against the spirit of nationality. At the same time, the discredit and futility of the parliamentary system became more and more obvious as it failed to meet the exigencies of the crisis which had come in the history of the political democracies. From the moment when the latter undertook to vindicate their superiority they were obliged to compromise hastily, when not to abandon entirely, the principles upon which they rested. Normally one might have thought that this would give the final blow to a fiction previously weakened, but the seriousness of national peril, coupled with the mobilization of thought, has helped to obscure that conclusion. Once the system had become a gage of battle, and a challenge to the enemy, it was endeared to its defenders, who clung to it all the more desperately, the more elusive and illusory it appeared.

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So it happened that Irishmen were invited to share the enthusiasm for an ideal about which they entertained no more illusions, except the one which experience had not had a chance to confirm or dispel. Pseudo-democracy they knew and rejected, as revealed in the light of a spurious political liberty under the control of English Capitalism, but they had not yet been allowed to make the experiment of politico-economic freedom on their own account. Meanwhile, by an amazing inconsequence, the imposition of these pseudo-democratic conditions became the ambition of precisely the most restive and acute critics of the political system upon which those conditions repose. The complete demoralization of the intellectuals by the present war will supply some future critic material for sceptical reflection. In the past, both remote and immediate, the educated have succeeded in differentiating themselves from the mob by refusing, in times of crisis, to be stampeded by appeals to ignorance. But gradually the *Intelligentsia* had been learning the expediency of attaching themselves to some social or political propaganda until, when the war broke out, they found themselves everywhere imprisoned by the new status they had assumed. They were no longer free to serve their real master, but had sold their intellectual birthright for a mess of official pottage. Their conscripted minds have definitely lowered their prestige, since they have set themselves to bluster and shout across their respective frontiers, in a manner indistinguishable from that of the plain people, without pretensions to mental discipline and rational speech. Though financially strengthened the intellectuals have been bankrupted, as a class, by the war for liberty.

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Without postulating the incompatibility of reason and mob patriotism, although the divergence of the two has been recorded in prominent examples, one may legitimately ask: Why this religious enthusiasm for an ideal whose discredit and disintegration were the chief preoccupation of intelligent men during the years leading up to the war? The greatest iconoclasts, so far as the idols of political democracy are concerned, have become the most fervent advocates of such "democratization," seized with a malign altruism which would share its ills with those untroubled by them. Benefits, which would be extravagant if claimed

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for a Utopia, are promised on behalf of a social organization whose human imperfections were never more indecently exposed than during the crisis when it was exalted as the panacea of civilization. But, in inverse ratio to their own hasty abandonment of the fictions tenable only in the uncritical times of peace, the pseudo-democrats urge the adoption of methods which even they find useless in the stress of national crisis. The foxes having lost the ornament of intellectual and economic freedom in the trap of capitalist politics are convinced that the whole world should be handicapped in like manner. The new gospel of equality of sacrifice, internationally interpreted, means the equality of weakness.

It is natural that the great resources of the English-speaking world should be pledged to the defence of the form of democracy which is the special creation of Anglo-Saxon culture, and that Britishers and Americans, rather than Frenchmen and Italians, should be most insistent upon the blessings of "democratization." That peculiar conception of liberty which has fostered the ignoble individualism of mediocrity, at the expense of intellectual independence and social strength, has evolved, under the ægis of England to her own satisfaction and advantage, until, at last, she came to be admired by foreigners unblessed by so unique a possession. Hence the fiction of British freedom, hymned by harassed outlaws or academic critics, concerned only for the more obvious advantages of a system which offered a refuge to the one and a guarantee of respectable stability to the other. When England was the safe haven for continental refugees, the admiring gratitude of the latter was untroubled by the reflection that it is one thing to harbour persons likely to cause trouble with an immediate neighbour, whose frontier is invitingly near, and quite another to give them the shelter of insular isolation. Moreover, the governments of more inflammable peoples, susceptible to the contagion of revolutionary ideas, cannot afford to take risks, which have no reality in the case of a people protected from that contagion by semi-education and an innate servility. Perhaps the greatest illusion of the last century has been the innocent admiration of other nations for the security of a system which postulates a race inhibited by ignorance, snobbishness, and mal-nutrition, from all revolutionary desires. They envy the impunity with which scandals, whose publication would elsewhere inspire assassination, if not revolution, may be revealed in the reports of Royal Commissions, without provoking more than a few columns of newspaper summary and comment. But these benighted foreigners know the temper of their own populations too well not to pay them at least the compliment of being afraid to provoke popular fury. Blue Books and parliamentary questions are not yet universally accepted substitutes for democratic control.

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The Irish people have more wisely adopted the ancient device, *oderint, dum metuant*, as the more intelligent attitude of a people towards its rulers, who have essayed in vain the process of demoralization so effective elsewhere. In Ireland alone the familiar ostentatious displays of Blue Book liberty fail in their purpose of disarming criticism, and consigning vital questions to an oblivion of official words. The capacious and retentive Irish memory actually feeds on those indigestible slices of British freedom, whose price and mode of distribution render them inaccessible to the vast majority of taxpayers at whose expense these sepulchres of truth are constructed. The effect of such serious attention to utterances designed as soporifics is a profound contempt for precisely that democratic virtue which has excited the admiration of certain foreigners, so consoling to the Anglo-Saxon sense of superiority. When the Irish-Irelander learns of England's claim to be the leader of democratic progress in Europe, and finds that claim endorsed by apparently disinterested critics, his instinctive movement is one of revulsion from all implied in the laudation. If English rule involves the acceptance of the democratic ideal, then he rejects the ideal, for he knows that its irradiations have not lightened his political darkness, and its practical workings have effected the ruin of his country. If democratization be synonymous with anglicization, Ireland begs to be excused. She is, therefore, thrown back upon herself, brooding and indifferent to the issues which convulse the peoples for whom the problems of the war have a definite meaning. This scepticism, however, does not bring Ireland into contact with any current of internationalism, based upon a conviction of economic evil existing in all capitalistic countries alike. The egoism of Sinn Féin determines the Irish attitude towards the war. "Ourselves alone," not German gold, determines Ireland's foreign policy.

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### III

#### THE SPLENDID ISOLATION OF SINN FÉIN

The prevalence of the illusion of British liberty has been an obstacle to the understanding of Ireland's problem for many years, and correspondingly the Sinn Féin foreign policy is not a recent phenomenon, since its objective has been the same for centuries as it is to-day. The French critic, Emile Montégut, writing in 1855 of Mitchel's *Jail Journal*, admitted the difficulty when he said: "If the oppressor of Ireland were Austria or Russia, no invective, no anger, would suffice to denounce the injustice and cruelty of the tyrant. Unhappily, the

oppressor of Ireland is England, Protestant England, constitutional, liberal, industrial, and trading England, the most accomplished type of the modern nation, the model of nineteenth century civilization." In recent times circumstances have tended to correct and modify the enthusiasm of an opinion which has been fortified, nevertheless, by the current identification of British commercial democracy with an ideal condition of society which must be protected at all costs. The neutral world is blandly assured of the necessity for accepting every humiliation, in view of the precious heritage at stake. The tacit, and often avowed, assumption is that the human race is deeply indebted to the noble altruism of the belligerents, who have brought devastation and famine upon the world for the greater glory of civilization.

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As a consequence of this Sinn Féin view of foreign affairs, the Irish themselves are at a disadvantage in presenting their case, for again, it is a question of an unauthorized egoism, an egoism not upon the official schedule of edifying war-aims. Montégut became aware of this when he tried to diagnose John Mitchel as a revolutionary, who might expect the sympathy of Europe. "The most anarchical Irishman," he wrote, "the most fiery partisan of physical force is, in fact, less versed in liberal ideas than the most obstinate monarchist on the Continent." As for John Mitchel, his French critic estimated him in terms which are as true of his disciples to-day as of the Young Ireland Movement and its predecessors. "He is revolutionary on the surface, in his accent and expression, but not in spirit or in principle"; such was the judgment of the first impartial admirer who was attracted to Mitchel by the purely literary qualities of that masterpiece of passion and irony, *The Jail Journal*. The most learned of the leaders of Sinn Féin, with a carelessness incredible in a professional historian, has tried to dismiss Emile Montégut as a hack journalist of the *Entente*! This sixty year old essay on John Mitchel contains, nevertheless, a classic description of the Irish rebel, as he exists, and has always existed, to the discomfiture of those who do not appreciate the "splendid isolation" of the Sinn Féin idea. Summing up the Young Ireland leader's attitude in foreign affairs, Montégut says:

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"Do not ask the author if he is Catholic, Liberal, or Republican, do not ask what government he would give to Ireland. He hardly knows. He does know that he hates England with all the forces of his soul, and that he is ready to rebel against her on every occasion, and that there is no party of which he is not prepared to declare himself the defender, provided that England perish: French *sans-culottes*, Austrian aristocrats, Russian despotism please him in turn. The revolution of February drove him to revolt; but do not think that he was consistent with himself, and that he was much afflicted by the death of the Republic! Of all succeeding events he asks but one thing; will they or will they not hurt England? Do they contain an occasion for the humiliation of Carthage? He applauds Mazzini, the enemy of Catholicism; likewise he would applaud an Ultramontane Bishop of Ireland blessing the standards of a Celtic insurrection. He salutes the French Republic with hope; but when on the pontoons of Bermuda he learns of Louis Napoleon's election to the Presidency, he gives a great shout of joy; on his arrival in America he learns the news from the east, and he echoes the warlike trumpets of the Tsar which resound on the Danube. In each of these events he hears the good news: England's agony!"

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European history moves on, but Ireland's hymn of hate is still unaltered, and to its accompaniment Sinn Féin adapts the incidents, great and trivial, which mark the progress of a conflict that is changing the world. Cut off from the war by intellectual and geographical barriers, Ireland is, therefore, not exactly the most fruitful ground in which to sow the ideas which have aroused to a frenzy all but a few disillusioned neutrals. The pathetic dreams of Liberal forward-lookers, the pious platitudes of Dr. Woodrow Wilson, and the prize-fighting rhetoric of embattled bureaucrats and newspapermen fall alike upon deaf Irish ears, which listen only for the rending and cracking of an abhorred political system. To speak of the sufferings of Belgians, Poles, and Serbians is merely to suggest analogies from Irish history; the reaction to the stimulus of atrocity-mongering is unexpected. Even the Russian revolution aroused only a passive, almost academic interest, until Lenin and Trotsky referred specifically to the question of Irish freedom. Then messages of congratulation to the Bolsheviks were sent from those who had been openly supporting Count Czernin in his amazing debate with the representatives of the first Social Democracy to engage in diplomatic *pourparlers* with a foreign power. But the capitalist press had scarcely published its execration of Irish "Bolshevism," when the Ukrainian peace was joyously greeted by Sinn Féin spokesmen, who were unperturbed in their unholy innocence of international capitalism, by the discreditable circumstances of that event, and its subsequently disintegrating effect upon Russia. These patriots, as Montégut said of their forerunner, Mitchel, "would unhesitatingly sacrifice modern civilization if there were no other means of striking England to the dust." Unfortunately, on this occasion, their ignorance of the solidarity of the capitalist Internationalism betrayed them into an easy acceptance of a situation by no means repugnant to the aims of their adversaries. The defeat of Bolshevism was the first great Allied victory of the war, tempered only by the melancholy reflection that Germany would be the immediate beneficiary of this restoration of "Law and Order"—that marvellous euphemism which covers a multitude of sins.

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If the isolation of Ireland from European politics has stultified her erratic excursions into foreign affairs, it has even more seriously affected the political relations of England and

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Ireland during the past four years. The Britisher, sympathetic or otherwise, is apparently quite incapable of realizing the fathomless indifference of the vast majority of the Irish nation towards the issues of the present conflict in Europe. Naive Liberals have been heard inquiring with plaintive optimism: "But surely you Irish can appreciate the seriousness of a German victory, even if you are not willing to fight for England"? And a look of incredulous despair follows, when the composure of the Irishman is evidently undisturbed by the lurid tableau of the victorious super-Hun, composed for sceptics on such occasions. He usually is polite enough to convey to his interlocutor his belief that no such triumph is possible for any of the belligerents. This perfectly intelligible and essentially neutral attitude has never failed to exasperate even more profoundly than pro-Germanism, the legendary malady of all neutrals who fail to accept the Allies and their policies unreservedly. As it is those who themselves denounce the Treaties in which the real aims of the Allied "democracies" were secretly formulated who also insist with the greatest unctiousness upon the moral superiority of the Allies, the embarrassment of the impartial is not diminished by this demand upon their credulity.

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While one may expect the average man to put faith in his country "right or wrong," he has exceeded the bounds of patriotic gregariousness when he asks foreigners to display an identical devotion. The imposition is all the more intolerable when made, not by the plain man in the street, but by intellectuals, professing the use of reason. It is positively revolting to the Irishman who, not being a citizen of those small nations happily outside the dominion of the belligerents, is prohibited from detailed neutral argument in defence of his own position. Denmark can speak through a Georg Brandes, but Ireland may not even quote the Allied press in support of her contentions. The Irish case for neutrality is expurgated of necessity—of military necessity! The possibilities of arriving at any understanding with the Allied countries have, therefore, been seriously hampered, apart altogether from the inherent obstacles to an admission on the part of Anglo-Saxondom that its statecraft is not an admirable combination of the choicest maxims of Holy Writ. Naturally, such conditions have in no wise modified the splendid isolation of Sinn Féin, since they have rendered free intercommunication between Ireland and the outside world impossible.

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The ultimate issue of this unequal debate, between a gagged nation and one in free possession of innumerable voices, was reached when those who transcended mere discussion interposed with their policy of "shoot: don't argue." The conscription of Irishmen is the logical conclusion to the secular denial by England of the claims of Irish nationality, a denial which has ceased even to be expressed in specific words, so comfortably has it sunk into the English sub-consciousness. This is the negation which underlies all political discussion between English and Irish, and has not a little to say in that futile debate already described. Since the Irishman's premises are not accepted, all his conclusions seem unreasonable to his opponent. Similarly the arguments of the latter; for they rest upon a denial, or, at best, an academic recognition of the fact that Ireland is a nation, with religious, social and cultural traditions as unlike those of England as the economic conditions of the two countries are dissimilar. No agreement is likely when discussion is vitiated by so vital a misunderstanding. Hence the logic of the Imperialists who shoot but don't argue. They know that Ireland is not a colony, and thinking imperially, they are unwilling to concede rights which they grant to their colonial fellow-citizens.

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This differentiation between colonials, who are Britishers, and Irishmen who are not, does not lead to its corollary that Ireland is a nation, for it is not the Anglo-Saxon habit to admit unpleasant truths, unpleasant here, because the admission would weaken the "moral" case for conscription, so dear to the British heart. The brutal Hun may dispense with moral sanctions, he may admit his wrong-doing, when military necessity involves the invasion of neutral territory. The German sheep—for we are assured of his docility—may masquerade in the wolf's clothing of intellectual honesty, his adversaries must have some law (of "angary"), or preferably, some text of Scripture, enjoining them to act as they have decided. Their wisdom is justified by the universal execration of Prussianism which, under other names, smells quite sweet. Unfortunately, Ireland, like other small neutrals, has failed to be impressed by the ingenious variety of the Imperialist technique, whose results are monotonously the same. In the particular instance of the proposal to apply conscription to Ireland, it is hard to say which attitude in the Englishman is the more preposterous from the Irish point of view: that of the virtuosi of Imperialism, who insist upon their moral "right" to conscript, or that of the soothsayers of liberalism, who think it "inexpedient" to impose upon the Irish colony a claim which they dared not impose on Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, and Canada. Both are obnoxious in so far as they rest upon the "great refusal," the negation of Irish nationality.

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It happens, however, that a corresponding divergence of opinion has expressed itself in Ireland to meet the conditions of British politics. Constitutional Nationalists and not wholly degraded Unionists have met the argument of inexpediency by adopting it, obeying the law of their parliamentary being, which demands cohesion with political friends in England. This section protests, therefore, against the attempt to enforce a theoretical right which was not exercised in the case of the British colonies. If logic were any part of a politician's equipment this position would be untenable, since only the Unionists profess to regard themselves as Colonials. The Nationalists assert that Ireland is a nation, but they act as if she were a colony, thereby adding to the incongruity of their revolt against participation in a war which they have supported and declared to be just. But happily only their illogical

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opponents insist upon the logical weakness of the position, as is the practice in politics, where the beam in the eye of one party never interferes with its perception of the mote in the eye of the other. Their respective constituents are quite satisfied.

Sinn Féin, on the other hand, rejects contemptuously the theory of inexpediency (while admitting the fact), and prefers to deal with the Britisher *in excelsis*, whose proposal is felt to be a declaration of war by one nation against another. The failure of England to regard the Republican army of 1916 as military prisoners of war is not felt to be a weak link in the logic of this reasoning—a very human exhibition of that political blindness to which reference has been made. The Sinn Féin contention is that Ireland is under no obligation to take part in the European conflict, and that even a measure of Colonial Home Rule should not involve a departure from this attitude of neutrality. It is argued, simultaneously, that the war is no concern of the Irish people, and that Ireland is one of the most important strategic factors of the Anglo-German struggle, owing to her geographical position. In short, the destiny of Ireland is to be largely determined by the outcome of the present hostilities, but the country itself is to remain outside and above the battle—a sort of ideal war aim, suspended *in vacuo*, and knowing none of the evils which normally befall small countries when they lie across the path of great empires. The ingenuous egoism of this viewpoint is, of course, obvious, and perhaps irritating, to the unsympathetic outsider, but it is neither better nor worse than the logic of the various Powers, great and small, whose national egoisms have been touched by the war. Every country affected is convinced that its particular existence and ambitions must be assured, if the true purpose of the war is to be achieved. All see in the satisfaction of their respective aspirations a guarantee of the millenium, and the triumph of Freedom, Justice and Humanity.

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The absurdity of appeals to reason, addressed to nations unbalanced by fear and desire, has never been more apparent than to-day. With the tissue of patriotic idealism worn threadbare, exposing ugly national greeds, self-complacent incompetence, and shameless commercialism, it would seem incredible that even the mob mind should not revolt. Yet, it is just at this supreme moment of disillusion, when the showing up of all belligerents is complete, that voices are heard clamouring for more soldiers to fight for Liberty, and the more incurable professors of Democracy—that blessed word—actually suggest that the true significance of the war should be explained to an ignorant Ireland. Once our darkness was lightened by the lords of propoganda we would take our places, not in the rear as become late-comers, but in the forefront of the great crusade, which is to restore to France her frontier of 1814, to allocate the Balkan States to various masters, to partition Turkey, and rearrange the economic and geographical map, to the greater glory of the Allied God. To say the least, the moment is not quite propitious to the cultivation of the necessary faith in people living, politically, *in partibus infidelium*. It is no wonder that the Irish nation, without introspection of motive, has united in opposition to the application of a law which could never have established itself, if it had been born into a world as sceptical as that of to-day. Illusion or panic must urge the duty of compulsory military service.

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The ruthless Sinn Féin policy of the English in Ireland called forth an equivalent Irish retort. Sinn Féin with its programme of national economics, has its roots in the history of the commercial relations between the two countries. From 1663, when the Cattle and Navigation Acts laid the first avowed restrictions on Irish industry and commerce, down to the present, the destruction of the economic, in addition to the national, freedom of Ireland, has been the deliberate policy of Britain. The programme of industrial revival, the plea for industrial autonomy, which was the point of departure for Sinn Féin many years ago, what is it, after all, but the crystallization of ideas common to three centuries of Irish economic literature? From the beginning of the seventeenth century a vast library of protest against English commercial jealousy has grown up, and is still growing. Obscure pamphleteers and writers of the highest fame stand side by side in this indictment of a country which dares now to assert that its crimes have not been deliberate. Swift's *Proposal for the Universal Use of Irish Manufactures*, his *Short View of the State of Ireland*, his *Modest Proposal*; the *Querist* of Bishop Berkeley; Hely Hutchinson's *Commercial Restraints of Ireland*;—these are only some of the most prominent documents in the history of the economic revolt, subsequently known as the Sinn Féin movement. A sharp corrective of the lazy ignorance of the fiction which describes the Irish case against England as one of retrospective sentimentality is provided by the economic writings of Irishmen for the past three hundred years.

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Sinn Féin succeeds Sinn Féin; one egoism has aroused another, and England now faces in Ireland the projection of her own spirit. Just as British policy has served only England's interests, so Ireland has learnt to think first of herself, having never seen her enemy give one thought even to fair play, as between country and country. Whatever claims the British Empire may have upon the gratitude or self-interest of other peoples, it has none on Ireland, which has not yet been allowed, as the phrase goes, to be just before she is generous. The sacred egoism of nations, so commendable when urging them to fight for their national existence—and even aggrandisement—against the Hun, is unfavourably regarded in all other circumstances. Neither Russia nor Greece has been pardoned a natural impulse towards self-preservation. Only great Powers are allowed to think of their own welfare; small nations are denied the luxury, except on specified conditions. Yet, in spite of brute force, and perhaps because of it, the smaller nationalities persist in a tenacious selfishness, without which they must abandon the struggle for life. Editors of military age, who are too proud of

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their verbiage to fight, may lament the shame of a people incapable of the noble altruism which fights for the Sacred Treaties. Even if a miracle of democracy in the Allied ranks had not come to give us those shreds of the truth behind the war, Ireland would still remain unconscious of her shameless soullessness. Strong in the sacred egoism of Sinn Féin, the Irish nation is convinced that only in his own country can an Irishman usefully engage in the struggle for freedom. Flanders, Gallipoli, and Mesopotamia are not milestones on the road which leads to the liberation of at least one forgotten small nationality.

If the anti-conscription movement had not asserted itself pious Liberal phrase-makers would never have believed—British fashion—that any community could actually stand by principles whose statement in England has invariably been a preliminary to their ignominious abandonment. Once again our political realism impinged unpleasantly upon the Anglo-Saxon consciousness, confronting the impotent mourners of theories they were too feeble to defend with the spectacle of a people aroused to fight against the supreme sacrifice demanded by the State of its citizens. The sacred egoism of the individual and of the nation was challenged, and a sacred union was the result, in which Ireland asserted, with uncompromising unanimity, her separate national identity. Characteristically, the professional Protestants kept aloof from this manifestation of liberty, to the bewilderment and shame of certain continental observers, proud of their Calvinistic origins, and surprised to find that, in Ireland, Protestantism is, by definition, antagonistic to the libertarian impulses with which it is associated on the continent of Europe. An aftermath of tragedy followed the religious tension of the anti-conscription demonstrations, when a number of Protestant Irishwomen were contemptuously excluded from the church in which they had intended to associate their prayers with those of their Catholic countrywomen. They discovered that the Church of “Ireland” denied them the elementary right of every Protestant to direct communication with God. The Dean who interposed between heaven and the prayers of the faithful was not, strange to say, invited to enter the communion which teaches the necessity for priestly intercession between man and his Maker. On the contrary, some of the victims of his ecclesiastical and political insolence were more concerned to absolve him from the blame of such an insult than to assert the principle for which Irish Protestants were alleged to be fighting. Such is the dilemma, and such is the quality, of the religion implanted by England in this country, and fostered, like the weakling that it is, in all the peevish selfishness of the spoilt child, eternally exerting the petty tyrannies it imputes to others.

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The reaction of Anglo-Saxondom to this Irish experiment in the teaching of the Allies has been somewhat similar to that described in the case of Russia, on the analogous occasion of the revolutionary realization of theories reserved for the academic leisure of the English upper classes. Mr. Lloyd George, that distinguished Liberal, was most insistent upon the “moral right” to impose military service upon subject races, his contention was echoed by all “responsible” statesmen, and the lofty example of Austria was cited as a model. This was a daring instance of associating with enemy ideas, only permissible to the chemically pure in heart.

If only the Hun had served the Bible as he served Bernhardi, the Lord would not have deserted him in his hour of need. In Ireland, however, the devil of imperialism quoted the Scriptures to no purpose, for this is an island, not only of Saints and Scholars, but also of theologians and politicians, who proved equal to this ingenious conflict of moralities. This alliance was particularly obnoxious to those who had engineered the politico-religious Carsonade of North-East Ulster. Just as the Allied governments have standardized the business of rescuing small nationalities, so the dominant British statesmen have the exclusive right to combine religion and politics. A Covenant of “loyalists,” in full Protestant regalia, organizing treason to the King and Parliament recognized by them, is but an incident on the path to political preferment and the honours of public life. A national pledge to resist the greatest infamy one nation can inflict upon another becomes a Papist plot. An Irish bishop is a sinister intruder only when he does not wear the shovel-hat and apron of the Episcopalian minority.

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In the greater Anglo-Saxondom across the seas, particularly in the Wilsonian Republic, the spectacle of Irish freedom was most offensive. An American critic once summed up the different characteristics of North and South in the Civil War by saying: “The Southerner was an imitation of an English gentleman, the Northerner was an imitation of an English cad.” In other words, society in the South was a shadowy reflection of the British landed aristocracy, in the North, it followed the example of the capitalist class. In terms of present day America this definition must be modified to meet the change effected by the triumph of the North, and the general disappearance of the old South. An American to-day is an English Liberal ... only more so. He combines the anti-social commercialism of the industrial early nineteenth century with the empty, verbal radicalism of the Cocoa Press tear-squeezers. Needless to say he has shown, on the whole, a more ferocious intolerance of minorities and individuals than any other belligerent in the present war. His hatred is more bestial; his patriotic zeal more inquisitorial. The slowly mounting tide of perverted Puritan legislation has broken over America, swollen by the tributaries of war lust, until the country is a vast wilderness of freak prohibitions aimed at the destruction of freedom. In these circumstances it is not surprising to find American journals occasionally protesting against the excessive zeal of the Administration in suppressing opinions and harassing individuals, because of pro-Irish sympathies which have been granted expression even in England. The New York *Nation*, a

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respectable and orthodox journal, written by and for intellectually anæmic college professors, sighs in vain for such toleration in Irish affairs as that of the *Manchester Guardian*. A striking tribute to the decadent anglicization of the Benighted States!

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At no time remarkable for the suppression of the national ego, America has now abandoned all pretence of respecting the egoism of other nations which have dared to display the instinct of self-preservation, in opposition to the ukases of absolutists of international virtue. Thus, we find the great minds of the Anglo-Saxon world with but a single thought, although forward-lookers in England still comfort their depressed followers with gallant attempts to extract hope from the rhetorical felicities of President Wilson, whose verbal harmonies are contrasted with the discordant defiance of ministerial utterances at home. Just as in America, progressive Radicals compare the autocracy of Washington with the democracy of London, and complain that Americans are deprived of the blessings of liberty and efficiency which the English enjoy. The great advantage of a numerous Alliance may be appreciated by all who observe the reciprocal illusions of the Allied peoples, of whom each believes that all is well with the others. An idea, or a reputation, exploded in London, will linger peacefully in more distant regions, until the circuit of disillusionment has been completed. By that time it may start afresh in some new guise, on the principle that you can pass as a statesman of genius with all the Allies some of the time, if not with some of them all the time, as certain idols of the market place would seem to indicate.

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When the collapsible German "plot" was landed in Ireland, and a number of arrests was made in the better-organized ranks of the anti-conscriptionists, it was doubtless the intention to prove Irish Nationalism synonymous with pro-Germanism, but the result has been to make it so, rather than to prove that it was so. This unexpected achievement has been pointed out—the Censor permitting—in various journals, and there has been a consequent recrudescence of activity to persuade Ireland that she is isolating herself from the world by turning towards Germany. With a tranquility in accepting the possibility as strange as the disinclination to remove its motives, Englishmen have set themselves to argue against the desirability of an Irish-German alliance. That being a highly conjectural and theoretical matter, it at once appeals to the Liberal British mind as a more suitable theme for discussion than the actual question at issue between England and Ireland. The Celt, whose preference for the dream over the reality is proverbial in non-Celtic circles, has been superseded by the theorists of freedom, who would much sooner argue academic points than face real political problems. They enjoy the task of setting forth the dire consequences of a Central European combination, with Ireland annexed, and contrasting this with the federation of free peoples, in which everyone is happy.

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Unfortunately, the future does not present itself to the Irish mind in any such simplified terms, and some Irishmen, too, offer the will for the deed of participation, but their reception is the most unfavourable. They are accused of supporting a war in which they refuse to fight. There is to be no reciprocity in this exchange. The pro-Ally Irishman is to give his life at once, but no instalment is forthcoming of the common ideal he has been invited to achieve. The democratic millenium to which the Milners, Curzons, and Carsons are leading, under the special patronage of Lord Northcliffe, is apparently so certain, that only the rudeness of parochial and provincial minds could prompt a demand for the commonplace realizations of here and now. So it comes, as the war progresses, that the number of Ireland's grievances is increased simultaneously with the demands upon her honour, her credulity and her patience. Consequently, as is the way of human nature, her egoism is exasperated, and becomes more firmly concentrated upon her own welfare. Precisely at that moment of exasperation an appeal is made for the voluntary surrender of that which was withheld even under threat of force. Since it is only the tactless Hun who is lacking in psychological subtlety, this strange phenomenon must be otherwise explicable.

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The truth is that our sacred egoism, strong and exacerbated as it is, has not yet touched the sublime heights of British selfishness and self-complacency. England refuses absolutely to be convinced, by the painful and reiterated facts of our history, that this country is not merely a turbulent province! Therefore, it ought to be possible to break our resistance, or to cajole us, as was done in England when the various Military Service Acts were passed. The men of the country were split up into antagonistic groups; the married against the single, the middle-aged against the young, trade against trade. Each wanted to escape at the cost of the other. In Ireland, of course, no such division can be created, for the simple reason that we have never refused to fight for our own country. Our detestation of pacifists equals even that of the English gutter-press, and our incredible indifference to personal, as distinct from national, convictions makes Ireland a paradise for militarists. But they must be militarists of our own creation. Sinn Féin fosters the development of native industries, and supports home products, often with an embarrassing disregard for the consequences. The Irish anti-militarist is, therefore, rarely a pacifist, and his objections are of a very different order from those which are surmounted or crushed by the advocates of military service in Great Britain. But it does not seem as if this elementary fact will be recognized, for to recognize it would be for England to admit that Ireland is a nation. To the denial and obscuration of that enduring truth centuries of English policy have gone, and in Ireland everything has been sacrificed to its assertion and reiteration. It lies at the back of the whole Anglo-Irish controversy, and sums up the essence of innumerable volumes which have attempted to state the case for Irish freedom. Until the fact of Irish Nationality is accepted by England, and acted upon, it will be the task of Sinn Féin to proclaim the sacred egoism of a nation

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that will not die.

\*\*\* END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK THE SACRED EGOISM OF SINN FÉIN \*\*\*

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