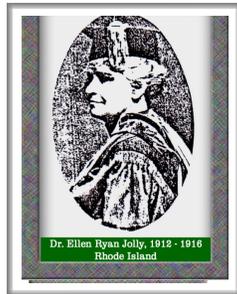


Irish Women Rise

LAOH Irish History Newsletter

Ellen Ryan Jolly and the Strive for Irish Freedom



During this fall when history was made when Pope Francis addresses Congress, we should remember our own history with Congress. Ellen Ryan Jolly, National President from 1912-1916, first addressed Congress in regards to the Nuns of the Battlefield Monument. On December 12, 1918 as Past President of the Ladies Auxillary along with the President of the AOH, President Mary McWhorter and future President Adelia Christy, they addressed the Hearing of the Committee on Foreign Affairs on the Irish Question. Many Irish Representatives spoke before the Congressional Committee to encourage the passing of a Resolution 357 to present the Right of Ireland to freedom, independence and self-determination at the International Peace Conference. In the Opening statement the group stated "We ask, Mr. Chairman, only for a free Ireland. We ask that, in conjunction with all other small nations, Ireland may be allowed to work out her own development, to look after her own interest and to be governed and directed by a government of her own people.". When addressing the Committee, Jolly stated "for 700 years the Irish people have been subjected to grievous wrongs, but

now we may entertain the hope that the day of their deliverance is not far distant. The resolutions before you provide that self-determination shall be given to the people of Ireland; that they shall finally and for all time decide for themselves the system of government under which they shall live. I am confident that this honorable committee will report a resolution which the plenipotentiaries at the Peace Conference on the soil of France, representing the various nations of the world, will be apprised of the widespread conviction in America that the doctrine of self-determination shall be applied to the settlement of the Irish Question."

Ellen Ryan Jolly was dedicated to promoting Irish and Irish American History. She served as the first Chair of Irish History from 1908-1912. She was elected National President in 1912 and served for 4 years including the period of the Easter Rising in 1916. During her term, the Irish History Contest was started along with the project of the Monument to the Nursing Sisters of the Civil War. The Nuns of the Battlefield project took 10 years to complete. On Saturday Sept 20, 1924, the Monument was dedicated on a day which was designated "Sisters' Day" the first time ever that the United States honored Catholic Sisters. The event was attended by both Religious and Government dignitaries. Ever the historian she was invited to address the American Irish Historical Society on the Irish Element which highlighted the Irish Contributions to America. In concluding that address, she stated "I will close by expressing the wish of every true Irish Heart-God Save Ireland and God Bless the United States.

Jolly had a true Irish Heart and in her letter in the May 1915 edition of the National Hibernian, she writes "the dreams of the Hibernians of early days may be realized. They dreamed and hoped for a independent Ireland. We shall never hope for less. By Unity, Friendship and Christian Charity we may win that which to the faint hearted may seem impossible, the privilege of celebrating and very soon a St. Patrick's Day upon the holy soil of an independent Ireland.

Jolly was a friend of O'Donovan Rossa. As President of the Ladies Auxilliary, she had the privilege and honor of being the only woman to serves as an Honorary Pallbearer. She writes about her memories in the National Hibernian. "With tears of which she was not ashamed, the National President stood besides the remains of the unconquerable Irish Rebel and with one hand clasped upon his dead hand and

the other upon his noble brow, pledged anew in her own name and in the name of every member of the Ladies Auxiliary eternal devotion to Ireland and Ireland's holy cause."

In the January 1916 *National Hibernian*, she writes "God grant that 1916 may be the year dreamed of by Robert Emmet when our beloved Ireland will take her place amidst the nations of the earth-green with the shimmer of springtime and gold with the glory of a victory worth the winning." On April 24, 1916, the Easter Rising took place with 200 women being active in the strive to achieve a Irish Republic. 77 of those women went to prison after the surrender. After Easter Week, Jolly spoke at rallies to support the men and women who participated in the Rising. She was the only woman speaking at the rallies. In her addresses, she pledged the support of the Ladies Auxiliary stating " we must stand shoulder to shoulder for dear old Ireland."

Ever the Historian, President Ellen Ryan Jolly was aware of the importance of historic items being displayed at the 1916 Convention. She arranged for the O'Donovan Rossa flag and the replica of Robert Emmet's death mask to be at the Convention. In August 1915, Padraic Pearse presented the flag of the Irish Republic to the O'Donovan Rossa family. This flag flew over the 1916 Convention. Jolly stated in the *Pawtucket Times* July 6, 1916 "With such relics before our eyes can our convention fall of ultimate success. The sight of Robert Emmet's heroic features and the folds of the sacred flag that enshrouded a Fenian form and that emanated from the wealth of affection borne to O'Donovan Rossa by our latest Irish martyrs will thrill and urge us on to great and high resolve to assist in making Ireland a nation once again"

Jolly never lost the goals of our organization. She was the first woman to receive an Honorary Degree from the University of Notre Dame. In 1930, William Hickey the Bishop of the Diocese of Providence Rhode Island presented the Papal Cross to Dr. Ellen Ryan Jolly. In the *Providence Visitor* January 10, 1930, Dr. Jolly was cited by Bishop Hickey as "distinguished among women as a constant teacher and loyal exemplar of high Christian virtue, exponent and promoter of every noble cause; inspired by the loftiest ideas of Catholic womanhood and of American citizenship; friend of the poor and the destitute; enamored of the cloistered

servants of Jesus Christ in religion; devoted patron of the Virgin brides of Our Lord who placed their lives and their service upon the altars of patriotism in the hour of fratricidal strife; poet and author who immortalized their names and their sacrifice in imperishable form, both by printed word and by durable stone and bronze in the center of our national capital, having easily aroused the hearty and enthusiastic cooperation of your sisters in Hibernianism, true lover of your race and faith, likewise with their assistance, contributing richly to the equipment of Mary's National Shrine with replicas of Cross of Cong, Ardagh Chalice, Missal adorned with the ancient art of Erin."

Ellen Ryan Jolly was a remarkable woman who truly lived the motto of the Hibernians. She never lost the goal of Ireland as a Nation. As we commemorate the Centennial of the Easter Rising, let us continue to strive for a united Ireland by following the examples of this remarkable LAOH leader.

Marilyn Madigan

LAOH National Irish Historian

