

## EDITORIAL

A PEBBLE cast into the ocean changes the centre of gravity of the universe. Thus, somewhat extravagantly, speaks the mathematician. The poet expressed the same idea by saying, "Thou canst not pluck a flower without the troubling of a star." The modern philosophers agree: they call it relativity. Everything is interdependent, they tell us, and sometimes the most tremendous results spring from the tiniest causes. A pebble might wreck an express, slay a Goliath, and destroy an empire.

On June 22nd the King went to Belfast for the formal opening of the Ulster Parliament, and made a very short speech. In that explosive atmosphere he dropped not a bomb, but a pebble. In a few, concise, pointed words he made a direct appeal for peace and conciliation. It was not a great speech either in length or eloquence. In its effects it seems to have been prodigious. It was a very lucky pebble which has sent eddies moving in ring after ring around the world.

At first it seemed that the King's fine appeal was not being backed by his responsible ministers. Within a few hours of the King's speech Lord Birkenhead announced in the House of Lords that the Government's policy of drastic repression in Ireland was to continue. The spark of hope seemed to have been once more extinguished. Nevertheless, the King's move was too significant and important not to influence "this high political chess game whereof the pawns are men." Hope once more arose unexpectedly when Mr. de Valera and Sir James Craig were invited to London to "explore to the utmost the possibilities of a settlement."

The Irish Truce is now an accomplished fact. The Truce has been splendidly kept. This will surprise those who have been given to understand that the

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“Republican” forces in Ireland were nothing more than a set of irresponsible assassins. It will not surprise those who know the ideals that inspire the young men of Ireland. They apparently consider that they have been forced into a state of war. Thousands have been driven into the ranks of what they consider an army of liberation by the frightful methods of the Government’s military agents. If we would try to see their point of view, we should ask ourselves what we should do if Irishmen came over to this country and burnt down our homes. We should be less than men if we did not defend ourselves and our women-folk. That is the simple logic of the Irish position. However much we may detest the “Republican” army, we must, if only grudgingly, acknowledge the very real bravery of its soldiers. It is an army which has no compulsion to bring men to its colours. There is no pay—only death or imprisonment if captured. Their numbers are few, their equipment is poor, and they are fighting an unequal warfare with a highly organized military force that has inexhaustible resources. Mad, idealistic, fanatical! Yes, but admirable qualities that should not be despised: certainly they are qualities that will ensure the keeping of the Truce.

Is the Truce to be the prelude to peace? Mr. de Valera in his address to the Irish people said: “In the negotiations now initiated your representatives will do their utmost to secure a just and peaceful termination of this struggle, *but history, particularly your own history, and the character of the issue to be decided are a warning against undue confidence.*” That is just the trouble. The Irish have been so often tricked, so often disappointed. Their hopes have been so often dashed that we must not be surprised if there exists a strain of pessimism about the possibilities of a settlement.

The Irish people want peace. Their enthusiasm

about the Truce proves that. They have suffered too much to want any continuance or revival of the wicked strife. It *must* mean peace this time. Now is the acceptable time. Surely it is now or never. The Irish want peace and the English want peace. And when both parties can agree to that extent they would be wicked fools to continue the age-long quarrel.

“Forgive and forget,” said the King. The Prime Minister has set an example in forgetting. He has forgotten all he said and did during the last two years, or at least he can act as if those sayings and doings did not exist. He can do what the sceptic philosophers only attempted: he can blot out the past and begin with a new theory of life, a new view and new principles. He has the faculty of “sublimating” the past. It is a dangerous faculty, because an adept may go on doing it when the present becomes the past. For immediate purposes, however, we may hope that all concerned in the peace negotiations will approach the problem in a mood of forgiveness and forgetfulness.

Ireland can no longer be regarded as a domestic question. The history of the last two years has shown how an embittered and disturbed Ireland, held by an army of occupation, can discredit the British name in the eyes of the world. French and English relations, so excellent during the war, have been sadly embarrassed by the Irish affair. In America Ireland is the plea for much hostility to England, and the occasion of much cynical criticism. If we are to respond to the American President’s appeal for a Conference to discuss disarmament and the peace of the world, we cannot do so with any show of sincerity until peace has been brought about in Ireland.

Peace, a real lasting peace, must be founded on something more solid than sentiment. Peace is the ordered tranquillity that results from a harmony of wills. “Forgive and forget.” That is a good way of

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reaching the attitude of mind that can think of peace. But we must remember that for forgiveness certain dispositions of mind and heart are necessary. We must have a humble confession of guilt and a practical sorrow expressed by a repairing of the damage done. No doubt the Peace Conference will bring forth its confessions on both sides. But whatever it brings forth it must bring peace—otherwise there is nothing left for us but despair. *It must mean peace.* If we ask God to give us more charity, more justice, more humility, more generosity, we may be sure He will grant us the further gift of peace.

Da pacem Domine in diebus nostris  
quia non est alius qui pugnet pro  
nobis nisi Tu Deus Noster.

THE EDITOR.

