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THE IRISH IMMIGRATION QUESTION IN BRITAIN¹

I

IN the western part of the British Isles we have a branch of the Mediterranean race, and, in the other portion, the Nordic. Political and national circumstances tend to be an expression of these racial distinctions, and so the Irish nationality (particularly that of the Free State) can be broadly considered as belonging to the Southern, and the British to the Northern race. In Europe the tall, stolid and phlegmatic northern race is separated from the emotional and artistic southern stock, by a broad wedge of round-headed peoples, known as Alpines, and comprising the peoples of Switzerland, Austria, Jugo-Slavia, Czecho-Slovakia, Hungary, Roumania, Germany, and part of France. In this sense the meeting of these two waves, the one from the south and the other from the east, in Britain, is a remarkable and unique occurrence.

The Nordic race differs fundamentally, in a physical manner, from the Mediterranean, and the racial history of these varieties of the "white race" varies considerably. The one is largely descended from those ancient people who raised the cairns and barrows in the far away Stone Age; and the other is descended from the Celtic and Gothonic invaders of these islands who came here in the late Bronze and the Iron Age periods: and is, perhaps, the most highly specialized section of the whole of the "white race". As a consequence of this racial difference there is a marked distinction in mental outlook and culture. The Mediterranean is fervidly sentimental and poetical (and the so-called dreamy Celt is more often a Mediterranean than not), and the Nordic is fundamentally a realist. The one rejoices in anything but constitutional democratic ideas, and the other is wedded to them. The unrest and lack of obedience to prescribed ideas in the one, and the great respect for communal institutions in the other, are biological as well as purely cultural manifestations. These racial differences are also expressed in religion. The Nordic peoples, with their hard realism, tend to discard

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the mystical in all things, and so are strongly Protestant in tendency : whereas the reverse is the case with the Mediterranean peoples. This religious difference is most marked where the two peoples meet in Ireland. In the north the descendants of the Nordic Scottish and English settlers are still Nordic, they think and act as such, and so we find them tenacious Protestants. The Free State displays, in its strong adhesion to the Roman Catholic Church, its Mediterranean sympathies. Thus in these islands, even a cursory survey of the racial question not only brings out the chief areas of location of the two types, but also carries with it some sense of the social differences, which are evidently as much racial as historical.

It must be clear, to all careful observers, that both these racial types have contributions to make to the common pool of world advancement. The evolution of Britain's democratic political institutions, and the progress of Italy under Signor Mussolini and his practical development of Fascist Government, mean that entirely new quotas have been made to the stock of world ideas. Whether either system be destined to any permanence we cannot say, but this we do know, that civilization will have been all the different for their creation. Thus on the political side, as well as in letters, commerce, industry and religion, both Nordic and Mediterranean are capable of yielding something of their best, which will have a lasting impress on the world.

This does not mean that the two systems can be merged, and thereby create a better race. Rather the contrary would arise, for disharmonic elements would be introduced into each. It is a notorious fact that really hybrid peoples are incapable of stability. Mexico, some of the South American States, and so forth, are ready examples. The reason is not far to seek. Remember this is, after all, a biological question, and one only capable of solution in accordance with the known laws of science. A fairly homogeneous people, with similar physical characteristics and the same stock of inherent emotions within each individual, naturally makes for solidarity. But mix two races and there is bound to be a falling apart, a crumbling of the national edifice, and just because the iron and clay will not amalgamate. The Eurasian, in his physical aspect alone, provides (even when social disabilities are discounted) an example of the evils arising from racial promiscuity. It is therefore clear that relative racial

purity is something to be desired, if both stocks are to develop to their best and give something really worth while to world culture, stability and, above all, peace. It seems that it is only along these lines that real world citizenship can be attained.

In studying the Irish question we realize that the Irish boundary, more or less, simulates a racial frontier. The North of Ireland, with its much greater proportion of Nordic blood derived from Scottish and English settlers, is definitely distinct from the more Mediterranean south. That difference is expressed in historical and sentimental expressions of sympathy, on the part of Ulster to Britain, and in a common religion and similar commercial and intellectual outlooks. The chaos of the old Ireland, when northern and southern were treated as one, just because they were fated to be born in the same island, is sufficient illustration of how impossible it is to create a homogeneous culture and state out of these two elements. Therefore, on scientific grounds, it seems that the policy of Mr. de Valera in demanding a united Ireland, is definitely attempting to put the clock back, and return to a cycle of wild chaos, misery and disturbance. On racial grounds, such action must be condemned, if peace and stability are held in any regard. Segregation seems to be the only solution to the problem. Out of that (with the passage of time and the drifting into oblivion of the bad past when both races were mutually hostile) there will be bound to come an era of friendly and cordial relations. The segregated races, which together were antagonists, will be capable of becoming common workers for the cause of civilization. An example of the benefits of national (and to some extent racial) segregation is illustrated in the benefits derived from the wise legislation respecting French and British in Canada.

It must be quite clear that the separation of these two races is, on the whole, to be desired, and that has been achieved by far-sighted statesmanship in Ireland. Unfortunately the problem does not remain there. Britain and the United States of America have, during the last century, both been the subjects of intensive settlement on the part of alien peoples. The United States, seeing her institutions likely to crumble before this menace, and with the glaring lesson of the deleterious effects of "wops", "dagoes", and Irish in her lower orders, has with admirable courage closed the doors and adopted a policy which aims at the maintenance of the Nordic race-type. Whether she will be

successful, time alone will show. Anyway it is a courageous piece of legislation based on sound scientific principles, and the British would do well to make a careful note of it and not only that, but act accordingly.

Unlike the United States, Britain has made little or no attempt to maintain the purity of her racial type. The little legislation on this head has been rather intended for economic than for eugenic or ethnic reasons. There is a real alien menace, as is clear from the study of any of our populations in the great cities, as well as from a review of those parts of Scotland where, for example, many of the miners are Poles and other Central Europeans, while, incidentally, the British are idle at the pit-heads. But the greatest feature of this alien menace lies in the immigration into Britain during the last one hundred years, of Irish of the Mediterranean stock. This is a definite menace, not because these people are undesirable in their own habitat, but because they are in that of a Nordic race. There, their presence can only bring a repetition of some of those worst features which we have experienced in Ireland.

II

In my previous section I showed the necessity for racial segregation, and how the United States of America had made attempts to preserve their own national character by special legislation. We saw that Britain was not immune from the immigration of alien blood, and that under this category came the Irish immigrants in the main. These people are largely of the Mediterranean racial type as distinct from the British Nordic stock.

I propose to give a resumé of the history, and the extent, of the immigration. During the last hundred years Irish immigrants have entered Britain in great numbers, and they have settled particularly in two regions—the Merseyside and the Clydeside—and from these centres they have spread all over Britain.

As far as Merseyside is concerned, the greatest influx was in the forties of the last century, owing to the disastrous famine from which Ireland suffered at that time. It fell to an appreciable extent thereafter, although it maintained a steady inflow till the last war stopped it entirely. For at that time, the Dominions and the United States of America formed a more congenial outlet for settlement, during those years of struggle. However, the influx was again experienced as soon as foreign

countries began to place restrictions upon immigration. Consequently from 1927 to 1929 inclusive, there was an ingress of 18,000 Irish into Liverpool alone. Therefore the number of immigrants into the North of England, at the present time, is considerable. This is the more significant when we remember that it is at a time when this great industrial region of England is experiencing an unprecedented breakdown in its economic and industrial life.

For Scotland the story is the same. It is estimated that by taking the relative figures for Roman Catholics and Protestants (since Protestant Irish and Roman Catholic Scots are not very considerable, and in any case would cancel out each other from a statistical point of view) something like a true approximation at the relative strength of both nationalities can be arrived at. On this basis we find that the Irish formed about 9 per cent. of the population of Scotland in 1881. By 1901 they had increased by 32.5 per cent., whereas the Scots' population had only increased by 18.5 per cent. By 1921 they had continued to increase, by 39 per cent. this time, while the Scots had continued relatively to decrease, only having an increase of 6 per cent. This is emphasized from the gains and losses in the population of schoolchildren from 1919 to 1922. We find, in Glasgow, that the Scots decreased by 6,071 while the Irish children increased by 612. Under the Lanarkshire Education Authority there was a Scots decrease, in the space of three years, of 173, but an Irish increase during the same period of 2,958. Under the Renfrew Authority, for the same period, the Scots increase was 301 but the Irish 417. Dumbarton showed an increase of Scots of only 2,428 as against an Irish increase of actually 1,209. On the eastern side of the country the same state of affairs exists. At Dundee the Scots schoolchildren decreased 1,435 while the Irish increased by 170; while in the capital itself, for the same three years, the Scots decreased by 1,348 as against an Irish increase of 175.

Furthermore, from 1924 to 1929 the migration statistics to be culled from the passengers travelling between Scotland and the Irish Free State indicates that for a period of five years and ten months there was an excess of incomers of 10,263. This, we must remember, does not take into account immigrants from the Irish Free State who travel into Scotland through Northern Ireland.

It is clear that, even in these hard times, when Britain possesses little of her former attraction for indigent immigrants, Irish settlers are coming into the country in relatively great numbers. Besides which, there are the descendants of the previous immigrants, whose numbers are on the increase through natural fecundity. Under such conditions it seems only a matter of time before an alien Mediterranean race supplants entirely the native Nordic peoples of this island. On academic grounds this might be held to be justified, by some form of sophistry (such as the confusing of racial realities with ideas of questionable scientific value based upon a false notion that the fittest tend to survive), were it not for the fact that before that could be achieved there would intervene a long period of racial strife. In other words, a greater Ireland would be reproduced, and with it there would come a warring of race-factions dragging in their train the total collapse of Britain as a world and imperial power : and perhaps with it—who knows ?—civilization.

Such a view is not based upon a wandering and irresponsible imagination, nor merely upon a theoretical study of the statistics and the racial factors involved, since we have two great glaring examples of the disastrous nature of this hybridization in our midst in Merseyside and Clydeside. True, heavy industries, and so forth, tend or have tended to create great festering social sores in the life of a nation. Yet no one can say that the coming of an alien race into these regions has alleviated these conditions in any way. It must be borne in mind that the Irish and industry tend to go together, and thus aggravate the ill-effects of each other. Thus we find that the Irish are represented as one to eight Scots in industrial West Lothian, but in agricultural East Lothian they are only one to twenty-five. Therefore careful observation shows full well that an element of discord and disruption has been introduced. It is interesting to note that as far back as the Census Report of 1871 we have the present conditions foreshadowed and a note of warning uttered by a commentator who said : “ The immigration of such a body of labourers of the lowest class, with scarcely any education, cannot but have most prejudicial effects on the population. As yet the great body of these Irish do not seem to have improved by their residence among us ; and it is quite certain that the native Scot who has associated with them has most certainly deteriorated.”

These people, although they live in our midst, refuse (and naturally so from a racial point of view) to become one with us. We have here a people who maintain a different culture and religion, and around that build up a different moral sense and temperament. They are a people physically and mentally alien to the Nordic civilization into which they have been introduced, probably against their will, by the merciless drive of economic circumstances. Furthermore, largely owing to that racial difference and owing to the original stratum of society from which the majority of them have been drawn, they are able to subsist where the British could not. Consequently, there has been a very definite lowering of social standards and a disruptive force placed within our midst, which cannot, and does not want to, assimilate our ideas, and which on historical grounds dislikes Scot and Englishman: and so this people ever looks back into history, and ever back across the water to the land from whence they originated. This is even, perhaps, more true of the younger generations born in Britain than of the older. To be plain, we have a very strong and growing body in our midst, whose sympathies are not British, and not with Britain, but rather with the Free State. These facts are clear from the most superficial observation; and from a British point of view, whether it be racial and cultural preservation, or whether it be political, this is an undesirable state of affairs. Were I a statesman with an honest appreciation of the trust I held for the welfare of both these races in the British Isles, this state of things would fill me with more disquiet than all the talk of peace conferences, disarmament and economics put together. The others are transitory, for the present; this, though less obtrusive, is nevertheless more real, affecting the present and, more than that, affecting all time, whilst ever blood flows from the old fountain-heads in these islands.

III

Thus far I have merely touched upon the general aspects of the case. There is another side to the question, which is of fundamental importance to-day—and that is economic. The Irish immigrants to Merseyside, on the whole, are found in the lowest stratum of our society, and have larger families than all other types of immigrants or the natives of that area. Thus, 57 per cent. of the adult males from Ireland, in one survey carried

out in this region, were unskilled manual labourers, as compared with 39 per cent. for the whole population. In other words, the Irish immigrants were of a class which takes away from, but contributes little to, our society. They are of a class which is badly stricken in these days and therefore they are constantly in need of relief and support by the remainder of the population. They are, therefore, a financial as well as a social drag upon our civilization. In the survey already referred to, 17 per cent. of the adult Irish immigrants were living in such a condition that they were unable to provide themselves with the bare necessities of life.

These facts are corroborated by the results of investigations in Scotland. For example, a very great and disproportionate number of Irish schoolchildren require relief (*sic*, food and clothing) as compared with Scots. Another instance will have to suffice, because of lack of space at my disposal:—of the total number of casual applications made from November 15th, 1931, to November 15th, 1932, to the Public Assistance Department of the Royal Burgh of Ayr, 60 per cent. are estimated as being from Irish people.

Therefore, it is conclusively shown that since the majority of the Irish belong to those classes which require the most assistance, either in reliefs or housing, they draw more heavily upon the funds of the state and the civic authorities than do the natives.

If we turn to another aspect of the case we will see how pressing this question is from a racial point of view. Of the people maintained in our prisons, Borstal institutions and criminal lunatic asylums, the Irish form a disproportionate population of these places. If we took the Scottish figures we should see a good example of this. The figures usually arrived at calculate the Irish percentage on the basis of those who were born in Ireland, or whose fathers were. This, of course, would only be a sound method if these people left no progeny, and the contrary is very definitely the case. If, in order to ascertain the truer approximation to the proportion of Irish, the religious system of forming a rough identification (to which I have already made reference) were adopted, we should find that instead of possessing 20·8 per cent. of the convicted prisoners in 1928, the Irish element was represented by 37·48 per cent. (This figure does not include Borstal inmates and criminal lunatics.) If we

take the lower figure, we find that the Irish proportion is far too high, since they form 13·26 per cent. of the population instead of 20·8 per cent. Therefore, in any case, they possess a higher ratio of the criminals than the natives. To put it another way, it seems evident that this Mediterranean stratum forms the greater proportion of the most undesirable part of our population. This may not be through any inherent criminal tendencies in these people, but simply due to the fact that they cannot racially, and therefore socially, become one with the British Nordic society in which they unfortunately dwell. These figures clearly illustrate the lowering social effect of the miscegenation of these two peoples.

Owing to this low standard of existence, and possibly also to inherent racial reasons, it is also an ascertained fact that the Irish are more subject to certain diseases than the Nordics. It has been shown that there is more tuberculosis among the Irish than the British. This matter is not merely one of environment but also of race. This aspect was brought out before the Council of the National Association for the Prevention of Tuberculosis, by Dr. Bradbury on April 21st last. He says, "There is evidence that the admittedly inferior environmental conditions of Irish families will not explain completely the greater prevalence of tuberculosis among them than among English families. The racial factor, which leads to a high incidence of tuberculosis in the Irish, is a relative want of immunity to the disease. The augmentation of the tuberculosis death-rate at Jarrow caused by the presence of a large proportion of Irish in the town, is a factor of considerable importance, being estimated at 31 per cent. of the death-rate which would prevail in the absence of the Irish." (See press reports in the *Scotsman*, April 22nd, and the *Sunday Observer*, April 23rd.) Furthermore, insanity and other undesirable features are greatest, according to the Merseyside surveys, in those classes in which the Irish form the greater section of the population. It must also be remembered that the immigration laws of the United States of America and also of the Dominions have been very selective. Regarding the latter we find that this discrimination is embodied in the whole framework of inter-Dominion migration. Thus the Dominions maintain the right to deport undesirable immigrants from Britain. On the other hand we have no such powers to deport equally undesirable people from this country to the

Dominions or the Irish Free State.¹ The consequence is that, as far as the United States and the Dominions are concerned, the best of these people have been admitted and the worst have been rejected. Consequently the only refuge for these who are considered unfit and undesirable by other nations, has been Britain. This means that the increase of these people not only leads to a lowering of social standards and an increase of reliefs, and therefore of taxation, and the aggravation of unemployment among our own people, but it also means the propagation of a strongly tainted blood stream.

All these considerations—social, economic, medical and eugenic—in addition to the purely racial one which shows that segregation is the only solution for the harmonious and beneficial development of both peoples, demand immediate attention. If we have the courage and the clearsightedness of the Americans, and so follow their example by introducing some race legislation, it may not yet be too late. We would then do something to preserve the heart of the one empire that can be of real world-service for humanity free from a cancerous decay which, otherwise, would shatter irretrievably its solidarity and virility. We would also give the people of Mediterranean extraction in our midst an opportunity to develop their own culture instead of offering a large section of them accommodation in our institutions.

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¹ I am indebted to the Bishop of Liverpool for drawing my attention to the fact that he has confirmed this at the Home Office.