THE MAN CALLED PEARSE

BY DESMOND RYAN

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BY THE SAME AUTHOR

THE STORY OF A SUCCESS

BEING A RECORD OF ST. ENDA'S COLLEGE SEPTEMBER 1908 TO EASTER 1916.

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TO

MRS. PEARSE

CONTENTS

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CHAPTER I

Pearse never was a legend, he was a man. And one of his students, with due acknowledgment and gratitude to Dr. Mahaffy for the happy phrase which has been borrowed for the title of this book, intends to deal in what follows with some aspects of the life and ideals of the Man called Pearse. Circumstances and a too literal interpretation of his writings have already lent considerable colour to the legend which depicts Pearse as the sombre Napoleon of some lost cause, as a relentless idealist haunted by the necessity for a blood sacrifice to save the Irish nation, as one who would "break his strength and die, he and a few in bloody protest for a glorious thing," as something or anything more legendary than the actual Pearse many of us knew. "Kings with plumes may adorn their hearse," ran a popular tribute as early as September 1916, "but angels meet the

soul of Patrick Pearse." Innumerable ballads have followed, and Pearse belongs to history already. We would prefer to describe him in the Provost of Trinity's words. It is doubtful whether anyone living to-day can call up again the complete Pearse, even the Pearse we knew in Sgoil Eanna. Unless, however, as intimate an account as possible is left of those important years from Sgoil Eanna's foundation in 1908 until the end, at the best, essential details will be absent, at the worst, a personality will have vanished in a legend.

Since Pearse died his pupils have felt a veritable blank in their lives, for Pearse was a rare and noble counsellor if ever there was one. To know him was to love him, to be inspired and see a glamour in the most humdrum details of ordinary life, a sanity in the most hazardous enterprise. Some critics have found him outwardly cold, parsonical, a poseur, a spinner of fine phrases without a practical spark in him. We have a different story to tell. On the contrary, Pearse meant the most subtle and beautiful thing he ever said, was the most human of human beings, critical, humorous, proud, tender, purposeful,

scrupulous, honourable, charitable, recking every sacrifice slight for his dear ideals of God and Ireland. His biography may be summed up as the accomplishment of the three wishes he often expressed before even Sir Edward Carson dreamed of arms: To edit a bilingual paper, to found a bilingual secondary school, to start a revolution. I have written elsewhere that the only tragedy in P. H. Pearse's case was the resolute and enthusiastic pursuit of a conviction. He believed that no nation could win freedom except in arms. He also believed that circumstances, as those for instance which faced Ireland in 1848, made insurrection inevitable and indeed a matter of honour for those who had preached and prepared for insurrection. He hoped for the best and dared the worst. There is the whole and simple truth on that aspect of the matter.

Remarkably few faults marred his character. Indeed, to write the literal truth as one may write who saw him in his own home, in every mood and vicissitude, as a teacher, a writer, a propagandist, a captain, he was a perfect man, whose faults were the mere defects of his straight and rigid virtues.

In his writings, whether political or otherwise, he lives still, for all his writings, whether propagandist or not, are unconscious autobiography. Few men have ever thrown a personality so completely into words. In his descriptions of Tone, Emmet, Mitchel, or Davis, one finds not only the Evangelists he deemed to have enunciated a national gospel; one finds the men themselves; above all, one finds the man those men and teachings made. Pearse has left in his political pamphlets the convictions which so greatly swayed him. Irish nationalism was a body of teaching derived from apostles who knew both the end and the means; the men and women of to-day might expound, improve in application, but never deviate from the primal truth by a hair's breadth. "Tone, Davis, Mitchel," he told his brother, "knew better than the present generation what should be done and how to do it." Perhaps in the G.P.O., when he cried exultantly that Emmet's two-hour insurrection was nothing to this, doubts may have crossed his mind as to the strict truth of his dogma, but assuredly this was the first and final instance. Tone's AUTOBIOGRAPHY,

Mitchel's JAIL JOURNAL, the essays of Davis and Lalor, and the vast historical library which has grown up around '98, '48, '67, he studied and assimilated just in the same manner as he had formerly made the Cuchulainn and Fionn cycles, ancient and modern Irish literature, his own. He carried Tone's AUTOBIOGRAPHY around with the unfailing care some ministers would appear to carry their Bibles, and knew it as literally. "Has Ireland learned a truer philosophy," he asks in a Tone commemoration address, "than the philosophy of '98, a nobler way of salvation than the way of 1803? Is Wolfe Tone's definition superseded, and do we discharge our duty to Emmet's memory by according him annually our pity?" It is the faith which flames up in the ardent and coherent rhetoric of the oration by O'Donovan Rossa's grave-side.

"Deliberately here we avow ourselves Irishmen of one allegiance only. . . . And we know only one definition of freedom: it is Tone's definition, it is Mitchel's definition, it is Rossa's definition. Let no man blaspheme the cause that the dead generations of Ireland served by giving it any other

name and definition than their name and their definition. . . . Splendid and holy causes are served by men who are themselves splendid and holy. O'Donovan Rossa was splendid in the proud manhood of him, splendid in the heroic grace of him, splendid in the Gaelic strength and clarity and truth of him. And all that splendour and pride and strength was compatible with a humility and simplicity of devotion to Ireland, to all that was older and beautiful and Gaelic in Ireland, the holiness and simplicity of patriotism of a Michael O'Clery, or of an Eoghan O'Growney. The clear true eyes of this man, almost alone in his day, visioned Ireland as we to-day would surely have her : not free merely but Gaelic as well ; not Gaelic merely but free as well."

Again, in his last four pamphlets he defines the same faith with the same fulness and clearness, writing as he did in complete consciousness that his pen must soon be laid aside, and now, if ever, should he write his apologia. If similarity of word, phrase and thought be any guide, he wrote it again in the Republican Proclamation.

Besides an apologia he has written an

autobiography. No careful reader of How Does She Stand, those three addresses upon Tone and Emmet, delivered in places so far apart as Bodenstown and New York, can ever mistake Pearse's personality, or character, or purpose. The singleness of his purpose, the strength of his character, the beauty of his personality shine through his words. His portrait of Emmet is a portrait of his own youth, his sadder, his more gentle side. From this came *Iosagán*, his Gaelic League activities, Sgoil Eanna. He used to remember those days with enthusiasm. "*Bhíomar óg an uair sin*," he would cry with eagerness and proceed to relate with intense pride and satisfaction all the dash and energy of his co-workers in the Gaelic League, what an ideal and vision the Language Movement had brought to him, recalling that at the age of eighteen he had issued his Three Essays on Gaelic Topics as a book, that at the age of twenty-three he had edited *An Claidheamh Soluis*, won a Modern Language Scholarship, become a schoolmaster and Secretary of the Gaelic League's Publication Committee in the one and same year. "Ah!" he would conclude, half in Irish and half in English,

"*Nach leisgeamhail an dream sibh!* You have no go!"

His portrait of Tone is a portrait of Pearse from the time he scoffed at his "harmless literary Nationalism" and passed into the Irish Volunteers, "the thing I have waited for all my life." In "The Rebel" and "The Fool," Pearse reveals himself as he was awaiting that fateful Eastertide. We find in *An Mháthair* that other Pearse who could have found his way blindfolded among the Connacht roads. We can read in *An Uaimh*, or the "Wandering Hawk" that great love for boys that has meant so much for Irish education. Finally, in "The Singer" we find the life-story and philosophy of one who knew its ending, and what it profits man to struggle for upon this earth, a vision of truth and duty perhaps no child of Adam dare hope to see and follow more than once in a hundred years. He drew his flaming inspiration from the Irish hero-tales and a simple, spiritual, living Christianity. He hints, too, that he has sounded the depths of disillusion. That is the message of the stern and subtle "Master," or the more direct and joyous *An Rí;* that message reaches a mature

expression in "The Singer" to convince us that Pearse, in very fact, incarnated the soul of Irish Ireland which laboured steadfastly until it rose before men's eyes in the lurid Easter flames and a city's devastation.

Because Pearse knew so well what he wanted, and repeated in a hundred ways his beliefs and teachings, he has been dismissed by some as simple. His message was indeed simple and direct to his generation. Repeatedly he has compressed his gospel in an article, a poem, a phrase. In justice one must protest, his was one of the most complex personalities of his day. Two very opposed statements of his are singularly illuminating in this connection, allowance being made for the self-deprecation men of his temperament indulge in sometimes. In 1912 when his advocacy of the Irish Councils Bill had exposed him to Republican and Sinn Féin criticism, he said in private he was the most sincere and dangerous man of them all, engaging in public to free Ireland if he had a hundred men to follow him. The offer expressed the conviction which never deserted him, that to desire was to hope, to hope was to believe, and belief spelled accom-

plishment. He devoted his life to the attainment of his three objects, or in the just expression of his brother, what he said beside Rossa's grave had been his inmost faith since childhood. Again, when the Volunteer movement had absorbed him he used to declare that before he had taken to the noble trade of arms he was a mere harmless literary Nationalist as his enemies well knew. He spoke more truly when he told a literary society at eighteen that he was an enthusiast and gloried in being one. Development may be traced in his writings, but no essential change. Essentially it was the same Pearse who stood in Kilmainham jail yard as he who had started upon the study of Canon O'Leary's *Séadna* twenty years before in a back room in Dame Street.

No more characteristic and frequent note was struck by Pearse than the uncompromising Separatist note. The growth of his political ideals is a useful study when we wish to avoid confusion of aims and methods. Pearse was always a Separatist, a Republican, and an advocate of physical force. A lover of paradox might say with some show of reason that Pearse was consistently a

moderate and a revolutionist. He always believed in an ultimate appeal to arms, claiming that no subject nation had won freedom otherwise, with the solitary exception of Norway, where the threat of force had been implied. For a long while he held the Irish people should accept any measure of Home Rule which guaranteed the national integrity, and use it as a step towards complete independence. Therefore as editor of *An Claidheamh Soluis* he had urged the acceptance of the Irish Councils Bill. In 1912, not a hundred yards away from the General Post Office in O'Connell Street, he spoke from the same platform as Mr. Joseph Devlin, and contended that Nationalists of all shades of opinion should follow Mr. Redmond in his agitation as far as he went, but not stop there. In *An Barr Buadh*, a political and literary weekly in Irish, which he edited about the same time, he sets forth this programme plainly, saying he stood for militant action in the event of British politicians proving as procrastinating and as elusive as usual. He has been quoted as saying, "If they trick us again I will lead an insurrection

myself," and that was his mood. In *An Barr Buadh* he preaches the doctrine that all government rests on force, actual or potential, a note which appears henceforward more and more in his speeches and essays. Towards the end I once heard him declare with passion he would try the national issue out with those same politicians if he had to march and fight with only his students to back him. In passing, one may note he had few doubts as regards his students. To tell the truth, he was rather concerned for a moment by the martial activities of some dozen of them during Easter 1916. He showed as much by his manner, to be promptly reassured, for P. H. Pearse was no ghoulish monomaniac who sacrificed his students without a thought, nor would he have had it said of him that he "dragged" his boys into an insurrection. He would have wished them rebels, no more or no less than he wished the people of Ireland. Sanctity of conscience and individual freedom were as sacred watchwords to him as love of country. He detested the little tyrannies which make, as he said, "Thou shalt not" half the law

of Ireland, and the other half, "Thou must." Certain London newspapers have wept over the fate of forty little boys marching out to meet the British army at full strength. Mr. Shane Leslie in an article where poetry rather than truth predominates, informs us that Pearse told him he meant to lead the St. Enda boys into rebellion some fine day. Pearse, indeed, was always willing to discuss insurrections with anyone, the subject being very near to his heart, but to confuse the schoolmaster with the politician is a grievous error. When irate British critics have asked whether Pearse had the right "to train the sons of others to be mad martyrs," it has not been easy for us who knew Pearse to refrain from smiling. For we knew his conscientiousness and remembered him sorrowfully admitting Thomas MacDonagh's "Begad, that's consistent," was right when a past pupil of both had departed for the wars. Pearse did not indoctrinate his boys with revolutionary doctrines. Freedom in education was his steadfast dogma, and he trained up neither little tin soldiers nor little jingos nor little cowards. As for the forty little boys, they have not been born yet!

When I first came in contact with Pearse, he was of the opinion that the younger generation should concentrate on industrial, language and Irish Ireland movements imbued with a fighting spirit and waiting their chance. He saw no other teaching in history than the way of the sword, or ability and readiness, at least, to use the sword when necessary or where opportunity offered. Ten years of this programme and he prophesied revolution. Despite all this he was alive and very candid as regards difficulties and possibilities. I have known him to admit in argument that a Home Rule Bill might conceivably make Ireland (to quote his own adjectives) smug, contented and loyal, that his opponents could advance powerful arguments for the nation's remaining within the British Empire, that an insurrectionary programme presented formidable and depressing difficulties. For himself, he was prepared and strove to face these. He could understand the case for compromise, but personally rejected it. As an instance, when discussing the now much mooted question of Colonial Home Rule, he averred that had he ever a voice in rejecting

or accepting such proposals, he would cast his vote with the noes, not considering, however, the action of those who championed such a scheme as in any wise dishonourable. Afterwards he summed up his mental attitude as that peaceful frame of mind common to men who never compromise, and the phrase is singularly felicitous.

"We have no misgivings, no self-questionings. While others have been doubting, timorous, ill at ease, we have been serenely at peace with our consciences. The recent time of soul-searching had no terrors for us. We saw our path with absolute clearness; we took it with absolute deliberateness. 'We could no other.' We called upon the names of the great confessors of our national faith, and all was well with us. Whatever soul-searchings there may be among Irish political parties now or hereafter, we go on in the calm certitude of having done the clear, clean, sheer thing. We have the strength and peace of mind of those who never compromise."—IRISH VOLUNTEER, 22nd May, 1915.

"Charity in all things" was no platitude on his lips. He has spoken with severe and

passionate condemnation of his political opponents, but invariably excludes personal invective, preferring to deal with principles rather than with men. Even here he believed in "courtesy upon all occasions." He would speak with restraint of the Irish Parliamentary Party, admitting the indictment of some of the members current in Sinn Féin circles, but adding unfailingly, *Níl cuid aca ro-dhona mar dhaoinibh.* Implacable as regards principles he scorned to impute motives to persons as such. In America when asked an opinion of Mr. Redmond's reasons for his attitude towards the war, he replied that he did not know, and refused to judge the man. In GHOSTS Pearse wrote his real indictment of the Parliamentarians with an eloquent and bitter dignity, proclaims that the men who have led Ireland for twenty-five years are bankrupt in policy, in credit, even in words, and wonders whether the ghost of Parnell is haunting them to damnation. But the main count in the indictment is that which accuses them of regarding nationality as a negotiable thing rather than a spiritual thing. The sentence in one of his speeches beginning:

"I believe them honest, but they have sat so long at English feasts," is a fair example of his views and methods.

The Volunteer movement arrived to find Pearse awaiting it the greater part of his life. If to the rank and file of that movement he was its spirit incarnate, to him the Volunteers were his ideas which had taken arms. His fierce advocacy of armed force came from his philosophy of life, but an Ireland of talkers and its effect in disgusting him had its share in his manner, at least, of expressing his admiration for the strong man armed. Some of his more caustic expressions were evoked by Ireland's attitude during the South African war, and bore indeed a startling similarity to the views of the late Mr. Joseph Chamberlain on the same subject. The great Imperialist had said that the Irish were very good as far as sympathy for the Boers and hurling insults at England went, but there the noise ended, nor was there courage enough among them all to raise even a riot. Which would have appealed to Pearse as a very sapient and true remark. To quote his own summary of the case: "A nice figure we cut during the Boer war!

We *talked*. Assuming our warlike declarations were seriously intended, what prevented us chasing the British garrison, small boys and militia men, out of the country?"

But Pearse was interested in other things beside the noble trade of arms, in the Irish language, for instance, and first and always in the whole men and women of Ireland. Turn to his ideals for the Irish language, his second great enthusiasm and inspiration. For his ideal was Ireland not free merely but Gaelic as well. His exploitation by several well-meaning but badly-informed critics in Great Britain and America as an Anglo-Irish celebrity is an amusing but grave misrepresentation. Indeed it should make him turn in his grave. His life-work will never be understood so long as it is ignored that the sources of his inspiration lay in the traditions handed down from the Sagas, the despair and militancy of the dispossessed Gael as voiced in his poetry, the simple and religious outlook of those self-contained communities remote from the manners and customs of the Pale upon the Connacht sea-board. In Sgoil Eanna, he did his best to make a younger Ireland

"Gaelic as well," and made Irish as much a living language as is possible when the home language of the majority happened to be English. Upon an average he gave his students a good working knowledge of the language within a year. Irish was the official school language, and to such an extent did Pearse speak in Irish only to the staff as well as to the pupils that I can count upon my fingers the number of times I held long conversations with him in English. When he heard one of his masters speaking to a visitor in English upon a certain occasion he did not recognize the voice! His method of making Irish the official language was the simple expedient of speaking it until sheer force of repetition made the new language familiar. "*Céard é?*" he would ask with bewilderment the new-comer who addressed him in English, to enjoy with huge secret amusement, a few months later, that dumb new-comer flourishing with great self-assurance the vocabulary and favourite phrases of his instructor.

Rightly or wrongly—one gets another view in Thomas MacDonagh's LITERATURE IN IRELAND—Pearse's whole mental attitude

was antagonistic to Anglo-Irish literature. The very words Anglo-Irish he detested and denied their validity, although, unlike certain perfervid propagandists, his knowledge of the work of Irish men and women was as appreciative and as exact as his knowledge of English literature itself. Next to the *Táin Bó Chuailgne*, which he read with the care and attention most of us read newspapers, his favourite author was Shakespeare, innumerable editions of whom had an honoured place on his book-shelves. His admiration for Yeats was profound and cordial. In J. M. Synge he recognized a genius who had made Ireland's name considerable in the eyes of the world. Nor was he slow to defend Synge in circles where the latter's works were disparaged for miserable propagandist reasons. But speaking generally, Pearse practised bilingualism to the detriment of the English language in Ireland, working and striving for the final battle between the two languages. Nor would his side in such a conflict have ever been in doubt for a moment. Your Anglo-Irish writers, he contended, brought only fame to English literature and could never be

true representatives of Irish literature. A special niche might be set apart for them in English literature, it is true, but at the best they only retarded the rise of a literature in Irish; at the worst they forwarded the most subtle of English conquests: the mental conquest. Pearse no more questioned that the language of the Irish nation should be Irish than he would have questioned the existence of God.

As a Gaelic League propagandist, Pearse was a great and effective exemplar. Like his fellow-worker, Thomas MacDonagh, to whom the Gaelic League had also been as a light from heaven, Pearse envisaged all the difficulties in any enterprise he undertook. Neither of them ever indulged in flamboyant prophecies that "in five years we shall all speak Irish." Pearse said with pride that the regeneration of the Ireland we know began when the Gaelic League began, added that Ireland would die when the language died, but he realized superhuman efforts were needed to prevent a further decay. In his own caustic and characteristic phrase he was singularly moderate in his aspirations and methods. He would merely have the

Irish people, and not the human race, learn Irish and speak it. So fine an example did he set them that Thomas MacDonagh exclaimed Pearse was killing himself by inches, but such men made movements. Those whose patriotic enthusiasm prompted them to master and apply Irish, Pearse believed, would count more in the language's ultimate preservation than the native speaker. Eventually he grew convinced that only an Irish Government could save the Irish language. The salvation of the Irish language he would have regarded as the first duty of an Irish Government. Perhaps he would have said that any actual Irish Government might very well thank the Language movement that it ever came to be. For all subsequent movements of his day he claimed had received their baptism of grace in the Gaelic League. The growth of English among the children in the parts of the Gaeltacht he knew best—he had cycled and tramped through every Irish-speaking district in his time—he regarded as the beginning of the end unless a miracle intervened. In one particular sense, he came to believe the Gaelic League had failed

in its purpose. He understood that the best non-native speaker rarely mastered Irish as he conceivably might have mastered French or German. Pearse might have been grimly sceptical as a schoolmaster of the latter possibility. His own Irish works stand among the classics of modern Irish literature, a non-native speaker whose pseudonym once led an ardent critic to declare that here was a veritable native speaker and Gaelic mind expressing itself in literature beyond a shadow of doubt. Pearse meant, however, that the cause of this comparative failure was to be sought in the lines the language movement had started, not in any deficiency of the learner or the language. The idea occurs once in an open letter to Dr. Hyde in *An Barr Buadh*. Pearse would argue that had the revivalists made the Irish-speaking districts the home of living ideas, democratic, religious or political, had there been more rebels in the best sense and less grammarians in the worst, to spread a propaganda from the Gaeltacht outwards, to make the Gaeltacht the home of living ideas instead of making the cities centres of linguistic enthusiasm,

progress would have been more rapid and results more permanent. Not that Pearse ever faltered in his allegiance to the Ireland Gaelic as well as free. Irish was our own language, and there the matter ended, might well sum up his attitude. Certainly, he wrote, when an inevitable development drove him to other activities, "I have come to the conclusion that the Gaelic League, as the Gaelic League, is a spent force, and I am glad of it. I do not mean that no work remains for the Gaelic League, or that the Gaelic League is no longer equal to work; I mean that the vital work to be done in the new Ireland will not be done so much by the Gaelic League itself as by men or movements that have sprung from the Gaelic League, or have received from the Gaelic League a new baptism or a new lease of life. The Gaelic League was no mere weed shaken by the wind, no *vox clamantis:* it was a prophet and more than a prophet. But it was not the Messiah."—*An Claidheamh Soluis*, November 8, 1913. Yet he added that he had spent the best part of his life teaching and working for the idea that the language is an essential part of the nation, nor had he

ever modified that attitude. In the movement to which he had given the best years of his life he had found not philology, not folk-lore nor literature alone, but the Irish nation. A new vision came to him. Henceforward his mind and deeds were given to a militant national movement.

The preceding sketch of Pearse's ideals is but an outline, for who can call up again the complete Pearse, the Man called Pearse, except, perhaps, his words alone?

I have squandered the splendid years:
Lord, if I had the years I would squander them over again,
Aye, fling them from me!
For this I have heard in my heart, that a man shall scatter, not hoard,
Shall do the deed of to-day, nor take thought of to-morrow's teen,
Shall not bargain or huxter with God; or was it a jest of Christ's
And is this my sin before men, to have taken Him at His word?

. . . . .

Lord, I have staked my soul, I have staked the lives of my kin
On the truth of Thy dreadful word. Do not remember my failures,
But remember this my faith.

CHAPTER II

THE THREE WISHES OF P. H. PEARSE

In a sentence this is the biography of P. H. Pearse: he accomplished what he wished to accomplish. *An Claidheamh Soluis*, Sgoil Eanna, the Irish Volunteers, these were the three works, the three monuments he left behind him. In the preceding chapter we have written of Pearse's ideals; we propose now to tell briefly the main facts of his career, and can find no more pithy summary than the declaration he often made to his relatives and friends. Repeatedly from the moment I first came to know him well I heard him say that he had resolved three things should be placed to his credit before he died. He wished to edit a bilingual newspaper, to found a bilingual secondary school, to start a revolution. A noble ambition moved him. That great saying of Cuchulainn, emblazoned around a fresco in Cullenswood House, found an echo in the

three wishes of Pearse: *Bec a brig liom sin sa gen go rabar acht oenlá ocus oenadaig ar bith acht go marát m'airscéla ocus m'imthechta dimm esi.* "I care not though I were to live but one day and one night if only my fame and my deeds live after me."

Patrick Henry Pearse was born 10th November, 1879, at 27 Great Brunswick Street, Dublin, where his father, James Pearse, an Englishman, for long had his place of business as a sculptor. James Pearse had a profound love of art, literature, and an even more profound love of freedom. As a sculptor he was judged to wield a distinctive chisel, and his work, instinct with high imagination and beauty is scattered in many pieces of ecclesiastical architecture throughout Ireland. Of his father Pearse was wont to speak with great affection and reverence, adding in his humorous way: "*Ní raibh sé ro-dhona mar Shasanach!*" James Pearse was, indeed, one of those Englishmen whose love of liberty did not exclude Ireland. A Radical, he numbered many fighters for freedom amongst his closest personal friends, English and Irish. He wrote a pamphlet, ENGLAND'S DUTY TO IRELAND, AS IT APPEARS TO AN ENGLISHMAN,

flaming with bitter scorn and contempt in reply to a certain pseudo-Irish, pseudo-Catholic, Dr. Maguire of Trinity, who had chosen to revive some ancient catchcries and political legends to defame the Parnellite movement. So effective a reply was James Pearse's pamphlet that it was quoted triumphantly from platform and pulpit throughout the country.

P. H. Pearse never allowed his hatred of British government in Ireland to extend to personal animosity against individual Englishmen as such. His writings are the last word in common-sense upon that singularly barren controversy as to whether love or hate should be the motive-force of Irish patriotism. Unfortunately for certain of Pearse's critics, those writings would seem to be so many blank pages to them. In general, he watched Englishmen closely and greeted them politely. When he met those rare Englishmen who were such friends of freedom as his father had been, he appreciated them cordially. From their father the Brothers Pearse undoubtedly inherited that deep sympathy for art, literature, and every struggling cause. From their mother, whose people came from

County Meath with memories of struggle and sacrifice from '98 onward, they received their love of Ireland, her traditions, her history, her august and sorrowful past. Of Pearse's affection for his mother it is unnecessary to write, since he himself has left it in a pathetic and imperishable record. In his youth Pearse is said to have been a dreamer, above all a student, rarely playing games, and lost in his books. He commenced his education in a private school at Wentworth Place, Dublin, kept by a Mrs. Murphy. He afterwards became a brilliant Intermediate student in the Christian Brothers' Schools, Westland Row, subsequently teaching there. From the age of twelve the Irish language appealed to him, and he assiduously commenced its study. The truest of his teachers, perhaps the most telling influence in his life, he informs us in *An Macaomh*, was "a kindly grey-haired seanchaidhe, a woman of my mother's people," who told him tales by the fireside when he was a boy. From her he heard many an old Irish tale, ballad and legend, many a tale of Wexford, Limerick, of Tone, Rossa, Emmet, Napoleon, those heroes of his boyhood. From her he heard

Irish first spoken in the recitation of an Ossianic lay. Later he procured the grammar and texts issued by the Society for the Preservation of the Irish Language; in due course he found his way into a backroom in Dame Street, and started to study Canon O'Leary's *Séadna* under the supervision of its reverend author. His close study of Irish gave him that mastery over it which later was to make him one of the great Irish writers of to-day. He steeped his mind in the heroic literature of the Fionn and Cuchulainn cycles. He acquired a wide and first-hand knowledge of Irish folk-lore, prose and poetry, founding the New Ireland Literary Society when he was just seventeen to spread the glad tidings of his discoveries to the barbarians. His presidential addresses to the society were published in book form in 1898 as THREE ESSAYS ON GAELIC TOPICS.

Before he was twenty-four he had graduated in the Royal University, been appointed Irish lecturer in the Catholic University College under the Reverend Dr. Delaney, S.J., gained his B.A. and B.L. degrees, and became editor of the Gaelic League official organ *An Claidheamh Soluis*.

For several years after his father's death he was the chief support of his family, and added the superintendence of the Brunswick Street business to these other tasks. It is proper to remark that he never flourished his barrister's wig and gown, indeed he had always a dislike for the legal profession, dubbing it as "the most wicked of all professions," and admiring Tone for his "glorious failure at the bar," his contempt for "the foolish wig and gown."

Into the Gaelic League he threw himself with a whole-hearted enthusiasm, and drank deeply of his first great inspiration. As editor of *An Claidheamh Soluis*, his first ambition was fulfilled. Valuable series of articles on education, especially in its bilingual aspects, appeared in the columns of the paper while he was editor. His *Modh Direach* lessons have been since republished as *An Sgoil*, and were the basis of the system of language teaching he afterwards applied and amplified in St. Enda's. A tour in Belgium, where he studied that country's language problem and educational system closely, supplied him with abundant material and observation which has left ere now a

lasting mark on Irish schools. *Poll an Phíobaire* (or *An Uaimh* as he renamed it), an adventure story for boys, and the stories afterwards reprinted as *Iosagán*, belong to these years. Nor must his carefully-edited editions of the old Fenian tales *Bodach An Chota Lachtna* and *Bruidheann Chaorthainn* be forgotten. He loathed slovenliness in speech or work. A bad or careless edition of a Gaelic text would move him to wrath. He set in this, as in all else, a noble headline to workers in the field of Irish literature. He worked out his educational theories during his editorship, and never wavered in his conviction that bilingualism in language teaching in Ireland was the real path to the salvation of the Irish language in the Irish-speaking districts. The utter exclusion of English from the Gaeltacht he characterized as fatuous. The problem confronting the Gaelic League was, he saw, to restore Irish as a living medium of daily intercourse to the six-seventh English-speaking parts of the country. He did not believe that Belgian methods were quite applicable to Irish conditions. Irish, in an efficient and unhampered educational system, he held

should be used as the language of instruction in districts where it was the home language, and English as a second language taught as a second language. Where English was by necessity the first language, he advocated a compulsory second language, which in the vast majority of cases would be inevitably Irish, used too, unlike English in the Gaeltacht, as a medium of instruction from the first. In all details of programmes, he desiderated the fullest autonomy for schools. In the MURDER MACHINE he sketches an organization scheme for any future Irish Ministry of Education, based more or less upon his observations in Belgium. In *An Claidheamh Soluis* he conducted a persistent agitation for Irish as a "teaching language" in primary schools. He determined to put into practice the old Gaelic ideals in a school that "should be an Irish school in a sense not dreamed or known in Ireland since the Flight of the Earls."

In Sgoil Eanna his dream became a reality. He has left on record its realization in THE STORY OF A SUCCESS. During the first six months of the school he continued to edit the Gaelic League organ. St. Enda's

College opened first in Cullenswood House, Oakley Road, Ranelagh, Dublin. Its prospectus, distinguished by the wonderful literary charm the author impressed upon the simplest thing he ever wrote, proclaimed a determination to create a revolution in Irish secondary education upon bilingual lines. The purpose and scope of the school was announced as "the providing of an elementary and secondary education of a high type for Irish-speaking boys, and for boys not Irish-speaking whom it is desired to educate on bilingual lines." Pearse's real purpose was to revive the education system not of a class but of a people. He took off his hat to the ancient Gael as being a better democrat in his school system than any modern community. "Our very divisions into primary, secondary and university crystallize a snobbishness partly intellectual and partly social," he said, and in his moral instructions to his students ranked snobbery as a vice slightly below the Seven Deadly Sins. Sgoil Eanna was a success. He revived an ancient system and permeated the school with a Gaelic atmosphere, giving his pupils that hardening and

inspiration he desired, although some of them did not perceive this until their Headmaster had died. Visitors to Sgoil Eanna remarked an indefinable something in the air of the place, and said they would ever afterwards recognize a St. Enda pupil anywhere. The central purpose of the school, to quote Pearse in his prospectus, announcing what he afterwards did with incredible success, was the formation of character, "the eliciting and development of the individual traits and bents of each; the kindling of their imaginations; the giving them an aim and interest in life; the placing before them of a high standard of conduct and duty; in a word, the training up of those entrusted to its care to be in the first place, strong and noble and useful men, and in the second, devoted sons of their motherland." Wide and generous culture, modern methods, a particular reference to the needs of to-day, based upon a national and heroic tradition —such were Sgoil Eanna's aims; such were its subsequent achievements. Two years later the school was transferred to the Hermitage, Rathfarnham. And Pearse had accomplished two of the three things he

had planned and resolved to accomplish. He now worked on until the Irish Volunteers and a European war arrived to find that he had long awaited their coming.

In November 1913 he made a powerful and remarkable speech at the inception of the Irish Volunteers in the Rotunda Rink, Dublin. He had long regarded the prevalent indifference to what passed for politics as a sign of decadence, however excusable. To Sir Edward Carson, Pearse paid the compliment of crediting the bellicose knight with not believing everything he said. "A lawyer with a price" he called him, and left the matter there. But he rejoiced that the North had began, and held that the rest of Ireland had no right to sneer at the Orangemen, "whose rifles give dignity even to their folly." He became a member of the original Provisional Committee of the Irish Volunteers—an enthusiastic and untiring organizer, and was elected Director of Organization. He strongly opposed the entrance of Mr. Redmond's nominees to the Provisional Committee, becoming more and more a leading spirit in the counsels and activities of the Irish Volunteers after the

split. He spoke on innumerable platforms throughout the country and surpassed himself in his great O'Donovan Rossa oration at the historic and imposing funeral of the dead Fenian. Definitely he had turned now to the last work of his life, and his political interests grew more absorbing than ever. More and more to the public he appeared as the Republican leader. But even here there was no real change. In FROM A HERMITAGE, a reprint of a series of articles which ran in IRISH FREEDOM from June 1913 to January 1914, Pearse tells us how he had determined upon again attempting to initiate a militant political movement. *An Barr Buadh* and Cumann na Saoirse in 1912, had been an attempt before the time was ripe. In a later chapter I shall describe at more length the too little-known experiment of 1913. Pearse had long contemplated an "armed Republican movement," but did not forsee the precise form it would take. Had Sir Edward Carson never taken to arms in Ulster, Pearse would have gone ahead with his militant movement. To every generation its appointed deed he said in 1913, and prophesied that the multitudinous activity of

organizations, political, labour and language, would meet yet in an Irish revolution.

Pearse's visit to America in the early months of 1914 made a profound impression upon him. He went there on a lecturing tour to raise funds for his college. He encountered the flotsam and jetsam of two generations' Irish movements. For John Devoy, Pearse had a deep admiration and affection; I have heard him speak of few other men in terms of such unstinted praise. His admiration for the survivors of the Fenian movement he met in the States was as lively. "There are no such men in Ireland to-day," he told us. How Does She Stand? belongs to this American visit, and records Pearse's admiration for Devoy, and his own growing militant determination. In an addendum, August 1914, to the pamphlet he writes: "A European war has brought about a crisis which may contain as yet hidden within it the moment for which the generations have been waiting. It remains to be seen whether, if that moment reveals itself, we shall have the sight to see and the courage to do, or whether it shall be written of this generation, alone of all the generations of Ireland, that

it had none among it who dared to make the ultimate sacrifice." Pearse has told us how in his youth he had walked hill and glen to find the Fenians drilling in the moonlight, but alas! to find them never. Ireland dreaded war and insurrection, it seemed to Pearse, because she had not known them for years, and he earnestly believed the national spirit of Ireland was in danger of death. The early developments in Ireland during the first stages of the war profoundly depressed, horrified him, and intensified his conviction that the national consciousness of Ireland was on the point of extinction. The service of his country had become the one passion of his life, and he cared nothing for honours, fame, nor, even as he had sighed for at times, tranquillity among his books. Many men have been as superb rhetoricians as Pearse, perhaps as human, as generous, as kindly; it is certain that few men have passed from thought to action with so deadly a thoroughness and sincerity. Fate brought him into the company of comrades who also were of the temper to back words with deeds.

During the Rising, Pearse acted as Commander-in-Chief to the Republican forces.

He was elected President of the Provisional Government. He established his headquarters in the General Post Office, and was the last to leave when fire drove out the defenders. It is impossible to give an idea of Pearse's bearing in that last scene, his calmness, his decision, his bravery, his care for the wounded, his humanity and regard for what are termed the courtesies of war. O'Rahilly was to him the most heroic of men. "Ah!" he said to me, "what a fine man O'Rahilly is, coming in here to us although he is against this thing." From 16 Moore Street, Pearse entered into negotiations for surrender with General Lowe, impelled by humanitarian and political motives. He was satisfied that Ireland's honour had been vindicated by a protest in arms, and he desired to save the lives of Dublin citizens. Tried by courtmartial, he was executed on May 3, 1916. Neither his brother, mother or sister saw him before his execution, but we know well how he felt in those last hours. A soldier's death for Ireland and freedom; he would have chosen that death of all deaths had God offered him the choice. Chivalrous, charitable, noble

was the spirit of this man when he realized the end had come. The most bitter personal controversy aroused by Easter Week he dismissed in one phrase in his message to the outside world when the bombardment of the Post Office was in full progress, and the Rising's duration a matter of hours: "Both Eoin MacNeill and we have acted in the best interests of Ireland." Shortly afterwards the Three Wishes of P. H. Pearse belonged to history.

CHAPTER III

AS WE KNEW HIM

The ballads have wisely left Pearse to the angels and to the hearts of his countrymen. For the moment we prefer not to leave Pearse entirely to angels, and certainly not to picture postcard artists who, whatever else they may have done, have not captured a glimpse of the magnetic and human presence still vivid in our memories. He has written of Tone, that "this man's soul was a burning flame, a flame so ardent, so generous, so pure, that to come into communion with it is to come unto a new baptism, unto a new regeneration, a new cleansing." "Davis' character," he wrote again, "was such as the Apollo Belvedere is said to be in the physical order—in his presence men stood more erect." In our experience these words had a literal and personal application to him who wrote them. We might add the adjective of an Englishman who spent an evening's argument in

Pearse's company : "Ah ! that is the most *persuasive* man I have ever met." The greatness of Pearse was to be found in his sincerity, his absorbing enthusiasms, his humanity, and certainly in his power of convincing and moving others. He had learned early what he would persuade his fellow-mortals to do; primarily, he persuaded by example. In this chapter we propose to recall some pictures of the man as we knew him.

In 1909, the headmaster of Sgoil Eanna was more in evidence than the writer and the revolutionary who appeared more and more in the public view in the years 1913-1916. Unforeseen circumstances and an amazing personal development have left since then an enigmatical personality for present-day Ireland to understand. The schoolmaster (all talk about "schoolmasters' insurrections" notwithstanding) has been contrasted with the revolutionary. To have known him in Sgoil Eanna is to question such a contrast. We never saw a really different man, but watched the development of the one and same individuality, coming, let us hope, unto a new baptism, standing

certainly more erect in his presence. He himself with great glee and quiet satisfaction would inform us that in his youth he had been "a bit of a prig," and subsequently "a dangerous man." But it seems to me that there was no essential change. He always said the same things, believed the same things, worked for the same things. In the last years of his life he perhaps spoke and acted with a deeper intensity and a more splendid coherence, but that was all. Nor when one remembers how a Gaelic League or political gathering would carry him out of himself, how eagerly his eyes would flash and his whole figure be lighted up with animation, is that final splendour in word and deed surprising. He neither drank nor smoked, detesting both these vices, especially the latter, but the strong wine of his enthusiasms kindled in him a very spiritual intoxication, evident to even a casual observer.

Sgoil Eanna's golden days were the first two years. We saw Pearse then more as a schoolmaster than we ever saw him afterwards. Although, thanks to his abnormal energy, he could carry through several

large undertakings simultaneously, he was accustomed to concentrate upon one thing at a time. He brought Sgoil Eanna through its most serious financial crisis and edited *An Barr Buadh* all at the height of one school session. In the spare moments which Sgoil Eanna and the Volunteer movement combined allowed him, he wrote some of his most profound and most delicate stories and poems. *An Uaimh* (as he renamed *Poll an Phíobaire*), *Iosagán*, all his plays, his carefully edited versions of Irish texts, belong to periods of his life, when the calls upon his time would have staggered most men. But it was characteristic of him to concentrate upon one thing; one thing to him included every conceivable aspect of that thing. In 1914-1916 he concentrated upon the Irish Volunteers, and ended by proclaiming the Irish Republic. From 1908 to 1913 he concentrated upon Sgoil Eanna and saved Irish education.

"My name in the heart of a child!" He has declared a memory, a resolve in the hearts of one of the least of his pupils were a sufficient recompense and justification for his "gallant adventure" in Cullenswood

House and the Hermitage. It would be possible to exhaust all the tricks of rhetoric or the flourishes of eloquence and not express what this headmaster came almost from the first day to mean to his pupils. He won our sympathies and affections. He clothed earth and sea, above all Irish earth and sea, for a thousand years with a new light for us. He made Irish a living language, and Ireland a noble land for us. He kindled new purposes and gave new meanings to our lives. In the fire of his personality he could make platitudes live again. "Never be mediocre," he would tell us, "do your best." "Do nothing you would not do before the whole world." "Faith without works is dead," and these things, as he said and lived them, set us aflame. Pearse had a great love and pride for his students. He recognized in them a tremendous loyalty and affection for himself. Four of his ex-students stopped him upon the Rathfarnham road one evening to inform him that they had heard a rumour he was to be arrested that evening on his way home, produced lethal weapons, and insisted on guarding him to the Hermitage. In times of peace, the story was the same.

"You were the best band of comrades I ever had," he told his earlier pupils during the severe financial crisis when it was doubtful whether the school would re-open. "I was told my school would not last four months; it has lasted four years, but if it closed to-morrow I believe my pupils have learned what I wished to teach them." Pearse invariably accepted a boy's word as true. If he accused a boy wrongly he apologized to him. In several cases, when he had accepted pupils' statements, in spite of strong circumstantial evidence to the contrary, he was gratified to find subsequently that his trust had not been misplaced. His very presence was the discipline of the school, while I am sure few schoolmasters have ever received so many confidences from their students. Pearse was a born teacher. His exposition of any subject was always vivid, clear, concentrated and energetic, arousing new interests, and opening up new vistas to the listeners. There was naturally a pronounced personal note in his teaching. It was a moral and intellectual stimulus to come under the influence of such a master. He did not wish to turn out so many replicas of himself,

his opinions and prejudices. It is significant that none of his pupils came to have an identical outlook upon life to his own, although they have had, one and all, something of a philosophy in common, together with a great reverence for their master. As a headmaster, then, let him describe his method and achievement. "I dwell upon the importance of the personal element in education. I would have every child not merely a unit in a school attendance, but in some intimate personal way the pupil of a teacher, or, to use more expressive words, the disciple of a master. And I here nowise contradict another position of mine, that the main object of education is to help the child to be his true and best self. What the teacher should bring to his pupil is not a set of ready-made opinions, or a stock of cut-and-dried information, but an inspiration and an example ; and his main qualification should be, not such an overmastering will as shall impose itself at all hazards upon all weaker wills that come under its influence, but rather so infectious an enthusiasm as shall kindle new enthusiasm."—THE MURDER MACHINE, p. 12.

P. H. Pearse had certainly a very powerful will, and that will was invariably made up, but he remained very open to argument and persuasion. Deputations of his pupils to demand a holiday for some special occasion well remember his affable and laughing surrenders to them. Upon certain subjects, political and religious, he adopted a very decided attitude, held them as dogmas, and made those who were rash enough to argue the matter out, feel rather foolish with his emphatic "No, it's not so; it's not so." Within the charmed circle of his pupils' confidence and friendship, he entered from the first day he knew them. A hundred pictures of him persist as the headmaster of Sgoil Eanna. Now as he spoke, a slow and deliberate figure from the rostrum to tell us the story of Fionn or Cuchulainn, or past efforts to gain independence with hope and prophecy of similar efforts to come. Again, as he strode down the hurling field, his black gown flying in the wind, to encourage the Sgoil Eanna players to beat some hostile team and end with the traditional Sgoil Eanna three shouts of welcome.

In July 1915 I spent a month's holiday with P. H. Pearse and his brother in Rosmuck, County Galway, the part of the Gaeltacht that he knew best. It lies ten miles westward of the nearest railway station, connected with the outer world by a telephone only, in the midst of the hills of Iar-Connacht, dominated by the Twelve Pins in the distance. The first hush of creation has fallen over the place. Few travellers come along the winding roads which lead towards it. A schoolhouse and a police barracks represent its largest collection of dwellings, the rest are scattered far and wide over the bog-land and heather slopes beneath the changeful skies. "Connacht of the bogs and lakes," the words fit the scene, and here, near a wayside lake, Pearse had his cottage. Across the fifty-acre expanse of water which is his lake, the white thatched oblong building with its green door in a porchway and two windows in front looms from its elevation at the two outposts of civilization beyond. Behind the Atlantic roars. Before evening shades into nightfall, the orange and reds of marvellous sunsets glimmer upon the

lime-white walls of the small dwelling, the bluish hills afar sink to a sombre purple. Curious patterns in daytime shape themselves across the skies, clouds hover above the hilltops, descend and roll up again. These empyrean phantasies are reflected with startling clearness in the waters below. Behind stretch bog and hillside, across which sweeps the vigorous breeze from sea and mountain. Half a mile away the main road has sent out an intricate sinuous by-path, springy with its peat-sod surface and forever windswept ; it clambers up to the gate below the cottage.

The lake is typical of Connacht's multitudinous lakes. Two large islands, rich in plants and vegetation, a peninsula, numerous small rocks break the pellucid smoothness of its surface. As twilight falls on the small rocks one understands the Waterhorse tradition claims to inhabit these waters. Yonder rock peeps suggestively above the level, a frown upon its forehead, a gleam in those crevices, its eyes, as if in very truth it were swimming and about to spring. A frog or stray lizard leaps from beneath one's feet out of the ferns or bilberries. A heron

hovers over the water. A rabbit scuttles away behind one. The district, rich in natural beauty, is not rich in natural wealth. Fishing, farming upon a rocky soil and not too much of that, kelp-making are the main industries. Poverty is here, underfeeding, a low personal income; a desperate battle with the soil is here, but squalidness and sordidness are absent. Despite all the obstacles hinted at, a self-contained community is here. It builds its own houses, grows its own food, cuts its own fuel, speaks its own language, and leads an isolated life of its own. A miniature civilization is evident. Superficial externals, the peculiar local dress, the slow melodious Irish greeting to the veriest stranger at once confirms the impression of a new and unaccustomed society. The topography of the district, the lives and souls of the people, the distinctive dialect, were as an open book to Pearse, and his reading of them gave us *Iosagán* and *An Mháthair*. Later he regretted that he had not dealt more with the social life of the people. "None of my stories deal with turf," he once remarked whimsically, as if he had discovered a serious

grievance. But there was not a hill or lake or *maam* whose name and history he did not know. Iar-Connacht's roads and soaring peaks, the hard fight of her people against big material odds, the glamour and terror of the sea that eats her very shores, the rich, inner life of her people, were all one to him. Iar-Connacht's mind and soul he wrote for wide humanity. In his last hours his mind called up the barefooted children, the little western towns, the quiet green hills, where he had often wandered, lost in some imaginative reverie.

I went on many journeys with him through Connacht, and soon learned his love for the district, and how profound a spiritual appeal the Gaeltacht held for him. We visited, in particular, a village some miles up Lough Corrib, in a castled demense. Heavy mists, small stone walls and houses, card players clad in frieze, gave us a characteristic glimpse, he said, of Connemara. Here, he continued, the days of hovels at the doors of Seigneurs lingered on, a rich spiritual life with poverty, a poor spiritual life with riches, side by side. We walked through the demesne, Pearse smiling at warning notices and using Irish

to melt the hearts of gate and gamekeepers; locks flew open and guns fell before the ringing Gaelic salutations. Obviously only very churlish folk could object to an explorer who blessed them in God's name with an air of decided authority. In the course of our rambles we once came across a venerable and amiable gentleman, with the air of a retired colonel, who remarked the scenery was delightful. After a moment's hesitation he pressed two copies of the Gospel according to St. John upon us, adding he always brought down a trunkfull for the "peasantry" there around. Pearse longed for a seditious leaflet to return as a gift in exchange, and gloated all the eight miles homeward over the simplicity of a man who used the word "peasantry" in 1915. He told us of soupers' colonies he had heard of in Iar-Connacht, and once, indeed, had been compelled to argue for several hours in a remote cottage with an elderly gentleman who had belonged to one. The latter insisted upon reading aloud the Bible in Irish, and raising controversial points innumerable until his daughter arrived to check Pearse's attempted conversion. It would be difficult to over-estimate

Pearse's love for Connacht. Every year, after the war-clouds broke over Europe, he re-visited Rosmuck, and was accustomed to bid a last farewell to the bogs and lakes. For he knew he had reached the threshold of his last adventure, had heard a call to action he could not ignore.

We returned to the city from this holiday upon the eve of O'Donovan Rossa's funeral. The atmosphere, as often in the last five years, was electric. Pearse was anxious to do justice to the dead Fenian, being very dissatisfied with an article he had written about Rossa some time previously. He was a superb orator. His rhetoric was never meaningless, but precise, cold, kindling, culminating in some terrific revelation of the gospel of sacrifice for an ideal. He used to poke fun at his earlier flights, confessing with a caustic smile, a flushed humorous look, "Well, I thought then I was an orator!" It has been observed, truly enough, that his conversation gave one the impression of clear-cut sentences from an essay. Some people misunderstood Pearse for this, and felt amused or uncomfortable in his presence. They did not know how Pearse revelled in

the study of Dublin or American slang. Nor certainly did they understand that he meant every word he said. Pearse, beside Rossa's grave, was a striking figure in his commandant's dress, his deliberate and impassioned delivery, surrounded by men who agreed with this man who certainly had never been so deadly in earnest. He fully realized his power to sway crowds with his words. Once, after an exceptionally powerful and moving address, I heard him say that he felt every man present would have followed him into any enterprise that very night. It was the same Emmet centenary address which made Tom Clarke exclaim, "I never thought there was such stuff in Pearse!" "Pearse means business," was the comment passed on his speech to commemorate the Mitchel centenary in 1915. Thomas MacDonagh used to say jestingly that Pearse had started a school to be able to make as many speeches as he liked. After some important holiday or school excursion (generally to some Wicklow glen or among the Dublin hills), we would insist upon, not a speech, but the recitation of "Seamus O'Brien," which after long and

coercive applause we succeeded in getting. Pearse, to our delight, would lay immense emphasis upon "the judge was a crabbed old chap," and startle us with the passion he threw into the lines :

> Your sabres may clatter, your carbines go bang,
> But if you want hanging it's yourselves you must hang !

I have described before his farewell speech to the school. Towards the end he grew more reserved and gentle in his manner than usual, revising his writings, and going on with his ordinary routine, outwardly at peace with all men and things. Then came April 24th 1916.

Pearse was an active and dominant figure on the ground-floor of the G.P.O., Easter 1916. All was dark within on the Wednesday evening that I had my last conversation with him. The fires glared in, distant volleys could be heard in the night, around lay men sleeping on the floor, others stood guard at the windows, peering through the sandbags at the strangest spectacle that men have ever seen in Dublin. I stood beside him as he sat upon a barrel, looking intently

at the flames, very silent, his slightly-flushed face crowned by his turned-up hat. Suddenly he turned to me with the very last question that I ever expected to hear from him : " It was the right thing to do, was it not ? " he asked curiously. " Yes," I replied in astonishment. He gazed back at the leaping and fantastic blaze and turned towards me more intently. " And if we fail, it means the end of everything, Volunteers, Ireland, all ? " " I suppose so," I replied. He spoke again. " When we are all wiped out, people will blame us for everything, condemn us. But for this protest, the war would have ended and nothing would have been done. After a few years they will see the meaning of what we tried to do." He rose, and we walked a few paces ahead. " Dublin's name will be glorious for ever," he said with deep feeling and passion. " Men will speak of her as one of the splendid cities, as they speak now of Paris. Dublin ! Paris ! Down along the quays there are hundreds of women helping us, carrying gelignite in spite of every danger." It was, indeed, fire and death and the beginning of the end. Pearse did not falter in

that last adventure. He was one of the most occupied men in that dangerous front room, superintending a hundred details, cheering wounded, and firing ever anew the devotion of his comrades within that furnace. His last letter to his mother expresses for all time his mood when he dared the worst. His manifesto from headquarters on the eve of surrender was a salute to the courage and gaiety of his followers. He was satisfied that Ireland's honour was saved, nor, for his part, was he "afraid to face the judgment of God nor the judgment of posterity." And that is the answer to the mood wherein we are tempted to grudge Pearse's immolation to his political ideals. But two pictures rise before us as we do. The first, that gallant captain in green, facing serenely a hundred dangers, and walking as serenely to his death. The second, a remembrance of that headmaster, who would have answered with a quick smile and eager gesture, "Ah, impossible!" The answer, I dare say, to all such moods.

CHAPTER IV

THE BROTHERS PEARSE

The Brothers Pearse! A right instinct guides us when we link William Pearse and his brother in that affectionate phrase which is no mere sentimental mode of speech, but the expression of a great fact. Pearse, indeed, has said all there remains to be said on the matter in a tribute to his brother to be published in years to come. He says there, "Willie and I have shared many sorrows together, and a few deep joys," adding, furthermore, that Willie is perhaps his only really intimate friend. The lines in "On the Strand of Howth," beginning:

> Here in Ireland, am I, my brother,
> And you far from me in gallant Paris,

breathe the same spirit: homage to the artist and friend who helped that leader of men more than will be ever adequately recognized to accomplish his amazing thirty-six years work. Yet William Pearse has

been sometimes pronounced a victim of circumstances rather than a victim of destiny or a victim of conviction. It has been taken for granted too readily that he followed his brother, and 'twas sad and noble enough in all conscience, but there the matter ends. The matter neither ends nor begins there.

Pearse has demanded in a eulogy of Tone's intimate friend, Thomas Russell, that wherever Tone's memory is commemorated Russell's memory should be honoured also, adding that he ever afterwards loved the very name of Russell for hearing of Tone's affection for the man. Future historians, possessed of the full facts of the case, will assuredly apply the spirit of this injunction to the Brothers Pearse themselves. The strongest and most urgent refutation of the view just observed is the record of William Pearse's life. His own words about his probable death in an insurrection, which I have quoted elsewhere, well represent the noble temper of the man: "I should not care. I should die for what I believed. Beyond my work in St. Enda's I have no interest in life." Yes, the Brothers Pearse worshipped at and were consumed in the

same flame. Lovers of freedom by instinct everywhere, poets and artists to whom beauty of word and form were a veritable passion, clear-visioned, and singularly disillusioned, for them the desire of Ireland's service was the passion of their lives. The vow made in childhood to live and die for Ireland can be traced to its fulfilment in the lives of both. William Pearse once told me the story of that vow in the presence of his brother to the latter's great amusement.

William James Pearse was born November 15th, 1881, at 27 Great Brunswick Street, Dublin. He was educated at the Christian Brothers' Schools, Westland Row, considered by his teachers to be a not very brilliant pupil, but never slapped. He early showed a great natural ability to make his father's profession of sculptor his own. It is noteworthy that his father's work, scattered over churches and public buildings throughout the country, shows, in the opinion of competent judges, profound artistic imagination and skill. About the same time as he entered his father's studio he became a student at the Metropolitan School of Art, Dublin, and studied under Oliver Sheppard,

R.H.A. In Paris, at a later stage, he pursued his art studies. In that city of "lime-white palaces and surging hosts," he reserved a special affection for the quaintness of costume, the diversity, the eccentricity and vividness of the student quarters.

His career as a sculptor may be described as brief but successful. At the Dublin and Kensington Schools of Art he gained several distinctions, while at the Hibernian Academy and elsewhere he exhibited numerous works, mostly studies of children. His first exhibited piece of sculpture was shown at the Oireachtas Art Exhibition, a nude study entitled "Eire": a symbol of young Ireland arising cleansed through the waters of the new Gaelic inspiration. From the first he was an ardent Irish-Irelander, mastering the Irish language, wearing Gaelic costume to Gaelic League festivals, and at one time as his ordinary dress, and following the political movements of the day intently and critically. During his studentship at the Dublin School of Art he conducted an Irish class there, being a fluent speaker of Irish, although his natural modesty somewhat obscured the fact. Throughout the country

he also executed a considerable quantity of ecclesiastical sculpture. Amongst other places, Limerick Cathedral, St. Eunan's, Letterkenny, and several Dublin churches, including Terenure, may be named as places where specimens of his work remain. His well-known figure of "The Mater Dolorosa" in the Mortuary Chapel, St. Andrew's, Westland Row, appears a tragic and prophetic masterpiece to us to-day. In some remote country districts one may find figures of the Dead Christ and the Immaculate Conception shaped by his chisel. The O'Mulrennan Memorial in Glasnevin and a Father Murphy Memorial in County Wexford may be also mentioned as his. A design he submitted for the Wolfe Tone Memorial, although not accepted, earned high approval from the judges. His child-studies—"Youth," the "Skipping Rope," "Memories"—reveal, however, when all is said, the work in which he was a pre-eminent master. A kinder fate might have spared us a sculptor of no small genius, one who, indeed, accomplished valuable and lasting work in his short day, one who, as his intimate fellow-students bear witness, would have

gained inevitably a considerable place among Irish sculptors. But the tragic and poignant memory that he carved upon Ireland's brain and heart has now, perforce, to vie with all the figures his brain planned or his chisel carved.

Sculpture, indeed, was not the only art to which William Pearse devoted serious attention. At the age of eleven he commenced to interest himself in the stage, acting in a play dealing with the battle of Clontarf, a work of some merit, written in verse, whose author was aged twelve, and P. H. Pearse by name. Thenceforward, he was an actor and stage-manager in many dramatic undertakings at the Dublin School of Art, the Abbey Theatre, and once in Dr. Douglas Hyde's *Casadh an tSúgáin* at an Oireachtas. Six or seven years ago, he, his sister, Miss M. B. Pearse, and others founded the Leinster Stage Society, which gave several performances in Dublin, and once visited Cork city. Under Thomas MacDonagh's management, the Irish Theatre, Hardwicke Street, was another histrionic haunt of his, where he acted mostly in plays by the Russian, Tchekoff, whom he greatly

admired for their deep spirit of sincerity and compassion towards all the weak and broken-spirited men and women of the world. In these tastes and occupations P. H. Pearse sympathized with his brother, holding sculpture to be the noblest of the arts, and employing the drama to an unprecedented extent in his educational schemes. At St. Enda's, no subject arose more frequently during those nightly conferences, where the pair discussed men, books, nations and their college to a late hour, than the play or pageant in hand or mooted. Whatever credit is due to Sgoil Eanna plays or pageants, as regards grouping and costumes, is due largely to William Pearse.

Upon his father's death, William Pearse took over the general management of the business, and eventually conducted the commercial side as well. His life down to the last years in Rathfarnham was a busy and eventful one, the life of a man devoted mainly to the arts. The vicissitudes of his career, combined with his unselfishness of character, had led him into the exacting life of a business man; now they were to lead him to forsake the congenial life of the studio, to enter upon

the devoted life of a schoolmaster, eventually into the ranks of the Irish Volunteers, the storm and fire of an insurrection, and Kilmainham barrack yard.

With his brother and Thomas MacDonagh, in the direction of St. Enda's College, he was early associated, and gradually assumed an importance and position there that few outsiders have understood. Until 1911 he was, for the most part, Art and Drawing Master, in 1913 he became a regular member of the school staff, from 1914 onwards one might have aptly named him the assistant headmaster. The actual headmaster's importance in Sgoil Eanna's scheme we need not again emphasize. But when an irresistible conviction compelled that headmaster to devote his time and energy more and more to the Irish Volunteers, William Pearse stepped forward to uphold the college in his brother's way, and with his brother's ideals and methods. He knew, none better, what a sacrifice his brother's course of action had meant to him. He knew full well how deeply Pearse's heart was centred upon Sgoil Eanna. The debt St. Enda's owes William Pearse can scarcely be over-estimated.

It cannot be too often repeated how largely his hand is writ upon it. Not unnaturally his brother's fame has obscured his claim to recognition. His retiring disposition did not impress the casual observer to the extent that P. H. Pearse's more aggressive and concentrated personality did.

I remember well the first appearance he made in Sgoil Eanna as a drawing master. He gave us, with his quiet, nervous manner, his flowing tie, his long hair brushed back from his forehead in an abundant curve, the impression of an artist first and last, that expression excellently conveyed in several of the full-length portraits of him now common. As a teacher he was most painstaking. He acted consistently upon his brother's maxim that the office of any teacher is to foster the characters of his pupils, to guide them rather than to repress them, to bring to fruition whatever glimmerings of ideals and goodness they possessed rather than to indoctrinate them with their master's prejudices or drive them through a course of studies like so many little tin soldiers. Elsewhere I have written of William Pearse's part in Sgoil Eanna, and

it is not necessary to repeat the story of his unwearied attention to the athletic, literary, social, and above all, the dramatic side of the school, or his knowledge of his pupils, his trust in them and their respect for him, or what he came to mean more and more in the life of St. Enda's. His place in the hearts of St. Enda students was deep indeed, nor have they adequate words to express what his life and death meant to them. In his lifetime a wag amongst his students wrote in a school journal (of which there was always a flourishing crop in the school, from *An Sgoláire*, quoted in *An Macaomh*, down to twenty less ambitious but vigorous sheets) :

> William Pearse's locks are long,
> His trousers short and lanky,
> When in the study hall he stands
> He does look very cranky.
>
> . . . .
>
> But now his fondest hopes have fled,
> His dearest wish's departed,
> Pope Pius the Tenth, his greatest work,
> Is going to be bartered!

This was in reference to a raffle in connection with a school fête of a piece of

sculpture gratuitously attributed to William Pearse. With this reference to his work as a teacher the record of the facts of his life may end. I fear I cannot convey a picture of the man. In his brother's writings passages frequently occur breathing a tenderness and compassion towards all the outcasts and oppressed of mankind, an austere joy in simple things, in the shapeliness or variety of animals, in the shade vivid or subdued of any plant or flower, a love of beauty and the suggestion of a great sadness. The only thing you will not find is melodrama or sensationalism. In such passages you will discover and know William Pearse. "The Wayfarer" might have been written by him, for "the beauty of the world had made him sad," and he had gone too upon his way sorrowful. But you must remember that the sadness of the world neither soured him nor robbed him of a keen sense of humour. Nor did it indispose him for action as his enthusiastic participation in the Irish Volunteers goes far to prove. When he saw a villain in a blood and thunder play he both smiled and hissed. A devout student of Dickens, he told me once that nothing

delighted him so much in all the volumes of that writer than David Copperfield slapping Uriah Heep in the face. His knowledge of English literature, it is worthy of note, was appreciative and wide; he was an especially keen Shakespearian student. Amongst modern writers he devoted especial attention to the works of Ibsen and the Russian novelists. The community of thought and affection which existed between the brothers Pearse was very apparent. It is said that Pearse once lost his temper to great effect in his schooldays when Willie was reprimanded by a teacher. Pearse's violent protests soon changed matters for the better, and Willie was never molested again. In St. Enda's, Pearse used to tell us with pride he had never lost his temper since the school had started, and this was strictly true, although he informed us that when he was younger his temper had been a fiery one. His feelings towards Willie were very evident even from his affectionate mode of addressing him, or even the tone of his voice when he spoke about him; this was the more remarkable, as Pearse was in public a very undemonstrative man. But

where his brother or his pupils were concerned, no one could be more genial, more kindly, more human. The two brothers at times conversed in a baby dialect of their own; the effect on first hearing it was weird in the extreme. In all important matters William Pearse was the confidant, counsellor, and often the critic of his brother. I have known them to spend hours arguing over a pupil's behaviour or character, a new school programme or scheme, and I remember Willie once saying bluntly about a speech: "Pat, you were terrible, you repeated yourself, you were too slow and bored the people!" In conversation William Pearse had an interesting and confidential manner. He spoke generally of books, very often of politics, while his criticisms of bumptious and snobbish persons were a joy to hear. He had a great reverence for women, and trusted them more than men. His religious convictions were very deep and earnest. His national faith was the same as his brother's, and quite as intense and ardent. Like P. H. Pearse, he never blatantly expressed his beliefs; indeed preferred to listen a good while before he argued.

The Volunteer movement brought a new purpose and enthusiasm into his life. He felt his brother would play a large part in its development and counsels. When it started in 1913 he joined the ranks, where his sincerity and enthusiasm for the work won him rapid promotion. A considerable portion of his spare time was devoted to the study of military science. He attended manœuvres, route marches and parades religiously, and became, from frequent practice, an accurate marksman. His attitude towards the last adventure was substantially his brother's. He was no pacifist. He did not gloat over forlorn hopes. He thought an insurrection in the circumstances worth a trial. He believed implicitly in a successful issue to the national struggle, but, in Easter 1916 or similar contingencies, he doubtlessly believed circumstances had arisen to make a fight against overwhelming odds a point of honour. What I have written on the same question as regards P. H. Pearse is true also of Willie: the simple explanation is that they both hoped for the best, but dared the worst.

When the Rising broke out, William Pearse was attached as a captain to the

headquarters staff. Easter Week found him in the General Post Office, where he remained an active but stoical figure until fire forced the Volunteers to evacuate the doomed and collapsing building. He was separated from his brother after the surrender from 16 Moore Street. He bore himself with dignity before his court-martial. On May 4th, exactly twenty-four hours after his brother, he was executed. From the surrender he never again saw his brother. He told his mother and sister of a terrible incident which happened the morning the latter was executed. An officer and guard arrived to bring Willie to pay a farewell visit. When they had entered the prison, and were proceeding towards a yard entrance, the report of a volley was heard, and another officer rushed forward hastily to tell the party that they had arrived too late. . . .

Perhaps from a personal point of view it was not a hard fate that neither of the Brothers Pearse survived the other. The works to which they had devoted their lives seemed to lie in ruins around them. Possibly the breaking of that great personal tie would have left the survivor a broken man. The

speculation is a rather useless one as to whether the shock would not have killed William Pearse in any case. In one sense, at least, the firing squad conferred unconsciously a service upon him: he would have been unknown otherwise to the succeeding generations. He will be remembered as one who went down fighting for his hopes and beliefs, while the story of the Brothers Pearse will move men and women wherever human affection, love of motherland and unselfishness of character are held in reverence. In the coming years he will gain a deeper place in the heart of Ireland. His death will not be his only claim to remembrance. He will stand out as one of the men who are essential figures in the struggles of this country, men who prepare the soil, sacrificing life, peace or fortune for whatever ideal has set them afire, ennobling the heritage of Ireland with their genius and disinterestedness. Such are the noble, silent heroes of the Irish revolutions whether that revolution bursts into warfare in the streets of the capital, saves an ancient language from death, or brings tenement dwellers and underpaid workers from out the depths of misery with flaming hearts.

In future hours, should the causes of their hearts be tried in the ordeal of defeat and disaster, some glimmer of freedom may well shine from their graves to nerve us and save us from despair. Such a man was William Pearse. It was good to have known him. And no words more dear to his heart could better preserve him in immortality than that noble and affectionate phrase: The Brothers Pearse.

CHAPTER V

SGOIL EANNA AND ITS INSIDE LIFE

In so far as Sgoil Eanna was a most vital expression of its headmaster, the actual translation of that "noble house of his thought" into bricks, mortar, class-rooms and the wonderful school life he created for his first band of pupils has been told already in THE STORY OF A SUCCESS. Without his burning enthusiasm, his "two globes and a map," his great love for boys, Sgoil Eanna might well have remained the delightful fantasy of an idealist's brain, and Irish education would present a more mournful aspect that it does. St. Enda's College, however, had three distinct features, Pearse, its inside life, and its pupils.

To a certain extent Pearse has dwelt upon the lighter side and the internal organization of the school elsewhere than in THE STORY OF A SUCCESS. In "The Wandering Hawk,"

a story professedly dealing with school life in a certain Western College fifty years ago—several instalments of which appeared in FIANNA 1915-16—Pearse wrote with a detachment and humour truly remarkable for a headmaster. He showed he knew his pupils better than they suspected, the nicknames with which they honoured him as well as themselves, and the pride and reflected glory they were conscious of, at times, in being the fosterlings of so great a man! In *Annála Sgoil Eanna* and miscellaneous notes scattered through *An Macaomh*, the same kindly and observant note appears. But all stories have two sides, in this particular case it would be, perhaps, true to say have, at least, a hundred. Pearse's pupils are already the possessors of an oral tradition to which the curious may still listen in fifty parts of Ireland and beyond. It is improbable that a complete account, which would satisfy those past students, will ever see the light. After the fashion of veterans, they will remain in their fifty groups relating their doings and adventures in Sgoil Eanna.

Sgoil Eanna's story has been told in essentials. So much was it an expression of

its founder's personality that we are sometimes inclined to disregard its significance as the soundest and most determined attempt to reform Irish education, to make its inspiration a national one, its methods modern ones, and its administration kindly and human. I have shown already it was the most practicable attempt to spread Irish as a spoken language among the younger generation. Pearse overcame the obvious difficulties, but was hampered by the inevitable limitations which the widespread use of English imposes. He overcame the financial difficulties by expending his own considerable private fortune, and when that had gone he supported the enterprise with indomitable tenacity and persuasiveness. Had the war not intervened, he would have cleared St. Enda's of every penny of debt. Sgoil Eanna was the first and most striking application of Sinn Féin principles to education; it declared its allegiance to Ireland in unmistakeable terms, claimed and exercised the widest possible liberty in shaping its own programmes, and shaping its own internal organization. It ignored West British ideals altogether, and took Ireland cheerfully for

granted. Its official school language was Irish, its games were exclusively Irish, its atmosphere was wholly Irish. In short, Sgoil Eanna was based upon the assumption that its pupils would live in Ireland and for Ireland, while when those pupils looked to the ends of the earth they should look through Irish glasses.

The question is sometimes raised as to whether Sgoil Eanna departed from its original ideals and programme. There is also an impression abroad that in the school all instruction was through the medium of Irish. The question requires an answer and the impression a correction. Until the second year in Rathfarnham the school held vigorously to the big and bold programme announced in the first prospectus issued. Irish was the official language of the school, and as far as possible the medium of communication between staff and pupils. Until Easter 1916, apart from language teaching, every subject was taught bilingually as far as practicable. Subjects like Experimental Science and Higher Mathematics, where technical terms and competent instructors were wanting, were of

course exceptions to this rule. Otherwise, Pearse as a pioneer with all the difficulties of the pioneer, lack of adequate support and serious financial worry, was true to his ideals and applied them with a success that will be better recognized in the future. His own account of the enterprise reads like a romance, but it is a true and literal narrative. The accusation that Pearse was an unpractical man has been based to a large extent on his difficulties with regard to Sgoil Eanna financially. It should hardly be necessary to point out, at this time of day, the gross unfairness and smug ignorance which are betrayed by such a charge. Pearse sacrificed his own advancement and resources to make his educational ideals a reality. If blame attaches to anyone, it attaches to the many eloquent critics of Pearse, who never lent him any practical assistance. He trusted himself, however, and undoubtedly would have outgrown the pioneer stage altogether had not a stern call to action in a more militant sphere come to distract him. Let there be no mistake about the matter. When Pearse laid aside his gown and grasped a sword, he felt the

sacrifice keenly. For his heart was in Sgoil Eanna, and he hoped to gratify his few staunch supporters in the venture with a monument to their common efforts that would survive them.

Sgoil Eanna will stand for ever as a great inspiration and model in the history of education and not Irish education alone. It stands out among schools by its three distinct and original features. It was one of the dreams Pearse realized. A Child Republic well describes the freedom the boys were allowed in shaping the internal government of the school. A captain, officers, and committee were annually elected amidst tremendous excitement. The event would have vied with any general election. Sgoil Eanna, too, was a very representative school. As I first saw it, it appeared to me as an Ireland in miniature. Youth was predominant, even, as the headmaster declared with pride, on the staff, thanking heaven for blessing him with an unbroken succession of clean-shaven professors. He spoke the truth when he said that in no school of its size was there present so much of the stuff of which men and nations were made, that

hardly one of his seventy pupils did not come from homes with traditions of literary, scholarly, or political service to Ireland. The school was a very reflection of the Ireland without. The inside life was always varied, vivid and stimulating. Over Cullenswood House loomed the heroic figure of Cuchulainn, and its atmosphere was a Gaelic one. Cuchulainn moved with Sgoil Eanna to the Hermitage, but settled down and became an invisible member of the school staff. In the Hermitage, Pearse turned to Emmet for an inspiration. He believed strongly in story-telling as an essential part of education. *Sgéalaidheacht* had always a recognized place on the programme. He told his pupils the entire Cuchulainn and Fionn cycles and the main periods, movements, and men in Irish history during the hours devoted to *Sgéalaidheacht.* Pageants and open-air plays accustomed the boys to the old world and very costumes of the antiquity of the sagas. Nature-study and a love for birds, animals, plants, were encouraged. A pride in Sgoil Eanna's invincible hurling team was fostered. By every possible means Irish was spread as a

spoken language among the students. Above all, Pearse and MacDonagh kindled a love and appreciation of literature in their classes. It was a dogma with Pearse that a language should be used nobly or not at all. He flung to the winds the idea that so many texts should be digested in a school year by so many different classes with an eye upon examinations. Long before his students had reached the higher classes, Pearse had introduced them to the classics of English and Irish literature, while Thomas MacDonagh, for his part, had unlocked the doors to Anglo-Irish and French literatures as only Thomas MacDonagh could have done. The inspiration and humanity of these teachers could not be overstated. With men like them, and the unique use of pageant, play, athletics and the more modern methods of language teaching, success was assured.

But the story only begins there. It is not necessary to speak of the part William Pearse, his mother and sister played in the inner arrangements of the school, or the wonderful environment in the Hermitage, or the subsequent development of St. Enda pupils. That has been told elsewhere, in

outline, at least. Nor is it quite time to deal with the "Secret History of St. Enda's," although some aspects of that have seen the light already in the pages of *An Sgoláire*, and humorous enough reading in all conscience that history is. Pearse has told in THE STORY OF A SUCCESS, from the headmaster's point of view, the narrative in outline of St. Enda's, how it was founded and the ideals and hopes of its founder. But Sgoil Eanna to its students was a home and a revelation.

Pearse's very presence, I have said before, was a discipline in itself. He had rarely to resort to corporal punishment. The most noisy dormitory or study-hall became hushed and silent as he entered with his peremptory *Céard é seo? Céard é seo?* A silence due to respect and not fear. His routine was a very busy and exacting one. Every morning, after the first bell rang at 7.30, his voice could be heard rousing the different dormitories as he rapidly descended the three floors. Morning prayers were recited, the Rosary followed by an old Irish Litany. In the refectory talking was allowed, and grew at times to a terrific din. Pearse sat with his staff at a small table, smilingly

observing the boys, and discussing with his masters the most diverse subjects, for he was interested in everything, the very picture of eagerness and animation, wrapped in his black gown, at times a distant and austere look stealing across his face. Class followed with intervals until 3.30. Until study, which lasted from 5.30 to 10, Pearse occupied himself with his many leisure projects, the financial affairs of the school, a new play, perhaps a new journal, and sometimes with insurrections. He would remain up until a late hour, writing or arguing with his brother. There was hardly a day he did not teach throughout the entire school day, even when occupied with outside meetings. He supervized the minutest details of internal organization. During his absence in America he insisted upon weekly and detailed bulletins with accounts of the boys' progress and conduct being forwarded to him those thousands of miles away. He conducted the preparations for catechetical examinations, the rehearsals for a play or pageant, the revision before the yearly examinations, in the same careful and personal manner. The influence of such a headmaster cannot be over-rated.

Aided by men like Thomas MacDonagh, and the brilliant procession of teachers who passed through the school, only very unsusceptible and unpromising material indeed would not have yielded highly successful results.

Besides the staff's influence upon the formation of character and awakening of latent imagination and purpose, besides the artistic and cultured environment, besides a contact with nature, the aid of the outside world was called in. A series of half-holiday lectures were arranged. Padraic Colum, Dr. Douglas Hyde, and Major MacBride were among the lecturers. Very candid and animated discussions always followed. In the school-committee meetings and fortnightly céilidhe, practice was acquired in speaking, while debates were held from time to time upon questions of public interest, Sinn Féin, Women's Suffrage, Temperance, Irish games *versus* foreign ones, etc. The question of the introduction of cricket as a summer game once split the school into two camps, the majority of the boys being strongly opposed to it. The controversy was decided by a vote of the entire school who rejected

it. A regular campaign preceded the result. Loyalty to Irish games was always a characteristic of the boys, as their athletic triumphs proved. For all the rare freedom and unique internal arrangements, which were such salient features of the institution, it held its own in the scholastic sphere, placing nine scholarships to its credit in the National University of Ireland.

In conclusion, let Pearse's words, which can never be quoted too often on this subject, stand as a summary of the dream that came true in the Hermitage and Cullenswood House alike. "A school, in fact, according to the conception of our wise ancestors, was less a place than a little group of persons, a teacher and his pupils. Its place might be poor, nay, it might have no local habitation at all, it might be peripatetic: where the master went the disciples followed. One may think of Our Lord and His friends as a sort of school; was He not the master, and were they not His disciples? That gracious conception was not only the conception of the old Gael, pagan and Christian, but it was the conception of Europe all through the Middle Ages. Philosophy was not

crammed out of text-books, but was learned at the knee of some great philosopher, art was learned in the studio of some master-artist, a craft in the workshop of some master craftsman. Always it was the personality of the master that made the school, never the State that built it of brick and mortar, drew up a code of rules to govern it and sent hirelings into it to carry out its decrees." With this high ideal Pearse carried through the eight years of his great work and gallant adventure.

CHAPTER VI

THE WRITINGS OF P. H. PEARSE

The purpose of this chapter is rather descriptive and bibliographical than critical. Pearse, as a writer, has been so variously and admirably treated by such able and appreciative critics as the Rev. Dr. Browne, Professor Arthur Clery, An tAthair Cathal O Braonáin, to mention but a few, that there is little necessity to travel over that familiar ground. One comes to Pearse's writings, says the first critic mentioned above very truly, to find literature certainly, but something more than literature, a veritable "*Itinerarium mentis ad Deum*, a journey to the realization of Ireland, past, present, and to come, a learning of all the love and enthusiasm and resolve which that realization implies." As an appreciation of Pearse's literary merits and purpose nothing could be more final than that. But the extent of his works, his rare gifts which brought him

pre-eminence in two languages, the autobiography contained in every uttered and written word, raise fresh considerations and begin a new story.

The extent of his writings in Irish and English is amazing. At the age of twelve he began with an English play in verse, dealing with the Battle of Clontarf. At the age of thirty-six he ended with "The Wayfarer," a valediction to the sorrowful beauty of the world. Between that poem and play a very library intervenes. His first published book was THREE ESSAYS ON GAELIC TOPICS, a remarkable and interesting volume, which shows his thorough grasp of ancient and modern Irish literature before he was twenty, a profound knowledge of Irish epic, Irish poetry, Irish folklore, an early revelation of how the ideals of the Gaelic League had fired his imagination and hardened his purpose. *Poll an Phíobaire* came next, a boys' story unique of its kind in modern Irish. The files of *An Claidheamh Soluis* during his editorship (1903-1909) contain many articles from his pen of historical and educational interest. *Iosagán agus Sgéalta eile*, published in 1907, marked a new and

pleasing phase. The living dialect of that corner in Iar-Connacht the writer loved so well enshrines the winning and pathetic figures that live and pass before us. Sean-Mhaitias, Bairbre and her doll, wistful Eoinín na nÉan, these are friends we love and remember. Mr. Joseph Campbell has recently taught them all to speak English. In these stories the author desired to raise " the standard of definite art form as opposed to the folk form." He portrayed the eternal miracle and quaintness of childhood. In 1915, *An Mháthair* had the same Connacht background but a deeper and more tragic theme, the mighty joys and sorrows which are the lot of women. Love, the target of Emerson's reproach, " Behold, she was very beautiful and he fell in love," is absent, but maternal love, the fidelity of children, the restraint and peace of men and women with whom life has dealt harshly, the terror and vicissitudes of life itself, its grandeur and its sweetness, these were the themes. Every one of the tales is charged with sadness, not the sadness of the morbid emotionalist, but the ancient sorrowfulness of tragedy, exhilirating and purifying. In the story which

gives the book its title the key-note of the collection is heard. "God loves women better than men, for He sends them the greatest sorrows and bestows on them the greatest joys." A restraint, depth and style marked the stories, unknown in Irish until then. Pearse rather admitted the charge of sentimentality urged against some of the tales in *Iosagán*. *An Mháthair* was his answer. It is an undoubted fact that Pearse is one of the best storytellers in contemporary Irish. He was a poet who sounded an unaccustomed, clear and natural note in Irish poetry, perhaps the truest poet among all the Easter Week leaders. *Suantraidhe agus Goltraidhe*, his songs of sleep and sorrow, written and published in 1913, are a brief and remarkable proof of his poetic power and vision. He has said somewhere that two personalities struggled in him as in us all, the man, the warrior, the seeker for conflict and adventure, the dreamer beside the fireside, the woman longing for tranquility and rest. In these twelve short poems he sings of those inner struggles, his intense spiritual outlook, of God's ancient herald death, his own coming fate and

renunciation. Life to Pearse in some moods appeared a terrible thing.

Sgoil Eanna brought out the playwright in Pearse. His plays, not excepting *Iosagán*, were written for his brother and pupils, "my masterpieces to order," to quote a jocose description of his own. Willie's voice he heard in every line MacDara speaks in THE SINGER, Ciaran in THE MASTER, the Abbot in *An Rí*, while the boys' parts were written with an eye upon particular individuals. THE SINGER, beyond all doubt, is the finest and best of his plays, the nearest approach we shall ever get to his view upon the last adventure, ordeal and test. His philosophy, his attitude towards men, letters, destiny rings through every line. Joseph Plunkett said after reading THE SINGER that were Pearse dead it would cause a sensation, so personal and tremendous a revelation was therein contained, an opinion the author himself rather deprecated. His warning that there is more poetry than truth in some of his more intimate writings should not be lightly disregarded. For some have been tempted to forget the man in the poet and construct weird legends; but the man was

greater than the poet, and the truth is stranger and nobler than the legends. In a great phrase, Pearse's reverence for women flashes out: "'Tis women that keep all the great vigils," a reverence we find also in the noble and moving "Song to Mary Magdelene." For the simple reading of this play any reader will grasp Pearse's outlook. The conflict MacDara tells of between every good teacher and every good mother shows us how intensely Pearse had experienced the joys and disillusions of the teacher's "priest-like office." THE SINGER has a prophetic atmosphere. Pre-Easter and Post-Easter Ireland atmospheres are there, the language, manners, setting of Connacht are there, and perhaps an answer to the critics of his part in Easter Week in MacDara's proud question: "So it is a foolish thing. Do you want us to be wise?"

Pearse's political writings, contrary to the prevalent impression, are more extensive in Irish than in English. The pamphlets in English, FROM A HERMITAGE, HOW DOES SHE STAND, GHOSTS, THE SEPARATIST IDEA, THE SPIRITUAL NATION, THE SOVEREIGN PEOPLE; three articles, "The Coming

Revolution" (*Claidheamh Soluis*, November 8th, 1913), "Peace and the Gael" (SPARK, Christmas 1915), "Why we want Recruits" (IRISH VOLUNTEER, 22nd May, 1915), and the O'Donovan Rossa oration, comprise practically the entire bulk of his English political writings. The final four pamphlets in "Tracts for the Times" were the execution of a long contemplated exposition of what Pearse deemed to be the national gospel. For him Tone, Davis, Mitchel, Lalor were the Fathers of the One True Church of the Irish Nation. Pearse uses an array of theological terms in GHOSTS to prove this case, but he has stated it elsewhere in a more simple and, to some of us at all events, more convincing wise. "I agree with one who holds that John Mitchel is Ireland's greatest literary figure—that is, of those who have written in English. But I place Tone above him both as a man and leader of men. Tone's was a broader humanity with as intense a nationality; Tone's was a sunnier nature with as stubborn a soul. But Mitchel stands next to Tone: and these two shall teach you and lead you, O Ireland, if you hearken unto them, and not otherwise

than as they teach and lead shall you come unto the path of national salvation. For this I will answer on the Judgment Day." Or again, when he reads Irish history to vindicate the unerring, popular, national instinct, and finds a theory of nationality to be no very great gain : "the instinct of the Fenian artisan was a finer thing than the soundest theory of the Gaelic League professor." Pearse's own political evolution is more significant than even the Republican and Separatist body of doctrine he came to apply and hold as rigidly as so human a personality could ever hold a political creed rigidly. In his political writings in Irish we get a far better view of his political evolution. And this brings me to consider the too little known and much neglected *An Barr Buadh* ("The Trumpet of Victory").

An Barr Buadh was a small political and literary weekly, printed in Roman type, and written wholly in Irish, which Pearse started and edited March 16th, 1912. Eamonn Ceannt, Peadar Macken and The O'Rahilly were among the journal's most constant contributors. A political society, Cumann na Saoirse, was associated with the

paper. Besides the above-mentioned contributors, Con Colbert was one of its members. The Cumann dissolved when *An Barr Buadh* ceased publication after eleven numbers. Pearse was the chief contributor, and in essay, poem and fable enunciated the political methods he then advocated. His criticisms of all political groups, Sinn Féin no less than Redmondite, Labour no less than either, read curiously to-day. He thought that the Sinn Féiners talked too much, that the Redmondites cared too little for Ireland, but had redeeming features not always acknowledged, that Labour was too Internationalist. "Less philosophizing and more fighting" was Connolly's advice to Irish Labour about this very time. To Irish Nationalists *An Barr Buadh* preached a similar gospel of action. That all government rests upon force, actual or potential, that anglicization, love of quiet living, a too peaceful spirit, a lack of union and mutual charity amongst Nationalists, were the great dissolvents of Nationalism as an effective factor—were in brief, the main points emphasized in the journal's propaganda. *An Barr Buadh* was

a political paper, but a remarkable political paper. For one thing it had the literary graces, style, fanaticism, and tolerance that only an editor like Pearse could give it. Above all it had thought, avoided formulæ and barren controversy. A delightful humour animated its pages, a caustic wit which did not even spare the editor, as witness a famous open letter to himself. The politics of the paper were Separatist and physical force. Its aim was that fulfilled later in the Irish Volunteers, a union of all Irishmen in a progressive national movement. It preached that a people's liberty could be guaranteed only by a readiness and ability to vindicate that liberty in arms. It is impossible to understand how Pearse's views upon methods developed until these Irish writings of 1912 are fully considered. An extract from his speech of March 31st, 1912, delivered from Mr. Joseph Devlin's platform in O'Connell Street, well illustrates Pearse's attitude at the time. (*An Barr Buadh*, April 5th, 1912; the original was, of course, in Irish.) "We only say, to-day, that the voice of the Gaedhil shall be heard henceforward, that our demands must be attended to, that our

patience is spent. So the Gaedhil proclaim, two hundred thousand of them crying here to-day, with one man's voice, that they demand freedom, and mean to achieve freedom, with God's will. Let us unite and win a good Act from the English. I believe we can obtain a good measure of Home Rule if only we gather sufficient courage together. But if we are deceived again this time there is a band of men in Ireland to whom I belong myself, who will advise Irishmen to have no council or friendship with England ever again. Let England clearly understand: if she again betrays us, there shall be a red war throughout all Ireland." I have shown in Chapter I the culmination of these ideals. Pearse had lamented that he and many in Ireland had been for long like Fionn after his battles, "in agony of depression and horror of self-questioning." A light had broken upon them in the Gaelic League. A greater illumination broke upon them in the Volunteer movement, and they had felt like men emerging from dark forests into sunlight. No one can do justice to Pearse's final, fiery, coherent splendour except the

glimpses he has left himself of it and there I leave this aspect of him.

Pearse disdained to use a language unless he used it splendidly. That is why his English works rank so highly as literature. I have often wondered why he came to use English to so large an extent as he did in his later years. When I knew him first he held, indeed, that any man or woman who had a message to deliver should be given an attentive hearing whatever language he or she employed. But personally for long he suppressed his command of English and flatly refused to speak to his pupils save in Irish. With us he invariably used Irish. Until the day he died he never recanted his belief that Irish was an essential part of an Irish nation. It was characteristic of the man to do everything thoroughly. In his public speaking he was constrained to use English more and more. The calls on his time increased as Easter 1916 drew nearer. It was his intention to give his plays and THE WANDERING HAWK an Irish dress. THE SINGER, of course, is a literal and beautiful, if the phrase be admissible, adaptation of the Rosmuck dialect of Irish. Behind all

his literary works stands a full and flaming Gaelic inspiration. He would never admit, as I have explained before, any justification of Anglo-Irish literature. He denied the very possibility of the continued existence of such a literature. Inevitably the Irishmen and women who wrote in English would adopt English ideas, English models, English inspirations. Some jesting Genie who loves the Anglo-Irish tribe of writers may have hurried Pearse into English as a playful revenge. That is the only explanation I can ever imagine that solves the mystery. Pearse as a Censor in a free Ireland would have been implacable and righteous enough to have suppressed his own works in English were that necessary to save the Irish language. Fate's hurry compelled him to build those noble niches in the temple of English literature. And strangest irony of all! critics have agreed after reading his poems and plays that an independent Irish literature in English is possible!

Pearse was nearly as orthodox in his views on literature as in his views on religion. Shakespeare, Milton, Wordsworth, Francis Thompson, Yeats, he read and re-read.

Among living English writers he had a high admiration for Gilbert Chesterton and Henry W. Nevinson, whom he admired for their love of freedom, but the views of the former upon the European war were not his. This did not prevent Pearse from quoting Chesterton with effect at an anti-conscription meeting. Chesterton has said that he might die for England but not for the British Empire—so few things being worth the trouble of dying for. Pearse changed the nation, but not the sentiment.

Of his method of work, and the circumstances amongst which the bulk of that work was done, it is unnecessary to say much. Suffice to point out that it was as concentrated as the man himself, and was written for the greater part amidst the arduous and exacting tasks of a schoolmaster and political leader combined. As a writer, to-day is not the time to do justice to P. H. Pearse, any more than to discuss his final adventure. In both cases we are too near him in time and too much under the spell of his personality, his genius, his deeds. As a stylist, a poet, a preacher, we gather dimly that Pearse is great indeed. As one

who has made vocal a new political and popular movement he is greater yet. But assuredly as one who has interpreted the minds, souls, lives of the Gaeltacht, who has thrown so completely his own noble, austere, and human personality into words he is grandest of all. He never fell between the twin stools of literature and politics as so many knights of the pen in Eirinn have fallen. He was never melodramatic, bitter, barren, rhetorical for mere rhetoric's sake. Pearse, wondering whether fairy hosts still dance around mushrooms on some moonlit hill, Pearse reading the souls of children, Pearse firing the soul of his generation to stake all their mortal and immortal hopes to share with him a last great battle for the Gaelic tradition, or telling his followers in the Post Office that Dublin's name would be splendid forever, or writing in his Arbour Hill cell a farewell to all the simple and beautiful things he loved—what a series of men, what complexity of character, aye, and what stark and sheer sincerity were there! For he was "a child with children, and he was a man with men." As the years pass, he must stand out more and more as an

Irish writer. Irish tradition inspired him. In English he soared to great heights, but his greatest eminences were based, not only for fact and manner, but even for his vivid and beautiful speech, upon the impulse which came from sources and places where spoken Irish is a reality, a mirror of the life of a people unspoiled and unbroken. All his life and works might be forgotten, but did one Irish poem survive he would be still immortal as one of the authentic voices of the Irish tradition.

I am Ireland :
I am older than the Old Woman of Beare.

Great my glory :
I that bore Cuchulainn the valiant.

Great my shame :
My own children that sold their mother.

I am Ireland :
I am lonelier than the Old Woman of Beare.

CHAPTER VII

THE SOCIAL IDEALS OF P. H. PEARSE

And because I am of the people, I understand the people.
I am sorrowful with their sorrow, I am hungry with their desire.

—*The Rebel.*

Perhaps the quotation should be the last word on this question. To pass from Pearse's poems and stories to his social ideals is an easy transition. A wise reader would find the latter implicit in *Iosagán*, *An Mháthair*, in "The Rebel" and "The Fool" in particular, with the noble ring of Whitman in the verse. But some misguided persons delight in drawing comparisons between the alleged materialism of James Connolly and the incontestable spirituality of Pearse. Moreover, Pearse has defined his social gospel almost as specifically as he has defined his nationalist gospel, it is a gospel startlingly similar to

James Connolly's own, a fact of which these very misguided persons are most likely to remain ignorant. Were the comparison made by those anxious to strain any point against Labour in Ireland, it would be hardly worth notice. Men and women, however, devoted to the memories of both men, have fallen into this error of confusing a difference between philosophies of history into a clash of ideals. In reality, no poorer tribute could be paid to Pearse in so far as this comparison betrays a remarkable misunderstanding of his social ideals and outlook. A student of Connolly's life or writings, one who knows the tendencies of the modern labour movement, one who grasps adequately the Marxian philosophy upon which Connolly took his stand, will know of course exactly how much attention need be paid to the charge of materialism. It would be easy indeed to prove that however firmly Connolly planted his feet upon the earth, his gaze was ever turned towards the stars. The two great causes of his heart were the ideals he worshipped with a religious fervour. In him love of freedom burned with the intensity of fanaticism, and were lip-service

to the things of the spirit all that is needed to constitute a man an idealist many a page from his writings would demonstrate his claim beyond yea or nay. Only a mental snobbery goes in search of such a proof, so instead of submitting the shade of Connolly to the ordeal by quotation, or entering on a discussion of the valuable emphasis, his character as a Socialist propagandist, his Marxian philosophy, his realist outlook led him to place upon the hitherto neglected economic aspect of Irish history, I prefer to consider what Pearse's views were concerning the bread nations no less than men require if they are to live at all. To do so will be to recognize that a great idealist and a true poet considered the physical welfare of a people ranked equally with the firing of their minds or the care of their souls. Nor will it remain longer in doubt whether Pearse's views on social matters shall remain as obscure as were James Fintan Lalor's until Connolly rescued them from newspaper files, libraries, and deliberate neglect.

Connolly's influence upon Pearse was profound and marked. He could have summed Pearse up as one of those real

prophets who carve out the future they announce, and he might have felt some pardonable pride that upon national and social fundamentals the accents of the prophet were not at all dissimilar to his own. Pearse himself esteemed Connolly as one of the greatest and most forceful men that he had known, while those of us who knew both men are aware of the great affection which existed between them. Emphatically there was no essential clash between their respective ideals although each had travelled by different paths to discover that the sole authentic nationalism is one which seeks to enthrone the Sovereign People. A sentence in the Republican Proclamation reveals a common faith : " We declare the right of the people of Ireland to the ownership of Ireland and to the unfettered control of Irish destinies to be sovereign and indefeasible." Partisans may choose to stress either part of that declaration but in a hundred other equally unmistakable and unequivocal utterances Pearse and Connolly will rise to confute them.

James Connolly's views upon the social question are too well known to fall into

obscurity. Pearse's social creed is equally clear and unambigious, but circumstances may very well tend to obscure its similarity in essentials with Connolly's teachings. Should it so happen only a deliberate ignorance of Pearse's last published pamphlet, THE SOVEREIGN PEOPLE, will be responsible. There he voices his belief with a fiery and noble eloquence that the true nationalist must be a deep humanist, that in a free nation the men and women of the nation must rule in fact as well as in name and, above all, that without vigilant care for the bodies of those men and women all rhetorical flourishes about the soul of Ireland are so much futile and beautiful cant. In poetic accents that is the message of "The Rebel" and "The Fool," in more delicate and subtle ways that spirit of deep humanity moves through his stories, plays and poems to emerge in the clear and burning definition of THE SOVEREIGN PEOPLE. Like the Italian patriot, Pearse was one who loved the people, not for nothing did he salute James Fintan Lalor as one of the Nation's Four Evangelists.

And this is unquestionably true despite

the difficulty of attaching a label to Pearse's social ideals. It would be inaccurate to call him a Socialist, Syndicalist or a Bolshevik. His views upon Co-operation or Guild-Socialism or the Distributive State have never been placed upon record. The word Socialism had no terrors for him, but he was no Socialist in the sense of adhering to any system of Socialist philosophy. It would be confusing and a crowning insult to dismiss him as a social reformer ; Pearse was no sentimentalist and believed the axe should be laid to the root of social iniquity. " If the workers must have strikes," he said to me during 1913, " I agree that their strikes should be thorough and terrible." He would himself have promptly disclaimed any pretence to speak with a dogmatic authority upon these matters, for while his social sympathies were deep and instructive, his national work and sympathies had been more absorbing. Towards the end of his life, however, his ideas on the social question became more pronounced and assumed the coherence of a system.

The works of Lalor together with close observation of conditions of life in Connacht

and Dublin assisted this development considerably. Undoubtedly the Dublin Strike of 1913, whatever glimpses he caught (by no means few) of the great Labour upheavals which shook these countries from 1911 onward, and Connolly's personal influence urged him more and more insistently to consider the issue. From the first Jim Larkin attracted him and in spite of much adverse criticism, he insisted on keeping the latter's son and name-sake at Sgoil Eanna. "Larkin is a man who does things," he used to say. "He has done more in six months than the politicians and ourselves with all our talk." As he wrote during 1913 his heart was with the men during that long and bitter struggle whence sprang the modern Labour movement in Ireland. Misgivings troubled him, no doubt. Internationalism was to him a word of omen as ill as it is still to many Sinn Féiners and Republicans, not to mention the A.O.H. Pacificism which seems to many inseparable from a Labour movement never appealed to him, and to the last he found no use for Tolstoy or other apostles of peace, not even appreciating their chief as an artist. Connolly's militancy was more

to his liking. "Even the Socialists," Pearse writes somewhere, "who want universal peace, propose to reach it by universal war; and so far they are sensible!" The pre-war solidarity of the workers seemed to him to threaten to obliterate the lines of national demarcation, and in such an obliteration he feared another imperialist triumph. While Connolly cried scornfully that his quarrel was with the British Government in Ireland and that nationalist critics had confounded politics with geography in their attacks upon the assistance British trade unions had given the Irish Transport Workers, Pearse wished to be at peace with all the men of Ireland. He protested that he was concerned with the nation as a whole and with no one class in the nation. Unlike others who uttered similar sentiments he literally meant what he said. Indeed he condemned with bitterness the inconsistency of those who objected upon national grounds to financial assistance from British trade unions and accepted the British armed forces to preserve law and order.

In an outspoken article at the time, since republished in "From a Hermitage," he

stated the views he then held, traced even Labour troubles to foreign domination, yet feels here is a matter in which he cannot rest neutral, since his instinct is with the landless man and the breadless man against the lords of lands or the masters of millions. In the light of his experience as a schoolmaster, when he recollects the ill-nourished children in the primary schools, the underfed third of Dublin's population, the condition of city tenements, he does not wonder that a great popular movement is astir beneath it all, and crude and bloody as this protest may be in ways, Larkin, who has attempted to set a wrong thing right, is a good man and a brave man!

Anti-pacifist, Nationalist of Nationalists, absorbed in Ireland as he was, Pearse's heart went out not merely to the Dublin toilers or the landless of the West, but was responsive to battles for freedom beyond the shores of Ireland. He admired the spirit of the more forward sections of the Labour movement in Great Britain, the Women's Suffrage movement, which he pronounced unconquerable, inasmuch as the women feared neither hunger nor death, and while

never avowedly a Socialist, he saw through the canting hypocrisy which relies for its criticism of Socialism entirely upon the exploitation of religious and moral prejudices. In private conversation he would pronounce his passionate and considered convictions on the struggles of the women and the workers for freedom. Particularly he rejoiced in the spirit and progress of the democratic forces everywhere from 1911-1914, marvelled at the victories of the democracies, saying things always come with a rush, as so would it be in Ireland some fine day. It was characteristic of Pearse, and may enlighten some of his critics, that he could never describe the fall of the Bastille without hoping piously to achieve a similar fate for Dublin Castle. Lovers of freedom in other countries may detect a provincialism in this, so we do well to repeat that he cared for the Irish nation as a whole, spending his life in the nation's service in bold and manifold ways, educational, literary, political. Let there be no mistake about Pearse's sincerity when he declared that he stood for the Nation. He transformed that faith into his daily tasks. Well would it be for Ireland

if his faith were less a platitude with others than it was with him! Ultimately for Pearse the root of Irish evil lay in foreign domination, he killed himself by inches to reform Irish education and restore the Irish language to its place in the natural culture, he hailed his death as the death of all deaths he would have chosen had God offered him his choice. His philosophy was a philosophy of force allied with idealism. In this was there a fatal contradiction to Connolly's teaching, that the root of all evil lay in the conquest by a class, even an alien class, of the nation's lands and wealth and factors of wealth production? Some, whether swearing by St. Mitchel or St. Marx, have certainly imagined there is obvious and flagrant contradiction. The thought lies behind the foolish and unreflecting comparison before noted.

Pearse and Connolly, much as they may have differed upon questions of philosophy, were not given to cant about the one's spirituality and the other's materialism. As their writings bear witness, they knew how amusingly superficial such a comparison is. Connolly worshipped at different shrines of

the goddess freedom in two continents, and spent his life at last as he would have wished in Ireland. Pearse served freedom in Ireland alone, but had fate brought him elsewhere, I dare believe his story would have been much the same. The ideal of both had different manifestations, but in the end it was one and the same.

Connolly was, indeed, the most terrific expression in a personality of the modern revolutionary spirit that these islands have known. Pearse undoubtedly was the grandest incarnation in men of Irish blood of the ancient tradition of Irish nationhood, but these two men, unlike many of the disciples of either, knew better than to stick fast in a morass of phrases.

Connolly's influence on Pearse as before mentioned was considerable. The meeting of these two men of characters so diverse in many ways during the early months of 1914 was, indeed, historic. Until then neither had known the other intimately. Years before a speech delivered by Connolly before a students' debating society in defence of woman's suffrage had left an indelible impression on Pearse's memory. Since then both

had worked in fields far apart, one striving to spread Socialist ideas in Ireland and America, to shake the general apathy as regards social issues, to build up an army of labour, to descend, as Mr. Robert Lynd has well said, into the hell of Irish poverty with a burning heart, the other squandering without regret the glorious years of his youth to re-create an Irish literature, to quicken with his idealist faith the dying national consciousness and bring an ancient chivalry and a new vision into the land. In due course the war in Europe threw them together. It would have required no bold prophet to foresee events must move henceforward in unwonted ways.

Modern civilization was no lovely growth in Pearse's opinion. His mind went back to the past to forget "the Christless cities of to-day," and find again the precious things modern communities have lost wherever factory chimneys rise. He insists repeatedly that civilization has taken a decidedly queer turn for the worse, and wonders often whether it could not have been avoided. In one of the first lectures he ever delivered, he declared war upon it.

In "The Intellectual Future of the Gael," read to the New Ireland Literary Society before he was twenty, he stated with vehemence the case against the moderns. Revising his writings at a later stage he accused himself of being "a bit of a prig," until he became a man of wrath. It was like P. H. Pearse to laugh at himself from time to time. In *An Barr Buadh* he addressed an open letter of sarcastic advice to himself, inquiring why he inspires his friends with silent awe, and whether he would not do better to shun politics and stick to his school-mastering. In the following passage from the lecture just mentioned we find a very early expression of his consistent attitude towards the world of to-day :

"It is no doubt a glorious thing to rule over many subject peoples, to dictate laws to far-off countries, to receive every day cargoes of rich merchandise from every clime beneath the sun; but if to do these things we must become a soulless, unintellectual, Godless race—and it seems that one is the natural and necessary consequence of the other—then let us have none of them. Do the millions that make up the population

of modern nations—the millions that toil and sweat from year's end to year's end in the factories and mines of England, the Continent, the United States, live the life intended for man? . . . What are the hero-memories of the past to them? Are they one whit the better because great men have lived and wrought and died? Were the destiny of the Gael no higher than theirs, better for him would it have been, had he disappeared from the earth centuries ago! Intellect and soul, capacity for loving the beautiful things of nature, a capacity for worshipping what is grand and noble in man, these things we have yet: let us not cast them from us in the mad rush of modern life. Let us cherish them, let us cling to them: they have come down to us through the storms of the centuries—the bequest of our hero-sires of old; and when we are a power on earth again, we shall owe our power not to fame in war, in statesmanship, in commerce, but to those two precious inheritances, intellect and soul."

The mission of the Gael he contends, will be an intellectual one. The whole essay is an indictment of modern literature

as senile and decadent. Some new source of inspiration must be opened up for the moderns, ancient Irish literature must bring new blood into the intellectual system of the world, the Gael in his turn must fire the minds of men with new beauty, new chivalry, new ideals as did the Greek in his day. But the world did not weary Pearse in his library only, or when he took tea with it. Readers of *An Macaomh* will remember his scathing description of the Six Commandments of Respectable Society. This dissatisfaction with current ideals and institutions drove him to seek a new educational inspiration in a return to the Sagas. An heroic tale was more essentially a factor in education than all the propositions of Euclid; the story of Joan of Arc more charged with meaning than a thousand algebras. He claimed, too, that had the old Irish Sagas swayed Europe to the extent the Renaissance has that inspiration would have saved many a righteous and noble cause. By an easy transition Pearse passed from this mood to proclaim the thing that was coming, to salute with Connolly the risen people. He announced his brotherly union with

Connolly was a union of thought as well as deeds, and that the national freedom both strove for extended to a people's wealth and lands as well as to their liberties and Governmental systems. Once and for all, beyond a shadow of doubt, he recorded these convictions in written words before the storm broke and he knew now or never was the opportune moment to proclaim his social faith. Thereafter he had " no more to say."

LABOUR IN IRISH HISTORY, and in a smaller degree THE RE-CONQUEST OF IRELAND, have left their mark upon *The Sovereign People*. This pamphlet is an explicit statement of P. H. Pearse's social ideals, the concluding one of a series where he re-states the gospel of Nationalism as defined by Tone, Davis, Mitchel and Lalor. Therein he examines the lives and teachings of the two last. In the previous booklets he had insisted upon the spiritual fact of nationality, upon the separatist tradition in history, upon the necessity of physical freedom to preserve the spiritual fact and vindicate the tradition. His argument might have been expressed in Connolly's words : " Slavery is a thing of the soul before it embodies itself in the

material things of the world. I assert that before a nation can be reduced to slavery its soul must have been cowed, intimidated or corrupted by the oppressor. Only when so cowed, intimidated or corrupted, does the soul of a nation cease to urge forward its body to resist the shackles of slavery; only when the soul so surrenders does any part of the body consent to make truce with the foe of its national existence. When the soul is conquered the articulate expression of the voice of the nation loses its defiant accent and, taking on the whining colour of compromise, begins to plead for the body. The unconquered soul asserts itself and declares its sanctity to be more important than the interests of the body; the conquered soul ever pleads first that the body may be saved even if the soul be damned. For generations this conflict between the sanctity of the soul and the interests of the body has been waged in Ireland. . . . In fitful moments of spiritual exaltation Ireland accepted that idea, and such men as O'Donovan Rossa becoming possessed of it, became thenceforth the living embodiment of that gospel."
—*Rossa Souvenir, p.* 19.

He proceeds to insist upon the necessity of the complete control of the nation's material resources by the nation and for the nation, no more or no less in the physical order than the whole men and women of Ireland.

Pearse boldly faces the terrible phrase, "the material basis of freedom," as Lalor, Davitt, and Connolly had faced it before him. This basis, he argues, is as essential to a community's continued existence as food is essential to the continued existence of the individual. The national material resources, he claims, are no more the nation than a man's food is the man, but are as necessary to secure a sane and vigorous life to a nation as food is to the man. Furthermore, the nation's sovereignty extends to those material resources to be used, as the nation deems fit, while the nation is under as strong a moral obligation to pursue and guarantee the personal welfare of each man and woman within the nation, as it is to respect the sovereign rights of other nations. It must exercise its right of control over all its resources, its soil, its wealth, and wealth-producing instruments to secure to all strictly equal rights and liberties.

What is Pearse's definition of a nation? A Sovereign People! His ideal was no mere political sovereignty, although he demanded this also in the fullest degree, but a sovereignty which extends to the soil and factories of Ireland that the stubborn and unterrified working class, the common people whom he hails with enthusiasm and pride, as the unpurchasable and unfaltering guardians of national liberties may say with truth of their nation that it is the family in large knit together by ties human and kindly. He salutes "the more virile labour organizations of to-day" as heirs to Lalor's teaching, nor do vague accusations of anarchism or materialism prevent him from announcing himself as one who is heart to heart with them. In effect, he agrees with Lalor, who held separation valueless unless it placed, not certain rich men merely, but the actual people of Ireland in effectual possession of the soil and resources of their country.

Here may conclude this short sketch of the social ideals of P. H. Pearse, but this mere formal outline is of little use to those who do not recognize the democratic instinct behind every line Pearse wrote. Connolly

recognized it and confessed to his friends that he had always been attracted towards Pearse, in whom he felt some quality above the average of Nationalist politicians. Those of us who knew Pearse well know how profound was his belief that the popular instinct is ever right. His views were so humane that he could not bear to see a child or an animal suffer. He was known to weep over a dead kitten, and once stopped gardening for a whole day because he had killed a worm by accident. He refused to eat a certain kind of shell-fish when he had learned that it was boiled alive. He was a strong opponent of capital punishment. Nevertheless, he was always a warrior and never expressed his mind so well as in the words he wrote of the present war, crying that policy moved the governments, but patriotism moved the peoples. "War is a terrible thing, but war is not an evil thing. It is the things that make war necessary that are evil. The tyrannies that wars break, the lying formulae that wars overthrow, the hypocrisies that wars strip naked are evil. Many people in Ireland dread war because they do not know it. Ireland has not known

the exhilaration of war for over a hundred years. Yet who will say she has known the blessings of peace? When war comes to Ireland she must welcome it as she would welcome the Angel of God. And she will. . . . Christ's peace is lovely in its coming, beautiful are its feet on the mountains. But it is heralded by terrific messengers; seraphim and cherubim blow trumpets before it." Assuredly this is near to Connolly's view that just wars should be fought in and unjust wars fought against.

It is not claimed here that Pearse saw eye to eye with James Connolly upon the question of Socialism, inasmuch as Pearse did not adhere to, nor had he indeed studied, the Socialist system that James Connolly spent a life-time in preaching and applying with equal success in the Ireland disillusioned by the Parnell split, the Ireland hostile to Larkin's methods and propaganda, the Ireland swept off her feet by the European War, in the cities of Britain or from end to end of the American continent. It is not even sought to establish whether Pearse was a Socialist or not. If Socialism be, as we hear often, the common ownership of the

means of wealth-production, distribution and exchange by and in the interest of the whole community, then it should be difficult to refuse the designation to the man who wrote *The Sovereign People*. Pearse himself refuses the designation in several places throughout his writings. He dreaded certain aspects of modern Socialist teachings, and would no doubt have damned them with the rest of modern evil. Many Socialists will be no doubt equally prompt to find evasions and unorthodoxies in his statement of his social creed. They will prefer to misunderstand the idealistic and nationalist inspiration which swayed him. They will, unlike Connolly, continue to emphasise the phrases in the Republican Proclamation anent the right of the Irish people to the ownership of Ireland, and deem Irish destines unfettered and uncontrolled a mere rhetorical phrase until another Pearse rises to confuse them. Perhaps the war will avert the need for another Pearse to confute them. Certainly they would never convert the idiots who babble about Connolly's materialism and Pearse's idealism without tremendous emphasis indeed. In Pearse they will find

that breath of freedom's eternal spirit which has moulded all their systems and creeds.

In any case, let us have no more foolish comparisons or sickly idealisms which have been greater cloaks for evil than all the materialisms in history. Let us, in short, remember what Pearse's social ideals were, or we shall misunderstand his greatness. For even when we have returned to the Sagas and burned our rent-books as Pearse advised us, it is, at least, problematical whether we shall all dismiss Karl Marx as quite so finished an instrument of the devil as Pearse dismissed Adam Smith. But, assuredly we shall have travelled far beyond enduring social unrighteousness because men and nations do not live by bread alone. Two men in Dublin knew that once before, when a manly figure in green grasped the other's hand beneath the Post Office porch, crying, "Thank God, Pearse, we have lived to see this day!"

CONCLUSION

So ends this book, but not the Man Called Pearse, for such men do not end.

In the foregoing pages I have endeavoured to deal with some aspects of his life and ideals as I knew them from daily intimacy, from conversations, from a study of his writings. What Dr. Mahaffy condensed in a phrase, I have amplified into a book, in the hope of shaking the gentle dreamer legend and the sombre, implacable fanatic nonsense alike. If to one reader I have brought a hint of the sincerity, the genius, the humanity, the real greatness of Pearse, I am satisfied. And it will suffice to end as I began upon the note: Pearse never was a legend, he was a man. *Requiescat.*