

IRELAND HAS THE RIGHT TO BE FREE

The New York *American* a few months ago had a convincing editorial on "If Any Subject European Nation Has the Right to be Free, Ireland Has the Right." The editorial was as follows:—

"Justice Cohalan is right in saying: 'In spite of martial law and of a large English army of occupation, and without any bloodshed, the people of Ireland by more than a two-thirds vote have broken down and destroyed the old political machine which had controlled the country for more than a generation and have declared more unequivocally and decisively than did the people of America before the Revolution their intention of governing themselves without permission or hindrance from any foreign power. America has always sympathised with peoples who are struggling to be free. Never was there greater reason for such sympathy than now, when the making of a just and permanent peace depends upon doing justice to all peoples, and to none more than to the people of Ireland, who have once again so decisively and so impressively shown their intention and determination to be free. The world is hoping and praying for such a peace, and England will have no greater statesman or friend than the one who will commit her to such a peace and turn the enmity and hostility felt to her in so many quarters of the world into friendship and amity.'

"The Irish people have a natural and inherent right to be free and independent. They have a natural and inherent right to a government which derives its powers from the consent of the governed. If this is not so, then our Declaration of Independence is simply verbiage and the professions with which we went to war were unworthy pretences. If the world is not safe for the free democracy of Ireland, then it is not safe for any democracy which a stronger nation may desire to rule. If England has the right to govern the Irish people against their consent, then Germany had the right to govern the Poles against their consent. Austria had the right to govern the Czechs and Slovaks against their consent, Russia had the right to govern the Finns against their consent. There is no escape from the inexorable logic of these comparisons.

"If the Irish people have not the natural and inherent right to be free and independent of a government conducted without their consent and against their interest, no people has that natural and inherent right—and the only basis of liberty and independence is not right but might. And there you have the doctrine of despotism and militarism, disguise it in whatever sophistry you will.

"The hundred thousand American men who laid down their lives in this war did not make that supreme sacrifice to pull down the supremacy of might over right in one portion of Europe only to more firmly establish that odious doctrine in another portion of Europe.

"We do not see with what face our representatives at the Peace Conference could demand independence for Bohemians, Slovaks, Jugo Slavs, and every other small people in one part of Europe and refuse to demand independence for the Irish people in another part of Europe.

"The argument that the Irish people could not defend their small nation from the attacks of more powerful nations applies to all small nations and presupposes that the old conditions of intrigue, aggression, and wars of conquest are to continue—and yet we are assured day after day that this war was fought to end such conditions and that the Peace Conference will formulate a plan of permanent tranquillity and permanent safety for weak democracies. Either the argument is worthless or else the promises and pledges by which our people were led to make their gigantic sacrifices of blood and treasure were worthless.

"If the Irish democracy cannot safely exist in the world without the protection of fleets and armies of its conqueror then the world is not safe for democracy, and all the lives and money given by Americans to make the world safe for democracy have failed to accomplish their high object. We are curious to see any convincing denial of that conclusion. It is no argument at all to say that of late years the English rule in Ireland has been less oppressive than in the past. The statement is not altogether true, as the late Sinn Fein massacres prove, but even if the statement were true it does not fundamentally alter the situation.

A Government of Force.

"The English rule in Ireland is not a government deriving its just powers from the consent of the governed. It is a government based upon superior force. It is the government of the Irish people by the English people in the interests of the English people. That is the kind of government against which Washington rebelled, which Lincoln denounced, and against which we have just victoriously fought.

"If the British Government is wise it will abandon its rule of Ireland by force and cultivate an alliance based upon gratitude, proximity, mutual welfare, and, above all, upon the firm foundation of justice and righteousness, without which foundation no government is ever permanent, no peace ever secure, no edifice of power ever enduring. By the measure of justice that is meted out to Ireland will be measured in large part the sincerity, the rectitude, and the results of the professions and purposes of England in this gigantic conflict.

"If every people in the world, great or small, strong or weak, is not safe to live its own national life in its own way and according to its own desire, then the pledges which invited us into the war and the high purposes which animated us in the war have failed of full realisation. To paraphrase the striking language of President Lincoln, the world cannot live in peace half slave and half free. Justice cannot be weighed out in unequal balances and be just. Democracy cannot serve two masters. Either we must stand fast in support of our high ideals of liberty and independence for all peoples who strive to be free and independent, or else we should regard the fate and destiny of none."

MULIER SECUNDUM ANIMAM TUAM.

(Eccles. VII. 27.)

You burn for freedom, aid your blood
Pulsing for this, and you would be
A galley-slave for nationhood;
Die, to live on in Ireland free;
And I am captive in your thrall
Since I must love you: that is all.

And thus I time my little pace,
Deeming that you would have it so;
My joy and sorrow make a chace
To meet your laughter or your woe;
My anger angers you, my hate
Wounds, that you be not desolate.

So with the Angel foot to foot
I wrestle; girt with shield and sword,
My thoughts of you, so I dispute
Your sole possession with the Lord.
And so, to set your spirit free,
Love, I would slay your love of me.

GEORGE NOBLE PLUNKETT, in *Studies*.

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