

(Concluded from page 13.)

torn up by a British King before the ink with which it was written was dry. We did not forget the Act of Renunciation of 1783, passed in the English House of Commons and Parliament at the very same time that American independence was recognised by England, an act which abandoned forever all pretences by the British Parliament to legislate for Ireland, an act which was a solemn act, which inscribed on the Statute Book of England the words that the sovereignty of the Irish Parliament should henceforth and forever be unquestioned and unquestionable. We had not forgotten that that solemn treaty was torn up by English Ministers within 18 years. We, who had the misfortune of living with Britain, and, therefore, knowing Britain's history better than others were likely to know it, we had not forgotten that this Britain that posed as a defender of the sanctity of treaties had herself torn up many treaties with Ireland; had, in fact, torn up so many treaties with the world that on the Continent England was known as "perfidious Albion."

#### Not Deceived.

Therefore we were not deceived by England's supposed and professed championship of the sanctity of treaties, nor were we deceived by England's role as a champion of small nations. We knew England's history as regards championing small nations to have been this: That she was a champion of nations whose liberty was going to weaken a commercial or imperial rival. We know that in the past England's history had been this: that to-day she fought with A against B to rob B, and to-morrow, when she got a chance, she fought B to rob A, and thus robbed them both.

So she robbed them both in turn. We had a very good test as to England's regard for the sanctity of liberty. We said to the English: "If this be truly a war for freedom everywhere, here is a nation at your own doors, one that has struggled the longest for liberty: a nation that has fought for it for nine centuries and a-half; a nation that enjoyed it for a thousand years before that. Here at your own doors is a nation, to free which you do not need to beat any Sultan or any Emperor or any Kaiser. You can free that nation by a stroke of your Monarch's pen. If you refuse to do so, aren't we right in saying that you are now, as you have always been, a hypocrite?"

"Fighting your own fight of commercial greed and imperialism, fighting that selfish fight under a righteous banner, with moral principles inscribed upon it."

And so, in Ireland, the section of the Irish people who know England's history and who knew Irish history said that if there was to be a fight for small nations, and if this fight that was on was a fight against imperialism, they would take part in that, not as crusaders in a foreign field, where, when they had poured out their life's blood, they could be cheated, but they would fight on the soil of the land to which they owed their first and only allegiance. They would fight their fight, that would certainly be a fight for the freedom of small nations. We did not have to go to the field of Flanders to find a militarism to fight against. English militarism was to our certain knowledge guilty in Ireland of the precepts which, in the case of Germany, we had to take the reports in the paper for. We had a certainty in the case of Ireland. Three days before war was declared, on July 26, 1914, Irishmen and Irish women and Irish children were shot down by English soldiers on the streets of Dublin.

#### A Strange Thing.

It is strange to hear, sometimes, Americans, who proudly proclaim that they are Americans first, Americans last, and Americans all the time, to hear these men find fault with Irishmen for saying, "In the case of Ireland we are Irish first, we are Irish last, we are Irish all the time."

It is very strange to hear Americans who fought for their own liberty find fault with Irishmen for fighting for the liberty of Ireland. I ask you to imagine yourselves in these circumstances—imagine that Washington had failed and that he and all his compatriots were hanged, drawn, and quartered, as the British law of the time was. He himself admitted that if he had failed the scaffold would have been his doom. Imagine that he had failed and that the scaffold had been his doom, and imagine that in the next generation a huge band of Washingtons had sprung up, as assuredly they would have if the first Washington had failed. Imagine that the next generation of Washingtons had failed, and that the next generation again took up the fight, and that they suffered on the scaffold as the first generation and the second generation had suffered at the hands of England. Imagine that still another generation had sprung up, and that, just as this war broke out, men were shot, here in America as they were shot in Ireland—imagine that they were shot down as they were in Boston—and that to-day, or at the beginning of the war, you suffered all those grievances against

which Washington—your Washington—the first Washington had gone out in arms to win the freedom of your country. Do you think that you would not have said to yourself, as we in Ireland, those of us that did not allow our hearts to run away with our heads—that you would not have said as we did: Our first duty is to free our own country. When we have done that, then we can go crusading for other lands?

Now, do you not, in your hearts, say to yourselves, that you would have fought first for America? Do you not know yourselves? Do you not know that in your own hearts, that even in this war, when you did come in, the immediate object which brought you in was to defend your own flag which had been attacked, and your own sovereignty, which had been encroached upon? You know that that was the immediate object which brought you in the war. But we knew in Ireland that you were not as England was when she came in, professing to fight for other people, without meaning it. We felt that the immediate object that brought you into the war was your own defence first, and that when you entered the war you meant to raise it up, even as Lincoln raised the war, which was first and primarily a war to defend the Union, to raise it; to be a war for liberty for the colored men.

So you, having entered this war primarily to defend your nation, meant that when you were in it it was going to be for the higher principles of liberty everywhere. We could believe you, because your history was such that these professions were strictly in accordance with the principles you professed and acted up to in the past. But if you take the circumstances that I mentioned, the cases I asked you to imagine, with the successors of Washington defeated, and dead, with their bodies burned in quicklime, for their love of country, what would you say if, out of your nation, supposing it was as large as it is now, that your nation contributed six millions of voluntary soldiers fighting for other lands? Wouldn't you have said that they had allowed themselves to be led away by the cry for liberty? Wouldn't you have said there was no nation more generous than yourselves, a nation which would have six millions of soldiers go fighting in other lands, even under the flag whose every fold was stained with the blood of your martyrs? Wouldn't you say that no nation could exceed in the setting up of an example of generosity—a generosity that forgot your own immediate needs and your own right to liberty in order to go on a crusade for the freedom of other peoples? You know you would.

#### Some Statistics.

Yet, in order to be as generous in this last war as the Irish nation was, you would have to contribute 6,000,000 of your soldiers without a draft. Six million voluntary soldiers. All the Irishmen who fought in that war fought as volunteers. England could not force Irishmen to fight as conscripts because Irishmen would not allow themselves to be conscripted by any parliament excepting a parliament of the Irish people. So you would have had to have given 6,000,000, and to-day, if you lost as many in proportion as Ireland lost in the last war, fighting for the freedom of Belgium and elsewhere, you would be mourning to-day, not 75,000 dead, but you would be mourning 3,000,000 dead.

I have given you these numbers, and perhaps you might think they are an exaggeration unless I prove that they are right. Ireland as a nation reduced to 4,500,000, a quarter of a million fighting men, we contributed for the cause of liberty, a quarter of a million men to whom the plea to fight for small nations was so great that they forgot their own nation and went out to fight for others. A quarter of a million men is one-eighteenth of the Irish population. An eighteenth of your population would be over 6,000,000, and therefore you would have had to contribute, as I said, 6,000,000, before you would have been as generous as the Irish nation was. And you would be mourning half that number, 3,000,000 dead, before you would have lost as much of your blood for the sake of freedom for other people as the Irish nation lost.

Take all of the circumstances and imagine yourself fighting for your own freedom. Imagine that Lloyd George and Asquith, both of whom were professing to be fighting for liberty, imagine that these men were men who had just before that broken all their pledges to the people's representatives, defrauded them. Do you not think that there is no audacity so great as the audacity of those who say that the Irish people were shirkers in the last war? You know that the trouble with the people of Ireland has always been that they have been ready to fight other people's battles rather than their own. It is scarcely fair, then, to say that they fought all other people's battles but their own. They have undoubtedly fought others' battles, but they have also fought their own battles. Nobody can, in truth or fairness, say of Ireland during the last war that the Ireland of 1914 to 1919 has not been an Ireland like the Ireland of the past; an Ireland which was strug-