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**FOUNDING AN IRISH REPUBLIC**

**How Easter Was Anticipated  
in New York Harbour**

**GROTESQUE INCIDENT**

A little less than a year before the Irish insurrection of Easter, 1916, the prologue to that political drama was staged in New York. It is often the fate of curtain-raisers to be ignored, and the present case is no exception, for few people on this side of the Atlantic are aware of the circumstances in which the Dublin Republicans were forestalled. Indeed, the congruously early hour which witnessed this premature manifestation of Irish Republicanism had the effect, familiar to playgoers, of reducing the number of spectators who were in time for the prelude to the piece subsequently produced in Ireland. The incident is worth recalling, if only to illustrate some of the eccentric elements that Sinn Fein has attracted to its Bag.

As the morning of July 3rd, 1915, dawned over the city of New York the alert spectator, or belated reveller, might have observed a launch put off from the pier at the foot of the West Fiftieth street, and proceed down the Hudson, carrying a solemn cargo of professing Irish-Americans. The party consisted of the "Revolutionary Committee of Public Safety of the Provisional Government of the Irish Republic," and the ceremony to which they hastened was two-fold: a Declaration of the Independence of their Republic, and a Declaration of War against England.

**What the Stars Foretold.**

The Master of Ceremonies was Mr. Aleister Crowley, rendered prominent in that rather anonymous collection of journalists and agitators, by reason of his little fame, in certain literary circles on this side, as the exponent of an erotic and obscene mysticism. Since their arrival in America both he and Mr. Frank

Harris have endeavoured by a strenuous course of mutual and public admiration to convince New York that they are entitled to the homage which the war prevented them from receiving in London. To Mr. Crowley's occult intimations of Ireland's republican immortality was due the selection of that matinal hour. His astrological researches had disclosed a propitious conjunction of the stars at half-past four o'clock in the morning of July 3rd. Add to this the symbolic setting of the dawn, and the significant coincidence of the season, with the anniversary of the American Declaration of Independence. Obviously "Der Tag" had arrived.

### **An Obdurate Neutral.**

Sailing down the Hudson, the launch entered the Bay, and stopped at Bedloe's Island, beneath the shadow of the Statue of Liberty. It was the intention of the Committee to hold the ceremony on the steps of this emblematic monument, which stands so invitingly at the threshold of American life, but this pretty piece of symbolism was ruined. None of the liberators had remembered that, while it is comparatively easy to constitute a long-distance Republic, to land on Bedloe's Island is a more serious undertaking, only possible for those armed with a Government permit. They attempted to negotiate with the watchman, who proved to be an obdurate neutral, uninterested in the international question at issue, and untouched by the solemnity of the occasion. His benevolent neutrality could not be secured for the imminent Republic, which had thus to learn at the outset that the "freedom of the soil" is a delusive phrase, unrealised even on the strip of earth supporting Liberty herself. Reversing the natural order, a "watery cradle" was vouchsafed by stern necessity to the republican infant, born on the calm but unstable waters in which the launch drifted during the performance of the ritual.

Undismayed by the unexpected symbolism of the foundations upon which he was about to rear the edifice of his dream, Mr. Crowley rose and saluted simultaneously the dawn of the Irish Republic and the light of the day, armed only with his eloquence and a British passport.

### **Founder's Oration.**

"I have not asked any great human audience to listen to these words; I had rather address them to the unconquerable

ocean that surrounds the world, and to the free four winds of heaven. Facing the sunrise, I lift up my hands and my soul herewith to this giant figure of Liberty, the ethical counterpart of the Light, Life, and Love which are our spiritual heritage. In this symbolic and most awful act of religion I invoke the one true God, of whom the sun himself is but a shadow that He may strengthen me in heart and hand to uphold that freedom for the land of my sires, which I am come hither to proclaim.

"In this dark moment, before the father orb of our system kindles with his kiss the sea, I swear the great oath of the Revolution. I tear with my hands this token of slavery, this safe conduct from the enslaver of my people, and I renounce for ever all allegiance to every alien tyrant. I swear to fight to the Last drop of my blood to liberate the men and women of Ireland, and I call upon the free people of this country, on whose hospitable shores I stand an exile, to give my countenance and assistance in my task of breaking those bonds which they broke for themselves one hundred and thirty-eight years ago. I unfurl the Irish flag. I proclaim the Irish Republic. Eire go bragh. God save Ireland."

From the bow of the launch a flag fluttered, not the tricolour of Sinn Fein, but the green and gold device familiar to constitutional nationalism in Ireland, weaving in the breeze which carried off the fragments of the corn passport.

### **The Declaration of Independence.**

After these preliminaries came the reading of the "Declaration of Independence of Ireland," a lengthy document from which only the more important and characteristic passages need to be quoted. It began with a recital of the grievances of Ireland, and suggested that "earth itself revolts at the recital of these tyrannies and treasons," and "Heaven itself is weary of beholding these intolerable evils." Much as the Committee would like to have gone into detail, they contented themselves with a general indictment of "the crimes of England" which, we were told, "already overload the scroll of the recording angel, and now bare the sword of the avenging angel." They believed that the hour had come "when desperation should be transformed into resolution, patience inflamed to wrath, and peace, folding her wings upon her face, mournfully beckon war." "Wherefore," it was proclaimed, "by the mouth of our trusty and well-beloved delegate and spokesman, Brother Aleister Crowley, No. 418," as follows:—

1. "That we put our trust and confidence in the judge of the whole world, appealing to Him to witness the righteousness of our intent.

2. "That, declaring England the enemy of civilisation, justice, equity and freedom, and therefore of the human race, we do hereby lawfully establish the Republic of the men and women of the Irish people, free and independent by right human and Divine, having full power to levy war, conclude peace, contract alliance, establish commerce, and do all other things which independent States may of right do.

3. "That we do hereby dissolve all political connection between that Republic and the usurper, absolving of their allegiance to England (a) all free people of good will that are of Irish blood, (b) all free people of good will born in Ireland, (c) all free people of good will who may hereafter desire to partake of the benefits of the Irish Republic, and effectually acquire these rights by the forms provided.

### **War upon England.**

4. "That we do hereby declare war upon England until such time as our demands being granted, our rights recognised, and our power firmly established in our own country, from which we are now exiled, we may see fit to restore to her the blessings of peace and to extend to her the privileges of friendship.

"And for the support of this declaration, with firm and hearty reliance upon the protection of God, we mutually pledge to each other our lives, our fortunes and our sacred honour.

"Long live the Irish Republic."

"When this document had been read, and signed by order and on behalf of the Committee" by "Aleister Crowley, 418," and attested by "L. Bathurst, 77," the party proceeded up the Hudson, along the western shores, and received a great ovation from the German sailors on the interned liners at Hoboken. The captain of one of the Hamburg-Amerika Line boats escorted the launch to its landing place at Fiftieth street.

The comedy of this story does not lessen the serious significance of such enterprises, especially in view of recent revelations of the connection between the German Government and these bodies of pseudo-"rebels" and irreconcilables in America. The effect of a general reaction against Irish separatists in the United States cannot leave Ireland unaffected. At best, it will strengthen the credit of Mr. Redmond and his Party; at the worst, it will leave Ireland without a friend in the world of de-

mocracy. As it is, the last hope of that popular fiction has vanished whereby Sinn Fein leaders have encouraged their followers to count upon President Wilson as their champion at the Peace Conference.