

his peace-loving father and mother! The grim irony of calling that a "Republican Army" which should rather have been called an armed kindergarten. They could not put a vote in those children's hands, but they could and did put rifles in their hands. And no man alive can quite realise the horror of such a Moloch-sacrifice, such a desecration of the soul of youth, as the mother-heart of Ireland realised it.

Later Developments

Of other misused words I will cite but one more. I have spoken of the war party not the Republican party, because there was no Republican party while I was in Ireland, nor after. Such a party there had recently been: a party of which the names and ideals will thrill Ireland to her latest day, a party which indeed stood for all that makes a true republic a high and holy thing. But all that was now left of that party was too busy translating the gist and earnest of a Republic into living reality to trouble about the name of it.

But nothing could well have been further from a republic than the Government contemplated by the seceders, even as far back as January, when I heard one leader driven to the private confession that if the people recorded a choice displeasing to the "soul" of an anti-English oligarchy, the people would be forced to think again. The war party did not juggle with the word in the sense that they had no Republic to deliver; that Ireland might choose famine and sword at this time, but would not be granted separation. They went on saying "Republic" when they meant "oligarchy" bureaucracy, or Frank despotism. The awful conditions of spreading revolt in latter April and on to the Battle of the Four Courts, were the earnest of the kind of "liberation" a successful war with the British Empire would have brought Ireland. When Rory O'Connor, bluntly and unrebuked, issued the manifesto of an "armed dictatorship" all Ireland shuddered from the Boyne to the Bandon, but the cloud of vain, twisted words lifted and the mask fell from the face of armed tyranny.

"Yet," it may be said, "Ireland had a right to choose ruin and death if she wished." But she did not wish it. It was not alone that Dublin from the highest to the lowest declared openly, eagerly for peace and re-building in those days. It was when I went through Southern Ireland in March that I learned the full strength of the peace party. Down the east coast to Wexford, along through Waterford, Dungannon, and the park-like country of the South, back again from the West of Kerry to Dublin, I mingled with the people on the way. All was peaceful then, kind, beautiful, as if one had gone through a garden. But the people were shy and cautious: they were even then afraid of hidden forces. Yet when a friendly word unlocked their ready confidence, there was but one story—their hatred of blood-shed and force, their love of home and country, and their passionate desire to embrace Ireland's new freedom and make her strong, safe, happy, and honored among nations. It was one voice that was heard, from men and women of culture and high education, from practical, civic-minded men of affairs, from ex I.R.A. men who had shed their blood for a true republic, from hardy men and women of the soil, strong in their patient folk-wisdom, from mothers, thinkers, priests. Believe me, I do but tell you what I saw and heard; and a great and proud experience it was to see the heart of a long and deeply wronged people thus open to the sun of a new hope and a lasting good-will. Mark me well; there was not one trace of servility, bowing to material advantage, or the subservience of a beaten people. Everywhere there was seen the dignity of a young State making an honorable peace, not for a moment deceived by the contention that in so doing they bound themselves or their children to any formula that would hinder the ultimate destiny of Ireland. That lovable city, that fair garden-land, each was drenched in blood later, but never think it was the will of their people; it was forced upon them.

The War Party

And yet I have said it is possible to admire and lament the leaders of the war party. It was the puzzle of Paris that deepened in Dublin. No balanced mind could doubt the sincerity of them, the ascetic strictness of their lives, the lofty devotion to an abstraction for which they gladly threw away fortune, ambition, life itself. Their love for Ireland was great, though their hatred of England was greater, and who that knows what some of them had suffered dare judge them for that? But how to reconcile all this with the broken faith, the under-workings, the cruel baitings that have ended in leaving Ireland shamed, bleeding, and leaderless this day?

Will you think it a foolish thing, the answer found on the spot by a twentieth-century seeker after truth? We are not all souls of a single age, on a single plane, with one common rule of life and conduct. One did not talk long with any of these people without coming up against an impenetrable wall. It was not lack of learning; it was not lack of love, it was not lack of honor. But it was the utter impossibility of touching them with any modern application of learning, love, and honor. When history is written with that wider, deeper understanding that is even now coming to the world, this truth will be told about de Valera and his fellow war-leaders. They

were people of the Middle Ages, never people of the twentieth century at all. There were heroes, scholars, and saints in the Middle Ages. But they were of their time; things that horrify us did not horrify them; the safeguards we have reared round life were unknown to them; the sacredness of life, as we, at least in theory, regard it was little to them; our slowly evolved charters, statutes, and constitutions would have been nothing to them. Read of life in the Middle Ages, the raids, the insurrections, the civil wars, the repressions, the fights about words and abstractions, the daring, the contempt of death, the pushing about of the common people as pawns on some feudal chess-board. Read of all this, and you have the key to the lawlessness, the contempt of human rights, the light dealing in blood and death that has made Ireland a land of sorrow to-day. It is not that these untimely-born souls are not among ourselves in the newer countries; but we, in happier circumstances, have tied their hands by those very safeguards the war party set out to destroy.

The Statecraft of Ireland's Leaders

It was a strange experience to realise that one was speaking to people four hundred years behind our time, and, quite unconsciously, resolved to bring back a sixteenth century State among the nations, such a State as Poland now is, with her freedom on paper, and her substance at the mercy of the war-mongering Powers about her. It was a beautiful experience to watch yet another age at work; the twenty-first century men who were toiling to shape Ireland's new nationhood. Not to-day and not tomorrow will the world understand what Arthur Griffith, Michael Collins, and the noble men who shared their vision and their burden were shaping in those days, a new State, and more than that, a new Statecraft that would have been (may it yet be!) the admiration of all nations. Read the Constitution that they framed, a Constitution from which coming generations will draw the sanctions, the safeguards, the opportunities pertaining to a twenty-first century State. And though they were never free one hour from perils, conspiracies, provocations from outer North and inner South, what did they not accomplish? Your enemies would bid you walk with heads bent, as belonging to a factious people, unfit for freedom. No! walk proudly with heads erect in honor of that newest and proudest of Commonwealths that the heirs of Michael Collins and Arthur Griffiths will yet found, not again to be shaken. These men worked day in, day out, hard official drudgery of which every step was a precedent, every experiment a leap in the dark. They composed Labor differences in a day where the entrusted ministers of older States failed after months. They living themselves on the salaries of common clerks so handled the business of a half-beggared country as to hand over an honest surplus on the day of reckoning. They had to relieve distress, to allay jealousies, to guard the people, to hold the balance calmly, justly, evenly against encroachments and back-dealings, yet never to let the flag of their country be lowered, or let the natural resentment of honest men lose them one inch of ground to their enemies. Last triumph of all, when the very ground was dissolving in rebellion and anarchy under their feet, they secured the seemingly impossible opportunity for Ireland to justify herself at the polls—an answer that none can twist or turn against her. Did they make mistakes? Perhaps; they were but human, yet demi-gods could not have steered a clearer, straighter course on the terrible way they were doomed to travel.

And now their greatest two lie dead, dying without fear and without reproach as they had lived—for Ireland. In vain? It cannot be. The fair promise of six months ago must return, for God is just.

Our Duty to Ireland

What can we do here to strengthen Ireland's hands? One thing we can and must do, never to cease standing shoulder to shoulder, one in aim, one in spirit, willing nothing and asking nothing that Ireland, in her fuller knowledge does not will and ask for herself. It is our watchword: "Charity and union: union and charity!" Overseas, they fought for something each believed right. Union there could not be in the days I saw, but a wonderful, an amazing charity there was, a charity Britain could never understand—a charity that showed itself later in that handshake of victors and vanquished when the Four Courts surrendered—a charity, last, that rose to sublimity in the dying words of Michael Collins.

In union, in charity only can the children of Ireland, wherever they be, give the lie to centuries of slander. In union and in charity, with the faction born of a mournful history behind us, and freedom before us, we shall at last realise the beautiful motto that de Valera found for the Family of the Gael.

"Eye has not seen, nor the mind of man conceived, the greatness of the destiny God has in His mind for Ireland."

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