

LIAM MELLOWS



DIED FOR IRELAND,
DECEMBER 8, 1922

"Who will tell the British Government when the time has come to tell it, keep its hands off?"

"Human nature, even the strongest human nature, is weak and the time will inevitably come, if this Free State comes into existence, when you will have a permanent government in the country; and permanent governments in any country have a dislike to being turned out, and they will seek to fight their own corner before anything else."

"Men will get into positions, men will hold power, and men who get into positions and hold power will desire to remain undisturbed and will not want to be removed—or will not take a step that will mean removal in case of failure".

(Liam Mellows: Treaty Debate, Jan. 4, 1922)

Éamonn Ó hEochaidh

20p

IN MEMORIAM

(December 8, 1922)

Rory and Liam are dead and gone,
Star of the morning, Mary, come,
Slain on the Eighth of December's dawn,
Mary Immaculate, guide them home.

Rory and Liam and Dick and Joe,
Star of the morning, Mary, come,
Red is their hearts blood, their souls like snow,
Mary Immaculate, guide them home.

Their slayers have rung no passing bell,
Star of the morning, Mary, come,
But the rifles crack is their funeral knell,
Mary Immaculate, guide them home.

Their eyes are steady in face of Death,
Star of the morning, Mary, come,
For their minds are rapt by the vision of faith,
Mary Immaculate, guide them home.

For traitors will pass and the Spring be born,
Star of the morning, Mary, come,
And Freedom will waken the land at morn,
Mary Immaculate, guide them home.

And what is death but an envoy sped,
Star of the morning, Mary, come,
To bring free souls to their Captain, Christ?
Mary Immaculate, guide them home.

Rory and Liam are dead and gone,
Star of the Morning, Mary, come,
They have found the lights that go out at dawn;
Mary Immaculate, guide them home.

Rory and Liam and Dick and Joe,
Star of the morning, Mary, come,
Our starlight fades, but the road they know,
Mary Immaculate, guide them home.

An Monsignor Pádraig de Brún.

INTRODUCTION

Liam Mellows, Rory O'Connor, Dick Barrett and Joe McKelvey were shot dead without trial on the orders of the Free State Government on December 8, 1922. It was by these methods that the 26-County State was set up.

This short account of the life, work and death of Liam Mellows will help the younger generation to understand the role of the 26-County State in England's design for the exploitation of our people.

EARLY DAYS IN NA FIANNA

It was in the old part of Dublin, the area that was so closely associated with the '98 Rising, that Liam Ó Maoil Iosa commenced work in a tobacconist's shop. Young and shy, he could not know that the inspiration of Tone and Emmet, of Lord Edward, the aristocrat, and Jimmy Hope, the weaver, who had walked through these narrow history-laden streets, would lead him within a few years to the same confrontation with the ancient enemy and to the same high place in the affection and esteem of all Irishmen who are concerned for their nation's honour and independence.

From High Street, Liam used to go every evening to Tom Clarke's little shop in Parnell Street. He was anxious to volunteer his help to the old Fenian but his shyness restrained him for a long time. Eventually, he found courage to go into the shop when he saw Tom Clarke alone; the opportunity Liam had so long awaited was here and the young diffident boy, setting out to serve Róisín Dubh, made the acquaintance of the old man who had spent long defiant years in English prisons and who would continue to love and serve Ireland to the end of his days. Liam explained he wished to give a helping hand in the office of the new paper 'Irish Freedom' and Tom Clarke did not hesitate to send the happy boy to Seán Mac Diarmada.

It is not correct to write that Liam was setting out to serve Ireland when he first made contact with Tom Clarke. He was already a devoted worker in Fianna Éireann and at the 1913 Convention he was appointed as its first organiser. In April of that year he set out on his first mission to Wexford. Within a year the organisation and tuition was not confined to Na Fianna for in November the Irish Volunteers came into existence and Liam and his comrades, among whom may be mentioned Con Colbert and Seán Heuston, were called on to help in the drilling of the Volunteers themselves. The value of the work they accomplished may be gauged by the distinction accorded them by the English enemy after Easter Week. Con Colbert and Seán Heuston were little more than boys but they had done trojan work in the Fianna and subsequently in the military formation of the Volunteers. So highly were they regarded that England condemned them to death after the surrender and today their names are linked with those of Pearse and Clarke and Connolly.

As an instance of the quiet bravery, based on high spirituality, which characterised these young heroes we may recall that the soldier charged to pinion and blindfold the Limerick boy, Conn A. Colbard, was impressed to the point that he asked to shake the hand of the young man on his way to the execution yard.

As with his Fianna comrades, Liam inspired the highest and noblest qualities in the boys and men with whom he worked and no effort was wanting on the part of the Royal Irish Constabulary and the British army in his pursuit in Galway and the West.

In appearance Liam was deceptive, and hardened countrymen in particular found it difficult to credit that they had anything to learn from him. They were quickly to learn from him. They were quickly disillusioned but Liam never asked from others what he was not prepared to undertake himself

and he earned the love and respect of the new Volunteers and indeed of all with whom he came in contact.

MISSION TO GALWAY

Some few months before the Easter Rising, Liam was sent to Galway and Proinsias Ó hFidhin has recorded this account of Liam's mission and methods :

"My first acquaintance with Liam was in the winter of 1915, when he was sent down from H.Q. to organise and train the Volunteers in Galway. I thought when I first met him that he was only a delicate little chap who was very enthusiastic about the movement and who might be able to give a very fine lecture on patriotism or even how to fight, but no more. I very soon found out my mistake. He addressed our company the first night he came down, and told us he was sent to us for a week and that we were to prepare for a very hard week's work. We felt half inclined to smile at the little chap from Dublin talking to us about hard work, but it was the only occasion we felt that way inclined.

"Next night we were brought out with some more Companies for a route march. I will never forget it. We were out about half-an-hour when it started to pour rain. Of course, we thought we would be allowed to seek shelter somewhere. No such thing. We were given to understand that we were not 'Sunshine Soldiers' and we got the order to double. Our Commandant and Liam and myself were at the head. The Commandant was rather stout, and we thought that about 300 yards would be a good long run at the double. I thought I was fairly long-winded. I don't know how long we were 'doubling' but we were all nearly doubled up by the time we got the order to 'quick march'. I pitied the poor Commandant, he was blowing like a steam engine. I was nearly as bad, but there was Liam as cool as a cucumber, trotting along, and the rain coming down in bucketfuls. After what we thought was an eternity, Liam told the Commandant to give the order 'quick march'. If it was to free Ireland he couldn't do it. The order was conveyed to me. I managed to blurt it out somehow and when we looked back we had about half the number we started out with! We had to wait for them on the road, and some of them didn't turn up at all. It was only then we had an idea of what Liam meant by a hard week's work. Next day, I was lying up for repairs.

"By the time that week was up we all had an idea that soldiering was not all sunshine, and I do believe if it was any other one who brought us through it, half the lads would have given up in disgust and despair. When Liam applied for another week with us even the children on the streets knew and loved him. When the second week was up, he told them at Headquarters that he was going to stay with us altogether, and I feel safe in saying that but for Liam the name of Galway would never be mentioned in connection with the Rising of 1916."

DEPORTED

It is the present policy of the British Government to deport undesirable Irishmen living in England. By undesirable the British mean, of course, those who protest against the atrocities of the British army and their allies in Ireland and demand that Ireland be given the right and opportunity to conduct her own affairs free of any English interference. The same policy of deportation has been followed before but prior to the so-called Treaty the reverse of this operation was the rule and men like Liam Mellows and Terence Mac Swiney were sent under open arrest to certain districts of England. In spite of surveillance, Liam, assisted by the daughter of James Connolly, Nora, travelled back to Ireland in time for the Rising.

Going first to Belfast with Nora Connolly, he travelled on to Dublin and spent a few hours of Holy Thursday 1916 at the Hermitage, the home of the brothers Pearse. He had been appointed to lead the men of Galway in the coming fight and from Dublin he made his way to the West, whence he had been deported some two months previously.

GALWAY IN 1916

Some time later, Mellows contributed an anonymous account to an American publication of the week in Galway :

"The Rising in the West," he wrote, "as in the other places where the Volunteers rose, did not assume anything like the proportions it would easily have done had it started as was originally intended, on Easter Sunday evening. The capture of the ship off the Kerry coast, with 20,000 rifles, ammunition, explosives, machine guns and other equipment aboard, on Good Friday, dealt the greatest blow to the suc-

cess of the Rising. Three thousand of those rifles were to have reached Galway on Easter Monday, by which time the entire county would have been in our hands, and there was a Galwayman ready to shoulder every one of the 3,000 rifles, as well as the rifles that would have been captured from the police.

"Then Eoin Mac Néill's order countermanding the Easter Sunday mobilisation resulted in great numbers of men becoming disheartened — good and brave men who were prepared to do all required of them on the Sunday night. Worse than all, through this order of Mac Néill's the 'element of surprise' upon which the plan of campaign depended, and which was a dead certainty on Easter Sunday was lost. The police never suspected that anything was intended for that night. That they had no suspicion, received no warning, and were quite unprepared for the Rising on Easter Sunday, speaks volumes for the integrity, discipline and earnest patriotism of the Volunteers. At least 1,000 men and hundreds of women in Co. Galway, as well as the men in the other parts of the country, knew the date and the hour from Easter Saturday, and some several days earlier; yet nothing leaked out."

Further in his account, Liam dealt with the criticism that no plan existed for the Rising, outside of Dublin : "As to the projected plans, it is obvious that the present time is inopportune to disclose them. Suffice to say that they were carefully prepared months ahead, every detail that would ensure success and co-ordination being worked out. The 'element of surprise' lacking, these plans could not be put into operation."

Liam recorded the incidents of the week and the news of the surrender in Dublin which led to the decision to disband the men in Galway. This was decided by a majority of the Council of Officers (Liam being among the minority). Referring to the subsequent situation, Mellows wrote : "The vindictiveness of the British Government after the Rising was appalling. The police in the West particularly excelled themselves. Hundreds were arrested, whole villages cleared of men and boys, and all treated in the most brutal fashion. Houses were wrecked, the same places being visited again and again until all they contained was destroyed. Women and girls were threatened with loaded rifles and fixed bayonets levelled menacingly at them, in order to extract information regarding their husbands and relatives. It need hardly be said that none of these threats had any effect."

Following the disbandment of the Volunteers, Liam was forced to go on his keeping, in common with the other

leaders, and also his close friend, Father Feeney. The latter has given us an account of this period :

"I first came to know Liam Mellows in the summer of 1915. He had been in Co. Galway for some time previously. He came to Galway to organise, not the Fianna, but the Irish Volunteers. He was well received by people who understood his intentions. In the beginning he had to depend entirely on priests. There were a few of these in whom he confided absolutely and to whom he turned for advice, help and consolation when he found it difficult to make any headway. Young men were inclined, and rightly, to mistrust a stranger until they saw him trusted and encouraged by priests whom they knew. He took charge of the Volunteers in Galway in the summer of 1914. It was from Galway he was deported to England in March 1916. The Rising took place in Galway on Easter Sunday, according to the orders for the day. The order from Eoin Mac Néill countermanding the Rising arrived about two o'clock on the same day. The men were disbanded pending further orders.

"The dispatch from Pádraic Mac Piarais was delivered to me on Monday at about 7 p.m. I took it immediately to Liam who was in hiding owing to the fact that he had returned surreptitiously after his escape from internment in England. The exact words of the dispatch, 'Dublin has acted 12 noon today P. H. Pearse' decided Liam to mobilise his men at once. They all responded.

"The Rising lasted until the following Saturday morning. After having marched south to join with Clare and Limerick, it was learned that neither Clare nor Limerick had risen, that the ship with arms from Germany had not arrived, and that Dublin was about to surrender. So after a long conference of the Officers, at which I was present, it was decided to disband. Many of the men had no rifles, not even shotguns and although they were quite willing to die in the hope that their blood would be fruitful, the officers considered it better to preserve their lives for a future occasion. It was 2 a.m. before a decision was reached. The men returned home and the leaders went on the run. All the men were afterwards arrested and deported, while some of the leaders who were captured were sentenced to death. Fortunately, we succeeded in getting Liam away out of the country.

"Liam was an exceptionally religious man. He had a deep trust in God as one who would never fail him in the noble cause for which he was working. This is little to be wondered at, since Liam carried with him the 'Imitation of

Christ', on which his soul feasted during train journeys and other leisure moments.

"Only a man of exceptional gifts could have accomplished what he accomplished in Galway. He had a wonderful gift for organisation but this would have been useless if he had not had the other gifts of sincerity, gentleness, humility, exceptional commonsense and quietly courageous perseverance that won for him the respect and confidence of the priests and they opened for him the only door by which he could enter into the hearts of the people. He had no knowledge of country life. He did not know the ways of the people. His very name was un-Irish and in spite of all these handicaps he organised Galway so well that it was one of the few counties to join in the Rising. That quiet, sensible countrymen should be ready to answer his call on Easter Monday 1916, although many of them had no arms whatever, is certainly a tribute to the organiser not less than to the organised. An estimate of his success can be formed from the fact that in November 1915, at a review organised by him in Athenry, attended by Eoin Mac Néill and The O'Rahilly, his Volunteers numbered 2,000. Another estimate of his success will be formed from the fact that after this review the number increased so rapidly that he had to have an assistant — Ailbhe Ó Monacháin.

"With the aid of his assistant Liam made such progress in the next few months that it was possible to muster over 3,000 in full uniform for a parade in Galway City on St. Patrick's Day, 1916. It is significant that all the Volunteers who had arms of any kind carried them in this parade. Such a bold stroke of publicity had its natural effect of increasing the courage of the young men and of firing them with enthusiasm."

"But perhaps the greatest testimony to the success of Liam as a leader is the fact that 1,200 men answered his call on Easter Monday after he had received Pearse's dispatch. And most wonderful of all is that some of these had to fight their way to his first headquarters at the Agricultural College, Athenry. To the eternal credit of Castlegar be it recorded that the corps from that parish had succeeded in fighting their way through an ambush laid by police and military, killing two of the police and routing the remainder with the few shotguns in their possession. Other corps attacked police barracks on their way and helped to secure some rifles and ammunition. When all had assembled — early on Wednesday morning — the position was attacked by a force of police. The attack was repulsed, but Liam decided to take up a less exposed position and moved the whole force to Moyode Castle. Here a few skirmishes took place,

the Volunteers winning each time, capturing several prisoners, and with each victory gaining experience and confidence. On one occasion they actually pursued the attacking force into the town of Athenry."

If Thomas Davis had lived to see 1916, he would surely have exclaimed, 'The West's Awake.'

Following disbandment, every effort, according to Fr. Feeney, was made by the other leaders to save, not themselves, but Mellows, who would surely be so useful in the future. Eventually, and after several months, arrangements were made through Captain Collins of Cork, to convey him to America via Liverpool.

ESCAPE TO U.S.A.

Arrived in America, Liam Mellows was well received by the Irish. John Devoy gave him a position on the staff of the 'Gaelic American' and he gave many lectures to Clan na Gael Clubs and other Irish Societies. But singleminded and transparently sincere himself, he was disappointed to find some lack of such qualities among some of the leaders of the Irish American organisation. He had to deal also with active opposition from the political secret police and English agents. As a result of the misrepresentation he fell under suspicion of not being genuine and was expelled from Clan na Gael. To quote his friend, Fr. Feeney again, "He was on the verge of starvation and contracted a serious fever as a result. It was then that God sent him a friend in Fr. Magennis, O.C.C., an Irish Whitefriar then stationed in New York, and afterwards Superior General of the whole Order. Fr. Magennis took him to the Carmelite Priory and the Carmelite Fathers supplied his every need. When he had recovered from the fever he was given a position on the teaching staff of the Carmelite Schools and in this capacity he tried to make some return for the kindness he had received."

He taught Irish history and the Irish language to the children, taught the old songs and the old dances and inspired a deep love in young hearts for the land of their fathers. Fr. Magennis later wrote of this period :

"The memory of those trips (to a variety of halls and centres) shall never pass away from any member of the little band that took part in them. The girls and the boys who were the actors in the scenes are now grown up and have taken their place in the world, but their lives have been

made sweeter and their characters are hallowed by those associations. In that other world to which Liam has winged his flight that memory shall be sacred and shall live in the golden rays from the Father's Throne. It is glorious to have known such souls as Liam but it is more glorious far, it is surely reward sufficient for every effort made, that those times cannot even fade from our memories in time or in eternity."

The end of the year 1918 saw also the end of the First World War, allegedly fought for the right of Self Determination among nations and for the Freedom of Small Nations. In December of that same year Dr. McCartan, as Envoy of the Provisional Government of Ireland, transmitted a demand to President Wilson in support of the claims to have Ireland's representatives heard at the Peace Conference. Copies were sent to the governments of twenty countries. The letter was drafted by Diarmuid Lynch, Richard F. Dalton and Liam Mellows and included the following points :

1. Ireland is geographically, historically, linguistically and culturally a distinct Nation.
2. Ireland is one of the ancient and sovereign nations of the world, and exercised sovereign status for one thousand years.
3. Ireland has never surrendered her sovereign status by compact or by treaty or to conquest and the exercise of such sovereignty has only been suspended by external force.

A few weeks later, after Dáil Éireann had been established and had appointed a Ministry as Government of the Irish Republic, Cathal Brugha and Michael Collins wrote a joint letter to Diarmuid Lynch in America, quoting Griffith, who like de Valera, was then in prison, authorising Lynch, John Devoy, Liam Mellows and Dr. McCartan and others in whom they had confidence to take immediate steps towards securing international recognition of the Irish Republic and to appoint delegates to assist or substitute for any delegation from Ireland to the Paris Peace Conference.

The shy Fianna boy was to become within a few short years a leader and a spokesman of his country. Brian O'Higgins, who published Fr. Feeney's account of his friend, makes this comment : "he remained humble, simple, unselfish Liam Ó Maoil íosa through it all."

PROPAGANDA IN THE U.S.A.

Mighty work was done by Liam Mellows throughout the United States when acting as advance agent for de Valera, President of the Irish Republic, who arrived in America in June 1919. Liam travelled all over the country, lecturing as he went and Fr. Feeney writes of this period: "The people took him to their hearts at once, his fighting record, his youthful appearance, his manifest sincerity and his wonderful oratorical powers making him a hero of the hour."

The enthusiasm, earnestness and devotion of Dr. Mc Cartan and his colleagues from Ireland, allied to the support from some of the Irish in America resulted in the establishment of a strong and virile and widespread Irish movement in the United States. On this formation de Valera was able to build and, for the work which his leader accomplished at the time, Mellows paid a very fine tribute.

In a letter from Mountjoy Frison in 1922 he wrote: "He (de Valera) made the name of Ireland respected where it had been despised and the Irish Cause an ideal where it had been regarded as political humbug."

Liam had gone to America in the first place simply to preserve his freedom but he had used the occasion to further the cause of Ireland and he and his friends had succeeded beyond all expectation, in spite of all obstacles and they were many and various, and above all, in spite of British propaganda and war hysteria.

*She is calling, calling, calling.
In the wind and o'er the tide
We, her children, hear her voices
Call us ever to her side.*

Att. James Connolly.

But the call home grew ever stronger, and although Liam was so successfully organising moral and material support for the fighting men at home, he was becoming increasingly impatient to be back in Ireland.

Explicit orders kept him in America but the day dawned at last when the word came to him to return home and rejoin his comrades.

"Liam was called home to Ireland," wrote Fr. Magennis, "to the land of his heart's desire; called home to the land where he was to find an early grave, a grave dug by his own countrymen into which he was thrown, done to death by the men with whom he had laboured, to whom he had given his life and his all. He had besought us again and

again to help the men in Ireland — the men who decreed his doom. He had urged us to contribute to purchase arms for the men in Ireland — and those arms were turned on him, the one we loved the best."

Changes, great changes, had taken place in Ireland since 1916. Old, and countless new, comrades were now engaged in the epic struggle against, not only the battle-hardened troops of England now bloodily engaged in denying Ireland the principles for which they had professed to be fighting on foreign battlefields, not only these troops, but the specially constituted highly paid Black and Tans and Auxiliaries of evil memories.

Hugh Martin, the correspondent of the English Daily News, summed up the English strategy, if such it can be called, as 'Government by tanks'. "It is only a temporary expedient," wrote Martin, "and it cannot be indefinitely prolonged. There are limits to the most grotesque comedy and in the end we shall have to give up either the hypocrisy of pretending to concern about freedom in Czechoslovakia or the infamy of stamping on freedom in Ireland. The issue may be delayed but it is not in doubt."

What Martin wrote in 1919 might equally well be written of the Six Counties today. The issue is still delayed; though given more explicit expression in '98, and subsequently, the struggle through all the centuries has been directed to the one end, to get the stranger out of our house.

That the British Government was well aware of the fundamental issue is clearly evidenced from the speech of the then Prime Minister, Lloyd George, when he said:

"If you asked the people of Ireland what plan they would accept, by an emphatic majority they would say, 'we want independence and an Irish Republic.' There is absolutely no doubt about that. The elected representatives of Ireland now, by a clear, definite majority, have declared in favour of independence — of secession."

These then were the terms of the struggle.

Prior to 1916 Liam and his Comrades had organised to bring the Republic into being; at Easter in that year they had proclaimed the Republic and by inspiration and deathless example they had stirred the old embers of national pride into an undying fire which consumed all that was ignoble and shone as a beacon to freedom lovers throughout the world.

As organiser and as a military leader the qualities of sincerity, of devotion, of selflessness had won for him a high place even among the great men who made 1916 and the succeeding years glorious. During the period of his exile in America he had been unremitting in his endeavours

to further the cause of the infant Republic and success and distinction attended his labours.

THE TREATY

Back in Ireland, Liam turned from the work of propaganda and organisation in which he had been engaged to the duties of a soldier and among other activities we find him, in his capacity as Director of Purchases of Óglaigh na hÉireann, engaged in conferences to import arms from Italy, or in plans to destroy the Custom House with its nine departments of British administration.

The summer of 1921 brought peace feelers from the British and a truce was finally arranged, to be followed by the signing of the so-called Treaty in December. The Treaty was signed by delegates who lacked authority to conclude an agreement without reference to Dublin; it was signed under threat of immediate and terrible war and it split the country.

In the debate which followed in the Dáil, Liam spoke against the Treaty with conviction and sincerity and made a deep impression on all who heard him.

In part he said :

“For the first time we had a Government established by the directly declared will of the people. Ireland was put forth to the world as the headlight, as the beacon beginning to shine for all time to guide all those who were struggling. Here in this country of ours is contained the germ of great and wonderful things for the world. This country has fought a fight that will ring down through the ages and maintained itself well against all the tortures and inflictions that a foreign tyranny knows so well how to impose. It maintained its way up to this stage, and now, not through the force of the British Government, but through the gullibility of ours, we are going to throw away the Irish Republic. These are facts.

“We are told that we must have unity. Yes, we want unity, and had unity in Ireland during the last few years, but we had it only on one basis, the basis of the Republic. Destroy that basis and you cannot have unity. Once you take yourselves off that position you place yourselves in a position to pave the way for concession after concession, for compromise after compromise. Once you begin to juggle with your mind or conscience in this matter, God knows where you will end, no matter how you may try to pull up later on. You can have unity by rejecting this thing; you cannot have

unity by approving of it. Even though you have control of some of the material resources of the country, you are going to put yourselves in the position of being within the British Empire, and outside, away from the rest of the world. As long as we were independent we could appeal to the outside world and so long were we certain of receiving sympathy and help. Now, you are inside the British Empire, if you accept this Treaty, and turn where you will, you will be told you are a domestic concern of the British Empire. The League of Nations, the League of Robbers! We stand, some of us, where we always stood, and despite all that has been said in favour of this alleged Treaty we mean to continue standing where we stood in the past. Whatever may happen, whatever the road may be in front of us we intend, with God's help, to travel it. The time will come yet — I hope it will come soon — when those who are going to depart from the straight road will come back to it. Then we will be together, but not until then.”

“God knows where you will end!” How prophetic were these words! Each succeeding decade since, each year, has brought some new shame to our country since the betrayal and treachery of the Treaty. The unity that was sundered, the honour that was so quickly abandoned, all, all, could have been preserved on the basis of the Republic proclaimed in 1916 and endorsed by the whole of the people in the following years.

“To my mind,” declared Mellows, “the Republic does exist. It is a living, tangible thing, something for which men gave their lives. There was no question of making a bargain over this thing, over the honour of Ireland, because I hold that the honour of Ireland is too sacred a thing to make a bargain over.”

But the men of principle who thought like Liam Mellows, the men who valued the honour and freedom of their nation and the welfare and prosperity of all the nation's children, found themselves in a minority in An Dáil.

EFFECTS OF THE TREATY

Can any who lived through those days describe the sorrow and the heartbreak? Almost we had glimpsed the Promised Land, almost our country had been delivered from the scourge of centuries and now, like Moses, we were condemned to put the vision aside.

In her book ‘White Light and Flame’, L. McManus writes of her feelings; the same thoughts and fears and doubts

and questionings that tortured countless others. Under date December 7th (1921) she writes :

"My friend came into the room. Her face was grave and puzzled. She told me what had happened. A feeling of amazement and fear siezed me. I took the paper and read. There was no room for doubt. At midnight a Treaty had been signed and Ireland had been placed under the Crown. The thought could not be adjusted; it jostled and drove out other thoughts; an intruder, and yet come to stay. And with it flashed into light the background of Irish history. All the tricks and frauds and tyrannies and broken treaties perpetrated by England on Ireland in the centuries seemed leaping out of time, and rushing together, and I saw confused, terrified men, broken armies, red swords, the hangman's rope, the pitch cap, all in one terrible intermingling scene. And we had been so near victory! And once again England had won! Then I rallied. There were men still left in Ireland. What would the other leaders say? What of the Cabinet of Dáil Éireann, and there was the I.R.A.!"

CIVIL WAR

"The tension of the country relaxed. Bewildered, half-stunned at the sudden change, at the submission, it waited for understanding, for guidance. And with this there was a relaxing of the stern spirit of resistance; and the horror of being hunted, and of the Black and Tans, and all the tyranny of the military, all that Ireland had suffered in the Anglo-Irish War seemed suddenly lifted. Men could stay in their homes in peace, no lorries with bellowing drunken ruffians would draw up at their doors; the raids would cease, they, or their sons, would no longer be dragged from their homes, or villages fired up, life would be safe, the boys untaken.

"Then in swept the Dublin papers proclaiming the greatness of the Treaty, the power, the gifts, the places left in Ireland's hands. And the Six Counties would come in — the Treaty provided for that — a few more years and they would come in. And the people had all the power in their hands; no change without the nation's leave; that was provided for; there was the Referendum. Nearly all the Press wrote leaders, and published letters in praise of it, and the exhausted, war-tired people felt for the first time their exhaustion and war weariness as the clamour of praise swept into their ears, for did not the papers and distinguished people say that the Treaty was next door to absolute free-

dom? England's hand was removed; a stepping stone to sovereign independence was gained; let Ireland take her stand upon it. But in the heart of the nation there was no exultation. It was relief; it seemed security, but it was not a thing to be cheered as a victory. And in thousands of men and women, the first amazement passed, there was indignation, there was questioning, and before long resolution. In England there was full knowledge of her victory — England's victory, at once. Every English paper praised the Treaty; Ireland was still under the Crown; her High Court of Appeal was to be Ireland's High Court too; the Constitution when drawn up was to be submitted to the English Cabinet; she was allowed an army, for that army might be useful."

Though not a full background, this passage from the pen of L. McManus conveys the mood of the country at the end of 1921 and through the early part of the following year. But the pressure from England on the pro-Treaty party was unrelenting and within a few months the country was in the throes of Civil War. Liam had recognised the signs when he said they had all become involved so much in the routine of the struggle that they had forgotten all they had learned in the beginning of the movement. In these latter days we should beware that we do not repeat any such mistake.

Much has been written on the war of brothers and Liam and his fellow officers exerted every effort to avert it. In April 1922 he was elected to the Executive at the Army Convention and held the rank of Q.M.G. Subsequently, every possible endeavour was made to prevent any division in the Army, to maintain Dáil Éireann and to have elections deferred while the threat of war with England was present, but to no avail. England's pressure intensified and English artillery was provided to the Free State in order to drive the I.R.A. out of the Four Courts.

With the inevitable surrender of the Four Courts, Liam Mellows, Rory O'Connor, Dick Barrett and Joe McKelvey were, among others, taken prisoner and they, with the many Republican prisoners, engaged in keen discussion on future action. Arising out of these debates, Mellows prepared some notes and these were smuggled out in August. His suggestions included the following :

"The programme of democratic control (the Social Programme) adopted by An Dáil, coincident with Declaration of Independence, January 1919, should be translated into something definite. This is essential if the great body of the workers are to be kept on the side of independence."

He continued :

"In our efforts to win back public support for the Republic

we are forced to recognise, whether we like it or not, that the commercial interest so-called—money and the gombeen man—are on the side of the Treaty. We are back to Tone which is just as well—relying on that great body 'the men of no property'. The 'stake in the country people' were never with the Republic. They are not with it now, and they will always be against it — until it wins! We should recognise that definitely now and base our appeals upon the understanding and needs of those who have always borne Ireland's fight."

Few further letters were to come from his pen. The I.R.A. in the field, in its determination to stop the executions of prisoners by the Free State forces, declared that it would hold the men who voted for the Military Courts responsible, unless the Free State adhered to the rules of war. In pursuance of this policy Brig. Seán Hales was shot dead and another wounded on December 7th, 1922. Within a few hours, Liam Mellows, Rory O'Connor, Dick Barrett and Joe McKelvey, prisoners in Mountjoy, were shot as a 'reprisal'.

COMRADES IN LIFE — AND IN DEATH

Rory O'Connor, Commandant General, was first in command at the Four Courts. He had seen long and active service and all his gifts and, in particular, his engineering skills were devoted to the cause of his country. He was wounded in 1916 and following capture in 1920 he was savagely tortured in Dublin Castle by the Auxiliaries. In a last letter to his sister shortly before he faced his executioners he wrote:

"Were you aware that the devotion of my life has been to the Blessed Virgin? This day I have just finished a Novena in honour of the Immaculate Conception, the anniversary of my First Communion."

Richard Barrett, a splendid Irish Irelander, was an inspiration to all in his native Cork. He was one of the seven who escaped from Spike Island in 1921, that prison island where the indomitable John Mitchel was briefly held at the commencement of his sentence of transportation.

Joseph McKelvey, Lieutenant-General in the I.R.A., made the Fianna strong in Belfast after 1916. On the morning of his death he wrote:

"The way to freedom is a hard and bloody one. I can only hope and pray that my death will be a contributing factor towards the great end for which so much suffering has been endured — our independence.

"I wonder what my former comrades will think of this. I am going to pray for them that they may yet see the light. I hope when I face the firing squad I shall do so like a man, and that you may never be ashamed to have known me. I feel that God in his infinite love and mercy has given me grace to do this, and that he will not desert me when the supreme moment comes"

Fr. Albert, who brought spiritual aid to the men in the Four Courts, wrote before his death in Los Angeles:

"I have been thirty years on the mission, and I can solemnly say that never during all that time did I receive a fraction of the religious inspiration I received in the Four Courts with Rory and the boys."

Brian O'Higgins, in the course of a tribute to the Four Martyrs, said:

"From the beginning of July 1922, all through the summer and autumn of early winter, they were held as prisoners of war in Mountjoy Jail, never charged with any crime even against the mongrel 'Free State' set up, not by the Irish people but by force and by an act of the English Parliament at Westminster, never tried by any court, civil or military; and then in the small hours of December 8, the Feast of the Immaculate Conception, their jailers entered the cells where they slept, awakened them and told them to dress and get their belongings together, as if they were about to be removed to another prison or to be released. When they were thus taken away from the company of their comrades, they were told that as a reprisal for something that had happened outside in the City of Dublin, a mile away from the prison, they were to be shot in a few hours time. And while their unsuspecting comrades assembled for Mass that morning, the volleys rang out, which told that the Four Martyrs had joined the company of Ireland's deathless dead.

"Liam Mellows and his Comrades followed freedom through fire and blood, through poverty and strife and slander, followed it through the gates of death, gladly, proudly, uncomplainingly. Their call to us is a call of hope and courage. They bid us remember that so long as there are even a few, be they weak or strong, who will not yield in their hearts to the English enemy, who will have no traffic with English trickery, who will keep the light of faith and love and service on the straight road they walked, so that others may see it and follow where they led, there is hope for Ireland still, and all the force and intrigue and treachery in the world cannot crush her down in defeat.

"They bid us be strong in our faith, unyielding in our course, courageous and clean in our actions, loyal to the

very last as they were and content to do our share of the uncompleted task, not caring to whom will go the honour and the glory."

To his very dear friends John and Eileen Hearn in Massachusetts, Liam wrote on the morning of his execution. He was as a son to them during his stay in America. It was in their house that one night after the Family Rosary had been said and all had retired that John Hearn recalled something he had intended saying to Liam and lest he might not remember it again he went to Liam's room. A knock brought no reply and John softly opened the door. Liam was on his knees saying the Rosary. To John's remark that he thought they had made their guest say enough prayers for one night the nonplussed Liam replied : "Well, here is how it is. No matter where I am or how late it may be, I always say the Rosary in Irish before going to bed. It seems to keep me near to Ireland."

Now in his last letter to these devoted friends he writes : "I have no regrets, for the future of Ireland is assured. We die for Ireland, for the Republic, for that glorious cause that has been sanctified by the blood of countless martyrs throughout the ages — the cause of human liberty. The Republic stands for truth and honour, for all that is best and noblest in our race. By truth and honour, by principle and sacrifice alone will Ireland be free. That this is immutable, I am prepared to stake all my hopes of the hereafter — Ireland must tread the path our Redeemer trod. She may shrink — but her faltering feet will find the road again. For that road is plain and broad and straight; its signposts are unmistakable."

On the anniversary of his death in 1923, Fr. Dominic, the exiled Capuchin, Chaplain to the Lord Mayor of Cork, Terence Mac Swiney, wrote : "A whole year since dear Liam's murder at the hands of Britain's minions. A whole year. But not a year, nor a year of years can blot out the memory of his noble life and heroic death. We are too near these events to fully appreciate the spirit, the sufferings and the achievements of Liam and his glorious companions. Those of us who have lived with them, striven with them, hungered with them, and faced death with them, know that we did so heartened by their example. And we realise that future generations will see them as the brightest stars in the historic galaxy of Ireland's martyrs for Faith and Fatherland."

Opposite page : Liam Mellows speaking at the grave of Wolfe Tone in Bodenstown, June 1922.



THE DAY

(Sung in the G.P.O. in Easter Week)
Air : The Rising of the Moon.

O God rest you, Robert Emmet,
and God rest you, noble Tone;
God rest you, Hugh O'Donnell,
and O'Neill of brave Tyrone.
God rest you, Patrick Sarsfield,
in your grave far, far away;
God rest you all who strove to speed
the Dawning of the Day !

Chorus :
Freedom's bright and blessed day !
Ireland free from Saxon sway !
Lift your hearts and pray God speed us,
to the Dawning of the Day !

Not in vain you poured your life blood,
gallant hearts of '98 !
Not in vain you stood undaunted,
'neath the scourge of English hate;
Men of Wexford! Men of Antrim!
Men whose names shall ne'er decay;
But shall shine like stars to guide us,
to the Dawning of the Day !

Foreign foe and native traitor,
both have failed to quench the flame
That has guided Ireland's armies
through the years of pride and shame;
And 'twill flash to deathless glowing,
making bright the upward way,
When our men shall march to freedom,
at the Dawning of the Day !

O'er the fields your blood has hallowed,
O ye hosts of Irish Dead !
In the light of Freedom's morning,
Men of Ireland will yet tread.
When the foemen reel before them,
in the thunder of the fray,
They shall shout your name in triumph,
at the Dawning of the Day !

Brian na Banban.

"In our efforts to win back public support for the Republic we are forced to recognise, whether we like it or not, that the commercial interest so-called—money and the gombeen man—are on the side of the Treaty. We are back to Tone which is just as well, relying on that great body 'the men of no property'. The 'stake in the country people' were never with the Republic. They are not with it now, and they will always be against it — until it wins! We should recognise that definitely now and base our appeals upon the understanding and needs of those who have always borne Ireland's fight".

(Liam Mellows: Notes from Mountjoy, Aug. 29, 1922)

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(From a Tribute by Brian O'Higgins)

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