



Edited by Ed. DALTON

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THE BRITISH SPIDER

So quiet and silent is he those days that I am forced to the conclusion the British Lion has been interned in the Veterinary Department for repairs, or that he has gone on a cruise (not carouse) with "our" invisible Navy. Whatever be the cause of his absence, he has left us a worthy and very dangerous substitute — in fact, a more dangerous thing than himself, and that substitute is the British Spider. The British Spider is a crafty, poisonous yet patient thing, which lurks in dark corners, and whose approach is unsignalled by even the slightest sound, until its cold, clammy, repulsive body is felt on our warm human flesh. Briefly, it is a crawling, sneaking, treacherous abomination, which all normal men and women detest, but which, unfortunately, derives power from the Evil One to disguise itself in many ways to wheedle many minds.

It is difficult to combat a spider. When I was big-game shooting in that wild though gradually "civilising" district of East Africa, of which Nairobi is the chief centre, it was often my good fortune to bag an elephant, and twice I brought down lions. But I have never yet shot a spider. If you catch a spider on the ground, you can stamp your foot on him—with your boot on, of course—but it is the first axiom of the spider's policy to never rest on anything solid, lest something solid might also rest on him; and thus between two solids, he, the spider, should be reduced to his proper character, an ugly stain on the floor.

The British Spider is a spider amongst spiders. I digress here for a moment to say that I am not certain if the word spy has been derived from spider. If it has, I offer my felicitations to the

"G" Division of the Dublin Police on having surpassed their paternal grandfather in meanness, in clamminess, and in general repulsiveness, but not in "cunningness."

And now again to our Spider. In the early stages of the war, the British Spider was called upon to understudy the British Lion. The latter had been howling "some" at the Curragh, and had smelt blood at Bachelor's Walk. It was a tall order for Spider, but not too tall. There is nothing too supremely hypocritical for English political spiderdom. By a quick movement of the lights the transformation was accomplished—and lo! in place of Leo rampant, his tail lashing his hips and blood dripping from his gaping jaws, we were presented with the British Spider, disguised as an "Archangel," garbed in red, white and blue, standing guard over the Catholic Cathedrals of Belgium and France, which were in jeopardy from the assaults of the Austro-German armies. The Spider, knowing the Irish people's reverence for God's temples, hoped by this manœuvre to gain Irish support for his designs. But the Irish people couldn't see what military object could be gained by the deliberate destruction of the churches, nor could they credit that the Austrian Empire, which was overwhelmingly Catholic, and the German Empire, which was largely Catholic also, would countenance, in even the slightest degree, any damage to church property which could be reasonably avoided. The Spider, of course, withheld all evidence which might discredit his accusation against the enemy. In the same way the Spider places guns on his passenger-carrying ships, thus converting them into war vessels. He withholds this fact

from the Irish and other neutral public, and when his armed vessel is torpedoed, he howls aloud against the enormities of the enemy, and calls on all men to witness the villainies which he is "out" to suppress. By besmirching the character of his enemy as much as possible, he hopes to so horrify the public mind that his own character and the fact that he is a filthy Spider may escape notice.

Having by various devices ensnared numbers of Irishmen into his web of war, he hums with glee that he has now made it "Ireland's war." Did you ever hear a Spider hum? Well, when you hear recruiters say, "This is Ireland's war, since so many Irish lives have been sacrificed in it." And again, "Will you not answer the call of your Irish brothers in the trenches?" "Will you have it to be said that the full complement of men for the Irish regiments had to be made up by English, Welsh and Scotch? Unless you come to the help of your brother-Irishmen they must perish." You hear in all this the hum of the Spider. Because nothing but a Spider could conceive the idea of luring in by every species of misrepresentation shoals of flies to his web, and, having safely netted them, turn to those outside, saying "Come into my parlour, oh, flies; it is yours as well as mine, since so many of your brothers' carcasses adorn it."

Again, we see the trail of the Spider in the alleged intention of the war-vendors to grant Ireland a share of contracts for other essentials than money and human lives. Over comes the Spider's agent, professing sympathy with Irish industries, and a desire to provide employment for the Irish people in Ireland. The S.A. is welcomed to Irish factories and workshops. He gets an inkling of their capacity, but in particular he notes the numbers of men of fighting age who are engaged therein. Then he doles out a few insignificant contracts to give colour to his professions, and immediately he and his associates are converted into a recruiting committee. How Spidery is not the whole game? It would be a successful game if the men of Ireland were "blue bottles," but they are not. This Irish job isn't one for a Spider at all; bring out the British "Lion."

DESERTED IRELAND.

To my mind, the saddest feature of the past sixteen months has been the action of the Irishmen who have deserted Ireland. Let it be clear that I am not alluding now to the Redmonds, the Devlins, the T. P. O'Connors, the Kettles, the Colonel Lynchs, the O'Mahonys, and all the rest of the tribe. Nor do I mean the leader writers

of the "Freeman," the erstwhile Fenians of the "Independent," and those others who are only too thankful that they have a country to sell. To expect anything else but treachery from these people would be to hope for too much. Ireland's hour of trial has always been for them their hour of gain. To dream that they would think of Ireland's interest before that of England would be to believe that English gold had lost its lure. No, it is not surprising to find such people betraying the country that had the misfortune to bear them.

The Irishmen to whom I allude are different men and men from whom Ireland had reason to expect better things. For example, there is Lord Ashbourne. There were people who declared that his Irishism was a pose, that his adoption of the Gaelic garb was a fad, and that his devotion to the grand old language of Ireland was merely a craze. I believed differently. I imagined it betokened the dawning of a new era for Ireland to find an Irish peer despising the shoneenism of his class and deliberately taking his side with the Irish Nation as against the English garrison in Ireland. I liked to see this titled Irishman walk proudly through the streets of Ireland's capital in an Irish kilt, and to find he was not ashamed of it. From such a man I was hopeful of much in case a crisis arose. It was a bitter blow to find I was deceived. True, this Irishman has not descended to the wretched depths of those "Irish" recruiting officers who prostitute the name of patriotism, who are not ashamed to take in vain for their unholy purposes the hallowed names of Wolfe Tone, Robert Emmet, John Mitchel, and Thomas Davis, in order to entice poor Irish boys to go and fight England's battles. True it is that Lord Ashbourne has, as an honourable man, not done such dirty work as this. But then there was so much that he might have done and that he has not done. I cannot believe it was cowardice on his part, because I think he is a man who wants neither courage nor devotion. I am at a loss to find why this man, in all else so manly, has allowed this crisis to arise without taking his stand on the side of those who, knowing England's history, have steadily withstood her influence. He must know that England is false in this war, as she has always been false in everything that she has entered. He must know that her catch-cry of "small nationalities" is pure hypocrisy. He must know that she is in this struggle under false pretences. All this and much more must he know in his inmost heart. What a grand thing it would have been had he come out and said so—for instance, like the Bishop of Limerick.

The second man in whom I have been disappointed is Canon Hannay. Despite his not

always pleasing humour directed against the rural Irishman, there were elements in the work of George Bermingham, and in his outlook upon Ireland as a whole, that revealed him to be—a man. Who that has read "The Northern Iron" but can realise that a spirit of revolt against a foreign authority ran through every vein of the writer. Nor can a man of George Bermingham's insight be blinded by the shifty and shady reasons given by England's apologists for her appearance in this war. Why is he silent, therefore? And why, when he does write, is it in a sort of hesitating acceptance of the English side of the question? True, there is little money, little profit, on the side in Ireland that he must know is right. "Nationality," for example, could not pay him a couple of guineas a column for an article like the "Daily Mail" or the "Daily News." But surely there is a finer side and one above such considerations in the George Bermingham who used to lecture in Harcourt Street to a crowd of eager listeners. Why is this finer side so mute?

The third person in whom I placed faith which has not been altogether justified is Dr. Douglas Hyde. This man did great work for Ireland. It must be hateful to him to see West Britonism rampant once more in the land. Even the "Irish Brigade" must wear khaki. The whole hideous drama at present unfolding in Ireland must be repugnant to the soul of Dr. Hyde. Everything forgotten—language, dress, games, country—at the call of Mr. John Redmond, aristocrat and Imperialist. Poor Irish peasants jeered at and mocked in Liverpool streets by English mobs. Men sent to jail for being Irish Volunteers. Felon-setting in the land, as in '48. And Dr. Hyde is silent. I cannot believe the man who laboured so much to create a distinctive feeling of nationhood in the country is unobservant. Nor do I quite think he will be silent always. But I should like to hear him speak just what he thinks, and that soon—though every West Briton squirmed with rage, even as they foamed in the mouth, over the letter of the Bishop of Limerick.

Had these three men—Lord Ashbourne, Canon Hannay and Dr. Hyde—spoken their secret thoughts, the defection of a hundred Kettles would not have mattered one pin to Ireland. Would that they might do so before it is too late!

THE BODENSTOWN SERIES.

Nos. 1 and 2 of the Bodentown Series have just been reprinted. They are P. H. Pearse's "How Does She Stand?" and his "From a Hermitage." The former is issued at a penny, the latter at twopence. Both can be had wholesale from Whelan and Son, 17 Upper Ormond Quay, Dublin.

THE NOT-FAR-DISTANT DATE

[I do not vouch for the authenticity of the following letter, a copy of which I found in my letter-box the other day. I leave my readers to form their own opinions.—Ed., "Spark."]

My Dear Birrell—

I much regret having to trouble you so soon after my letter quashing your precious Retrenchment Enquiry so far as it concerned Ireland, though that letter was dictated by reasons which are obvious to you. The cause of the present note is much more serious, in that it affects the Irish Party immediately and intimately. In Sir John French's farewell order to the troops on the Western Front, that distinguished general prophesied victory "at no far distant date." That phrase, as you know, is the copyright of the Irish Parliamentary Party and their followers in Ireland; it has been on the lips of the leaders and members of the Party—with the possible exception of Parnell—every other day for the past forty years; and its unwarranted use by a British Field Marshal has given rise to much bitter disappointment among the present members of the Party, and according to advices received, of much scoffing among a certain section in Ireland. Personally, of course, I am prepared to make any sacrifice which will help to bring the war to a successful conclusion; but my colleagues think that the limit has been reached when, after sixteen or seventeen months of war, retiring generals have to rely for their parting shots on the stolen thunder of the Irish Party.

I enclose a copy of a resolution unanimously adopted by the Party, and I would ask you to take it more seriously than you did the other one dealing with the "senseless prosecutions" of Irish Volunteers some months ago. We are in earnest this time.

Very truly yours,

J. E. REDMOND.

P.S.—I am not sending a copy of this to the Press, but accidents do happen—think of "Dear Mr. Brayden"—and those d—d "Spark" fellows can find out more than your whole "G" division.—J.E.R.

ENCLOSURE.

Resolution, proposed by Mr. John Dillion and seconded by Mr. Joseph Devlin:—

"That this Party views with alarm and dismay the unwarranted and unlicensed use by Sir John French of the phrase "at no-far-distant date," which two generations of use on the lips of the Irish Parliamentary Party ((pledge-bound)) have consecrated to the service of Ireland; that we remind the Government of the sacrifices and concessions made by this Party

both before and since the outbreak of war; and we hereby solemnly warn the Government that any further use of this phrase in any theatre of the war—even at the Dardanelles—will be fraught with grave danger to the truce now existing among the parties in the House of Commons and will imperil the national unity, and thus prove a source of bitter disappointment to our Allies, and of encouragement to the enemy, including the factionists and disruptionists in Ireland; and, with no uncertain voice, we call upon the proper authorities to take precautions to prevent the occurrence of such a calamity at this stage of the world's history."

SUFF ON YOU, GREECE!

John Bull has at last loosened up. His pockets are bulging with gold, and he is scattering it abroad with frantic haste. Money is no object. He can get as much of it as he likes from his frightened people. "I want three millions a day," he said, "and I don't want anybody to ask me how I am spending it." "All right, John." "Four millions a day, and no prying eyes around"! "All right, John." "Five millions a day, and if you see any half-eaten joints of meat or empty champagne bottles thrown about, you just keep your mouth shut and stump up the money." "Certainly, John; mum is the word."

Are there any small nationalities up for auction? John is there to bid for them. They were cheap at the beginning of the war, but, like everything else, they have gone up in price. He got Belgium for a promise—which, let us hope, he will some day keep. He got Ireland—that is, all of it that would sell itself—for a cheque dated after the war. Yes, dated after the war, when there will be no money in the bank to meet it, and when torn scraps of paper will be lying about so thick that one additional will not be noticed.

But after Belgium the bidding went up. Poor Belgium made such a rotten bargain that the other small nationalities began to get desperate. Then Italy came along, and England thought Italy was a big nationality, and Italy went a good price, as prices ruled in those days. But when Italy began to fight, it was discovered that she was only a small nationality after all. Then the bidding went down again. Bulgaria was next. Twenty-five million pounds was the price mentioned at first. But John Bull was so badly taken in by Italy that he was in a tight mood at the Bulgarian auction. Afterwards he got frightened, and would have bid one hundred

millions; but, alas! the hammer had already descended, and Bulgaria fell to Germany.

And now Greece is under the hammer. How dreadful of Greece to allow itself be influenced by mere selfish considerations. Imagine Greece, the Greece of Homer, Demosthenes and Lord Byron, taking self into account at such a crisis in European history! Suff on you, Greece! You have no higher morality than if you were one of the big powers. Greece has now to come down off the fence. She must choose between sacrificing herself in the cause of religion, civilisation and small nationalities, as Belgium and Servia have done, or of joining the Huns like the barbarous Bulgarians.

But, Greece—oh! Greece—if you refuse our money and reject our Cyprus, remember how we have the ear of the world. If you do what we like, the earth shall resound with your praise. But if you don't, then remember we have a bad tongue, and we shall proclaim the wonders of your ancient culture. When the ruined temples of your Acropolis are blotted out by German shells, our tears will be more salt than those we shed over Rheims. When your children are being tossed on the bayonets of the Huns, the whole world will ring with our shrieks of indignation. But if you don't come down on our side, then you are only barbarians, and your boasted culture is a will-o'-the-wisp. Your ancient literature is but the product of the darkness of paganism, and the statues of your temples are indecent. If you do not join our side, or at least stay on the fence, then in the name of Christianity and civilisation we shall blow your dirty old Acropolis to atoms with the guns of our navy. And we shall pour shot and shell in amongst the children on the crowded streets of Athens, like we did in Ireland in the good old days of yore, lest perhaps the "nits might grow into lice."

REV. MICHAEL O'FLANAGAN.

Crosna, Boyle, Co. Roscommon (late of Cliffoey, Co. Sligo).

FLEADH

na noúlas

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