

## A.E.'S APPEAL TO REPUBLICANS

Reasons for Ending "A Civil Conflict whose Continuance Would be Disastrous to the Nation."

"A.E." (Mr. George Russell), the distinguished Irish author and publicist, has written "An Open Letter to the Irish Republicans," in which he describes the results of the campaign of resistance to the National Government, and makes a powerful appeal to Mr. de Valera and his followers to accept the democratic principle of majority rule as the solution for our national difference. "A.E." writes:

"If I intervene in a conflict my natural desire is to take part with the underman. If I do not do so now, it is because you are where you are only by reason of a mentality which may be changed. You are not like the poor in their slums held there by inexorable pressure from a social order not yet beneficent enough to secure comfort for all in the national household. You have only to speak a word and active hostility against you is ended. Can you say that word without dishonor? I believe you can.

"My friends among you defend to me your warfare on the Free State on spiritual grounds, asserting the natural right of our people to complete independence, and that they had no freedom of choice in taking the decision they did, being under threat of a war to extermination if the Treaty terms were not accepted. I do not deny the right asserted. I could not without self-contempt condemn those who desire full independence for their country any more than I could blame those who would bring about a revolutionary change in the economic system so that none might be neglected or starved in mind or body.

### Ideals and Actions.

"But there may be discussion over the means to those ends. I think with your employment of force the ideal you stand for tends to recede and become more and more remote in the affections of your countrymen. They cannot dissociate the ideal from the acts of those who uphold it and the ruinous consequences of those acts.

"Now the certitude of the soul that its ideal is right too often begets a moral blindness with regard to conduct and its purity of motive is taken as absolution for its sins. Ideals descend on us from a timeless world, but they must be related to time, for this world has its own good and if we do not render to it its lawful right neither will it receive our message, and Heaven and Earth are divorced and both are wronged.

"There is much may be said in defence of a small nation contending for freedom with a great empire when it adopts the method of guerilla warfare. It is dangerous, for only an internal light hard to keep prevents degeneration into the methods of the assassin. Yet a nation may only have that choice or complete submission.

"But you continue the same methods of warfare against your own countrymen, though by doing so you admit you are outnumbered in relation to those you attack, as the nation was against the empire and your moral authority to act as you do is thereby diminished.

### The Greater Horror.

"Some of you assert the conflict was begun by the Free State, though it has seemed to many onlookers it began with those who without authority seized public buildings, filled them with armed men, and interrupted national services. But the country has come to such unhappiness that it is not judgment on the past which is imperative, but consideration of the future.

"The wisdom of the world is not great enough always to secure a peaceable settlement of disputes between nations. But the most highly evolved have found a means of preventing the greater horror of civil war among their citizens by their common assent to the principle that questions at issue between them must be decided by majorities.

"It is admitted that majorities may be, and often are,

in the wrong. They may err because of ignorance, or decide because of fear, as you assert the majority has done in accepting the Treaty. If there was fear on the people, I cannot think it was therefore justifiable for you to work on that fear and hold a terror over your countrymen to force them to yield to your policy.

### The Democratic Solution.

"Some of you argue that it is only by suffering and sacrifice a people can come to the highest in them. But that crown comes to those whose sacrifice is willing, not to those on whom suffering is forced. They feel only the wrong that is done to them, and lose, too often, belief in any ideal, and I think this country, through civil warfare, is lapsing into a bitter materialism, and at another election it may be those disillusioned who will have power to make Ireland in their own image.

"I believe in the democratic solution of national differences, and think it is better to wait for recognition of the error and the righting of the wrong later by a democracy persuaded thereto by reason and experience, rather than bring the most morally ruinous of all conflicts on a country. In civil war more hateful passions are let loose because greater natural affections have first to be overcome. The effects of the conflict cannot be confined to the organism of the State which is assailed, any more than a fever can be confined to one limb in the body.

### Poison of Civil Strife.

"The whole body politic suffers, the people far more than the State, which can only topple when the ruin of the people is complete or their mood is changed with regard to it. But in this conflict I think the majority regard you, not the Government of the Free State, as the cause of their suffering; and while they may be turned from it because they think some of its acts harsh or unwise, they are not therefore moved to support your policy.

"In sickness the germs which cause the illness multiply and run riot over the whole body. So when violence is relied on rather than reason, the impulse to violence is intensified on all sides, the most powerful mood evoking its likeness in characters with any affinity to it. Those who are normally restrained from violence in a settled order break out, and we have violence everywhere.

"It is not you and the Free State troops alone who employ force, but every rascal in the country, and many, alas! who were not rascals, but merely morally weak, and who are impelled thereto by the prevalent mood.

### Leaders' Responsibility.

"The bandit, the bully, the lecherous, all use violence; and they do their deeds under the aegis of your ideal, and you cannot, while employing force in guerilla warfare, evade popular attribution to you of responsibility for many of their acts. For some of the most terrible deeds done, whether your leaders approved or not, they must accept responsibility, for in this guerilla warfare men are split up into small groups acting on their own initiative.

"If the power of death dealing is given to hunted and passionate men, not disciplined by long training as the armies of States usually are, this leads to assassinations and in the minds of such men personal hatred tends to become indistinguishable from political antagonism.

"And, still more, because of this warfare of the nation are led into a violence equal to your own and a harshness of policy, and so the whole national being is degraded in its imagination of itself and in the regard of other nations.

"No ideal, however noble in itself, can remain for long lovable or desirable in the minds of men while it is associated with deeds such as have been done in recent years in Ireland. I believe that Christ and His Kingdom would

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