

which alone was permitted any voice.

A Treaty which was only sanctioned by a majority of one, of its five Irish signatories, and by a majority of seven in the Dail even under the dishonest threat of the return of the Black-and-Tans, can hardly be said to carry in itself the sacredness of an irrevocable decree by a nation. The Provisional Government which was the outcome of that narrow vote based all its authority upon the claim that it represented the vote of an overpowering majority of the Irish people—it was put as high as 95 and even 99 per cent.—at the General Election of June, 1922. That claim is however a notoriously untenable one. True majority rule was represented at the General Election by the Collins-de Valera Pact solemnly recommended to the country by the unanimous resolutions of the Dail and of the Ard-Fheis—that is to say of the men who alone had made any Treaty possible. The painful violation of that Pact at the last moment all but completely mystified and nullified the vote of "Southern Ireland" at the General Election, sending back a decreased number of Free Staters as well as a more largely decreased number of Republicans and substituting for the defeated candidates of both sides a new body of Laborites and nondescript Independents, whose appearance was the only genuine resultant of the General Election. The General Election was in reality a stalemate. Those who stirred up the repudiation on the eve of the polls of the *modus vivendi* unanimously endorsed by the Dail and by the Ard-Fheis were the men who set the Civil War, with all its horrors, going.

It was idle to claim any divine right for a Government proceeding from a confusion such as this—a Government which although forming the largest group was in matter of fact a minority Government, since even an expurgated Dail from which the 34 elected Republicans were excluded the Government thus apotheosised could only command a majority of four on a Vote of Censure upon an issue so vital as their policy of reprisals and must have been promptly turned out of office had the Republicans been admitted to the Division Lobby. When a Government with this precarious title began—even before summoning the newly elected representatives of the people at all to ask their sanction—by bombarding the Four Courts and starting the Civil War the night after receiving something like an insolent order from Mr. Churchill it is not difficult to understand, why the claim of such a Government to a sanction from on high in the name of "Majority Rule!" was scouted by the young soldiers of Ireland who were old enough to remember that the same cry of "Majority Rule!" raised largely by the same people was responsible for all the disasters of Ireland in the previous fifteen years—the killing of Land Purchase, the Partition of the country and the universal shipwreck from which nothing but the Revolution now anathematised could have saved the Irish cause.

The ease with which Mr. Winston Churchill's heavy artillery enabled the Free State Generals to dispose of military operations on the grand scale, led the Irish and the English papers to form a ridiculously erroneous

estimate of the insignificance of the resistance before them. Months after the capture of the "last rebel stronghold" and of another last and still another last had been proclaimed until men's hearts were sick of the boast, the Generals of the Free State found themselves in the same position in which General Macready had been twelve months before: every town and village was theirs and their foe was more unseizable than ever. They were cutting unresisting waters with an irresistible sword, but the waters were not dispersed. When President Cosgrave assured the English public through the *Times* that he was only dealing with "a handful of boys and of neurotic women," he was making a boast which only the isolation from public opinion in which he and his government were compelled to live could excuse. The "handful" multiplied to above ten thousand men in the Free State gaols and still enough of the "handful" remained outside to make the task of an army of fifty thousand trained men a heartbreaking and futile one. If the Free State Ministry could succeed in drowning resistance in a river of young Irish blood, their troubles would be only thickening.

It is no less true that the proceedings of the Republicans or of those who disguise themselves in their garb have often reached a pitch of folly that might well be mistaken for dementia. Their criminal recklessness of the life and limbs of non-combatants, their forced levies, their bomb-throwings and burnings and railway raids in every form of blind destructiveness that could imperil the people's means of communication, their sources of employment and even their daily food—shook the foundations of morals and civilisation to their base and might well seem to justify the sacred fury with which any suggestion of a truce with such men on any terms short of unconditional subjection or extermination was denounced as treason to the first principles of society. Recriminations are natural enough in the first heat of hasty and uninformed judgments on both sides. But recriminations are a poor game when it has become a question of splitting Ireland from top to bottom by new chasms of hatred among her sons, which generations may labor in vain to reclose. A cause capable of inspiring a hundred thousand young Irishmen to the most amazing and tenacious sacrifices, month after month, in the face of overpowering odds, cannot be a wholly guilty one, and assuredly is not to be disposed of by words of wrath any more than by the volleys of the firing platoons to which the official reprisals were entrusted.

The Civil War began as soon as the General Election, which was neutralised by the violation of the Collins-de Valera Pact was over, and is dragging along ever since. It is to be lamented that every effort of honest public opinion to stop the war before the mischief should be irreparable, was overbearing and even flippantly stamped out. "These peace resolutions are all moonshine" were the first words of the Democratic President of the Free State in a manifesto waving aside a long series of conciliatory resolutions beginning with the unanimous appeal of the Senate, which he had himself just nominated

as the Second House of his own Parliament, and followed by the resolutions of all the National Corporations and most of the County Councils in "Southern Ireland"; and there were other jibes and threats still more unworthy of his high station. *The Bulletin*, which is supposed to be the official organ of Mr. de Valera, responded with the no less irrational ultimatum "Ireland shall not enter into the British Empire so long as there is a man of us left alive."

To stand up against stiff-necked unreason on both sides such as this, the only friends of peace who have hitherto presented themselves with a dog's chance of being listened to are "The Old I.R.A. Association" of men who fought in the Anglo-Irish War, up to the Truce of July 11th, 1921, and since the Civil War broke out have refused to imbrue their hands in brothers' blood on either side. As I write, their claims, too, to interfere are being insidiously counterworked and that largely by those who were never militants in the united Sinn Fein movement and would not be too disconsolate to see it going to pieces through intensified dissensions. Whether "The Old I.R.A. Association" may not fail of a hearing as sadly as all that went before them have failed who shall dare to think unlikely? They have at least the advantage that in no other direction can any prospect of an enduring National Pacification be now discerned. They are believed to represent the cream of the fighters who were ready for any feat for Freedom's sake except fratricide; and they if any have the commission to carry their appeal at need from the half a dozen men on each side who forbid negotiations to the overwhelming majority of a people, who abhor a war of partisans and can see nothing but bankruptcy and red ruin before the country unless it can be stopped.

(To be concluded.)

HOW YOU MAY HELP

The writer of historical notes relating to the Church in New Zealand, now appearing in the *Tablet*, tenders his thanks to a number of thoughtful friends who have forwarded photographs of some of the priests who labored with such zeal and devotion in the early days of colonisation and of others of later though no less strenuous date. A valuable service has thus been rendered—a service which will earn the lasting gratitude of future generations.

Others still may help in this direction, and photographs of priests and old-time church buildings, also newspaper cuttings, writings, etc., will be gratefully accepted. These will be used in the best possible way in compiling reliable records, and carefully returned to the senders. Please forward to *Tablet* Office, Dunedin, with full particulars as to names, places, etc., attached.

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