

"Not yet lost is their power to quicken, to exalt, to purify. Still they live and reign and shall reign."

That national tradition which moved Pearse and his associates animates the Sinn Feiners who succeeded him. The average man may not guess the thoughts which move the mightier of his kind, but the same elements are in his being and he obeys the call when it is made. The first thing to realise, then, if you would understand Ireland to-day, is that the Irish people are truly a nation with a peculiar cultural or spiritual ancestry; that its genius for hundreds of years has been denied free national expression, and the passion for freedom is more intense to-day than it has been. We do not expect from Italy, France, Germany, or England anything different in character from what they have already given to the world. They are like artists who have accustomed the public to a certain character in their work. They have done perhaps the best it was in them to do. But people like the Irish, the Russians and the new nations in the new world have yet to give to the world the best which is in them. They are like the Greeks before Pericles, Phidias, Sophocles, Plato and all that famous life whose aftercoming justified "a small city state" in resisting the domination of a great empire. Ireland through Sinn Fein is fighting for freedom to manifest the Irish genius. I feel this is the root of the matter. If there was not an incorruptible spiritual atom of nationality in the Irishman he would never have suffered and sacrificed for so many centuries. When I stress the spiritual it is not because I am unmindful of material grievances or do not know the economic case which can be made against the continuance of British rule. The economic case can be better understood by most, though I do not think Ireland would have been troubled by rebellions at all if the people had not a distinct national character, if they did not see a different eternity from the Englishman, yet the majority of Irishmen will stress economic grievances most in conversation.

It is ludicrous of British advocates to speak of Ireland as a country grown prosperous under British rule when it is the only country in Europe whose population has been halved in living memory. Poland or Alsace under their alien rulers increased in population as in wealth. The population of Ireland has dwindled from eight millions to a little over four million people. Even the province so dear to British imagination, even Ulster, has lost as high a percentage of its people by emigration as any other province in the last eighty years.

#### Why Was This?

Because year by year the surplus revenues of Ireland and the wealth created were sucked up by its vampire neighbor and expended on Great Britain. At the present time the revenues of Ireland, over and above expenditure on Irish services, which are retained by the British Government and spent in England, helping to keep Englishmen alive, would suffice, without the imposition of an extra penny taxation, to maintain a population of one million more people in Ireland. The British Government, according to the last Treasury return, taxes Ireland up to £50,615,000. Of this £29,221,000 on its showing was spent on Irish services which were largely oppressive and unnecessary, and £21,394,000 was retained for British use. Truly they find Ireland a profitable possession. I ask Americans to think what would be their economic plight if Germany had conquered the United States and exported half the American revenues yearly to Germany to be spent there. Would not your economic system decay? If in any country the revenues are exported the population must also be exported. Workmen must go where wages can be paid. The Home Rule which the British Government offers, nay, which it thrusts upon Ireland, for not one single Irish representative, Unionist or Nationalist, has cast a vote in favor of it, is worse for Ireland than the Act of Union. It reduces Ireland to complete economic powerlessness. Instead of one hundred and two members at Westminster to safeguard Irish interests, the number is reduced to forty-two, yet Great Britain retains control over trade policy, the imposition and collection of taxation, and a tribute to Great Britain of £18,000,000 a year is a first charge upon Irish revenues. It also takes power to increase this tribute in the future if it finds Ireland has any further surplus of wealth to be appropriated. The British Government is determined that the Irish export of revenue and population

shall continue. The present Viceroy and the last Chief Secretary said all the trouble in Ireland was caused by young men remaining in Ireland who ought to have emigrated. Failing their duty to Great Britain to clear out of Ireland, the Government last year gathered together some thousands of the more dissolute heroes of the Great War and sent them to Ireland to wreak any unexpended heroism on that country. City after city has been shot up, burned, raided, and looted. The excesses committed by these men, who seem to have been given a free hand to kill, burn, wreck, or loot, have been unfavorably compared, even by British publicists of repute, with the worst which has been done under the Czardom or the old Turks.

The great movement promoted by Sir Horace Plunkett for the organisation of the farmers has suffered by this orgy of militarism. About fifty of the dairy and agricultural societies have had their premises wrecked or burned, and the Government refuses any public inquiry into the acts done by its servants.

Has this terrorism affected its ostensible purpose, which was to make Ireland contentedly accept British rule? I believe it has

#### Only Hardened Irish Opinion.

If such a policy is to succeed at all it must succeed at once before human nature grows insensitive through over-sensation. Irish people to-day regard the raids, wreckings, burnings, shootings, and imprisonment without trial as part of their normal life, and the only effect I can see is a deeper nausea at the thought of union with Great Britain.

The Irish character anciently was full of charm. The people were lively, imaginative, and sympathetic, the best talkers possible, but their power of sympathy and understanding, their capacity of seeing both sides of a case, made them politically weak. The oppression of the last six years has made a deep and I believe an enduring change in that character. It has strengthened the will. The political rebels I meet to-day are the highest types of Irishmen I have met in my life of fifty-four years. I think of these young men, so cheerful, so determined, so self-sacrificing, and I grow more and more confident that something great must come out of a race which produces such men in multitude. I think the rank and file are even finer than their leaders. But perhaps I should not say that. The real leaders are unknown almost. It is not a time when orators can make their voices heard. The press publishes a daring utterance only at the risk of suppression, and many papers have been suppressed. It is impossible to hold political meetings. Those who lead and inspire are nameless.

#### They Work in Secret.

They can only "convince by their presence." But I divine ardent and selfless leadership because of the spirit of the rank and file, just as when I see the clouds warm at dawn I know the glow comes from a yet hidden sun. The Paddy of British caricature, based on the Handy Andys, Micky Frees, and Charley O'Malleys of old novels, if there ever were originals of this type, have certainly left no successors. I find only a quiet, determined, much enduring people, so little given to speech that it is almost impossible to find among Sinn Feiners an orator who would attract a crowd or speak of Irish wrongs as the Redmonds, Sextons, O'Briens, and Dillons of the last generation did. Ireland has become for the present all will. I have no doubt when a settlement comes that the ancient charms of imagination and sympathy will be renewed, but they will spring out of a deeper life, and literature, art, and society will gain.

I am trying to explain the mood of my countrymen to-day. I think highly of them, but I do not think Ireland is by any means an Island of Saints, and things have been done by Irishmen which I at least will not attempt to defend. That may be because I am a pacifist by nature and prefer to use intellectual and spiritual forces rather than physical force. But it is only fair to say that two years of raids, arrests, and imprisonments, of which there were many thousands,

#### Preceded the Adoption

of their present methods by the Volunteers. If it ever is right to use physical force, which I doubt, because I feel there are other ways by which right can find its appropriate might, then, when considering the tragic happenings