

IRISH NEWS

TRAGIC HAPPENINGS.

The quiet optimism of Dublin (writes the local correspondent of the *London Catholic Times*) received a dreadful shock on Thursday, December 7, when it became known that Mr. Hales, T.D., had been shot dead, and Mr. O'Maillie seriously wounded, in the public street while on their way to attend a meeting of Dail Eireann. None of the deeds of violence, though some of them have been sufficiently appalling, which have blackened the good name of Ireland during recent months have been quite so terrible, quite so disheartening, as this latest crime. An elected representative of the people, on his way to discharge the duties of his trust, has been shot down in broad daylight in the streets of the Irish capital by persons claiming presumably that their one desire is to make Ireland free. What kind of "liberty" would this country enjoy, I wonder, were she ruled by men who can bring themselves to do such deeds, what kind of men can hope to win her people to their side by indulging in such outrageous, such un-European conduct?

HARROWING TRAGEDY IN DUBLIN: LAND MINE EXPLODES AND KILLS ITS BEARERS.

One of the most devastating explosions in Dublin in recent times occurred recently on the Naas road just outside Inchicore. A group of men, variously estimated from five to ten, were seen carrying a heavy article from a field near the Blackhorse Bridge. Suddenly a great burst of light flashed into the sky, and a detonation as loud as, and more terrifying than, thunder shook the ground. The result was ghastly. The men who were carrying the mine—as such it proved to be—were blown to fragments. The bodies were so frightfully mangled that it was impossible at first either to identify the remains or to say precisely how many lives were lost.

The casualties are now put at four dead and two badly wounded. The killed were:—Bernard Curtis (19), engine cleaner, the Cottages, Bluebell; P. J. Egan, goods clerk, Ashbourne, Co. Limerick; Thomas Phelan (22), engine cleaner, Banteen, Galbally, Co. Limerick, and a man still unidentified.

A quantity of firearms and ammunition was found inside a wall on the roadside. The general conjecture is that an ambush was being prepared and the mine prematurely exploded. Two lorry loads of troops were approaching the spot, which they reached just a few minutes after the terrible crash.

THE FREE STATE IN BEING.

On Wednesday, December 6 (says a Home paper), the Free State was formally established, and legally at least the transition period in Ireland came to a conclusion. On that date the oath of office was administered to the new Governor-General, Mr. T. M. Healy—whose appointment has occasioned so much satisfaction—by the Lord Chief Justice, and to the members of Dail Eireann by Professor Michael Hayes, the Speaker of the House. With very few exceptions the non-Republican members took the oath, but the Labor deputies did so under protest, stating that the Treaty—which they accepted—had been imposed on Ireland by duress and asserting that they would be faithful not only to King George V. and his successors, but also to all mankind. The swearing-in ceremony having been completed, Professor Hayes, on the motion of the President, was again elected Speaker of the Dail, and shortly afterwards the President himself was re-elected to the office of First Minister, and forthwith nominated General Mulcahy and Messrs. O'Higgins, McNeill, Fitzgerald, McGrath, and Blythe members of the first Free State Cabinet. While these events were taking place at Leinster House, Dublin fortunately was quiet, and the Republicans, unable actively to interfere with the day's proceedings, very sensibly refrained from indulging in any futile demonstrations. For one hundred and twenty years

the citizens of Dublin have looked forward to the re-establishment of an Irish Parliament and the reconstruction of the Irish State. What a commentary it is upon the present age that on the day on which their hopes were realised they felt thankful for being allowed to rejoice in peace!

THE BIRTH OF A STATE.

Le Roy le veult!

This is a legacy (writes James Hayes, in *Catholic News Service*, London) that the English have from William the Norman, the Conqueror who came over with his fighting men and ships of war, and on the field of Hastings accomplished—as he thought—his pet project of making England a Crown Colony of the rich Duchy of Normandy. Instead of England becoming a Crown Colony of Normandy, the Duchy became a mere appanage of the Anglo-Norman Crown. So William the Norman has passed and his Crown Colony scheme came to nothing; but the Norman French that he imposed on the conquered English still lingers, though attenuated, in the simple phrase with which the Royal Assent is given which imposes on all legislation the force of law.

You may look at this curious old phrase in two ways. These four words in old French, once the common language throughout England, may signify nothing more than a mere formula; a legalising of something that has been perfectly decided upon by the political rulers of England. On the other hand, you may dismiss the modern frock coats and trousers that more or less embellish the scene, and see in this act a symbol; the Anointed Sovereign of the English people, speaking in that people's name as its fount of honor and justice. "The King wills it," and as the King is constitutionally the father of his people, therefore his people will it.

Now all this is in regard to a brief ceremony that took place in the House of Lords at Westminster, when the Lords Commissioners in giving the Royal Assent, gave the fullest legal existence to the Irish Free State, and as the words were spoken a State was come into being legislatively. There is not much room for outsiders at these occasions; but those of us who secured the privilege of the entry saw a scene of the richest symbolism, a symbol both for the people of England as well as for the people of Ireland.

The Lords Commissioners, who speak in the name and on behalf of the English Sovereign, sat there in their robes of office, fashioned in rich scarlet and snowy ermine, not a single whit altered in style from the robes of the Peers of England who in the 13th century waited at Westminster upon the Catholic Sovereigns of England. A more modern note was struck at the Bar of the House, where Mr. Speaker, with his wife reminiscent of the Stuart era and his gown of medieval pattern, had been summoned together with the Commons to hear the Royal Assent given to the Irish Free State Bills.

From a table in the House of Lords a voice broke in on the waiting silence. It was the Clerk of the Crown, who read aloud in English the title of each Act. "The Irish Free State Act" he called, and an answering voice from the Clerk of the Parliaments replied in deep tones "*Le Roy le veult!*"—The King wills it! Again the first voice sounded: "The Consequential Provisions Act." And once more the Clerk of the Parliaments replied "*Le Roy le veult!*"

That was all. The Head of the nation willed it, and so the Irish Free State came into the fullest legal being in these brief phrases, and the Norman French which was the language spoken by the first invaders of Ireland by the knights of Henry II. seven centuries or more ago, was the language that has brought the English soldiers out of Ireland and set Ireland free.

There was one unrehearsed and unpremeditated incident. Just as the Clerk of the Parliaments, acting as the mouthpiece of the Lords Commissioners had given the Royal Assent, there boomed out from amid the Members of the English Parliament at the Bar of the House a deep voice crying aloud "God save Ireland!"

There was no challenge to that prayer. It came at the striking moment when, from the point of English law, the Irish Parliament and Government were set free from every restraining bond—may the prayer of that Member of the English Parliament be answered in its fulness!