

What Ireland Gains Under the Treaty

Mr. Barton's revelation on Monday night (says the *Nation and the Athenaeum* for December 24) has had a great effect on the fortunes of the debate in the Dail. He stated that he and Mr. Gavan Duffy had only consented to sign the treaty because Mr. Lloyd George threatened to make immediate war on Ireland if they refused. We need not say that such a threat was, in our opinion, unjust and unwise: unjust for reasons that have been often enough expounded in these columns, unwise because such a threat put a weapon into the hands of opponents which was certain to be used sooner or later. It would indeed be a lamentable consequence if Ireland allowed herself to be misled by this unhappy episode into supposing that the treaty is of such a character that she ought not to accept it on its merits. We believe—and we shall give reasons for our belief—that the Irish delegates have won for Ireland security against the most serious danger to which she is exposed as a nation. To understand this let us consider what Ireland gains under the treaty which she would not gain if she set up a republic.

Let us suppose that there had been no talk of force or war, and that the two sets of delegates, putting all such considerations out of their mind, had sat down to find some arrangement whereby the two nations could live together in peace and friendship. Ireland begins with a proposal for separation; England with a proposal for Irish autonomy, qualified by certain safeguards that she thinks necessary to her safety. At first there is a wide divergence, but as discussion proceeds the two parties find here and there opportunities for agreement. England gives up first one and then another of her original reservations; Ireland admits first one and then another method of common action as not inconsistent with her freedom. It is seen on both sides that the fact of physical neighborhood compels some degree of partnership, and that the fact of Ireland's desire for full political self-expression determines its character. On both sides the concessions that are made are made with reluctance. The Lord Chancellor allowed quite frankly in his speech on Friday in last week that he would have drawn the treaty differently if he had had merely to consult his own judgment. Finally, the differences are narrowed to a relatively small point. Is Ireland to be a free and equal ally outside the British system or a free and equal ally inside the system?

When it comes to this, a wise Irishman has to consider very carefully what Ireland loses and what she gains by either arrangement. He may find it hard to strike the balance between the dangers of standing outside and the danger of standing within the British system, for both courses involve their own risks. But there is one argument of great weight for accepting a treaty that brings Ireland within that system, and we imagine that any Irishman who considered it carefully would think it so strong that he would accept it, force or no force, threat or no threat. For by this treaty England and Ireland do not merely regulate the relations of England and Ireland; *they regulate the relations of the Ulster counties to the Irish Free State, and they regulate those relations in such a way as to secure the Free State against a real danger.* That is the immense advantage that Mr. Griffith, Mr. Collins, and their colleagues have gained for Ireland in return for accepting association within the British system.

Let us imagine that Ireland had decided to stand outside, knowing that she would not be coerced, but that such a decision would make the difference between the good-will and the ill-will of England. The Ulster counties would have declared themselves in rebellion. They would have appealed to England. Would the moral judgment of the world have held that England was not entitled to defend them if attacked, or to give them political and financial privileges? If Austria-Hungary had offered Bohemia a treaty such as this in 1913; if then Bohemia had rejected it; if Austria-Hungary had replied: "In that case we shall defend the German corner if it wants to remain German, and we shall give to those Germans extensive political and commercial rights," would the world have condemned her? Such a situation would have arisen if Ireland had seceded, and the obstacles to her reunion would have become in this way very formidable indeed, for

the Six Counties, with the status of a Dominion and preference in English markets, would have had no reason to come to an accommodation with republican Ireland. By coming within the British system, the Irish delegates have obtained from England a treaty which defines and limits explicitly the powers the Ulster counties are to have so long as they remain outside the Free State. In other words, this particular obstacle cannot arise. Mr. de Valera said in one of his earlier messages that his Government was prepared to accept some form of association, not to please England, but to conciliate Ulster. In accepting this treaty the Irish delegates were acting in this spirit. They could choose between independence within the British system with the certainty of ultimate unity, or they could choose independence without the British system with the certainty of lasting division. For if Irish independence was only acceptable in a form that compelled the Ulstermen in the six counties to become aliens in the British Commonwealth, it was only possible in the form in which some Unionists have recommended it, with a republic in the rest of Ireland, and a British colony, supported by the military, political, and economic resources of Britain, in the North, enjoying special advantages in the British markets to compensate her for the losses she would suffer by a boycott in Ireland.

We are not defending, of course, the use of threats or the language of superior power. We have denied the right to coerce Ireland from the first; if it had come to force again, we should have resisted the Government's policy not less strenuously in the future, though with small hopes of success. But it would be a thousand pities if Irishmen allowed themselves to be blinded to the capital advantages that their leaders have won for them or to the governing facts of their position. It is those facts that statesmen have to consider. It may be doubted whether the man who is all for academic principle and disregard of circumstances is not more dangerous than the man who is altogether at the service of circumstances without regard to academic principle. On paper it is easy to set out an ideal relationship between Ireland and England, and to show the grave defects of any alternative. But the Irish statesman has to remember that he is dealing with a world of passions, prejudices, and fears, and that Ireland's future depends ultimately on the way in which those forces push England, Ireland, and Ulster about the chessboard of politics. The treaty limits the moves on the board in Ireland's favor. With an Ireland that did not insist on secession, there is no more reason for helping the Ulster counties to stand out of the Irish Free State than there is for helping the Englishmen on the Rand to stand out of the Transvaal. *If Ireland accepts this treaty, England can no more give Dominion powers to the Six Counties over the head of Ireland than she could give those powers to Quebec over the head of Canada.* For our part, we think that Ireland's independence is more safely anchored on the rights of the Free States of the Commonwealth than on any treaty that recognises her independence. We do not mean that vigilance is not necessary in Ireland, and the utmost care necessary in England. But whether this view is right or wrong, one thing seems clear. Under this treaty all England's influence is used to persuade Ulster to enter the Irish Free State. If Ireland had stood outside the Empire, Ulster would have looked to England, and nobody who understands the emotions of mankind will doubt how England would have answered. Thus what the Irish delegates have done is to remove the English complex from Irish politics, and this, as Sinn Féin has often reminded us, was the worst and most insidious of all the forms in which England sought to control Irish history.

New Music

Mr. Harry Hiscocks (organist of St. Benedict's Church) has composed a number of solos for the piano quite recently, and he possesses a rare gift of melody. The compositions are delightful to listen to; but the works are, above all, atmospheric; and while they are only moderately difficult when estimated from the technical point of view, they nevertheless demand the exercise of sound musical qualities on the part of their interpreter. Few can convey all they mean in music so well as this brilliant writer. We congratulate Mr. Hiscocks on his latest efforts, as he has once more provided an essential to every musician's library.