

## The Desecration

By HENRY W. NEVINSON

Dublin, December 18

WITHIN the last five weeks I have been for some days off and on in Dublin, and have also visited the following scenes of recent devastation or murder, or both: Templemore, Thurles, Mallow, Castleisland, Tralee, Ardfert, Foynes, Limerick, Killaloe, Scarriff, Raheen, Gort, Ardahan, Galway, Tuam, Swineford, Belfast, and Cork, in that order. On my way I have also seen the ruins of the partially or utterly destroyed creameries at Loughmore, Ballymacelligott, Abbeydorney, and Lixnaw, and the cooperative stores at Foynes. In all those places, with the possible exception of Killaloe and Swineford, private houses, people's halls, or public buildings had been burnt out, and in many of them murders had recently been committed by groups of men whom everyone in the place or district believed to be members of British armed forces, either military or police.

If reprisals upon innocent and untried people could ever be justified, excuse might be pleaded in a few of those cases, where members of British armed forces had been kidnapped, ambushed, shot at, or killed by unknown people who probably maintained they were at war with the British Government. But, as Mr. Justice Pim said in his charge to the grand jury in Belfast on the first of the month, "There can be no legal reprisals. If reprisals were carried out, or if there were an excuse for that kind of thing, it would lead directly and absolutely to anarchy, and to nothing else."

In Ireland it is leading to anarchy and nothing else. The worst of it is that the anarchy of reprisals is being produced by the representatives of "law and order." In Belfast and other towns of the northeast corner, reprisals have been perpetrated by Protestant and Orange mobs. But I suppose that there is not one human soul living in Ireland who even pretends to believe that the reprisals in the rest of the country are not the work of the British reinforcements to the armed police, whether Auxiliaries or Black and Tans proper, or, in far fewer cases, the work of the regular British army. In Ireland I have never heard or read even a suggestion of any other agency. Besides, the question always recurs: if the agents of the "reprisals" are not in the service of the Government, how do they procure the motor lorries in which they rush through the streets of cities and through the country, and the rifles with which one sees them firing at random? How do they secure the immunity to prowl in cities at night and burn out buildings such as the *Freeman's Journal* office or the Sinn Fein Bank in Dublin, or the great shops and Sinn Fein Clubs in Cork, where the earlier burnings were all done during curfew hours? Or how is it that a party of five or six in the Auxiliary uniform could with impunity rush into the shops and homes of Catholic Irish people and smash all the goods, glass, furniture, and other possessions, as I saw had been done in Cork last week, while they kept crying, "We'll teach you to mock at us!"

I do not know who imagines himself in control of these Auxiliaries on such occasions. The men are supposed to be all ex-officers. In thirty years' fairly intimate acquaintance with the British army, I have never seen officers like these. General Tudor tells us they get a guinea a day. What more they acquire I cannot say, but many of them behave more like a gang of bandits let loose upon a poor

and distracted country than like the British officers to whom I have hitherto been accustomed.

Cardinal Logue is an old man—a man of known moderation and studied discretion. Let me, then, recall a passage from his Pastoral Letter of three weeks ago. After saying that men had been taken from their homes and shot because they were suspected of sympathy with Sinn Fein, their captors acting as judges, juries, and executioners, he continued:

Lorries laden with armed men career through the country day by day, and when the unhappy people seek cover or fly, as one naturally would when a cry is raised of a mad dog at large, or a savage beast escaped from a menagerie, that flight is taken as sufficient proof of guilt, and they are pitilessly shot down at sight. No false pretences, no misrepresentations, no pall of lies, even though they were as dark as Erebus, can screen or conceal the guilt of such proceedings from anyone who knows and can weigh the facts.

It is difficult to give names or direct evidence, except where the victim has been actually killed and so is free from harm. When Mr. Edward Lysaght gave evidence about the character of his assistant, Connor Clune, who was slaughtered in a chamber of Dublin Castle "for attempting to escape," just as the brother of Mr. Lysaght's chief manager had been slaughtered on Killaloe bridge a few days before "for attempting to escape," the store of his Cooperative Workers' Society at Raheen was promptly looted. Mr. Lysaght is known to all Ireland as one of the greatest benefactors of his country, owing to his experiments in cooperative farming, and the encouragement of Irish culture and art among the people. What new disaster may happen to him owing to this account (for which I have his leave) one can only fear.

What may be the Government's intentions with regard to the Irish nation, I cannot tell. But I do know something about the present condition of the people under our Government's methods. Martial law and open war could hardly make it more pitiable. Cardinal Logue's comparison is exact. *The people live as though a mad dog might spring upon them at any minute and from any corner. It is a life of perpetual fear and strain. No man who has any sympathy with the national cause (one of the causes for which we were told the Great War was fought) can regard his property or his life as secure from evening to morning. No woman can regard her home as safe. It is safer to take the children for refuge to the bogs and mountains. The children cannot sleep at night. Doctors tell me that St. Vitus's dance and other nervous affections are terribly on the increase among the young. Men, women, and children, against whom there is no proof or charge or even suspicion of guilt in any kind, are insulted, humiliated, and brutally treated. To my mind the insolence and scorn which will prompt armed men to thrash passers-by with whips as a joke, or to compel them to kneel in the mud and take the oath of allegiance at the revolver's point, or to sing "God Save the King" under compulsion in a cinema, reveal a lower depth of degradation in our Government's agents than the more violent "reprisals" of pillage, arson, and murder. Of one thing at least I am certain: whatever martial law may accomplish, or discussions on truce suggest, there can be no possible hope of peace or of truce until, as the first step, the Auxiliaries and Black and Tans are withdrawn or disarmed, and such arms as may still be thought necessary are limited to Irish police who have some feeling for their countrymen, and to regular troops who have some respect for their officers and the honor of our English name.*

## In the Driftway

SO Betelgeuse is twenty-seven million times as big as our puny little sun, and may have scores of inhabited worlds hanging about it, each with a dozen attentive moons as large as the ball of mud which we find so troublesomely diverse and big. The Drifter wonders if those far-off planets have canals, and if their astronomers think to discover canals on other planets, and if the small boys of Betelgeuse's satellites have half as good a time in those sluggish streams as he had in the old Erie Canal. The Drifter considered himself something of an astronomer in the days when the Erie Canal lay just beyond the school-room windows, and he remembers many an anxious night dreading the sight of ruddy Betelgeuse—"bottlejuice," he called it—rising above the winter horizon to warn him that the hour was already past when his parents had bade him be home.

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WILL the Barge Canal ever be as fair as the old Erie? And can the canals of Mars or of more distant constellations have half the charms of that muddy ditch? Do the boys of Betelgeuse's universe, so far away that light, speeding 186,000 miles a second, takes a hundred and fifty years to reach the Erie's towpath, swim, and skate, and, when the canal is low in autumn, boldly chase the dangerous bullhead in its shallows, as the Drifter did in the old Erie? The Drifter still thrills at the thought of the magnificent mudfields of the Wide-Waters when the canal is emptied, when every puddle holds new wonders, and adventure calls the small boy over his shoe's depth of mud in search of mussel shells more beautiful to his awed eye than any mother-of-pearl, of larger snails than any canal had ever before yielded, and of stranger fish to languish and die in his untended aquarium. He can still feel a shudder at the thought of winter's first ice, when he had to slide hard to get past the thin edge to the solid ice in the middle, and when the unwary skater gliding magnificently Fairportward might feel the ice crack and give under his feet, and sit ingloriously on the mud bottom in two feet of shallow but very cold canal. He recalls the Dingle, watered by the canal's leakage, where he saw his first Cape May warbler; he remembers the guilty joys of swimming in the canal's forbidden dirty water, and the sense of God-sent retribution that came with a rash that followed a swim, but which later years taught him was due to poison sumach bordering the canal. And the locks, and the old lock-tender, and hours passed in watching them; and his first overnight vagabond journey on a canal-boat. Do the Martian boys and the little Betelgeusians have half as good a time with their canals? Or have they such developed brains that the children are too mature for unintellectual joys?

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ANATOLE FRANCE, meditating upon the inevitable chilling of this world of ours, wonders what race of beings will succeed man when the temperature drops too low to support our frail existence. If evolution be true to her erratic past, it will not be a direct offshoot of our temporarily dominant *genus homo*. Anatole France looks to some form of butterfly as Life's highest achievement. The superhumans of Mars and Betelgeuse may, like the butterfly, be inferior in brains, but surpass us in other ways. The

butterfly, instead of wasting love in youth, and living on into gray old age, is caterpillar first; he eats and plods when young, and then, emerging into winged beauty at the end, lives for a brief season untrammelled by harsh needs of food and toil, has love at the last, and dies in the full blow of life's climax. Perhaps the dominant creatures of the distant worlds fret less, with less brains than we, but are born senile, and grow old into youth's warm passion.

THE DRIFTER

## Correspondence

### A Baseless Slander

TO THE EDITOR OF THE NATION:

SIR: It is currently stated that the Allies paid rent, and are still paying rent, to the private owners of the lands used as battlefields during the war and now for military purposes in Europe. Can you give me the facts and authorities which I may quote on this, if it be a fact?

WALTER THOMAS MILLS

Berkeley, California, December 22

[There is no basis whatever for this rumor. It is an echo of anti-Ally propaganda during the war.—EDITOR THE NATION.]

## Inexpensive Classics

TO THE EDITOR OF THE NATION:

SIR: I hate to say a good word on behalf of a publisher, for such action is against the best and oldest tradition of the guild to which I belong. But why bewail the sad fate of the Everyman Library when a similar American effort continues, against great odds, to provide us with an increasing list of ninety-cent classics? It is very unfortunate indeed that the paper manufacturers and the printers and the binders of Great Britain have made the further fabrication of reasonably priced books an impossibility. But our own printers and lithographers and binders have nobly striven to do likewise, and if I am not mistaken their warfare upon good but cheap books will be continued for another twelve months. The continued appearance of the Modern Library series is the sort of thing which would throw all good hundredpercenters into an ecstasy of pride. Those of us who, less pure, still confess to a love of letters and art, show our joy in a less boisterous way, but we appreciate the battle on behalf of popularly priced classics with sincere gratitude.

New York, January 4

LIBER ALTER

## Baron Rosen's Testimony

TO THE EDITOR OF THE NATION:

SIR: *The Nation* has made no comment on the interesting disclosures of Baron Rosen's "Forty Years of a Diplomat's Life," more particularly his insistence from the start that the Revolution of March, 1917, was a demand of the Russian masses for peace. The large newspapers of Russia refused to publish Rosen's articles. He appealed to Maxim Gorky, who printed his views in the Socialist paper, *Novaya Zhizn*, and thus won for their author the epithet of pro-German and Bolshevik.

Rosen saw clearly that the only salvation for Russia from disruption and anarchy was the speedy conclusion of a general negotiated peace on the basis of the new democracy's formula of no annexations and no indemnities and in accord with President Wilson's principles and with the Reichstag's resolution of July 19, 1917. As a lover of his country and the old established order he worked for such a peace. But the intelligentsia of Russia and the influential and moneyed classes of all the Allied countries, like the militarists of Germany, were eager to have the war go on and let it go on another year and three-quarters because they were callous and found it a good thing.

Cleveland, Ohio, December 28

RICHARD E. STIFEL