

GRACE  
SITFORD

# THE SPARK

"KEEP THE FIRES OF THE NATION BURNING"  
(C. S. PARNELL)



Edited by ED. DALTON.

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## LIBERTY OF THE PRESS

There is liberty of the Press in Ireland. Liberty full and unrestrained.

Only in Germany, the Hun's country, are restrictions placed on that liberty, and even there it is but when the moral law is transgressed that any drastic action is taken.

So that liberty of the Press is held sacred by even the barbarian. And we, under the Union Jack, "the flag that braved a thousand years the battle and the breeze", the token and the symbol of freedom, we enjoy that blessing of liberty of the Press to the fullest degree.

Did I say there was *liberty* of the Press under the British flag? Yea! Not liberty only, but *License*.

Germany, by the aid of its "Militarism" and its "Prussian despotism", insists on its Pressmen respecting the moral law, but under the "old Jack" that law even may be violated with impunity.

The grossest, most brutal, and most insane immorality may be, and has been, propagated by British newspapers, and the British Censor "winks the other eye".

Indeed, the British Press enjoys such unrestricted freedom that, solely in self-defence, and for the protection of our growing youth, for whom that class of literature is designed, the good priests and people of Limerick and, later on, of Dublin, were obliged to form voluntary Vigilance Committees, to prevent the sale of the immoral and indecent publications

which were dumped on our shores year after year from England, whilst the English Government, which is now so fired with zeal for the interests of morality and religion, looked on unmoved.

The place to safeguard the interests of morality and religion is at home. If you want to clean the street, clean your own doorstep first. If the English Government is seriously concerned for the interests of morality and religion, let it put its foot down on the moral assassins who flood Ireland with filth from the English printing presses. Let it chain up or smother the authors of the indecent songs and "jokes" which you are permitted to *cheer* at the Hippodrome but dare not *hiss* under a penalty of forty shillings or a month.

If Herbert Asquith wants to wear wings and preach in the limelight, let him make good his claim to do so. Mr. John Redmond once, in my hearing, described this man as "a cruel, cowardly, and callous English Minister". If Redmond has changed Asquith hasn't. He still merits Mr. Redmond's alliterative volley, with the addition, for interest perhaps, of "crafty and culpable".

Now, I have written this to show that I am not an unreasonable man. I do not favour unrestrained license in the Press, but of liberty within certain defined laws I *am* in favour, and I *claim* that liberty and I shall *exercise* it. If I transgress the laws, let the laws be invoked, but otherwise let no man, and no body of men, attempt to interfere with me in the production of this paper.

If any institution in Ireland thinks it has a grievance against me, and sends its agents to interfere by violence with my liberty, I make this request, let it not be married men it sends.

I am an impulsive man and sensitive, and if any of mine, even in self-defence, rendered women heavy of heart and lonely, or left little children fatherless, I should be haunted by the thought all my life whether that life be long or be short.

I assume that I am unfortunate enough to make some enemy through this paper. I shall regret it, but it is a sequel that I do not invite. If any reader of this paper becomes my enemy it is due to some inherent defect in his character and not to any uncharitable or immoral kink in mine.

I am, however, consoled by the thought that there is only one institution in Ireland which can kill its enemies "according to law"; and that institution is the British Government. If the British Government chooses to regard me as an enemy, I cannot very well complain. It will merely mean that that Government and myself have different stand-points from which to view the same series of facts.

It would, however, be a serious blunder on the part of anyone to have me killed. There is little satisfaction in killing a man who doesn't regard death as punishment. It is only the fatuous, unbelieving English themselves that take this view of death. "A rebel" said Boyle O'Reilly "is never so powerful as when he is dead," and I am a rebel. A rebel against crime, hypocrisy, and deceit, at all times and in all climes, and if these poisonous weeds flourish under the Union Jack, I am none the less a rebel against them. If the upholders of the Union Jack choose to regard these evils as so many indispensable assets of their flag, and legally take my life for fighting against them, I shall go cheerfully before God and I shall say to Him: "I am come, my Father, before my time. Your enemies have sent me to prevent me doing your will on earth."

With this thought in my mind, and cognizant of the depths of crime and folly to which some institutions can stoop, I issue the first number of THE SPARK. I do not apologise for the name, nor do I explain it. Its significance may not be apparent to some readers; that is their fault, not mine. The tone and scope of the paper will justify its title. I send THE SPARK out on its career to-day and I invoke for it, the blessing of God's Mother and of Ireland's Hero Saints.

ED. DALTON.

## THROUGH THE SMOKE

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The thoughts which I shall publish in this paper are my own. They are inspired from no source save my own heart, and that heart I have dedicated to the service of God and my country. I would never have issued this paper but for the action of the armed agents of that "scientific barbarian," Kitchener, ("Everyman," August 23rd, 1914) in intimidating printers in this city from printing the Nationalist papers, and the newsagents from selling them.

The policy of suppression and intimidation is obsolete and ineffective. You cannot prevent Irishmen from *thinking*; whether they are unarmed civilians in Ireland, or whether they are captives of war in Germany. There are thousands and thousands of Irishmen prisoners of war in Germany at present, who probably have now more opportunity for reflection, than was ever theirs before. Go out to them in spirit, and try, if you can, to analyse their thoughts.

What thought is uppermost in the minds of these, our countrymen, when they realise that the Germans are not, after all, the vile demons that the sensation novelists of London have represented them to be? When they look on their hands and reflect that these Irish hands have been stained with the blood of patriots who never did Ireland a wrong, and when they realise that they were incited against these patriots by the Hell-steam of falsehoods from the immoral, hydrophobic Press of London, what thoughts, I ask you, will arise in their minds as they lie in the calm stillness of the German night, far away from the old land, far away from their mother's heart, the mother to whom they were never kind enough, to whom they were never dutiful enough, and the mother who needed, oh, so sorely! the help of their brawny arms, and the music of their passionate voices bidding her hope that the dawn would break at last? What thought, I ask you again, shall be uppermost in their minds? They are our countrymen, bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh. They have not yet forgotten their manhood, they have not forgotten their patriotism, they have not forgotten their Creator, and they will go down on their knees and beseech God to give them but one chance, one golden hour, only an hour to redeem themselves for their sins against Him and Ireland.

I leave the matter there. Put your trust in God,

my readers, and pray fervently that His will may be done on earth. Ireland never prayed for less; she could never pray for more.

There is one outstanding fact which I should like readers of this little paper to keep before their minds in these confused and confusing times, when the Editorial offices of our so-called National Press (the *Freeman* and *Independent*) are under the censorship of a Militiaman, and the fact is this—the immoral literature which the Vigilance Committees were formed to combat did *not* come from Germany or Austria or even Turkey. This vile filth, which probably ruined more immortal souls than the great war has bodies, came from England and France.

And remember that it wasn't because Germany or her allies couldn't print English that they didn't send us this filth. No! That is not the reason, because if you go around to any of the shops where prayerbooks are sold you will unfortunately find many bearing the legend "Printed in Germany" inside.

Years ago I fought against the importation of German-printed prayer-books into Dublin, not because they were prayer-books, but because they were German. And I held, and still hold it, a sin against our countrymen, to import even one single article into Ireland which reduces the field of employment to Irishmen in the land of their fathers. There are, of course, many things, the manufacture of which in Ireland cannot be justified on economic grounds, but prayer-books are not amongst them.

And France, England's dear ally, sent us the French atrocity in the shape of vulgar and grossly indecent postcards, which the A.O.H., to their credit, endeavoured some years ago to stamp out.

But you cannot adopt a purely negative policy towards this traffic in immoral literature and immoral pictures. They are the almost natural and logical complements of what is called British "civilization". It is hardly possible to be a true Briton and to lack desire and appreciation for these things; it is less possible to be a *West* Briton and to lack them. If British "civilization" is to continue in Ireland, then we must put up with its accessories, the immoral and indecent paper, book, and picture. If it is not to continue, and I say it *should not*, then let us, in God's name, clear the decks for action.

I had the privilege of listening some years ago to a lecture by Father Tom Fitzgerald, O.F.M., in the course of which he declared that the purveyors of immoral publications found no supporters in the

Irish-Ireland ranks. And that is so. Gaelicism, the essence of the National movement, is hostile by instinct and tradition to all that is immoral, vulgar, and indecent. You cannot find a man or a woman animated by the spirit of Gaelicism who would not be hopelessly bored, to use no stronger term, by the immoral publications which must have received strong support from the West Briton element in Dublin.

The antidote to the unnatural and outrageous traffic is to be found in the Irish-Ireland movement. Do not forcibly suppress immoral literature, but *starve it*. Do not say to people: "You should not read immoral literature," but kill in them the desire for it, by filling their hearts and minds with the high ideals which characterise the Gaelic movement.

Let us, then, in this year of grace, 1915, bend with renewed vigour to the work of reviving our own Gaelic culture. Let the "civilized nations" kill and maim each other to their heart's content—we cannot alter the issue of the war by a hair's breadth. The work which we owe to our own people and country is at our side; let us turn to it.

One of our Belgian "refugees", hot from the seat of war, has declared how appalled he was on beholding the poverty and distress amongst the Donegal peasantry; but the spurious patriots and humanitarians who are raking in the coin for Belgians, Turkos, and other foreign fry, never gave a thought, and never will give a thought, to their own flesh and blood, who live in direst misery and in a state of semi-starvation all their lives?

Remember, readers, the importance which is attached to the capture of foreign trade in the present crisis. When a nation is at war it is an act of treason to it to purchase supplies of any kind from the enemy. Let your future motto, therefore, be never to buy from an enemy what you can buy from a friend. A dtuigeann sibh go leir.



### SCIENTIFIC BESTING.

There is a science largely practised in Dublin known as "besting." A friend of mine is investigating the matter, and hopes to issue a little booklet shortly—entitled "The Art of Besting." I am also informed that he will issue before long, for the benefit of Dublin business houses, a list of fairly prominent professors of the art. These gentlemen have enjoyed a lucrative practice at their profession, but they have been too modest to claim recognition. In the near future we shall draw them from their retirement.

### OUR NATIONALIST WOMEN.

How blessed we have been in modern Irish movements by the co-operation of our splendid women. In the Gaelic League, in the Industrial Associations, in Sinn Fein, the G.A.A., and, latest of all, in the Volunteer movement, they have given vivid evidence of their ability and capacity for genuine constructive work. Their judgment and their instinct have been rarely at fault, and most aggravating of all to the compromising male mind, they have been aggressively logical. God has surely been good to us in giving us such loyal and helpful comrades; may Nationalist Ireland in the future, as in the past, prove worthy of woman's support.

Whilst I am dealing with this subject of our Nationalist women colleagues, there is an aspect of the matter which I have been for long eager to broach, and it is this: we men have been so infected with the blight of West-Britonism, and so inured to foreign standards of conduct, that we have unconsciously failed to display that courtesy and chivalry towards our women which they so truly merit, and which was always so eminently characteristic of the Gael. Because they are superior to us in moral courage, we are largely overawed by them, and we forget at the crucial moment to show them those acts of courtesy which are woman's due. I do not say that any rudeness is shown to women in our ranks, far from it; but it is not sufficient that we refrain from actual offensiveness, we must be deliberately polite and chivalrous to them, and show them that we do not consider they have forfeited any of the privileges of their sex, by actively and unselfishly concerning themselves with public affairs.

And, mind you, I do not claim these privileges for our women because of the fiction that they are the "weaker sex." I believe, to the contrary, that they are the stronger—because, right down the ages from Calvary, and before Calvary, down to the Blasquet islands, where the heroic Eibhlin Nicholls sacrificed her life in attempting to save that of a little Irish-speaking fisher-girl, women have continued to set us examples of nobility and self-sacrifice which our sex cannot hope ever to eclipse.

Where, in any modern movement, can you find such devotion to principle as the despised Suffragettes have displayed? Heavy-weight editors and mean-souled ward heelers may, and do, attribute this devotion to a craving for notoriety; but the post-mortem notoriety achieved by poor Emily Davison—who, in the coolest and most deliberate manner, rushed to inevitable death in order to impress the English mind with the reality and vitality of the women's movement, was but poor recompense for her life's sacrifice. And in Marjorie Hasler, our Irishwomen gave

another noble martyr to their noble cause. The cause which commands such devotion and such self-sacrifice becomes sanctified and undefeatable.

### IRELAND'S SILVER CROSS.

It has often been said that Ireland is too poor to reward those who are faithful to her. It is the faithless who speak thus. But I have often felt that recognition should be given to the services of the quiet, patient workers in our midst, whose names even, perhaps, we seldom hear. There are many earnest souls—men and women—doing potent work for our country at the present time, and I wish to give them honour for their services and to show them that their worth is recognised. To this end the "Order of Ireland's Silver Cross" has been established. The cross has been designed by a patriotic Irish lady; it is of Celtic pattern, and will make a neat badge or brooch. This week, readers of "The Spark" are asked to select the Irish girl in Dublin most deserving of one of these crosses.

### WHO IS DUBLIN'S BEST GIRL?

Fill in coupon distinctly, and affix a penny stamp. Write on a half-sheet of note-paper, one side only, the reasons for your selection; pin this to coupon, and post to Editor, "The Spark," 3 Findlater Place, Dublin. Mark envelopes on top left-hand corner, "Competition."

The name of the girl selected will be published, but not the essay, unless with her consent. The writer of the best essay, which may not necessarily apply to the winner, will be awarded a volume by an Irish writer. Coupons must reach office by Friday, February 12th, and result will appear on Sunday, February 21st. Another equally interesting competition will be announced in next week's issue.

### :: Dublin's Best Girl. ::

Name.....

Address.....

Competitor's Name

Address.....

1d.  
STAMP.

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