

Irish Peace Treaty Signed In Mixture of Hilarity And Gloom

London, Jan. 30.—The inside story of the scenes in No. 10 Downing Street, Premier Lloyd George's official residence, the night the Irish peace treaty was signed and how the Premier's personal secretary was rushed off to Belfast, with the Premier's overcoat, wearing Lloyd George's overcoat, is here given for the first time. With the strain over, the signing took place amidst the greatest hilarity.

The account, as given by the Evening News, follows:

The excitement at Downing Street throughout the crisis was intense—that is the only word.

It left officials limp and apathetic afterward, as if a white-hot fire had burned them out.

But they were cheery and full of nothing but the great campaign and victory.

The Prime Minister would not give in. He passed from group to group and man to man, arguing, urging, defending. He seemed to have had no luncheon or dinner, only a snack of tea, standing up talking as he ate and drank.

Mr. Churchill, too, never lost heart. He lowered his bull-head and drove home brilliant point after brilliant point unchangeable fortitude.

But, of course, the climax of the drama was the last act, when after the Sinn Fein leaders had put back their answer, they returned and commended till 2:30 with our Ministers.

The scene of the signing was memorable indeed for its strange, almost unnatural high spirits.

There was a hectic hilarity born of weary nerves and jaded thoughts, and everyone chattered and laughed.

Best of all was Mr. Collins, the indomitable man of action and practical negotiator, whose jokes and ever-ready humor sent the Prime Minister into peals of laughter.

He was appealed to about details, and answered so drolly that the room shook with amusement time and again.

But a certain shrewd observer tells me that the time which gladdened his heart most was when peace had been signed and former foes were at long last wholly friends.

The problem was to get the news and terms in time to Ulster, and to the clock spoke of 2 a. m. and past!

"What was to be done to get the messenger in time 'to-morrow'?" "No, to-day," said Mr. Collins, and everyone reared.

The Sinn Fein and Englishmen put their heads together for common action for the first time against the common enemy Time, and devised means for the instant transmission of a courier to Belfast.

The ordinary train to Holyhead takes, I believe, six and one-half hours or more, so a special one primed to do it in five hours was ordered on the telephone.

Next a destroyer was summoned through the Admiralty to be in readiness to wait Mercury across the briny seas.

But who shall go. The prime Minister pointed resolutely to Mr.

Collins. Mr. Collins pointed back to the Prime Minister, when their eyes fell upon the devoted red head of Mr. Shakespeare, the indefatigable secretary of No. 10, who had followed negotiations all night.

"Shakespeare, you must go," said Mr. Lloyd George.

"He has no clothes for the journey," said someone.

"He can have my overcoat," says the Prime Minister.

"And my toothbrush!" roars an Irish voice somewhere.

So, otherwise without change of garments, Mr. Shakespeare speeds off in the Prime Minister's fur-tipped overcoat to brave a nonstop run along crowded rafts to Holyhead and a rolling passage over the Irish Channel.

Then somebody said what ought to have occurred to them all:

"How strange that a man named Shakespeare should act as intermediary between our reconciled nations."

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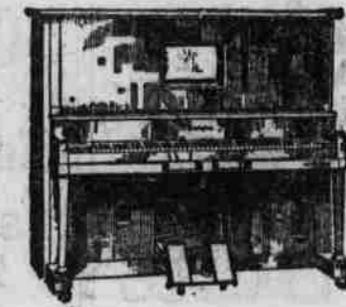
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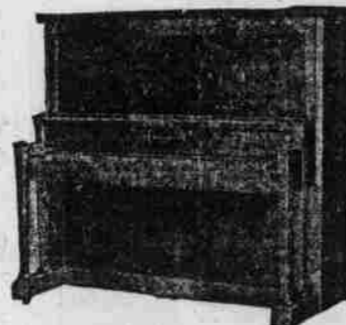
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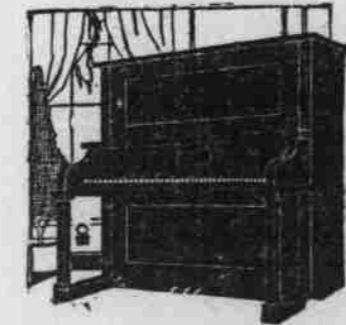
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