

MICHAEL COLLINS' OWN STORY OF HOW IRELAND WON HER FREEDOM AND HOW SHE WILL KEEP IT

TREATY GAVE ERIN CHANCE TO BE FREE

Pact of London Provides Not Ultimate Freedom, but Freedom to Achieve That Ultimate Freedom, Says Head of Provisional Government, Who Claims "Our Difficulty Now in Making a Noble Irish Ireland, Lies in People Themselves."

THIS is the first of a series of articles by Michael Collins, idol of Ireland and head of the provisional government. These articles will detail the history of the movement for Irish freedom, which has culminated in the erection of the Irish Free State, and will furnish a mass of exclusive information. The series will embrace the history of the military movements of the Irish republican party, the peace negotiations with Great Britain, and the ratification of peace with the British empire following the struggle between the two peoples, which endured for 750 years.

By MICHAEL COLLINS.

(Head of the Provisional Government of Ireland.)

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DUBLIN, Feb. 4.

AS you have asked me to make certain statements for your newspapers, and, as with reluctance I consented to do so, I should like at the outset to correct the mistaken impression which is held by many of our friends in America owing to a misconception of certain words of mine in my speech to the Dail Eireann on December 19 last.

It appears that many of our people thought that I was aiming a backhanded blow at those who wished us well. The mistaken impression was caused by my words to the effect that "America did not recognize the Irish republic because she knew it would mean war with Great Britain."

I meant those words not as a slur on or a detraction from the sympathy of the American people for our suppressed nation, but simply to indicate that we understood the realization by them of our position as it was.

MEANT ONLY APPRECIATION.

I meant those words to be an appreciation on my part of the difficulties which faced our friends in America, and I have no less regard for their good services now than I ever had.

You have asked me to write this article on the treaty with England, and before dealing with the treaty itself, you asked me to say something of the political incidents which led up to it.

In my opinion the truce of July last could have been secured in December, 1920, at the time when His Grace, Archbishop Clune, endeavored to mediate. But the opportunity was lost through too precipitate action by certain of our public men and public bodies. The action taken indicated an overkeen desire for peace, and, although the terms of the truce were virtually agreed upon, they were abandoned because the British leaders thought the actions referred to indicated weakness on our part. Consequently they decided to insist upon the surrender of our arms, and the result was a continuance of the struggle.

The British aggression went on unabated and our defense was kept up to the best of our ability. I am not aware of any negotiations that preceded the truce of July. I do know that there was much visiting back and forth by well meaning, but unauthorized persons.

NO EFFECT ON PARLEYS.

However, as far as my knowledge goes, those things did not have any effect on the communication from Premier Lloyd George to President De Valera, which opened up the period of correspondence between the two governments and, subsequently, resulted in the negotiations in London.

If there were any official conversations prior to Lloyd George's letter they took place entirely without my knowledge.

I have been asked to express an opinion upon the correspondence and to give a history of the negotiations in London. I feel that it will only weary people to go into these things now. One matter, however, I

can deal without any breach of confidence or without any departure from strict etiquette.

It has been variously stated that the treaty was signed under duress. It has been said that the treaty was signed under threat of "immediate and terrible war."

Not signed under duress. Our position never appeared to me to be that. I did not sign the treaty under duress except in the sense that the position as between Ireland and England historically and because of superior forces on the part of England, has always been one of duress.

The element of duress was present when we agreed to the truce, because our simple right would have been to beat the English in Ireland.

There was an element of duress in our going to London to negotiate. But there was not and could not have been any personal duress.

Neither did the threat of "immediate and terrible war" matter overmuch to me. Our position appeared to me then exactly as it appears now. The British would not, I think, have declared "terrible, immediate war" upon us.

They had three courses open to them. The first was to dissolve parliament and put their proposals before the country. The second was to resume war by courting, openly or covertly, breakages of the truce. (These breakages of the truce might have come from either side.) Their third course would have been to blockade Ireland and at the same time encourage spasmodic internal conflict.

I must say that the first course of action indicated above seemed to me to be the one most likely to be adopted. Then in case our position was endorsed by the people, either the second or the third method of procedure would have been very easily managed by the British.

A political reverse would have been more damaging to us than to have the English adopt either the second or third course which was open to them.

War Threat a Bluff.

The threat of "immediate and terrible war" was probably a bluff. The immediate tactics would surely have been to put the offer of July 20, which the British considered a very good offer, before the people of the country. If the offer was rejected they would have had very little difficulty in carrying their own people into a war against Ireland.

Another thing that I believe, and I have not said it except to some of my personal friends, is, that on the resumption of hostilities the British would have been anxious to fight with us on a basis of belligerent rights.

In such circumstances I doubt if we would have been able to carry on the conflict with the success which previously attended our efforts. I scarcely think that our resources would have been equal

HERO OF IRISHMEN



MICHAEL COLLINS,

Who, although only thirty-one years old, has won fame as a fighter and a diplomat.

to bearing the belligerent rights responsibilities.

No, I am not impressed by this talk of duress nor was I impressed by the threats of declaration of immediate and terrible war.

Great Britain has not made any declaration of war upon Egypt. Neither has she made a declaration of war against India.

But is the conflict less terrible because of the absence of such declaration. We must not be misled by words and phrases.

Unquestionably the alternative to the treaty, sooner or later, was war. I accept that, and if the Irish nation had accepted that alternative I would gladly have accepted it.

Let that point be emphasized, for the opponents of the treaty declared over and over again that the alternative to the treaty was not war. In my judgment, this was misleading the Irish nation, and I could not be a party to that.

The decision of the Irish nation should not be given on a false basis. That was my own attitude. And if, indeed, it be true as the antagonists of the treaty say, that the alternative to the treaty was not war, where, then, is the heroism? Where, then, is the necessity

for the future sacrifices that have been talked about so freely?

The foregoing remarks express my position in signing the treaty. To me it would have been a criminal act to refuse to allow the Irish nation to give its opinion as to whether it would accept this settlement or resume hostilities.

That, I maintain, is the democratic stand. It has always been the stand of public representatives who have been alive to their responsibilities.

Now let me pass on to the treaty itself. And in dealing with the treaty I am anxious to get out of the mists and into clear air. The Irish struggle has always been for freedom—freedom from English occupation, freedom from English interference, freedom from English domination—but not for freedom with any particular label attached to it.

It may also be stated that what we fought for at any particular time was the greatest measure of freedom that seemed to be obtainable at that time. It depended upon our strength whether the claim for freedom was greater or less at one time than at another.

When the national situation was very bad, we lay inert. When the situation improved a little, we

looked for the repeal of the union. When our strength receded again we looked for home rule under varying trade names. When it went still worse we spoke of some form of revolution. When our strength became greater our aims became higher and we strove for greater measure of freedom under the name of the Irish Republic.

Didn't Fight for Name.

But it was freedom that we fought for, and not for the name of the form of government we should adopt when we got our freedom.

Now what really happens under the treaty?

When I supported its approval at the meeting of the Dail Eireann, I said that it gave us freedom—not the ultimate freedom which all nations hope and struggle for, but the freedom to achieve that ultimate freedom.

And I was and am now fully alive to the implications of that statement. Under this treaty Ireland is about to become a fully constituted nation.

The whole of Ireland as one nation is to compose the Irish Free State, whose parliament will have power to make laws for peace and order and good government in Ireland, with an executive who will be responsible to the parliament.

This is the whole basis of the treaty, and it must be clearly borne in mind that the treaty, (and the treaty, be it remembered, is between equals) is the bedrock from which our status springs, and that any later act of the British Parliament derives its force from the treaty only.

We have arrived at our position by virtue of the treaty and any furthering act of the British legislature will likewise be by virtue of the treaty.

By Virtue of Treaty.

And it is not the definition of any status which would secure to us that status but it is our power to make secure and increase what we have gained that gives us our status; yet, obtaining in the treaty the constitutional status of Canada, and that status being one of freedom and equality, we are free to take advantage of that status, and we shall set up our constitution on independent Irish lines.

No conditions mentioned hereafter, unless in the treaty, can affect or detract from the powers which the mention of that status in the treaty gives us, especially when it has been proved that the treaty has been made good by the withdrawal from Ireland of English authority of every kind.

England has renounced in fact all right to govern Ireland and the withdrawal of her forces is proof of this. With the evacuation secured under the treaty has come the end of British rule in Ireland.

No foreigner will be able to intervene between our government

BRITISH ONLY WELCOME AS GUESTS NOW

"Not a Single English Soldier or Official Will Ever Again Step Upon Our Shores Unless Invited to Do So by a Free People—England Has Renounced All Right to Govern Ireland," Says Dashing Irish Chieftain.

and our people. Not a single British soldier, not a single British official will ever again step upon our shores except as the guest of a free people.

Our government will have complete control of our army, our schools and our trade. Our soldiers, our judges and our ministers will be soldiers, judges and ministers of the Irish Free State. We can send our own ambassadors to Washington, to Paris and to the Vatican. We can have our own representatives in the League of Nations (if we wish).

I have said above that it was freedom that we fought for—freedom from British interference and domination.

Evacuation Now On.

Let us, in this regard, ask ourselves these few questions:

Are the English going?

To what extent are they going? If the treaty is put into operation will they, for all practical purposes, be gone?

The answer to the first question is to be seen in the evacuation, that is proceeding apace. The claim that the English are going is being fulfilled. The auxiliaries are practically all gone. The regular British military forces are rapidly following them.

The answer to the second and third questions is that they remain for negligible purposes and that the extent to which they will remain is negligible. We will have complete freedom for all our purposes. We will be rid completely of British interference and British rule.

We can establish in place of British rule, our own rule, and exactly the kind of rule that we like. We can restore our Gaelic life in exactly what form we like. We can keep what we have gained and make it secure and strong. The little we have not yet gained we can go ahead and gain.

All other questions are really questions of arrangement in which our voice shall be the deciding voice. Any names, any formulas, any figureheads representing England's wish to conceal the extent of her departure from Ireland and to keep up some pretense of her power over us which is now gone, will be but names, formulas, and figureheads.

England Used Force.

England has exercised her power over us simply by the presence of her forces—military, police, legal and social forces.

Is it seriously to be suggested that in the new order, some functionary, no matter what we may call him, will serve the purpose of all these forces, or a part of them, under any particular interpretation of the words of the document?

British government could only be maintained by the presence of British forces. Once these forces are gone the British government can no longer arrange the form that our national government, and our national life, will take, nor can they set any limits on either.

If we wish to make our nation a free and a good nation, we can do so now. But we cannot do it if we are to fight among ourselves as to whether it is to be called Saorstát or Poblacht.

Whether the name or the political phraseology, we cannot restore Ireland without great united effort. Our difficulty now in making a noble Irish Ireland, lies in our people themselves, and in the hundreds of years of Anglicization to which we have been subjected.

The task before us, having got rid of the British, is to get rid of their remaining influences—in do-

Anglicize ourselves, for there are many among us who still breathe after English ways. Any thoughtlessness or any carelessness will tend to keep things on the old lines—the inevitable danger of the proximity of the two nations.

Can any restriction or limitation in the treaty prevent us from making our nation great and potent?

Can the presence of a representative of the British crown, depositing upon us for his resources, prevent us from doing that?

Can the words of a document as to what our status is, prevent us from doing that—that is, dooming ourselves?

Can we not concentrate and unite, not on a negative, but on a positive task of making Ireland distinctive from Britain—a nation of our own?

The only way to get rid of British contamination is to secure a united Ireland, intent on democratic ways, to make our free Ireland a fact and not keep it forever in dreamland.

Against British Help.

It must not be kept as something that will never come true and which has no practical effect or reality except as giving rise to everlasting fighting and destruction which it seems have almost become ends in themselves, in the minds of some—some who appear to be almost unending and un-mindful of what the real end is.

Ireland is one—perhaps the only—country in Europe which is now living in hope of a better destination. We have the opportunity to make good. Much is within our grasp.

Who can lay a finger on our liberties? If any power remains our liberties we are in a stronger position than before to resist the aggressor.

Let us advance and use these liberties to make Ireland a shining light in a dark world, to reconstruct our ancient civilization on modern lines, to avoid the errors, miseries and dangers into which other nations with their false civilizations have fallen.

In taking the treaty we are not going in for the footsteps of the British Empire—nor unless we wish to. It is futile to suggest that all these tendencies would disappear under freedom by some other name, or that the government of an externally assisted nation, or if a republic any more than of a Free State, would be able to suppress them and force Gaelicism upon the nation.

Freedom for All.

Whatever form of free government we had it would be a government of the Irish nation. All the other elements—the old aristocracy, the house rulers, the revolutionists, etc.—would have to be allowed freedom and some self-expression.

The only way to build the nation solid and Irish is to settle these elements in a broadly national way—by attraction and not by compulsion—making them feel themselves welcomed into Irish nation in which they can join and become absorbed, as, long ago, the Geraldines and the De Burghs became absorbed.

The treaty is already working itself. The English demands are to Lloyd George and his cabinet. "You have surrendered."

Our own demands are to us. "You have surrendered."

Maurice Hewlett, Noted Writer, Tells How It Feels To Be An Alderman In London Town

By MAURICE HEWLETT,

Famous British Author, in an Article in the London Daily News.

THOUGH something of the newest, that is an addition to my store of honors, and it was with that at the back of my head and an essay of Bagehot's before my eyes that I fell into the train of thought which is hereafter expressed. Bagehot was quoting Shakespeare, the second part of "King Henry VI," where two of Jack Cade's following are discussing the wonders to come.

George: O miserable age! Virtue is not required in handicraftsmen.

John: The nobility think scorn to go in leather aprons.

George: Nay, more; the king's council are no workmen.

John: True; and yet it is said, Labour is thy vocation: which is as much to say as, let the magistrates be labouring men, and therefore should be magistrates.

Among the new things which are certain about Shakespeare, one is that when he penned (if he did pen) that scene he thought he was describing two clowns; and another that, to his mind, the inference that working men should be magistrates was as good a snub of

clownishness as he could devise. Bagehot himself, with all his clear sight, goes on to agree with Shakespeare and to pronounce that so did the British people. Yet laboring men are magistrates at this hour, members of Parliament, privy councillors and cabinet ministers.

WORK AND GENTILITY. In that position of respect and hard work to which I have been chosen by my shire I think it more than likely that other laboring men may be found; for we seem to be a "fortuitous concourse of atoms." A marquis is chairman, and among the aldermen and councillors are peers, members of Parliament, clergymen, military officers and a number of untitled persons, one, at least, living in a cottage.

Well, my bench at Sarum, as I expect my council at Trowbridge, are doing their best to show that there are no longer any "orders." One is more or less of a gentleman—which is, or should be, only so say that one is more or less of a man.

Perhaps we cannot yet get it out of the optative mood, but I hope we are on the way.

A family story is of a maid who, when she was asked what she meant by a lady, said:

"Someone who lies on the sofa and slaps the bell."

That takes you back a long way. Its correlative comes from that Duke of Devonshire who said of a cousin of his:

"He is not a gentleman—he works."

AS TO "INTIMATES."

It was told of Sir Walter Scott by one of his own people that he spoke to every man as if he was a blood relation. Lockhart, in reporting it, exclaims upon his habit of "freedom of personal intercourse" with his servants both outdoors and in as being extraordinary. I suppose it was then very extraordinary, for I happen to know that it is considered by some rather extraordinary now.

Yet, living as I do and have done for many years in a recessed country village, I should have been in a considerably worse position than I am if I had not been able to associate on just those terms with people who have, not had my upbringing which Sir Walter used. If I were now to reckon up my intimates, those whom I may fairly call friends, I am sure I should find more of them among the peasantry than in any other walk of life.

"People have asked me: But what on earth do you find to talk about? And I always reply, just what you and I talk about—what-

ever happens to turn up. You can't talk to anybody—to call it talk—unless you are yourself. Sure of that on both sides, the talk follows.

"Everything flows," in fact, as the sage said; and a good thing, too. The tide is now urging upwards the kindly earthen vessels, and in the growing scarcity of them of the brazen make they will make a better passage of it today than there was any prospect of doing in Walter Bagehot's. That exponent of clear thinking and hard hitting died when I was sixteen. Just as little as he thought in his heyday that "laboring men" would sit upon the bench where he sat, jure divino—just as little did I think in that year of his death that I should live to be an alderman.

Taxis Make Walking Dangerous in Paris

PARIS, Feb. 4.—The Paris pedestrian is up in arms against the taxi chauffeurs who have made walking on the streets of Paris a dangerous diversion. A committee of the town council, which has investigated the situation, puts the daily number of accidents at 150.

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The task before us, having got rid of the British, is to get rid of their remaining influences—in do-