

Anarchy in the West of Ireland

THE BETRAYAL OF LOYALISTS.

Copy letter received from a correspondent in the West of Ireland.

“I don't suppose people in England at all realise what we are going through here. If they did, I am sure there would be an immediate outcry against the Powers that be for allowing such a state of affairs to exist within the Empire.

Here we have been watching the steady advance of lawlessness from the usual centres of disturbance towards our hitherto peaceful county. Daily we expected to see some effort made to check the tide of disorder and afford decent people some sort of confidence that they would get protection from those who are turning the country into another Russia. We have been sadly disappointed, and at the present time have no security, no protection whatever, and are waiting and expecting to have the Sinn Fein element down on us at any moment.

Few loyal people here are out after dark if they can possibly avoid it; the roads are now very unsafe, both for pedestrians and those in motors. Since the authorities have withdrawn the police from all, or practically all, the outlying barracks, cases of 'sticking up' and damaging motor cars have been fairly frequent, and pedestrians have been held up and robbed by armed men, especially near the outskirts of the towns.

Here the police are confined to their barracks at 10.30 p.m. till morning, and it really seems as if the protection of barracks is of greater importance than the protection of life and property. There is no protection whatever for the latter, and we have to take our chance, without the slightest hope of any assistance or relief in the event of one being singled out for attack or raid.

You probably have heard of some of the raids carried out in these parts. There have been many more of a smaller nature that have never got into the Press that have occurred

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not very far from where I write, and though less dramatic, perhaps, than some of those reported, have been equally serious to those concerned.

One of my nearest relatives is at the present moment in a very critical state as the result of a raid that took place ten days ago at her house. There were no men at home at the time, and she was trussed up and gagged and blindfolded, and while so was severely kicked and illtreated, most brutally so. We now expect her recovery, but a few days ago it was touch and go, and this is supposed to be a civilised country and part of Great Britain!

While all this is taking place, and every paper is filled with accounts of crime and outrage, they talk of imposing a new form of government on us that nobody here has any use for. I say 'They talk' meaning the English Press and those who don't understand what is happening. Here we never discuss it even! It is beyond our imagination that any such change could possibly take place while this civil war—for such it is—is going on.

I should be heartily glad if I could clear out of the country to some place where law and order are respected, but it is out of the question in my case for many insuperable reasons. What then is to happen to us? I really don't know. I cannot even get as far away as Dublin with an easy conscience, for, were I away for any time, I believe the house would probably be raided, and my wife is not in good health, and the result might be very serious. Every time I go to either the local town or anywhere outside the demesne, I meet a Sinn Fein patrol somewhere handy. I have noticed them every time I have gone out for months past, and saw them to-day as I had to go to the town. One's every movement is noted, and doubtless reported to their chiefs. Is it any wonder that the decent people are all terrorised into calling themselves Sinn Feiners, whether they like it or not, and vote so too! If they didn't do so, their lives wouldn't be worth living, and no public opinion of any value will be possible until the authorities wake up to the fact that they must, at all hazards, make the ordinary law respected, and afford some sort of protection for the law-abiding section of the community, otherwise the only alternative left to us will either be to be completely wiped out, or become Sinn Feiners. Possibly the first alternative is preferable.

Excuse this somewhat lengthy letter, but it is a very big subject that I have been writing about, and there is a lot that I have left unsaid as it is."

PRINTED FOR AND PUBLISHED BY
THE IRISH UNIONIST ALLIANCE,
109 GRAFTON STREET, DUBLIN.

WILLIAMS & ARMOUR,
PRINTERS, 9 CROW ST., DUBLIN.

D989c/1/39