

A NEW IRELAND OPENING

The provisions of the treaty entered into between this country and England this week and published to an expectant world on Wednesday morning, while they fall short of standard of Republican Government for which we have been striving, are a truly remarkable achievement. Indeed, it is not too much to say, that they exceed all expectations. They might indeed have been attained at the cost of still greater suffering than we have already experienced.

We, middle-aged people, looked upon a prolongation of the war as inevitable, and though we dreaded it, were prepared to accept the consequences. The youth of the country, however, who have been swept into the Volunteer movement, and to whom political freedom is a second religion, were imbued with the lust of battle, as benefitted the fighting traditions of the race from which they sprung. On them, principally, fell the hardships of the conflict, and the spirit of dashing adventure with which they sustained it, exciting the admiration of their enemies. Much, however, as their brave and at all times chivalrous conduct might have inspired the martial ardour of the race, leaving a priceless heritage of valour to be sung and told of by unborn generations “peace hath her victories no less than war.”

It does not indeed require any great gifts of political prophecy – assuming that peace terms and ratified, and the country proceeds on its national course – to envisage a very prosperous and happy Ireland, and not in the remote future either, nor is it indeed too much to say that in many departments of her life, which are as yet unspoiled by modern materialism, the glory and renown which made her famous throughout the world will once more emanate from her. The treaty which has been entered into this week and which, we have very little fear will miscarry, gives Ireland the right and status of a British Colony to be known as the Irish Free State. She has also complete fiscal autonomy, and can raise a territorial army and a navy.

Indeed it might be said that the only portion of the country treated ungenerously has been North-East Ulster. There is a completely new future before the rest of the country – to make or to mar and we are fairly confident as to what will happen. “Ulster” however with its high brow ministers without portfolios, is given the option of eating humble pie before a month has elapsed or clinging on to its English connection. As a matter of fact this is not so valuable an asset as it used to be. Indeed deprived of support and sympathy of the rest of Ireland, as “Ulster” unfortunately will be, should she still persist in her policy of isolation it may not be an asset at all. That is the worst of taking people literally at their word. We observe amongst the other conditions imposed, is one safe guarding the interests of minorities in Northern Ireland. We think ourselves that this must refer to Catholics and Nationalists whose civil rights have been so grossly abused, especially since the truce, but perhaps we are mistaken, and anyhow, in the present complainant conditions of the country, we can afford to regard conditions as to the treatment of threatened minorities and religions, insulting and unwarranted though they be, with a large gesture of contempt. The rest of the country indeed feels in a tolerant mind, and despite all that has happened is prepared to extend the hand of goodwill and assistance to North-East Ulster. A good deal of water flows under bridges

in a month, and we are not all sure, that the contingency anticipated by the British Peace Delegates – that the Partition Act will disappear and the entire country be again united, on a more real and durable basis this time, will happen before it becomes necessary to establish the new regime. It not we shall be sorry, but cannot help matters and we must confess ourselves, that until now we never thoroughly appreciated the diplomacy (if that is the adequate word) of Mr. Lloyd George. What more could the Orangemen want than what they ask, and in conferring upon them continued unity with England, and isolation from the rest of Ireland. My Lloyd George is paying them back in a most unexpected manner for the various degradations they heaped upon himself, and the members of his Government, who one and all, have come under their leash as well as for the contemptible position they have forced their supported into, by the anti-religious and anti-social campaigns they are constantly adopting. The measure of bluff and intolerance was never before more cleverly taken, or more humiliatingly applied. No wonder we are all laughing.

It would be course, be impossible to withhold admiration from the manner in which the Irish forces have been led. Since negotiations opened especially the plenipotentiaries have manifestly betrayed a patience, restraint and acumen which frequently put their opponents on the other side to the blush, while clever strategist and not particular to a shade as to his interpretations of facts, whether historical or of current important though he might be, Mr. Lloyd George's passages with Mr. de Valera were always an intellectual pleasure. We hope the English Premier enjoyed them as much as the Irish people did. Personally we would not have missed them for anything, especially that message to the Pope, which twisted British diplomacy in the Vatican into such complicated knots that it has not yet succeeded in disentangling itself.

The victory which has been won, however is a great exploit for the younger men of our generation, who dared all and whose achievements is partly their own and altogether for themselves. But four or five years ago, Ireland was on the dissecting table, its soul having temporarily departed. A new spirit was breathed into it and from the ashes of the grand and brave men of 1916 arose the spirit which has at last terminated in triumph. We would not wish to deny them the thought that in their homes beyond the grave, they are unresponsive to the new fortunes which await their country. For this they died.