THE HOME LIFE OF PÁDRAIG PEARSE

edited by his sister

MARY BRIGID PEARSE

THE HOME LIFE OF PÁDRAIG PEARSE

AS TOLD BY HIMSELF HIS FAMILY AND FRIENDS

EDITED BY HIS SISTER
MARY BRIGID PEARSE

Published by An Chartlann

CONTENTS

PART I
MY CHILDHOOD AND YOUTH
(*From an unfinished autobiography*)

1	Myself—My Father—My Mother and Her People	4
2	A Little Boy in Wonderland	9
3	New Arrivals on the Scene	13
4	More Comings and Goings, Adventures and Mysteries	17
5	First Lessons and Schooldays	22

PART II
OUR HOME RECOLLECTIONS OF PÁDRAIG

6	‘He served His Country and Loved His Kind’	26
7	Fun, Frolic and Masquerade	34
8	Gentleness and Strength—The Gift of Humour	39
9	‘The Little Priest’	45
10	A Budget of Stories	51
11	My Brother’s Love of Books	57
12	‘The Pride of Finisterre’	61
13	‘Brian Boru’ and Later Plays	69
14	Early Enthusiasm for the Irish Revival	76
15	A Social Evening and Other Diversions	82
16	Ireland’s Glories and Ireland’s Destiny	88

PART III
SOME THINGS THAT FRIENDS HAVE TOLD ME

17	A Schoolfellow’s Tribute	96
18	Travels Abroad—Connemara and Aran	100
19	With the Girls at St Ita’s	106
20	Prophet and Martyr	114

EPILOGUE

I	P. H. Pearse’s Farewell Letter to His Mother	119
II	The Last Scene	121

PART I
MY CHILDHOOD AND YOUTH

By P. H. Pearse

(*From an unfinished Autobiography*)

1: Myself—My Father—My Mother and Her People

There has been so much tempest in my life (*writes my brother Pádraig in the autobiography which he began but never finished*) that the quiet places in which my childhood was spent, and the quiet voices that sounded there, seem to me sometimes not to have belonged to my life at all, but to have been part of the life of another of whom I have heard or read, or whom I have imagined; one whom I can observe with considerable detachment as the story of his days pieces itself together in my mind again and his dreams come back to me.

And this detachment is in no wise inconsistent with a certain charity and definiteness in the recollections of impressions and emotions. I am not sure whether it is a good thing for a man to possess, as fully as I have possessed it, the faculty of getting, as it were, outside of himself and of contemplating himself as if from a little distance.

Many of my failures have doubtless been due to the fact that my thoughts and emotions of yesterday, my ordeals and triumphs of tomorrow, have always been more to me than my deeds of today: the remembered or imagined experience more insistent than the actual. Often in a world which demands swift and ruthless action I have found myself pausing to catch some far-off sound—the echo of a long-silent voice—or to anticipate some unspeakable glory of a new sunrise or moonrise. When people have been talking to me about national policies, I have been listening to the flickering of the wings of flies on a window-pane that I once knew; in the midst of military plans and organisations I have been watching myself as a child come out of a certain green gate into a certain sun-lit field; or as a lad breasting great

breakers beneath the moon, striving with strong white shoulders, wet and glistening.

And continually my thoughts have gone back to the places that were first familiar to me, and my ear has heard the voices that it first heard. I will set it down to my credit, that I have never loved any place better than those old places; or any voice better than those old voices. I have been faithful to them in my heart even when I have deliberately turned my feet from them, seeking far places and far voices …

You must not think that we who love perilous adventure have not also the common affections; that we do not remember, as poignantly as you bankers and solicitors and government clerks, some fireside where our kin once gathered, some caress of a woman's or a child's hand. For myself, I have never gone out to do any difficult thing, or to face any long road of sea or land, that my heart did not yearn at the leave-taking; and I have never spent a night away from the house where my kin were that I would not have given much to be among them.

Two things have constantly pulled at cross-purposes in me: one, a deep homing instinct, a desire beyond words to be at home always, with the same beloved faces, the same familiar shapes and sounds about me; the other, an impulse to seek hard things to do, to go on far quests and fight for lost causes.

What I have written here is the only defence I shall make for myself in this book, whose object, as I plan it, is simply to record things done and thought; not to explain, or to apologise for, or to justify anything. And it may perhaps stand as a defence for many a nameless brother of the ages; for I suppose that what I have said of myself is true of many others, and has its root in some old duality in the nature of man who, born of a woman, is yet the child of God. The woman in us loves to sit by our own fireside; the man in us urges us forth on divine adventures.

(*A few days previous to the fateful Easter Week, 1916, both my brothers visited every place and scene of their happy childhood. I can imagine how wistfully and lovingly Pat must have been thinking of his first adventures in a certain 'sun-lit room' which he describes later on,*

as he paused for a moment on the eve of his big adventure—his biggest and last adventure of all!—M.B.P.)

I was born in the city of Dublin on 10 November 1879. My father was an Englishman. My grandfather and grandmother on my father's side were, I assume, born in London, but my grandfather's family was certainly of Devonshire origin. The three children of the marriage (my father and his elder and younger brothers) were born in London, my father's birthday being the 8 December, 1839. While the children were young the family removed to Birmingham. My father was a sculptor, and had, as it were, only drifted to Ireland; but Ireland was to become his home, and, through his children, his name was to become an Irish name.

On my mother's side I can go back to a great-great-grandfather, Walter Brady of Nobber in the County Meath, a Cavanman by origin. He fought in '98, and one of his brothers was hanged by the Yeos; another lies buried in the Croppy's Grave at Tara. His son Walter, my great-grandfather, married Margaret O'Connor, who had five sons and three daughters—Catherine, Phil, Anne, Patrick, Larry Christy, John and Margaret.

Irish was the language of North Meath in their days, and the only language that my great-grandfather knew well. His home, by all accounts, was a place of mirth and kindly cheer and song. The famine year drove him from his land in Meath, and he came to Dublin with his five tall sons and his three daughters. My mother remembered him as a tall old man who wore knee-breeches and a silk hat, and who spoke Irish.

I remember my grand-uncle Phil as a patriarchal man, whom I regarded with awe on account of his mighty age. My grand-uncle Christy was the youngest of the brothers. He had beautiful horses, and drove with all the pride of a Meath yeoman's son to Baldoyle and Fairyhouse. He had wide fields, which I remember white and fragrant with hawthorn. To spend a day at Uncle Christy's was always an event in our lives. He had married a Wicklow woman—a double Keogh—and great was their generosity, and great the cheer of their table and

hearth. I know many Irish words which I first learned from my Uncle Christy. His voice had a ring, and his eye a humour that I have never known in any other man's.

(*I would like to say here that, while I was reading over my brother's manuscript to my mother, she mentioned that she remembered her grandfather singing in Irish 'The Blackbird'; also singing the old, old ballad—this one in English—called 'My Sporting Old Grey Mare'. My brother himself was particularly fond of this ballad; he learned it from Auntie Margaret. One of my grandmother's brothers, James Savage, fought in the American Civil War, and lost an eye in battle, so the spirit of freedom was strong on my mother's side.—M.B.P.*)

My grandfather was a very different man from my Uncle Christy. He was taller and gentler, and less successful in life. His place was smaller, and his cattle and horses were fewer. The bad year of '79—the year in which I was born—hit him hard. But his temper was so placid, his manhood so true and fine, that even greater reverses than those which came to him could not have brought any bitterness into his life, or have affected the charitableness of his spirit. He never, to my knowledge, said a hard word about anybody.

My grandfather had married Brigid Savage, a Fingall woman, who was the best step-dancer of her day in the North County. Their children were Walter, Brigid, Catherine and Margaret. This Margaret, daughter of Patrick, son of Walter, son of Walter, was my mother. Of my grandfather I shall speak again, for I spent part of my childhood in his house; and I shall have to speak, too, of his youngest sister, Margaret, my fosterer and teacher.

For the present, I have said enough to indicate that when my father and my mother married there came together two very widely remote traditions—English and Gaelic. Freedom-loving both, and neither without its strain of poetry and its experience of spiritual and other adventures. And these two traditions worked in me, and, prised

together by a certain fire proper to myself—but nursed by that fostering of which I have spoken—made me the strange thing I am.

Pearse Family Photo
Back, left to right: James, Willie
Front, left to right: Pádraig, Margaret, Mary Brigid, Margaret

2: A Little Boy in Wonderland

I was the second child of my father and mother. My elder sister Margaret was some fifteen months my senior. I was born in a back room on the first floor of our house at 27 Great Brunswick Street.* My Auntie Margaret (that was one name for my mother's aunt, my dear fosterer and teacher) was present at my birth; and she has told me how her heart leaped when it was found that I was a boy. It has long been her desire that my mother's first boy—for my mother was her favourite niece, as my grandfather was her favourite brother—should be called after that beloved brother. So it was decided that my name should be Patrick. The name of Henry was added, after my father's youngest brother. Auntie Margaret carried me to the church—St Andrew's, Westland Row—to be christened.

When I was six months old I had a dangerous illness, and it was thought I should die. Auntie Margaret disputed with my mother as to which of them was entitled to nurse me; they compromised and watched me together, winning me from death to the great surprise of the doctor. He had given me only a few days.

When the Theatre Royal went on fire, Auntie Margaret held me in her arms at a back window to see the flames. I do not remember it, for I was, I think, less than a year old.

My first recollection is of our living-room in the basement, and I am not sure how much of what I can piece together about that room in my own recollection, and how much has been told me by others. The room ceased to be our living-place some little time before I was two. It was a dim room, because the single large window opened, not on the street, but on my father's workshop. I seem to remember a fire-place on which a kettle sang; a fire-place surrounded by clothes-horses, designed, I now imagine, as a barrier to my progress forwards. For the singing of the kettle was as the carolling of a cheerful fire-fairy inviting me to be its playmate.

* Now named Pearse Street.

All this is phantasmagoric and uncertain; imagined, perhaps, rather than recollected. Much more clearly defined in my memory are the characteristic sounds of the room: the carolling of the black fire-fairy, the ticking of a clock, and the rhythmic tap-tapping which came all day from the workshop. In this tap-tapping there were two distinct notes: one sharp and metallic, which I knew afterwards to be the sound of a chisel against hard marble; the other soft and dull, subsequently to be recognised as the sound of a chisel against Caen stone. In the one case the chisel was struck by an iron; in the other by a wooden mallet.

To this rhythmic and not unmusical sound, there was superadded at intervals a sound lawless and strident: later on I fixed it in my mind as the voice of a strenuous pig clamorously resisting the attempts of someone to force it into a bag. Still later, I knew it to be the sound of a chisel against marble whirled on a lathe. But in the beginning all these sounds were alike unexplained and inexplicable. They were among the eternal postulates, things that always were and always would be: like the crackling of the fire; like the carolling of the fire-fairy; like my mother's voice!

Pearse as a young child.

Our dim room, at a period which I can scarcely determine, and by a process of which I can offer no explanation, transformed itself into a mountainside; a mountain on which yellow furze flamed and where larks sang. As in the case of the room, it is by its characteristic sounds I remember the mountain best; and its characteristic sound was the singing of larks. I have often re-visited it; indeed for long spells it has been my hone; and to me it is always a hill of larks. For ever larks sing there—trill there—vociferous, triumphant—above the furze, above the city, above the sea!

From the mountain-side we returned to the house in the city—not to the dim room, but to another room higher up, a bright room with great spaces of floor. And this event is to be regarded as a sort of Hegira in my history, the beginning of an era; before it, all is dim, shadowy,

legendary; after it, all is clear, certain, historic. I speak henceforth of what I know.

I am familiar with every inch of the floor space of the immense room that now became our habitat. I knew every nail and knot and crevice by which its configuration was diversified. It is a matter of congratulation to me to have obtained at so early an age so intimate a knowledge of that large region. How a house of moderate size can have contained so vast a room is a matter which I am not very well able to explain; but that the room was vast beyond the custom of rooms I have, and can have, no doubt.

I have sailed over its surface in ships; I have traversed it in sleighs, in Roman chariots, in howdahs on the backs of elephants; I have discovered, in remote corners of it, jungles where wild beasts prowled; and I know that on one of its verges there stretched for miles a sandy desert across which caravans moved.

All these discoveries were not made at once; it takes a long time to know a room. In the beginning, my knowledge of this room was confined to the perception that it contained the black fire-fairy, the clock, and certain other familiar bulks and shapes translated, like myself, to this new country; that my sister was there, and my mother; that my father sometimes came up from the shop in his white blouse; that one Nannie, an exceedingly tall person, moved about with sweeping brushes; that there was a somnolent cat (named Minnie) who monopolised the centre of the hearthstone; and that there was an energetic dog (named Gyp) who made things lively in the house, and had continual hair-breadth escapes from death in the street.

The room had two large windows which looked out on a street where the most extraordinary things were always happening. Nearly opposite to us there was a break in the row of houses, through which we caught a glimpse of the green tops of trees. If one got out on one of the iron balconies, and craned one’s neck, one could see the wall and paling of the College; and the trees, we found out afterwards, were in the College Park. Their green tops were so beautiful and so high that I thought, for a long time, that they were in heaven.

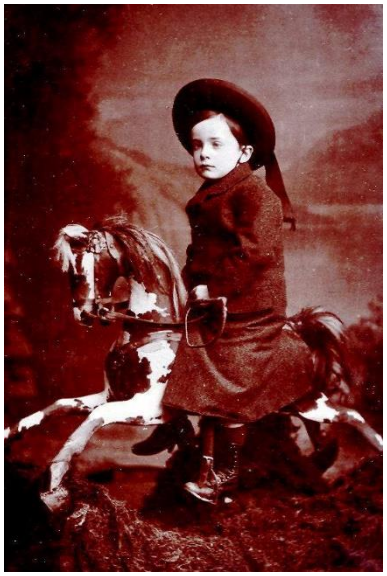
I had many adventures in that sun-lit room, so near to heaven; adventure the most thrilling of all that have befallen me on land or sea, giving plenary satisfaction as only the adventures of childhood can. The real adventures of a man are like the adventures of a dream; they trail off inexplicably and end ingloriously or even ridiculously. The half-real, half-imagined adventures of a child are fully rounded, perfect, beautiful, often bizarre and humorous, but never ludicrous.

Pearse Family Home
27 Great Brunswick Street (now Pearse Street)

3: New Arrivals on the Scene

My first great adventure (after those strange migrations which some may look upon as myths) was the coming of Dobbin.

Dobbin was of wood, but apart from that disadvantage he was as gallant a steed as ever knight-errant rode. My father had fashioned him, toiling at him for many nights in his workshop after his apprentices had gone home; building him five hands high; giving him mighty limbs and a proud head and a fiery eye; a broad back and round shapely haunches. He was grey, as all famous steeds have been; and he towered grandly the evening my father set him up on a table for us to see.



Pearse astride Dobbin, age 5.

'Dobbin is his name,' my father said solemnly, not as if he were making a suggestion, but as if he were announcing some fact as old as the Creation.

That night, my mother, who had been ill for a few days, stole down from her room to see Dobbin; and the next morning a little brother came to us mysteriously—a more momentous coming even than that of Dobbin.

And my mother was very ill, and the little brother had to be sent away to Uncle Christy's, where he was fed on the milk of one cow. My mother nearly died; and during all that time Dobbin remained quietly stalled behind the door. Sometimes I climbed up upon him and bestrode him; but oftener I sat with my sister near the fire, and watched the fire-fairy, and studied the ways of Minnie and Gyp.

It was a long time before my mother came down to us again. When she did come, looking very pale, one of the first things she did (after pressing my sister and myself to her heart) was to go over and kiss Dobbin; and in gratitude for that gracious kiss I told her that I would consider the little brother (who returned to us the same day) entitled equally with me to bestride that noble steed, as soon as his little legs should have the necessary length and strength to grip on. For the

present they were obviously too fat for any such equestrian exercise. So I alone rode Dobbin, and galloped him to many a battle. Sometimes I harnessed him to a state-coach, and he drew my sister on triumphant entries into cities; often I yoked him to a carrier's cart, and he rattled along country roads at night; there were times when he toiled under loads of hay; I have even known him, suitably draped in black, to pace mournfully with hearse and coffin behind him to Glasnevin. But oftenest I rode him in quest of some Holy Grail, to the relief of some beleaguered Ascalon or Trebizond, or over the slaughtered hearts of some Roncesvalles or Magh Mhuirthemhne.

I have been told it is a marvellous thing that I remember so clearly the days before and after the birth of my brother; for I was only two years and five days old when he was born. It would seem marvellous to me if I did *not* remember that time and all its little incidents. What greater thing has ever happened to me than the coming of that good comrade? Willie and I have been true brothers—companions! As a boy he was my only playmate; as a man he has been my only intimate friend. We have done and suffered much together, and we have shared together a few deep joys.

While Willie was too small to play with, my sister and I were sufficiently loving companions. Sometimes we quarrelled. One of the chief grounds of quarrel was her frequent insisting on my putting Dobbin to what I considered base uses. She was perpetually killing people in the most terrifying and unheard of ways, and calling upon me to bury them. This meant that, instead of driving Dobbin to war, I had to yoke him to a hearse and go on a lugubrious progress to Glasnevin. I thought that she should bury her own dead.

In those days she was both bigger and of a more dominating character than I, and she generally had her way. She extracted considerable deference from me as her junior by over a year. She insisted that her wisdom and experience were riper than mine, and, by dint of hearing this again repeated, I came to believe it and to entertain for her a serious respect.

She finally lost my confidence, in the affair of the London Horse's tail.

The London Horse was a present which my father had once brought me from London; he was much smaller than Dobbin, but was more elegant and had real hair. One day my sister instructed me in the properties of hair.

'If hair is cut, it grows. For instance, if I were to cut the London Horse's tail, it would infallibly grow again.'

I was dubious; she was positive. She urged me to dock the tail quite short so as to ensure a luxurious growth. I yielded so far as to reduce the flowing appendage by half its length. Not one fraction of an inch did it ever grow again!

We always tried to persuade ourselves that our toys had life. We quite realised that their life was different from our life, or from Gyp's, or Minnie's. But we felt that they had a kind of mystic *toy* life; and we thought it probable that at night, when the house was still, they disported silently on the carpet; that the dolls rode frantic races on the London Horse; that the cows (I had a fawn and a brindled cow) browsed in secret pastures under the furniture; that my white goat climbed the back of the sofa as if it were a crag.

Once I crept out of bed and downstairs, although sore afraid, to see these esoteric gambols; but all the toys were very quiet. I hoped then that I had come too soon or too late. I could not bring myself to believe that they were merely wooden, without any quickening of joy anywhere within them. But fear of the dark staircase would never allow me to steal down to see them again.

The night at that time was always terrible to me. I thought the house was peopled by strange beings, uncanny and terrifying. My mother and Auntie Margaret knew that visions of some gruesome sort (I never coherently described them) affrighted my sleep, and they used to sit by me as if I was restless.

Often and often did Auntie Margaret steal up to me when she was visiting us, and sit silently beside my bed. How good it was to hear her step! And when my mother did not come (thinking I was asleep like the others) how often have I lain tossing from one side to another, trying to call their names, yet fearing to raise my voice lest it might attract the notice of some grisly thing outside the door!

Only when my father and mother came up to bed would relief come to me. I used to pray as my mother taught me, but the prayers never drove away the spectres. Only when dawn began to come greyly through the window-blinds did they creep back to their lairs.

A slightly older Pearse.

Left to right:
Margaret, Willie, Mary
Brigid, and Pádraig.

4: More Comings and Goings, Adventures and Mysteries

I had my day-dreams as well as my visions of the night. Chiefly I used to imagine our living-room as an island of which I was king. It had its spired cities and its lonely hills and its green glens. Or again, it was a sea across which I voyaged in towering ships. Or it was a forest where deer lay down at evening by a stream in a brake, and I lived alone but for their gentle companionship.

It was not to be supposed that I was utterly moonstruck and melancholy; I was imaginative and liked often to sit still and give my imagination rein. But I was not morbid. Physically I was a healthy child, and my animal spirits were high. Many a jolly game I had with my sister, and with my little brother as soon as he began to toddle about on his fat little legs; and many a well-deserved smacking did I get for going into some forbidden place, for breaking some precious thing.

When Auntie Margaret was with us, however, it was *geasa* to touch me. She used to say to my mother: 'What is he but a child, Maggie? He doesn't know the difference!' It has been handed down as folklore that once, when caught doing something atrocious, I myself alleged this irresponsibility by saying: 'Pat don't know the diffy!' and that my mother was disarmed.

When I was nearly four and a half, and Willie two and a half, my younger sister was born. We were sitting at the fire eating toast with dripping on it when the nurse came in and told us that the doctor had brought us a little sister. We asked her how much my father would have to pay for the infant, and she answered, 'a hundred pounds.' That evening we were taken up to my mother's bedroom, and the little sister was placed for a few minutes, in turn, in each one's arms. She was given the names of Mary and Brigid after our two grandmothers.

It was soon after this I was breeched for the first time. Up to then I had worn (as boys in those days generally did up to the age of four or five) a frock and pinafore. My first breeches and jacket were of blue serge, and the socks I wore with them were cardinal. It was a grievance to me that for some time longer I was made wear a pinafore over my manly suit.

About this time my half-sister (for my father was a widower with a son James and a daughter Emily when he married my mother) was married to Alfred MacGloughlin, an architect. Her wedding was a very magnificent affair. My sister was her little bridesmaid, and I was her little page. I held up her train as she walked from the carriage into the church.

At the wedding breakfast we had apple pie. I thought they ought not to have put us children at a separate table; but when Auntie Margaret came to sit with us, I was content. Willie made an outcry, during the meal, for pie, and I felt wounded when they laughed at him. I was always wounded when Willie was slighted or ill-used.

Not long after she went away my half-sister sent us a wonderful scrapbook into which she has pasted thousands of pictures. It was so immense that it took two of us to lift it. There were pictures of giants and dragons and fairies in it; of clowns and harlequins and circus horses; of redcoated huntsmen on grey hunters—a book that was full of echoes from a world of romantic and far adventure.

I began straightaway to people our house with the creatures of that book, and to see myself going into the perils that were pictured there. This was my way with every book that was read to me; with every picture that I saw; with every story or song that I heard. I saw myself doing or suffering all the things that were dared or suffered in the book, or story, or song, or picture; toiling across deserts in search of lost cities; cast into dungeons by wicked kings; starved and flogged by merciless masters; racked with Guy Fawkes; roasted on a gridiron with St Laurence; deprived of my sight with the good Kent. When I heard of anyone's sorrows or of anyone's triumphs, I suffered the sorrow and enjoyed the triumph myself.

Few visitors came to our house. My father had not many intimate friends. Those who did come to see him were mostly artists whom he had known in other places, and who looked in upon him when passing through Dublin. I liked them for their quaint costumes, and their humour and gentleness. Ever since I have looked upon painters and sculptors as a kindly and lovable and pathetic race.

Most of those who came to see us seemed poor, and many of them seemed sad. There was one who used to kiss my little sister tenderly and say: ‘God bless thee, little one!’ And when he was going away he used to say that my father was fortunate to have children around him.

Many of these visitors made drawings and paintings of me; sometimes of my head only, and sometimes of my whole body without any clothes on. They said I had a thoughtful face, and that I was very finely shaped. I think what they valued me chiefly for was my faculty of remaining still for a long time.

I liked to stand—or, better still, to lie—without my clothes in the warmth of the fire, and to think out my thoughts. Some of the longest stories I ever made up about myself were made up while a man was making a picture of me stretched on my face with my chin resting on my hands. He said I was the best and quietest little model he had ever had. I used to be drawn and modelled and painted by people until my father and mother thought I was getting too big.

Our only frequent visitor was Auntie Margaret. Sometimes she came only for an evening; sometimes she stopped a few days. When she came I used to bring a little square stool that was recognised as mine, and sit beside her. I would show her any new toys or picture-books that I had got. She would tell me where she had been; and of the white chickens that she was rearing for me, and of the foal that my grandfather’s black mare had, which I must ride when it was a little bigger. She would put back my hair on my forehead, and pull up my red socks (which had an inexplicable tendency to get down into my boots), and she would sew in tightly any button that was loose on my jacket. Often she brought me something, and she used to make me guess what it was she had brought. When I was in bed, she would steal up to me and share her supper of bread and cheese with me: a secret proceeding supposed to be unknown to my mother. But I think now that my mother knew about it, and pretended not to. Then Auntie Margaret would sit with me for a little while, and whisper some story or some old song into my ear.

She had many endearing names for me, and I for her, but these names are too sacred to be written here.

Auntie Margaret was small, the only one of her family who was not big and stately. Her face had kindly little wrinkles in it, and her hair was grey; it had been grey almost from her girlhood. She wore that dear grey hair in a net; and I remember well the fragrance of her hair and of her nets. She dressed in black always, with a collar buttoned up high on her throat, and black braid down the front.

We all knew her step on the stairs and would run to meet her. She would take my hand, and the others would cling around her. Often she would draw us all to the window, and we would watch the pageant of the street. We got to know everyone that came and went, and of the time of every coming and going.

In the open space nearly opposite, where the line of houses broke, a grey horse was stalled. Every morning a man would come and yoke him to a van, and they would go out on a day's adventures. Soon after they were gone the doctors would begin to make their morning calls to a Children's Hospital that was next door but one to us, on the right. There was one doctor who drove a very beautiful horse, without winkers. There was another who was so stout that he had to ride in a hansom—the only hansom in Dublin—for he could not have gone through the door of an ordinary carriage.

Then in the evening there was the thundering by of the mail cars to Westland Row railway station. And always there were the trams, with the tinkle of their horses' bells. We liked especially what we called 'the little tram.' It went on a circular journey from Westland Row to College Green all the way for a penny! We often thought it would be a great exploit to get into the little tram and drive round and round eternally, expending interminable pennies.

In the evening about six o'clock the grey horse would come home; and it was always a satisfaction to see him getting his truss of hay, or his nosebag of oats.

. . . . .

(*There are two points in my brother's narrative upon which I wish to comment.*

His vivid remembrance of the 'wonderful scrapbook' brings to mind an odd fact about it. That same old album is at present used by me as a music case! And a first-rate music case it makes, too. It is a faded green and gold, and there are golden birds at the corners.

My brother must have been always fond of 'little tours,' so to speak. My mother has often told me that when he was a small boy, he and our cousin Mary Kate used to spend their pennies in rather a curious and unusual fashion. The 'Loop Line,' as it is called, had only been constructed, I think, and it evidently held a wonderful fascination for the two youngsters. They used to spend hours travelling on it, merely going back and forwards between one terminus and the other! They extracted a fund of pleasure from these excursions.

Our cousin Mary Kate Kelly (now Mrs Sydney Taverner Shovelton, living in England), and my brother were great chums when they were children. Mary Kate resided with our grandfather, her mother being his elder daughter, Catherine.

I am happy to say that I have procured from my cousin a little story about Pat and herself: also a letter which he wrote to her when she was at a boarding school. Later on, in their proper place, I shall insert them in this narrative. She sent them to me from England where her home is now.—M.B.P.)

5: First Lessons and Schooldays

I have not written as much here about Auntie Margaret, about my mother and father, or about my brother Willie, as I shall have to write hereafter about mere acquaintances; people whom I came across, or who came across me, fellow-travellers for some little part of a journey, but nothing to me, or less than nothing, except as portions of a story I am telling.

And the reason is the same as I have given for not writing here the secret names that Auntie Margaret and I had for each other. I have undertaken to record the things done and attempted, the dreams dreamt, during a life that has not been without exterior and interior activity; but I have entered into no bond to tell all the little things that happened between me and the few with whom I have been intimate—to confide to everyone the little and beloved memories that bind me to men and women who are dead. One must not put all one's secrets in a book!

Of the young mother of my childhood it is sufficient to say that I remember her best by her kind true eyes, and by the softness of her cheek, and by the music of her voice. She had the beautiful voice that all her people had; the voice which in Uncle Christy had a jolly ring—which in my grandfather was mellowed, and deep and grave; which in Auntie Margaret was so low and caressing. All music was in my mother's voice! All sweetness and strength, as of music which was in her nature! …

My father came up to our room only once or twice in the day, and at evening. He was big, with broad shoulders that were a little round. He was very silent, and spoke only once or twice during the course of a meal; breaking some reverie to say something kind to my mother or something funny to one of us. At times, indeed—but these were very, very seldom—he would, in order to please my mother, rouse himself to exercise the wonderful social gift that he had and then my mother's face would flush with pleasure, and we would laugh in pure happiness, or join shyly in the conversation.

Occasionally at night, when he was kissing us, or when going away (he sometimes went away to look after some work he was doing)

the deep reserve of his nature would break down. Then he would lift one of us, and press our face against his face, and put his arm around us, and draw us very close against his stone-dusty blouse.

Before my half-sister had gone away she had taught my sister Maggie and me our letters. We both learned quickly; so quickly that I have no recollection of any effort on my part, or of any difficulty that beset my path through the Spelling Book. Soon I knew it all; from the alphabet, in which A was the Ass, and K was the King, and Q was the Queen, and X was Xerxes, and Z was the Zebra, down to the Boy and the Wolf—a story which frightened me, and which I disliked because it was in very small print. When my half-sister sent us the great scrapbook, we were able to read the legends under all the pictures with the greatest ease, and then to learn them by name as well as by sight—Prince Greatheart and the Giant Despair, and all their heroic or gigantic kin.

Young Pearse with a child-sized gun.

When my sister was eight and I seven, we were sent to school. The school was in Wentworth Place, and its presiding dragon was a Mrs Murphy. We had been only a month or two at school when a great migration took place. We all left the house in Great Brunswick Street and went to live at Sandymount in a house near the sea. It had a large garden behind it, and a field behind the garden, and another field across the road opposite.

Scarcely had we moved into this pleasant place when I became ill with scarlatina. During the first day of my illness, before they knew what I had, Willie came to my bedside and kissed me. The next morning he, too, was ill. Auntie Margaret came out to nurse us: the other children were sent back to Brunswick Street. I was very dangerously ill, Willie less so; I tossed feverishly for several days

and nights. The nights would have been dreadful (for I could not sleep) but for my dear nurse, who sat unweariedly beside me. She taught me a hymn for a child awake at night which consoled me in the long watches.

When I was a little better she sang me in her low crooning voice old ballads and snatches of songs in Irish and in English. Her songs were mostly of men dead, or in exile for love of Ireland, or of some Royal Blackbird or Green Linnet that was to come from beyond the sea. She had many songs of Napoleon; chiefly I remember the 'Old Grey Mare,' which I long afterwards printed with a stanza that I prefixed to it in order to complete it. I also printed another song of Auntie Margaret's, in which were the lines:

In a very little while
They took from St Helena's Isle
The body of Napoleon that lay mouldering in the grave.

These songs were printed in *An Macaomh*, May, 1913. I never heard the songs from any other, nor ever saw them in print until I printed them.

Auntie Margaret spoke of Wolfe Tone and of Robert Emmet as a woman might speak of the young men—the strong and splendid young men—she had known in her girlhood. The Young Irelanders she did not talk so much of, except Mitchel; but she had herself known the Fenians, and of them she had songs full of endearing expressions, and musical with the names of O'Donovan Rossa and the Hawk of the Hill.

She had long before taught those songs to my mother; perhaps when she was nursing her through some childish illness as she was now nursing me—and my mother had often sung them to us as lullabies. They have always seemed to me the most gallant of all songs; and the names that were in them the most gallant of all names.

That long convalescence is, in the retrospect, the happiest and, at the same time, the most important period in my life. In it, all the strengths and fealties and right desires that have worked in me, and have given to my life such utility as it can claim, have authentically

their roots. They were as yet puny and faltering and inarticulate enough; such strengths and fealties and desires as a child is capable of. But they were destined, through effort and suffering, with not a few set-backs and deflections, to grow with my boyhood and youth, and to find at length, in my manhood, some sort of expression …

(*My brother's diary ends abruptly here. I am very sorry that it has ended; for I have a curious, blank feeling, as if some pleasant, confidential voice had suddenly grown silent.—M.B.P.*)

Intermediate Certificate Students, Westland Row, 1893.
Pearse is seated on the far right.

PART II
OUR HOME RECOLLECTIONS OF PÁDRAIG

By Mary Brigid Pearse

6: 'He served His Country and Loved His Kind'

Before I commence setting down my own reminiscences of my brother's boyhood I shall give the words of 'The Old Grey Mare' which he had mentioned, and of which he was very fond. Also I shall give, in his own words, a dream which he relates in *The Story of a Success*. I think it is an appropriate place to do so, as he has just been recording the childish dreams which used to affright him.

The following is the old ballad which he loved:—

THE OLD GREY MARE

(*A Bonaparte Ballad*)

At break of day I chanced to stray
All by the Seine's fair side,
When to ease my heart young Bonaparte
Came forward now to ride.
On a field of green with gallant mien
He formed his men in square,
And down the line with look so fine
He rode his Old Grey Mare.

My sporting boys that's tall and straight,
Take counsel and be wise,
Attention pay to what I say,
My lecture don't despise:

Let patience guide you everywhere,
And from traitors now beware,
For there's none but men that's sound within
Can ride my Old Grey Mare.

Bonaparte on her did start,
He rode too fast, it's true!
She lost a shoe at Moscow fair
And got lame at Waterloo.
But wait till she comes back to the shamrock shore
Where she'll get farrier's care,
And at the very next gate she'll win the plate,
My sporting Old Grey Mare!

It is certainly a very fine old ballad, with quaint rhymes and fancies.

I will now quote from *The Story of a Success*, the following extract. As my brother remembered very vividly his childish dreams and nightmares, so this strange dream impressed itself on his mind.

> I dreamt (*he writes*) that I saw a pupil of mine, one of our boys at St Enda's, standing alone upon a platform above a mighty sea of people; and I understood that he was about to die there for some august cause, Ireland's or another.
>
> He looked extraordinarily proud and joyous, lifting his head with a smile almost of amusement; I remember noticing his bare, white throat and the hair on his forehead stirred by the wind, just as I had often noticed them on the hurling-field. I felt an inexplicable exhilaration as I looked at him, and this exhilaration was heightened rather than diminished by my consciousness that the great silent crowd regarded the boy with pity and wonder rather than approval—as a fool who was throwing away his life, rather than a martyr that was doing his duty.

It would have been so easy to die before an applauding crowd or before a hostile crowd; but to die before the silent unsympathetic crowd!

I dreamt then that another of my pupils stepped upon the scaffold and embraced his comrade, and that then he tied a white bandage over the boy's eyes, as though he would resent the hangman doing him that kindly office. And this act seemed to me to symbolise an immense brotherly charity and loyalty, and to be the compensation to the boy that died, for the indifference of the crowd.

This is the only vivid dream I have ever had since I used to dream of hobgoblins when I was a child.

A strange dream, truly, and perhaps a prophetic one, for many of the boys of St Enda's have died gallantly for Ireland.

And my brother's other dreams! His dreams of Waking, not of Sleep! Surely they have come true! He dreamed of founding a school where he could foster and cherish his beloved boys. And lo!—his dream was realised at historic Cullenswood! He dreamed of one day giving his life for Ireland's freedom. One fair May morning, *that* dream also came true, when English bullets found their billets in his heart!

. . . . .

As a further prelude to what I shall personally have to say, I will here give place to the following words by my mother:—

A MOTHER'S GOLDEN MEMORIES

'There are so many golden memories of my son enshrined in my heart that I find it difficult to separate them, one from the other, and write about any one thing in particular. These memories are so fragrant—so delicate—so loving! But for the sake of the Irish boys whom Pádraig loved so much, I will endeavour to set down just a few

incidents and reminiscences which may, I trust, interest the young readers of this little book.

The Pearse family children.

‘Pádraig was always an affectionate child. I can remember the heartful delight of my chubby little son when the nurse told him of the arrival of his little brother—the little brother whom he loved so dearly through his life, and who followed him always during their years of childhood, boyhood, and early manhood. Ah, yes! That faithful little brother who marched along the thorny road with him, even to death, for the freedom of their beloved country. It seems but a few short years since they both made a vow to fight for Ireland, and, if necessary, to die for her.

‘Pádraig was always very devoted to me, his mother. I remember, oh, so clearly, when he was only a tiny little fellow, I used to sing his little sister to sleep. The songs were Irish songs I often recall to my memory.

‘In later years I used to sing a song about O’Donovan Rossa, and little Pádraig would stand by my side and say: “Muddie! Sing that song again!” It is strange that my boy should have remembered this particular song so vividly; for I find in some of his writings a reference to it. He says that he felt that Rossa must have been a great man. Another song which Pádraig loved to hear was, “My Mother Dear,” which his father used to sing.

‘This exquisite and profound love for me, his mother, grew with his growth. He always called me “Little Wommie,” and “Little Mother.” In that beautiful play, *The Singer*, when Mac Dara rushes into his mother’s arms, it was of me, his own mother, that Pádraig was thinking. I knew that, instinctively; and Willie afterwards confirmed my belief when he told me that I was the prototype of Mac Dara’s mother, Máire. His own “Little Mother” was in my boy’s brave heart when he wrote that play.

Pádraig was always very kind to, and fond of, the poor and the aged, and his brother Willie was just the same. Pádraig was especially kind to his delicate sister, who spent most of her time in bed. I remember how, when living in Brunswick Street (now Pearse Street), he would race up the stairs as soon as he came from school to the front room to see her; when he would find that she was not there he would run up the other two flights to the bedroom to her. Then he would take up *Little Folks*, or any other story he could lay hands on, and read chapter after chapter for her. I could scarcely get him down to his dinner; and as soon as he had finished, he would rush up again to continue reading the child's beloved books.

'My son was exceedingly fond of study. In fact, his father could not get him to put his books away even at night-time.

'When Pádraig left school he could not make up his mind what profession to take up. He had an abhorrence of the Civil Service, into which all his school-fellows had entered; yet he felt he must do something. His whole ambition was to teach boys; and he told me himself that from the time he was sixteen years old he had determined to have a school of his own, where he could teach Irish boys as they should be taught.

'I could write many, many more loving little instances of Pádraig's childhood days; but I feel that I have given sufficient for my purpose. And that purpose is to impress on the minds of the boys, and of girls also, that they, too, can grow up as this gentle teacher and lover of children grew up—affectionate, kindly, and brave, as he was in his childhood days.

'All his life he confided in his "Little Mother"; and he never did the least thing which I did not wish him to do. Even to the last night he was with me, he was just the same. On Good Friday, April, 1916, he stood, as he usually did, with his beloved brother at the foot of the bedroom stairs to bid me that fond good-night: in his last letter, which he wrote to me from Kilmainham, he still turned to me:

> Good-bye again, dear, dear mother! May God bless you for your great love for me and for your great faith in me. May He

remember all that you have so bravely suffered. Good-bye! I have not words to tell you of my love for you and home, and how my heart yearns to you all. I will call to you in my heart at the last moment!

'Oh! What inexpressible consolation this beautiful promise has been to me! What greater happiness of exultation could any mother's soul contain!

'It has been difficult for me to write about Pádraig without mentioning Willie more frequently. Both were lovable, and they were inseparable. Since their death, I have never spoken of one without speaking of the other also. Both my sons died for their country; both lived in their mother's heart; both their names will shine on the pages of their country's history.'

. . . . .

As a fitting pendant to the foregoing words by my mother I will quote Pádraig's famous poem:

I do not grudge them: Lord, I do not grudge
My two strong sons that I have seen go out
To break their strength and die, they and a few,
In bloody protest for a glorious thing;
They shall be spoken of among their people,
The generations shall remember them,
And call them blessed;
But I will speak their names to my own heart
In the long nights;
The little names that were familiar once
Round my dead hearth.
Lord, Thou are hard on mothers:
We suffer in their coming and their going;
And tho' I grudge them not, I weary, weary
Of the long sorrow—and yet I have my joy:
My sons were faithful, and they fought.

My mother asked me to insert the little prayer which Pádraig wrote for her, his mother, on the eve of his execution. The circumstances surrounding it are curiously touching.

One evening at Sgoil Éanna some time before the rising of 1916, my mother was sitting very dejected and cast down, pondering sadly many things. Already the ominous thunder of war could be heard far off, and the mother's heart was very heavy, thinking of what might come. Pádraig noticed that she was sorrowful, and, putting his arms around her, tried to cheer her.

'What are you thinking of, little mother?' he asked her tenderly.

'I'm thinking,' she told him, 'that perhaps you may be arrested.'

'I may be,' he smiled.

'And I'm thinking,' she went on, still more sadly and fearfully, 'that perhaps you—and Willie—may be killed!'

'It would be better to be killed than imprisoned,' he said quietly.

'But—' she whispered, 'if you were killed—and Willie left—or if *Willie* were killed and *you* left—how awful that would be for the one left behind!'

Pádraig was very quiet for a moment and then said slowly: 'Yes! That would be terrible!'

They were silent for a few moments, and then Pádraig saw that she was crying.

'Don't worry,' he said gently. 'Don't upset yourself! Things will be all right.'

A few minutes afterwards she got up and put her arms around him, as he sat writing at a table.

Pádraig and Willie, lifelong companions.

'What is it, little mother?' he asked her, smiling into her eyes.

'I'm thinking,' she whispered tearfully, 'that—if you go—there will be no one to write something for me—as your father used to. He wrote such beautiful things when your Auntie Kate and Grandfather died. Do you think you—could write something for me? If you—get time?'

He looked at her, with his soul in his eyes.

'Yes,' he promised her: 'I will write something for you—if I get time!'

Just at the last hours that time came, and Pádraig wrote the following prayer for the little mother of his heart:

A MOTHER SPEAKS

(*Written in Kilmainham Jail*)

Dear Mary, that didst see thy only Son
Go forth to die amidst the scorn of men
For whom He died:
Receive my first-born son into thy arms,
Who also hath gone out to die for men,
And keep him by thee till I come to him:
Dear Mary, I have shared thy sorrow,
And soon shall share thy joy.

7: Fun, Frolic and Masquerade

As a child, my brother was extremely fond of sweet things—jam, sugar, honey, and the like. This ‘sweet tooth’ was sometimes the cause of his getting into mischief.

I remember on one occasion, when we were living in Brunswick Street, that a landing-window pane was badly cracked. Our father—pending the time when he could have the pane replaced—patched up the cracks by putting on little flat gelatine sweets, which adhered quite closely. Every day, however, to father’s mystification, one sweet after the other disappeared off the pane.

The thing was inexplicable, for the sweets which remained were sticking quite firmly. Perhaps, however, father would not have been so much amazed if he had seen a small, serious-faced youth surreptitiously taking a sweet every evening as he passed that particular window on his way up from the hall after coming from school. At last, however, there were no more sweets left to stick, and the irate householder was obliged to get the pane inserted. He was exceedingly annoyed when he came across his hopeful son blissfully enjoying the fruits (or should I say ‘sweets’?) of his wrong-doing. Only father’s keen sense of the ridiculous saved the culprit from chastisement.

Pat had a particularly ‘strong weakness’ for currants, raisins, and candied peel, such as are used in rich cakes and Christmas puddings. Every Christmas Eve our mother collected the various ingredients for a mighty Christmas pudding, assembled her flock of youngsters round the table, and allotted to each a certain portion of work.

I was usually given the suet to chop, as I had a light, deft wrist, and was exceedingly conscientious; to my sister would be given the bread to crumble and grate; Willie would be made happy with the egg beater (we all loved that powerful machine!) when he would blissfully beat up golden eggs into a lovely frothy foam; whilst the heir of the family would gravely take upon himself the task of stoning the delicious fat raisins.

This was rather a sticky job, but the industrious young *chef* never heeded such a trifling inconvenience, for many of the luscious fruits

found their way into his mouth. I used to be very indignant, and always told him exactly what I thought of him, which was far from being complementary; but my rantings never had the least effect on him.

When my mother would come bustling back from the kitchen to see how the work was progressing, she would invariably find a most remarkable shrinkage in the amount of fruit for her pudding. (Unlike my father, however, she was never in the least surprised at any such occurrence). She knew perfectly well that her seraphic-looking eldest son, whose grey eyes were fixed on her with melting tenderness, was responsible for the shortage. Gently, but firmly, therefore, she would shift her too zealous helper to another job, which was usually that of slicing the candied peels. Of course, the same thing happened. Much of the candied peel soon became conspicuous by its absence, this dainty being a special favourite of the young epicure.

In view of the fact that a pudding was absolutely necessary for Christmas Day, the harassed housewife would be obliged to banish her son altogether from the table. Pat would then stretch himself on the sofa, and start a most dismal and discordant racket which he called ‘singing.’ He would drone out (for he had absolutely no ear for music, although he was very fond of it) some curious ballads. One was about a strange individual called ‘Brian O’Lynn,’ the other about an amazing female named ‘Kitty.’ The verses ended like this:

For me heart was heavy and me pocket was light,
And how could I go to the ball that night?

Then came a devastating chorus, running as follows:—

Kitty, fol lol, fol lol, fol lol!
Kitty, fol lol, fol li doh!

This peculiarly enlivening performance only terminated when our father’s sharp knock at the hall-door would send the minstrel and his little brother, the industrious egg beater, scurrying upstairs to bed, where they both should have been hours before.

My elder brother was also particularly fond of nuts, almonds and coconuts being his favourites. On Hallow Eve he relished the coconuts extremely. But this taste for nuts always led to trouble: for my mother—not for Pat! Whenever she bought a rich cake, with chopped almonds on the top, and inadvertently left it about, she always found it later bereft of its nutty covering. Pat, seeming to know by instinct that there was almond cake around, would carefully pick all the nuts off the top, leaving it quite bare and ugly looking. It seemed as if he could not resist these delectable tit-bits! He had the most beautiful strong, even teeth, and could crack the hardest nut with perfect ease. Pat retained his 'sweet tooth' all his life, and could always enjoy a stick of sugar barley or Turkish delight as well as any schoolboy.

He also retained another proclivity which he had when he was a child: namely, that of dressing up and masquerading as different, strange, rather eccentric people—principally females. He would frequently dress himself in any old clothes he could rummage out, and present himself at the hall-door, disguised as a woman in motley garb. The servants were always quite deceived, and would go up to tell the 'mistress' that a strange person wanted to see her. But this 'strange person' would have decamped by the time my mother arrived at the door. Pat was really very clever at 'making up,' and was able to disguise even his boyish treble, making it appear old and cracked. He and Mary Kate, our cousin, were incessantly playing pranks of this sort. Even now she remembers them very well.

> I remember (*she writes*) that on one occasion Pat dressed up in Maggie's clothes, and we walked along Amiens Street inquiring at various shops if a 'Mrs Brady' lived there. Eventually we found in one place where a good lady of that name really *did* reside. We were considerably disturbed, and had to beat a hasty retreat whilst the person in the shop went to tell Mrs Brady that we wanted to see her.

Personally, I think it would have been poetic justice if the two jokers had been caught.

My nephew Alfred, who lived with us for a long time and helped Pat when he was producing his plays, has many interesting stories to tell about him. Among other things he has told me that when my brother was a man—just before he founded St Enda's, in fact—he used to masquerade as a poor person. His object was to find out, by experience, how it felt to beg.

He and Alfred went out more than once around the roads in Donnybrook, where we were living at the time, and asked for alms. They were dressed in their oldest clothes, and it was dusk when they started their experiment. Curiously enough, Alfred says that *he* received nothing, but that my brother was more successful. One kindly old lady gave him a sixpence, saying whilst she tendered it: 'Here you are, my poor fellow! If it were the last sixpence I had I'd give it to you willingly.' I *do* like that dear lady.

Another time, Alfred tells me, Pat donned his roughest and shabbiest clothes (whilst he was in Connemara), procured a stout stick, refrained from shaving, and started off to tramp the country roads as 'a man of the road.' No one knew who he was, of course, which is what he wished, for he could mix quite freely with the country folk as one of themselves, and sit at their homely, hospitable turf-fires, drinking in all their beautiful stories and exquisite music to his heart's content. I suppose it was thus he found out so much about the lives and customs of the people in his beloved West.

I think it must have been because Pat himself had such a fondness for practical jokes that he always felt a sneaking sympathy with other practical jokers.

There is a little anecdote which my nephew has told me about Pat, demonstrating that determination of character which was so marked in him. He was only nine years of age, or thereabouts, and he, Willie, and Maggie were visiting our half-sister. The children were all out in a field behind the house, playing tennis, when the landlord arrived on the scene, and curtly ordered them off. Our little niece Emily (now a nun in Texas) told him that he had promised to allow them to use the field.

Pat was on his mettle immediately. He listened; looked straight at the angry landlord, and calmly remarked: 'Then we *will* play!' and they

did. Young as Pat was, he felt that a promise ought to be kept, and he refused to be bullied. The landlord, routed, beat a hasty retreat, leaving my small brother victorious, and the tennis players in undisputed possession of the field.

Pearse, the young man, with an unknown child.

8: Gentleness and Strength—The Gift of Humour

The following sympathetic little pen sketch is from my half-sister Emily. Emily, of course, knew my brother before I was born; so I am sure her few reminiscences will be read with great interest.

Two things struck me very forcibly whilst reading the various contributions which have been sent to me. Without exception, everyone who knew my brother—remotely or intimately—has been impressed by the same two dominant traits in his character: his reserve and his quiet strength and determination.

I, also, have always been conscious of this quiet strength which lay behind Pádraig's gentleness; and his reserve has been a sort of barrier between us many a time. As I myself am even more reserved than he ever was, it can be imagined how shy of each other we sometimes were.

But whenever my brother was among his beloved children his reserved vanished like mist under the genial rays of the sun. In one of his poems he wrote:

Of riches or of store
I shall not leave behind me
(Yet I deem it, O God, sufficient)
But my name in the heart of a child.

AN ELDER SISTER'S RECOLLECTIONS OF PÁDRAIG PEARSE

'My recollections of Pádraig, whom I knew only as "Pat," are neither very startling (*writes Emily*) nor very full of incidents. In one sense, however, they are exceedingly real and vivid, even though I knew him best only when he was a tiny boy.

'Perhaps the lack of incidents is due to the fact that his natural reserve, his gentle shyness, his silent thoughtfulness were, even in childhood, his chief characteristics: characteristics which were the

principal factors in his marvellously dominant personality, and which made him the man he was.

'Pat's sweet uncomplaining patience when, as a tiny boy, he was very ill, is one of my clearest memories. He must have suffered severely; yet never once did I hear him utter a cry of complaint. Self-repression was part of the gentle boy's nature. And again, Pat steals back into my memory as a child taking a childish delight in toys; and delighting also in his brother's and sisters' enjoyment.

'I picture him at my wedding—a comely little page, royally dressed in ruby velvet and heavy lace, a truly princely little figure; reserved, shy, and silent, with a wonderfully calm self-possession which sat strangely on his small figure.

'And so I like him to remain in my mind; for it is so that he stands out most vividly—a beautiful picture of bygone years.

'Little did I dream of the power that my small, velvet-clad page was to hold some day in his frail-looking tiny person!

'One other precious memory I hold of my brother. It was after a lapse of years, during which period I had not had many opportunities of seeing him. He had left boyhood behind him; and all singular powers of his personality seemed to have grown with him.

'He was reciting "Seumas O'Brien" at a Magic Lantern entertainment given by my father to a few friends. The young reciter was tense with emotion, so thoroughly did he realise the sentiments of the piece. Seumas O'Brien and his wrongs, the sufferings of his people and country, seemed to have entered into my brother and set his soul on fire!

'If the *child* dwells in my memory, as a small person silently thinking out a great purpose that was born with him; so, also, does the young man—only a boy, indeed—live in my recollections of later years. A grave, forceful man, with the same purpose. And this purpose an exalted one—newly sprung to glowing life! A keen, deliberate purpose which would not die, but which would, in the future, be fully accomplished!'

Emily Pearse McGloughlin.

. . . . .

Emily, like many others, was particularly impressed by the force and sincerity of Pádraig's histrionic powers.

All his life he was a devoted disciple of the dramatic art. When he was a mere child he began to write plays and to teach us how to act them. The fine art of elocution always made a strong appeal to him; and his manner of reciting was peculiarly impressive and arresting. Even in the quiet parts of his pieces there was ever a hidden fire—an ardent sincerity—held in check, but burning fervidly all the while.

A favourite piece of his when he was quite young was an old ballad called 'The Glen of Aherlow.' It was rather a mediocre piece, yet Pat put such a power and pathos into his rendering of it, that it was a real pleasure to listen; and the very ordinary verse with their doubtful prosody became quite beautiful and fine.

'Little Jim' was another pathetic piece which Pat learned from Auntie Margaret who used to sing it to him. As my brother couldn't sing a note, he did the next best thing and recited it. 'Fontenoy' and 'The Death of the Old Year,' were two other favourites of his.

That charming old ballad 'Seumas O'Brien' was, I think, my brother's favourite recitation. Our father, although he was an Englishman, was a great admirer of good Irish ballad poetry. He used to recite 'Seumas O'Brien' himself with exquisite feeling, and he loved to hear his small son recite it also.

At St Enda's, when the beloved Head would be amongst his boys, 'Seumas O'Brien' was always clamoured for. One of his pupils, Desmond Ryan, in his book *The Man Called Pearse* comments on this fact.

> After some important holiday, he writes, or school excursion (generally to some Wicklow glen or among the Dublin hills), we would insist upon, not a speech, but the recitation, 'Seumas O'Brien,' which, after long and coercive applause, we would succeed 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, ’tis yourselves you must hang!

In Shakespearean recitations my brother was exceedingly good. His rendering of the famous oration of Mark Antony was quite beautiful. As in ‘Seumas O’Brien,’ his quick transition from extreme quietness to fierce passion was quite out of the ordinary and was tremendously effective. With the tenderness of a mother crooning over her child, he would murmur Antony’s endearing words over the dead body of his friend:

Show you sweet Caesar’s wounds—poor, poor, dumb mouths—
And bid them speak for me.

But as a wild triumphant challenge would come the closing lines of Antony’s speech, flung out in ringing, exulting tones, rapid, and *stinging:*

But were I Brutus,
And Brutus Antony, there were an Antony
Would ruffle up your spirits, and put a tongue
In every wound of Caesar, that should move
The stones of Rome to rise—and MUTINY!

But if Pat’s sudden change from quietness to tense vehemence was startling, his equally swift veering from gravity to unbounded hilarity was still more remarkable. This idiosyncrasy was very often the cause of friction between us. Pat and Willie and Alfred were all very fond of the tragedy *Macbeth*; and the four of us learned virtually the whole of the play. Pat took the title role, whilst I, of course, played Lady Macbeth. Unfortunately, however, Pat’s risibility always completely overcame him the instant he addressed me by any endearing

term, and he used to break into uncontrollable laughter! This made the whole business absolutely farcical. To see the grave Scotsman holding his sides with hilarity, to hear his helpless peals of mirth was too ridiculous. I used to become seriously annoyed. I would work up the scene most dramatically, and then Pat would ruin it.

It would run something after this fashion:

Lady Macbeth: 'Great Glamis! Worthy Cawdor!'

(*'Great Glamis' would show signs of acute enjoyment!*) 'Greater than both, by the all-hail, hereafter!' (*Worthy Cawdor on the point of suffocation as his Lady gracefully kissed his hand!*) 'Thy letters have transported me beyond this ignorant present
And I now feel the future in the instant!'

Macbeth (in choked tones): 'My dearest love! Duncan comes here—' (*'Ha! Ha! Ha!'*).

And here would occur an utter collapse of the tragic Scot!

I used to rail at him, and Willie—who was a splendid actor and a most reliable one—used to implore his facetious brother to be sensible and get on with the business in hand. But we might as well have spoken to the wind. Pat would sprawl on the sofa, shrieking; and there was nothing for it but to start on some other part of the play—the scene with the witches, or the scene between Macbeth and Banquo. Pat made a fearsome witch, and his voice was awesome enough to satisfy the most fastidious witch that ever rode a broomstick.

But eventually I divorced my eccentric husband, and Willie took his place. We were reciting for a priest one evening, and Pat, as usual, spoiled the scene. I was so furious that I would not act that part with him again.

Both my brothers used to act the famous Quarrel Scene from *Julius Caesar*. Pat took the part of Brutus, and Willie that of the wily Cassius. Pat was fine in that scene—dignified, keen, and commanding; a splendid foil to Willie's equally good rendering of the tricky, affected Cassius.

As a matter of fact, though few people seem to know it, my elder brother possessed an acute sense of humour. He would appreciate a joke against himself more than anyone I ever knew. I remember an instance of this. He was expecting a distinguished lady, called Miss McNaughton, for afternoon tea. As luck had it, my mother was also expecting a visitor, namely, a new maid, on the same evening. Pat heard the bell, and knew that someone had arrived. Assuming at once that the arrival was *his* visitor, he strode into the drawingroom in a most lordly manner. In his magnificently courteous fashion, and with his characteristic little bow, he held out his hand, saying cordially: 'Miss McNaughton, I believe!'

Whatever *he* believed, the new maid certainly *did not*; and her expression of profound astonishment—amounting almost to stupefaction—caused my brother to feel vaguely that something was wrong, *somewhere*. My sister and mother signalled frantically to him across the room to go away, which he did as quickly as possible, leaving the maid wondering at the eccentric behaviour of the master of the house. When Pat heard the real truth of the matter, he became positively uproarious; and it was quite a while before his mirth subsided. On one occasion, a gentleman was telling him about some very effective fluid for exterminating slugs. Its name was 'Slugeen.' Whether it was the name itself, or the gentleman's quaint manner of pronouncing the name, that tickled my brother's ear, I cannot tell. All I know is that he was seized with an uncontrollable impulse to laughter and had to bury his head in the sofa-cushion and thus stifle his merriment behind the gentleman's back, while the latter wondered why his host had become suddenly dumb. Willie and I, in the meantime—in choked voices ourselves—had to start on some engrossing topic or other in order to distract our visitor's attention until Pat had regained sufficient command of his features to resume his part in the general conversation.

9: ‘The Little Priest’

He was a very young priest—very young indeed: in fact, he was only about ten years old!

His vestments, too, were somewhat unecclesiastical. A long white nightdress, taken from his mother’s room, and held in at the waist by a piece of twine, constituted the alb; whilst his own little shirt, hanging from his shoulders with the arms crossed in front to represent the stole, did duty for the chasuble.

The acolyte who served was a chubby little fellow, only a year or so younger—the priest’s own small brother. His duties consisted in ringing a tiny bell and moving a large book from side to side of the bedroom altar. This small Mass-server—whose big eyes seemed always ready to brim over—had a perfect passion for ringing the bell, very often at the wrong time.

But his brother was the sweetest-tempered ‘*sagart*’ imaginable, and never an angry word fell from his lips. Not even when the congregation of two small maidens started quarrelling, and shrieks of defiance filled the air, would he lose his rare composure of manner. Sometimes the sobs of the little altar-boy would swell the woeful chorus, and then the poor ‘*sagart*,’ in great dismay, would endeavour to make peace.

Yet, despite the fantastic garments and the absurd conduct of the congregation, the whole performance (including a sermon) was the quintessence of dignity. For the ‘little priest’s’ gestures were reverent, his voice low and earnest, his childish face innocent and good, his grave shy eyes aglow with feeling.

. . . . .

I can see, as in a glass, this gentle boy-priest in many different phases of his life. I can see him as a small laddie, serene-eyed and happy-hearted—though always rather quiet—hurrying to school, the ‘little brother of his heart’ trotting beside him, for the two were never apart.

I can see him as an earnest student toiling unceasingly in preparation for examinations, and winning many fine laurels. I can see him in his young manhood, a little less dreamy than when he was a boy, but still with his broad white brows bent over his books; still climbing the ladder which leads to fame.

But although all these visions are as clear to me as is the shining of crystals in dark places, there is one vision more vivid than all the rest—that tender vision of the innocent little *sagart* standing before the homely altar in the sunny room of the old house in Brunswick Street. I can see his little outstretched hands and earnest boyish face. I can even hear his young voice whispering reverently—*Ite, misse est.*

. . . . .

I know it is not necessary for me to tell my readers—either old or young—the name of this quaint little priest, or equally quaint little acolyte. Their names are known and loved through the length and breadth of Ireland. The dreamy young '*sagart*,' when he became a man, endeared himself to every young child by writing for them many beautiful stories. Later, he founded schools for the boys and girls he loved so much, that they might be fostered under his gentle rule. From the delicate little human story 'The Priest' we see that he found a replica of himself in *another* little priest, only eight years old.

His description of his 'Páraig' might have been a perfectly accurate description of himself in the same circumstances. Let me quote it:

> Páraig stood out opposite the table, bent his knee, blessed himself, and began praying loudly … Whatever wonder was on Nora at this, it was seven times greater the wonder was on her when she saw Páraig genuflecting, beating his breast, kissing the table, letting on he was reading Latin prayers of the 'Second Book,' and playing one trick odder than another. She didn't know rightly what he was up to, till he turned round and said: *Dominus vobiscum!*

‘God save us!’ she says to herself when she saw this. ‘He’s pretending that he’s a priest and he reading Mass! That’s the Mass vestment he’s wearing, and the little Gaelic book is the book of the Mass!’

It’s no exaggeration to say that Nora was scared.

However Nora was scared when her son pretended to be a priest, our mother certainly was not. I really think that she believed her adored little son could not do wrong!

. . . . .

I recollect that we all had a strong predilection for May Devotions, and on these occasions, of course, Pat was the officiating ‘clergyman.’ The Devotions consisted of the Rosary and Litany, recited before the Blessed Virgin’s altar, followed by a procession through the bedrooms. We carried lighted candles, and my sister and I wore veils. These processions were always accompanied by a weird style of singing peculiar to ourselves. Of course, my brother always ‘vested’ for his part, and actually preached a little sermon!

Sometimes (rather often, I fear) my sister, Willie and I would squabble, for Maggie liked to domineer over us, and we resented it. Pat, like a true ‘priest,’ always made peace, for his grave reasonableness was very forceful.

Accidents would sometimes mar the smoothness of our Devotions. The vases would fall over and soak the altar cloth, or the altar itself would suddenly blaze up. Once, indeed, Maggie’s veil caught fire, which was serious. But she and the equally courageous ‘priest’ kept their nerve perfectly.

Truly, children are incomprehensible beings! My brother’s quaint garb never appeared funny or even peculiar to any of us: neither did his impersonation ever lessen our veneration for the awful dignity of the priesthood. Somehow, on such occasions there was always such a sweet gravity about him that it commanded our respect.

Both Pat and Maggie were very keen on the different ceremonies of Holy Week. They went regularly to Tenebrae, and religiously made many visits for Portiuncula. Once my brother was in such a hurry for his devotions that he slipped when getting off the tram, and narrowly escaped a bad accident.

A funny thing comes to my mind at the moment of writing. Maggie's and Pat's constant attendance at church, and their speaking about priests, must have greatly impressed me. I had a toy village at the time, everything complete, with the top portion of a lovely Noah's Ark belonging to Pat for the village chapel. It had an altar and seats and a confessional, so we had to have a priest. Pat purchased a small statue—of St. Dominic, I think—and he made a wee chasuble from paper, and painted it green. Every week this quaint priest said Mass for the equally quaint villagers!

. . . . .

From his earnest years Pat constituted himself Willie's champion; and woe betide anyone who ventured to browbeat the 'Little Brother'! As he tells us himself in his own reminiscences: 'I was always wounded if Willie were slighted or ill-used.' His zeal in this self-appointed task sometimes drove him to extremes.

On one occasion, when he was only a small laddie, he and his schoolmistress (Miss Murphy) had a tussle of wills. She was about to punish Willie for some trifling fault, when Pat started up to the rescue. Quietly, yet with flashing eyes, he informed her that he would not *allow* her to touch his brother! The lady was so amazed at his innocent audacity (for indeed, Pat was not defiant, only solicitous about his nervous little brother!) that she merely remarked: 'Sit down, Patrick!' That intrepid youth replied with extreme politeness, yet with unconscious irony: 'I am not tired, Miss Murphy!'

Years later at the Christian Brothers Schools, Westland Row, Pat again stood up for Willie and won his cause with the kindly teachers there, as he had won it long before with the austere mistress. Looking back, I now realise that neither of my brothers was quite like other boys.

Neither joined in the usual rough sport beloved of schoolboys, and they were rarely mischievous. They both loved home and were content to stay there.

My mother tells of one very mild escapade. She had sent them to visit a dear old lady of whom we were all very fond. The evening suddenly turned wet; and the anxious mother, fearing her darlings might catch cold, journeyed after them to Rathmines, with overcoats and umbrellas.

When she arrived at the old lady's tiny cottage, she was stricken with horror on learning that there was no trace of her sons! Then she heard the most curious sounds proceeding from the roof, and discovered that the two lads were on *top* of the house, in the rain, instead of under shelter! Her coats and umbrellas seemed superfluous! Pat's defence, when sadly reproached by his afflicted mother, was that they wished to find out if the roof was in order!

There was one very curious game which my brothers used to play, principally to amuse me. They called it 'Playing Clowns.' At night, when they were half undressed, they would tumble into my room, in their stockinged feet, and swarm over the furniture, and chase each other in the oddest manner. After many freakish antics—all performed in absolute silence—the 'Clowns' would be put to flight by the sound of father's step on the stairs. This pantomime was gone through almost every night.

When we lived in Sandymount, in the house which my brother has described, he was the hero of rather a funny exploit. There was a good orchard attached to the house, with fine rosy apples in abundance. Most boys would have wished for those apples just to eat; but Pat, who was only about nine, although exceedingly fond of fruit, wanted to apples to sell, to help *poor children!* So one fine day he purloined a quantity of the apples, found a big basket in the store-room, dressed himself and Willie in their oldest clothes, and sallied forth on an adventurous journey to sell his wares.

But the praiseworthy expedition ended disastrously for the small apple-vendors. The ragged boys in the neighbourhood, strongly resenting the conduct of the 'young gents' in stealing their trade, fell

on the two philanthropists and scattered the apples in every direction. Then they started beating the two lads, who had been striving merely to be kind.

Pat put up a good fight, but he was hopelessly outnumbered, and very much younger than his assailants. Things were becoming serious, when, providentially, the son of one of our neighbours arrived on the scene. He was a big lad, over sixteen, and quickly put the cowardly street urchins to flight. Then he led my brothers home, Pat, flushed, tired, dishevelled, bruised, but—*undaunted!*

I think that this was his first *real* adventure, and he enjoyed it, I am sure in his own odd way.

Like his last 'big adventure,' its finish was, to him, a triumph—not a defeat.

Margaret
Pádraig's sister

Margaret Pearse, née Brady
Pearse family matriarch

10: A Budget of Stories

My brother, as I have said, always extracted the most exquisite pleasure from his own blunders. Here is an instance I remember very well.

Willie and I were producing at St Enda's a farce called 'The Skull,' written by our nephew Alfred. Before the curtain rose I was near the stage in the big Study Hall dressed as a rough old countrywoman, my face very dirty and greatly changed with grease paint.

Pat came swinging along in his best Head Master style and stopped short when he saw the strange figure. Then he demanded with great indignation: 'Who is this woman?'

I knew that my disguise was fairly good; but I never imagined that it could be as effective as it apparently was. Of course, the light was dim at the time, which helped my 'make up.' I was too amazed to speak, and Pat again inquired in still more truculent tones: 'Who is this woman, and what does she want here?'

Willie, who was passing, dressed still more preposterously than I, found voice to say: 'Why, it's Mary Brigid!'

Pat uttered a sudden exclamation, something between a chuckle and a war whoop, and faded away from the hall. When he re-appeared he was exhausted and very red, and his eyes were moist. He had been seized with irresistible mirth, which had necessitated his strict seclusion for a time.

. . . . .

I remember a fine 'howler' which stands to his credit. He was proudly telling some visitor about the many glories of his beloved Hermitage. The conversation turned on the different forms of vegetation found there, wild flowers, and others. My brother had a good working knowledge of botany, but his knowledge or ordinary horticulture was vague and limited. With a magnificent gesture of his arm to indicate space, he remarked:

'You see, all the grass at the Hermitage is pampas grass!'

The visitor appeared slightly stunned.

'What—*All?*' he stammered, quite shaken.

Evidently he was wondering how the boys could possibly play hurley in a field covered with tall canes, fully five feet high, each surmounted with enormous feather tufts.

'Oh, certainly!' my brother assured him, airily; 'Even the playing fields. It's all the *finest pampas grass*.'

The visitor became very thoughtful, reflecting, no doubt, on the amazing place that Pearse's school must be!

My brother's whole-hearted enjoyment over the affair, when I afterwards explained what pampas grass *really* is, passed the bounds of moderation. There were times, however, when no one could possibly know whether my brother was in jest or in earnest! His dry wit was quite baffling.

He would come and tell us, with a perfectly serious face: 'I must make a dart for the capital at once'; or, 'I must make a bee-line into the city *instantly!*' Then he would quietly start to read, leaving us all nonplussed. Regularly he would gravely warn his mother that if the tea were not on the table at six, *precisely*, his whole career would be blasted. The fond and trustful lady used to bustle round and have tea to the second. Yet at eight o'clock he would be leisurely drinking stone-cold tea and calmly perusing some book. When reminded of the time, he would appear mildly surprised, and then remark in the most casual manner:

'How annoying! I ought to have been delivering a lecture in the city at eight sharp!'

Then he would flash his mother a quizzical smile, and rush out like a whirlwind.

It was literally true that he ought to have been lecturing at eight o'clock! I, myself, have sometimes been sitting in a crowded hall, waiting for this very casual lecturer, who, I knew, could not possibly arrive for at least half an hour, the reason being that I had left him at home peacefully drinking tea or correcting proofs.

. . . . .

Our nephew Alfred remembers some amusing examples of Pat's idiosyncrasies.

'I could tell,' he writes, 'many humorous instances of his antics with an alarm clock which he got to make him rise in time to catch the printers. At this time he was editor of *An Claidheamh Soluis*. At 7.30 when the alarm clock rang out, he would start throwing pillows, books, boots—anything, in fact, at the clock, in order to stop the noise so that he might go to sleep again. At 8.30 he would reawaken, spring from the bed, and cry frantically: 'There are twenty printers cursing me now!' Madly he would scramble into his clothes, bolt his breakfast, and rush from the house.'

At one time we lived in Sandymount, our house being just a few minutes' walk from the railway station. On Sunday mornings my mother and Maggie would start calling Pat at eight o'clock for the 11.55 train. From that until a quarter to twelve, each of us would take a turn in striving to rouse the somnolent editor for twelve o'clock Mass. When the signals dropped at seven minutes to twelve, we would all rush from the house, with a last frantic call to the sleeper upstairs.

But never once was Pat late for that train! As the shrill whistle sounded, and the train steamed into the station, he would be sprinting up the platform, triumphant and breathless. Once or twice he just hung on, and was hauled into the guard's van. The porters all got to know the eccentric gentleman who was always late, and would courteously keep a door open, and push the flying figure into the carriage in the nick of time.

I remember once Pat came home, and, stretching himself on a sofa, remarked in a detached manner: 'This complicated piece of machinery called P. H. Pearse has gone out of order.' Then he sighed, and observed that he thought he was dying.

. . . . .

My brother's extraordinary sense of humour always flashed out at its brightest in moments of danger. Alfred gives us a little incident which will illustrate just what I mean:

‘My most vivid recollection of Pat,’ he tells us—‘apart from political connections with him—is of a fire which occurred in Maggie’s bedroom. Maggie was always very particular about her nice near furniture; and I can still hear in my mind Pat’s vast laugh, as, seizing a hearthrug and a bundle of bedclothes, he crushed the whole against the window sash, where the fire had started. By this means he succeeded in quenching the flames.

‘I don’t know which was the more ludicrous: Pat’s loud laughter in the midst of smoke and fire, or Maggie’s woe-begone face as she surveyed her bedraggled apartment afterwards.’

I myself remember this episode clearly. My brother’s laugh was ringing with exultation. Always a good fight—whether moral or physical—was a sheer joy to him: a kind on intoxication; a glorying in danger, and in the *testing* if his own powers to *meet* danger. His laughter at those times was deep and strong; the careless laughter of a sportsman, whether he wins or loses, so long as the *combat* is good!

. . . . .

Foremost among my brother’s many brilliant gifts was that of good reading. Even when he was quite a little lad, his reading was a revelation—a sheer delight! He possessed every qualification of the good reader. Sympathetic appreciation of the text; suitable inflection; musical intonation; popular pitch, and a clear, concise enunciation. That immortal story *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* became to me, as my brother read it, a pulsing, heart-thrilling reality.

I was a pitifully delicate child, always ailing and nearly always confined to bed. One of my strongest and pleasantest recollections is that of my brother reading to me every evening when he came home from school. Oh, how I used to yearn for my brother’s return! How many times would I ask my mother: ‘Are the boys in yet?’ How my childish heart would throb tumultuously when at last Pat’s quick light step was heard on the stairs, and his eager face appeared in the doorway!

And then came the long delightful hours of supreme content and quiet rapture, when I could forget my pain and weariness in listening to that tireless fresh young voice. Very often Pat would not even wait to take his dinner, and then my mother used to carry *both* dinners up to my room, and we would eat the meal cosily together, Pat reading and eating at the same time! We used not to speak much, excepting when my brother would explain a word or passage, for both of us were curiously shy. But there was a close bond of sympathy between us, notwithstanding, and we enjoyed our readings immensely.

Pat went over a wide range of literature, for our taste in this matter was universal. One special favourite was that fine old English tale *Robin Hood the Yeoman*. Father had bought it for my brother, and we simply revelled in its quaintness and freshness. We were also extremely fond of *Little Folks*. I remember when Pat was quite a big lad, both he and I were much affected by a story in *Little Folks*, called 'Doctor Spider,' and by another delightful tale about a dog and a cat, into which we threw ourselves whole-heartedly. Both of us were exceedingly fond of animals, and we used to actually *live* the stories which we read.

. . . . .

This trait in my brother showed itself very strongly in the stories which he himself wrote afterwards for children. He created live children; but with a still finer genius he created for these children live toys, and animal friends with perfect understanding. In 'Eoineen of the Birds,' he says that 'the song-thrush and the yellow bunting heard the story, and he thinks they told it to their friends the swallows, and that the swallows then told the story to him.'

All his life my brother loved the swallows. Every spring he watched for them, and I used to watch also. He would come to me radiantly and tell me when he had heard the first glad twitter of 'his friends.' I always think of him when the summer brings the swallows, and when the sombre autumn takes them away again.

Eoineen tells his mother about the swallows in a most engaging manner:

‘I was coming up from the well when I heard their twittering—a sweet joyful twittering, as they’d be saying: “We’ve come to you again, Eoineen. News to you from the Southern World!” and then one of them flew past me, rubbing his wing to my cheek.’ And again Eoineen says, when the swallows have left him: ‘I’m very lonely since they left me in the harvest. They had so much to say to me. They see everything coming over, and they don’t forget anything. I think long, wanting them.’

And in the lovely little story called ‘Barbara,’ the author shows how a doll saved a little girl’s life, by falling from a dresser. The little child had been lying near the fire, and her coat had blazed up, and the noise of the falling doll had brought the mother—only just in time.

‘In front of the dresser she (the mother) took notice of a thing fallen on the floor. What was it? A little body without a head—a doll’s body.

‘“Barbara fallen from the dresser again,” says the mother. “My conscience, it’s she saved your life to you, Brideen.”

‘“Not falling she did it at all,” says the little girl, “but it’s how she saw I was in danger, and she threw a leap from the top of the dresser to save me. Oh, poor Barbara! You gave your life for my sake!”’

Front, with dark coat and light hat: Pearse at a Conradh na Gaeilge aeraíocht, c. 1905

11: My Brother's Love of Books—His First Attempts at Authorship

From my childhood my brother was always exceedingly studious, which accounts perhaps for his being grave and quiet beyond his years. One seldom saw him without a book open before him, or tucked away under his arm. Books concerning Ireland were, of course, first favourites; but he was always wonderfully interested in nature studies and children's stories. Pat inherited this taste for literature from our father, who was not only a widely-read man, but also a very able writer.

As Pat grew older, his zest for children's stories increased, and his great love for children manifested itself very clearly. At one time a very fine English magazine, call *St Peter's*, made its appearance over here. It was a Catholic publication, and was packed with splendid stories, articles, and puzzles. Its children's pages were especially attractive, so my brother bought the first copy. As both of us liked it so much, he continued buying the magazine.

He used to purchase any and every book for me if I only expressed a wish for it. He procured *Alice in Wonderland*, *Through the Looking Glass*, *Sylvia and Bruno*, *The Wallypug of Why*, and a delightful story called *Prince Boohoo*. I have this still, as it was my *very* own, and I always treasure my books. He also bought *The Swiss Family Robinson* as a birthday present for a little chum of his, whom he had met and petted in the Christian Brothers' School, Westland Row. I think that Pat and I enjoyed the book more than the little boy himself!

My brother had favourite characters in the children's stories; and a particular hero of his was the White Knight in *Through the Looking Glass*. He used to get the *Strand Magazine* because of the very fine children's stories, by Nesbit, which it contained. I remember 'The Railway Children,' which Pat and I revelled in. Pat loved railways, and liked to live within the cheery sound of the trains.

My elder brother and I had another bond of sympathy between us besides that of literary taste and aspirations. Both of us shared a keen pleasure in all sorts of quaint or pretty little toy animals. If they were

elegant and lovely, we delighted in them and admired them; but if they were fanciful, singular, or unique we loved them whole-heartedly and petted them fondly. Pat was always bringing me home dainty and lovable toys—principally toy animals, of course, to please my childish fancy, and to while away many a weary hour of loneliness and pain.

I have one or two of these little articles yet—a delicately-formed wee swan, fashioned from celluloid, and a most quaint pen-wiper consisting of three cheerful-looking pigs, all smiling broadly—the mother pig and her two babies! They are the funniest trio imaginable, for they are all sitting up on their haunches and 'taking notice' in a most un-pig-like manner. I wouldn't part with them on any account—indeed, they have travelled with me many a time!

When Pat was only a mere lad he ran—or should I say edited?—a paper once a week, all of which was written by himself—articles, jokes, puzzles, sketches, and a serial story entitled 'Pat Murphy's Pig'—a humorous story, as its name implies. I used to look forward to the night when the Weekly came out. It was just an ordinary exercise book, closely filled with the author's small neat writing. At that time Pat used to take *The Shamrock*, one of the few Irish weeklies then published. There always has been—and *will* be, I'm afraid—a great dearth of Irish literary papers for children or adults.

My brother's love for, and interest in, everything relating to 'Stageland' were evident from a very early age. He retained these characteristics all his life, as his splendid work at St Enda's has verified. The beautiful plays which he wrote for his boys, and which he taught them to act so finely, are eloquent testimony to his ability and earnestness in this respect.

Pat began to write plays at the remarkably early age of nine, or thereabouts. More amazing still, these plays dealt with the romantic passions of love and jealousy! Yet both these themes are almost entirely absent from his later and more mature works. That a grave little boy, who had read only simple childish matter suitable to his years, could have imagined such strangely un-childlike themes and woven them into plays, is scarcely credible. Yet the fact remains: and I am sure that my readers will be interested in such descriptions as I can give of these

plays, and in the few fragmentary passages which are all I can remember.

The young author had a ready and very enthusiastic helper in myself, for I was as keen on the business as he, although I was only about six years old! Our 'Theatre' was that 'bright room with great spaces of floor,' which Pat remembered so faithfully; the stage was that part of the room which took in the fireplace; and the audience (not very many) sat near the door at the other end. We had not many stage properties; but I have a hazy sort of recollection that for our second play Pat managed to contrive a back-cloth representing a wood. I think that he and Willie painted it themselves, and I seem to remember how the place *reeked* of the smell of paint!

Our stage costumes were not very elaborate, nor very many. My sister and I used to get some simple dresses, blue and pink, made of book muslin; but the actors were not so easily provided for. However, Pat solved the difficulty in a very adroit manner. He used calmly to rifle our mother's ragbag, or even her wardrobe, blissfully aware that she would never say a reproving word to him. Indeed, if she missed anything in the way of clothing she always knew where to find it—amongst her hopeful son's stage properties. It is my private belief that if Pat had annexed her priceless seal coat, or her best silk gown, she would have merely smiled, and shaken her head at him in half-comical reproof.

Pat was the leading incentive and presiding spirit of our small company. Yet he never domineered over us or worried us in any way. Quite the contrary! It was a delight to work with him—or under him, which means a great deal more! He managed everything and everybody with a quiet force mingled with an intense, happy earnestness, wonderfully pleasant and effective. He was ever the gentlest, and kindest, and most patient teacher. He always seemed to *understand* each one's special difficulty, and would strive to overcome it.

Thinking over these things now, I realise he must have *always* possessed, in abundance, every attribute of the perfect teacher. He was a teacher in the truest sense—a 'fosterer,' as he would say himself. And when he reached manhood this gift from God found expression in the

establishing of St Enda's College. I can imagine how the boys under him must have worshipped this beautiful understanding spirit in their beloved Head.

But to return to our plays!

I do not remember very much about our *first* production, as I could not have been more than five years old, and I cannot boast of a long memory such as my brother had. I am afraid that this play was a rather desultory and fragmentary affair. But the name was quite striking. It was *The Rival Lovers*—and my brothers were the diminutive lovers and rivals! Both were very fiercely in love with the same fair lady. From what I can remember, Willie was false to me, for he cast me off contemptuously in a very thrilling scene. The rivals resolved to have a duel, and whoever won was to claim the lady's hand—which was rather hard on the damsel, who favoured her *first* lover, my brother Pat.

I remember falling on Willie's neck, and wailing out in a most imploring manner: 'O Fred, dear, for *my* sake, don't do it!'—*it* being the duel. But the heartless youth pushed me roughly from him, saying harshly: 'I will! I will! Go away!' Then I fell back gracefully into Pat's arms in a dead faint, as Pat had taught me to do; whilst he sternly rebuked his rival, saying in cold measured accents: '*Now* see what you've done!'

Then our cousin Mary Kate, who was cast for the part of my mother, rushed forward and flung herself upon me, exclaiming wildly: 'Alas! You've killed my child!' But her child recovered; and my faithless Fred still repudiating me, I accepted my sad fate, and fell on my knees, crying out: 'Very well! I'll live and die an old maid!' After this trying scene came a truly awful duel between the rivals: which duel used to strike terror into the hero's mother. That anxious lady suffered from the painful apprehension that her darling sons would get maimed, or even shot! As the weapons were only toy pistols loaded with peas, the danger was not very great. I forget the end of the play, however, or who won the duel.

12: 'The Pride of Finisterre'

Our next play was more ambitious, and distinctly better in every respect. It was called *The Pride of Finisterre*; but I am still at a loss to understand why Pat selected a Spanish setting for his play. I sustained the title role, and Willie was my lover Bernard; this time a very ardent and faithful one indeed. Mary Kate was again cast for my mother; whilst her tiny brother John (he was about two feet tall!) played the part of a priest. He had only a few lines to say which he said correctly, if somewhat mechanically.

Maggie was a notable lady of Spain, by name Marie D'Artua! (I am afraid I have not got this peculiar name quite right; but I have spelt it as we pronounced it, at all events!) This noble dame was grievously tormented and humiliated by a most villainous husband called Alexander. The young author sustained this part himself. He was a Count, and he had a servant, Louis, who was as big a scamp as the Count himself. Willie played the double role of Bernard and Louis.

The play was written in verse, some of which I can still remember. In the first scene Bernard told the audience that he was an art student, who was going to Rome to finish his education. He said good-bye, and swore eternal fidelity to 'the Pride of Finisterre,' his sweetheart. They parted in great sorrow.

The next scene was the outskirts of a wood, and the disreputable Count with his wicked servant strolled on together. Louis complained that he was very tired, and the Count resolved to rest awhile.

I recollect these lines:—

Count: *Come, lay us down beneath the shade*
Which these old ivied trees have made.

Accordingly they stretched themselves on the floor and dozed blissfully; whilst the audience had time to note the Count's very peculiar costume. He wore an odd kind of bodice, called at the time a 'Garibaldi.' In colour it was a most startling and ugly red, quite indescribable. Round the Count's slim waist was a wide red sash; and

on his head an old Leghorn hat. Over his shoes and stockings this amazing gentleman had drawn a long white pair of Maggie's stockings, which she used to wear with a white dress when walking in processions. The Count had ribbons at his knees, to hold up the stockings; and his floppy hat was looped up in a most fantastic manner.

But the redoubtable nobleman's crowning glory—if I may use the term—was his large, intensely black moustache, which he used to stick on with gum, thereby hurting his lips very much. There is no doubt that Pat, with his pleasant soft face and the aggressive moustache under the brim of the rakish hat, *must* have been a most astounding little figure! But I used to think him most imposing, and even heroic.

Well, we left the Count and his henchmen resting themselves under some leafy trees in the woods near the Castle of Nevère. After some little while, the two ladies from the Castle came slowly on the stage together. Eugénie (the 'Pride of Finisterre') began to speak in a very plaintive fashion:

Eug.: *O mother! I feel ill today!*
Mother: *My daughter, chase these thoughts away;*
Thy lover's in Rome—far o'er the sea;
Yet trust me, he'll be true to thee.
Eug.: *Yes, mother, that is very true;*
Yet when I said my last adieu
I felt my heart would break in twain!
Oh, when shall I see my lover again?

Then the ladies went on to the Castle, leaving the Count quite inflamed with Eugénie's beauty. He expressed his determination to woo and win her, regardless of the fact that he had a wife already! The scamp Louis willingly promised to help his wicked master.

An old mendicant came tottering on (my sister, disguised), and from him the Count learned all about the ladies and Bernard. When this old beggar went off, the Count and his accomplice arranged their nefarious schemes. Louis rather overdid his protestations of devotion to his master, and that wily gentleman saw through it immediately:

Count: *Now, that's a lie, thou wily curse;*
It is not me—it is my purse
that's dear to thee, and to thy heart;
But, Louis, come; let us depart!
The day grows late, and we must go:
Tomorrow, good Louis, what! Dost thou know?
Louis: *Yea! yea! good Count! I do—right will!*
Thou'lt storm the heart of the Finisterre Belle!

But just before this dramatic ending, a rather embarrassing accident had befallen the proud Count. At least, it would have been awkward to anyone excepting my brother. In the midst of his impassioned speech to Louis, regarding his love for Eugénie, his preposterous moustache suddenly fell off.

But the resourceful villain was not in the least disconcerted. With the utmost coolness he lightly tossed the facial appendage over the back-cloth, and calmly proceeded to finish the scene!

How the audience must have enjoyed the episode!

The fourth scene of the play showed the full villainy of the wretched Count. Having determined 'to storm the heart of the Finisterre Belle,' he carefully laid his plans. He purposely met the guileless maiden as she was walking in the woods near her home, and they fell into easy conversation.

Eugénie, like all love-sick maids, at once began to babble about her absent lover. The Count pretended to be amazed and horrified when he heard the student's name.

Eug.: *His name is Bernard D'Epathà;*
A student, who has gone to Rome,
The Eternal City—far from home.
Count.: *His name is Bernard D'Epathà!*
O! is it true what thou dost say?
Because the man of whom you speak,
Is dead, I say, for many a week!
Eug. (wringing her hands): *Kind Count, take back these words of*

thine!

Count: *I can't, because the power's not mine;*
'Tis true, alas! What I do say—
Thy lover's dead for many a day.

Eug. (flinging up her arms wildly): *My Bernard dead!*
My heart will break!
My Father! To Thyself, oh, take,
This child of sorrow and of woe;
I pray to Heaven that I may go
To join my Bernard up above;
The only man that I can love!

Here the stricken girl swooned back into the Count's arms, and he laid her on a rustic seat, and knelt beside her until she revived.

Then they could be seen whispering earnestly together, as though the Count were telling the lady something of deep import, to which she listened with rapt attention.

At this juncture Marie, the betrayed wife, came or rather glided on; but she was not supposed to be seen by the others.

Marie: *O! What a wicked wretch is he!*
He pledged his troth one day to me!
And now he leaves for this maid!
Both of our lives he would degrade!
O! What if she should fickle be
To Bernard, who is o'er the sea!
O! If she were—'twould break his heart!
That gentle, high-born son of Art!

Then the lady glided away again, and the stage was left to the Count and Eugénie; that is to say, to Pat and me. Both of us were keyed up to the highest pitch; yet I think that under my brother's earnestness there ran the usual little vein of whimsical laughter, which was perilously near the surface!

I began my next lines, as though continuing the whispered conversation, during which the perfidious Count had told me that Bernard had died in his (the Count's) arms, and had begged his friend to find his sweetheart Eugénie, and give her his last message—to wit, that she was to marry his friend, instead of himself. Eugénie, to honour the memory of Bernard, began to think the idea not bad.

Eug.: *You say this is his last request?*
Count: *I do! Before he joined the blest!*
Tell Eugénie, my dearest love——

And then the lies began all over again, until the amazing girl consented to wed the false-hearted Count. She rose up and, giving him her hand, said happily: 'Dear Alexander! I say—*Yes!*'

This was all very well, of course—but what was to happen to Marie and Bernard? Marie was not the sort of person to be made a fool of!

The *dénouement* came in the last scene, however. This scene opened by my running on happily:

Eug.: *Today it is my wedding-day!*
I'm going to wed this Count so gay!
'Tis now a year since Bernard died!

(I heaved a big sigh here.)

Count (entering): *What! Art thou here, my heart's own pride?*

He folded me in his arms and kissed my brow.

Eug.: *Yes! Alexander, do you know,*
I feel some foreboding of woe!
Count: *My gentle dove, you make me laugh,*
I know you talk but silly chaff!
I disregard these feelings mad;

They only tend to make one sad.

Here my lady mother came on, also quite happy.

Mother: *The wedding will just now take place.*
Count (aside): *All recollections must I chase*
Of my once loved wife, Marie,
Who still, I know, is true to me!

For sheer, cool effrontery I think this is hard to beat.

Mother: *The wedding will just now begin,*
Good Father, quickly, pray, come in.

The diminutive priest came on, and was placed in the centre of the stage. The Count and his bride stood on the left, and the mother on the right.

Priest: *Do ye both, now, for weal or woe,*
Consent to wed each other?——

But before either could reply, a most dramatic disturbance took place. Marie and Bernard rushed in, crying out wildly: *No!*

Priest: *Who are ye both, in Heaven's name?*
Bernard and Marie: *We're two that have a lawful claim*
To stop this wedding——

All looked amazed, and Eugénie, recognising her lover, rushed into his arms. Marie sternly went on to denounce her unworthy husband.

Marie: *For this man*
Would wish my weary life to ban.
He is my husband——

Count (savagely): *That's a lie!*
You're not my wife!
Marie: *O! husband!* Fie!
I am your wife—these words are true!
To think that I am joined to you!
It breaks my heart! O! my poor head!
O! heavens! Would that I were dead!
Count (grimly, drawing his dagger): *I am undone,*
and by thy hand!
Dost think that I'll by quietly stand?
I'd sooner perish—than by thee
Be shamed *to death—my wife Marie!*

(N.B.—'Marie' had of course the accent on the last syllable, so that it would rhyme properly).

Here the wretched man made an attempt to stab himself, but Marie sprang to him and caught the dagger.

Marie: *Great heavens,* No! *My husband* Live!
Marie D'Artua knows how to forgive!
Bernard: *Nay, what is this! Good Count, arise!*
Arise, I say, and take the prize,
Which Heaven hath kindly sent to thee;
Thy faithful loving wife Marie.
Count (as he dropped the dagger and slowly rose up, Marie nestling into his arms): *Do you forgive me, everyone?*
Priest: *Of course they do, my erring son!*
Count: *And thou, Eugénie, dearest maid;*
Forgive me, too, for all I've said.
Dost thou forgive me?
Eug. (who had prayed in the other scene that the Count would have a very fair fortune): *Yes, good Count.*
You see my prayer, that fortune's fount
Would give a model wife to thee,
Has come to pass—Behold Marie!

Bernard (proudly): *My Father, wilt thou now commence*
To give to me my recompense
For years a-waiting for my bride,
Eugénie, who is called the pride
Of the old Castle of Nevère,
Or else 'the Pride of Finisterre'!

(Tableau)

I don't believe that *any* of the greatest actors on the stage ever felt such exquisite delight when they received the plaudits of a vast audience as *we* felt when we 'took our curtain' amidst wild clapping from our friends! It was simply the perfection of joy!

But it is still amazing to me how any little boy, of my brother's years, could have imagined and written—quite unaided—such melodramatic business as *The Pride of Finisterre*. With all its faults, it demonstrates the active intelligence with which my brother was lavishly endowed. And Pat never stayed from school, or neglected his schoolwork for his writing. His whole soul was bound up in study.

Back row, centre: Pearse c. 1905.

13: ‘Brian Boru’ and Later Plays

We were intending to produce another play, called *The Crusaders,* but the idea was abandoned, because at the time my brother was older and was going to school to the Christian Brothers, Westland Row. He was studying very hard and winning extraordinarily high honours at his work. This play would have been really quite good, and certainly much better in every way than the last. I remember one verse which my father liked very much. It runs as follows:

To arms, to arms, each Christian knight,
And arm yourself for God’s own right;
The Saracen now holds the sway
Where in the tomb Our Saviour lay.
Let every knight, with sword in hand,
March forward to the Holy Land.
Raise the Lord’s standard up on high!
Win, Christians, win! Else, fighting—die!

But although my brother never finished this play, he found time during all his heavy school work to write two little plays, one for Willie and the other for me. They were to be performed by cardboard figures on the table. Pat drew all the scenes and figures himself, and Willie cut them out and made them to stand up. The theatre was a box lit up by a night-light.

Willie’s play was the story of Brian Boru. It was historically correct, even to the battle of Clontarf. One scene depicted the Hill of Howth with the Danish fleet around its base. As the youthful author wrote:

Around the foot of rugged old Ben Edair,
Their galleys throng.

The characters of Brian, Maelmorrough, Broder and ‘Silken-haired Sitric’ were all drawn with delicate insight and skill. A tender

little love story ran, like a silver thread, through the play. Briefly it was to the following effect:

Maeve, a gentle Irish maid, and young Olaf, a Dane, loved each other well and truly; but the girl's father would not permit them to marry. So they married *without* the old Chieftain's consent, and Maeve went to the Danish camp with her husband. There were scenes describing the father's rage and grief and bitter threats of vengeance, and also scenes representing the Irish and Danish camps on Holy Thursday night, the eve of the historic battle of Clontarf. Maeve was happy as the beloved and honoured wife of Olaf, but her heart still yearned for her father in his loneliness. I can still remember a few lines from a touching little dialogue between the young lovers:

Maeve: *Oh, Olaf, Olaf, how I fear the morrow!*
Olaf: *Why dost thou fear the morrow, dearest Maeve?*

Maeve told him how it hurt her to be in the camp of the 'Strangers' and how sad she felt when she thought about her father.

Maeve: *My poor, poor father! He loved me well,*
And I have left him childless! Oh!
The very thought is sadness, Olaf.
Olaf: *Do not weep, dear Maeve, but pray unto*
That God you worship
That all may be well with Brian
And with Olaf.

They left the stage, and Brodar with the renegade Maelmorrough came on.

Brodar: *Tomorrow is the day when Christians tell us*
A Man died long ago in Palestine;
And on that solemn day they call Good Friday
They will not care to fight! But we will attack them
On that solemn day, and, by great Thor and Odin,

They must *fight!*

Maelmorrough: *I was a Christian long ago myself,*
But have abstained the God whom Christians worship;
And now I hate Him, and I hate His name!

After more dialogue the scene changed to the Irish camp where the chieftains and clansmen were assembled. They were discussing the coming battle and the forces arrayed against them.

Silken-haired Sitric: *and the vile Maelmorrough,*
Traitor and villain, false to God and Erin!

One of the others took up the theme:

He's brave; I've felt his arm in war myself,
And men do say he yields alone to Brian as a commander:
Still, the cursed Norsemen,
With treacherous Maelmorrough at their head,
Might make the Gaels tremble.

Brian entered presently and delivered a stirring speech to all the clans, and the scene closed in a highly dramatic manner. Then came the great decisive battle of Clontarf; but a short scene was first given to a touching little incident.

Maeve's father and Brodar came on fighting, Brodar, however, getting the better of the old chieftain. Just in time Olaf rushed in and defended his prostrate foe.

Olaf: *Hold, I command thee, Viking, stay thy blow!*
(Brodar made another lunge.)
Nay, spare him, Brodar,
For he is weak and old!
Brodar: *I care not! He's Christian—and that's enough!*

But Olaf routed the fierce Norseman who ran off crying vengeance.

Then the old Chieftain stood up and spoke to his deliverer:

Go, take my daughter, Olaf,
For who so worthy of her
As he by whom her father's life was saved.

The scene ended, to be replaced by Brian's tent where the King had remained during the fateful conflict. Brodar entered and stabbed the aged monarch, and then rushed off crying that 'Brodar had killed Brian!' The Irish clans crowded on to the stage—too late; for their beloved King was dead!

The play finished with a beautiful Lament, in which the sorrowing clans extolled the glories of their fallen King and bewailed his death. Unfortunately, I remember very little of this Lament:

All: *Weep, weep Dalcassians, Brian Boru is dead!*
Ochone! Ochone! Ochone!
Weep, weep, men of Erin, your Monarch has been slain!
Ochone! Ochone! Ochone!

Even now, after the lapse of so many years, I can still see that small stage, so dimly lighted, and the tiny cardboard figures, and I can still hear the sad keening notes of the Lament. And even now I am convinced that the little play was quite good.

My brother wrote two little plays for me. One was a kind of scenic version—with words in verse combined—of my old favourite, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. The other was a play based on love, and hate, and jealousy. I remember there were brigands in it, and I was to put music to the score and make it a sort of opera. I *did* put some music to some of it. One rollicking song sung by the Brigand Chief and his men was rather good. Here is one verse:

Chief: *Ye are the men of the brigand band!*
Men: *Yo ho, ho, ho, ho, ho!*
Chief: *Ready to fight at your Chief's command;*
Men: *Yo ho, ho, ho, ho, ho!*
Chief: *Ready to fight, by day or by night;*
For fun or gain—ay, laugh again,
Ho! Laugh again, my brigand band!
All: *Yo ho, ho, ho, ho, ho!*
Yo ho, ho, ho, ho, ho!

I can remember *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, the second play, vividly. The scenes which my brother depicted of Eliza's escape; Little Eva, and Topsy; and the defence of the escaped slave, George Harris, were most affecting. The first verse of George's defence ran as follows:

We stand upon the soil of God and tell you we are free;
We'll die before we'll wear again the chains of slavery!
My wife and child are by my side, my pistol in my hand,
We've sworn to gain our liberty, or perish where we stand!

It has struck me since that these words which my brother wrote for the heroic George Harris were strangely and prophetically characteristic of himself.

Like all youthful authors, Pat was fond of writing poetry. One pretty poem was called 'Colm, the Fisherman's Boy,' and told how a little fisher lad had saved people from a wreck. Another little poem was written for, and dedicated to, that dear queen at whose feet he knelt in loving, faithful homage—his mother!

He came to me one evening and asked me in his eager way to compose an air for it, and sing it for our mother. I did so; and tears of pride and joy came into her eyes as she listened, gazing proudly and fondly upon her 'boy.'

MOTHER!

I am thinking of you, mother, of your fond and loving face,
To you my heart's e'er turning, and my dear old native place.

(There are two lines here which I cannot bring to mind. They would finish the first verse.)

I've crossed the thundering ocean, and I've heard the billows roar;
I've seen the storm clouds gather, and the awful tempest lower;
I've seen the lightning flashing on the billows capped with foam!
Yet 'mid the fearful warfare, I've thought of you—and home!
Yes, mother, dearest mother, through danger's stormy ire,
With you my heart still lingers, and the dear old cottage fire;
And in my dreams I've seen you, sweet and gentle as of yore!
Oh, may Heaven kindly grant you to see your boy once more!

In strong contrast to the early plays of my brother are the beautiful, dignified plays and pageants which he wrote especially for his boys at St Enda's. *An Rí*, *Íosagán*, *The Lost Saint*, *The Master*, the delightful pageant of Cuchulain, and, finest of all, the exquisite *Passion Play*. We find in *The Story of Success* a very high appreciation of this Passion Play from the pen of Padraic Colum.

'It was made convincing,' he writes, 'by the simple severity of the composition and the reverence of the performance. No one who witnessed it had any doubt as to the fitness of the production. This Passion Play takes us back naturally to the origin of the modern European drama. In a sense, it is the first serious theatre piece in Irish. It has root power … If its production be ever made an annual event it might create a tradition of acting and dramatic writing in Irish.'

The Play was acted in the Abbey Theatre in Passion Week, 1911. It was spoken in Irish, of course.

Desmond Ryan, who edited *The Story of Success*, waxes keen over the plays and pageants at St Enda's. 'The students of Sgoil Éanna,

Pádraig and Willie, at Scoil Éanna, 1914.

and Sgoil Íde,' he says, 'roused Dublin by their earnest, simple, and unelaborate enacting of the Passion Play.' And further on he writes: 'Sgoil Éanna did much towards creating the tradition of acting and dramatic writing of which Mr Colum speaks. In June, 1912, we produced *An Rí*, in the open air upon the banks of the river that runs through the Hermitage grounds. In Whitsuntide, 1915, we produced *The Master*, at the Irish Theatre, Hardwicke Street.'

Undoubtedly, my brother was tremendously interested in drama; and he was thoroughly convinced that the noble art of acting was a very real education for youth and also a very real help in developing high art in Ireland.

'I think,' he tells us, 'that our performances of Irish and Anglo-Irish plays, and especially our Passion Play of last Easter twelvemonth—intended to be a triennial event and due again at the Easter of 1914—have meant something, not only in the development of our boys, but in the development of dramatic art in Ireland. As Padraic Colum has written of us, we have gone back to the beginning of drama instead of trying to transplant the full-grown art from an exotic soil.'

Certainly, as Padraic says himself, 'Achievements such as these have made the first five years of St Enda's College memorable.'

14: Early Enthusiasm for the Irish Revival

My brother was only about twelve years of age when he evinced quite a remarkable aptitude for lecturing. This talent was developed and greatly encouraged in rather unusual circumstances. Of course, we had all known that Pat was very fond of, and clever at, delivering little *sermons*; but *lectures* were rather an innovation.

One day the small boy was seized with a longing for a toy magic lantern, which, I fancy, he must have seen alluringly displayed in one of our great toy shops. Whatever my brother wanted, he always made up his mind to *have*; so he began to save up carefully and thriftily—though not meanly—most of his slender pocket money: 'Saturday money,' as we used to call our weekly pennies.

At length the small hoarder had sufficient money to buy the coveted article, and he and Willie went off to purchase it. Proudly they returned with the pretty little toy, and started to work it according to directions. But, alas! Its prettiness was only on the surface, for it had no working value whatsoever. It was perfectly useless; and poor Pat was deeply disappointed and chagrined. Our father, hearing of the catastrophe, was so sorry that he at once resolved to buy a proper magic lantern for his small son's next birthday.

To the great joy and astonishment of us all, therefore, a most perfect lantern arrived home, with dozens of the loveliest slides imaginable. Of course, we had a show straight away; and after that it somehow came about that Pat began to lecture on the splendidly assorted slides at each succeeding exhibition.

In the commencement, our lantern was lighted only by oil; but father was not satisfied, and soon he had the brilliant limelight instead. *Then* we had really first-rate shows, and first-rate *lectures!* These lectures were finely delivered, and were both instructive and entertaining. They were certainly tremendously appreciated by those privileged to hear them. At that time there were no cinemas, and very few panoramas; so a really good up-to-date lantern was counted a treasure and cherished accordingly.

It was father's custom to have a lantern show about twice a year for ourselves and a few very special friends in the dear old room at Brunswick Street. At these little festive gatherings of congenial souls, Pat's happy knack of lecturing made half the pleasure of the evening. At least eighty slides—generally more than that!—would be shown, all dealing with many different subjects: yet for every one of them the clever boy lecturer found something worth saying.

It was quite remarkable that so young a lad could have gathered such a fund of useful and reliable knowledge. The style of his compositions and the delivery of them were admirable. Father, a keen and honest critic, was always thoroughly pleased with his son's efforts, and not a little proud of 'Paddy,' as he sometimes affectionately called him. At these little socials Willie acted as Father's aide-de-camp, helping with the slides and the manipulation of the lantern. And very efficient help it was, too.

However, as Pat grew older, his school-work became heavier and claimed almost all his attention; and after a time he was obliged, through the high pressure of work, to relinquish almost entirely this delightful hobby of lecturing at home. He was obliged, also, to give up his long hours of reading for me, which, naturally, was a great sorrow to me. But my brother would often read aloud passages from old Irish books which he chanced to be studying at the time. My first glimpse into old Irish heroic tales came through Pat reading them aloud.

He had a fine collection of the old sagas; and he was a fluent translator at sight; it made no difference to him whether the stories were in Gaelic or English. *The Flight of Diarmuid and Grainne*, *The Fight of Ferdia and Cuchulain at the Ford*, with its pathetic ending; the game of chess under the quicken tree—all these quaint heroic tales I heard beautifully spoken by my brother's lips. It was he, by the way, who explained to me that the quicken tree is the rowan tree, popularly called 'mountain ash.'

Yet, despite Pat's constant hard work at his own studies, he found a little time to help me with Irish; and it was he who set me my first Irish copybook.

In later years my brother became wildly enthusiastic over a phonograph which he purchased and brought home without the slightest warning. As well as I can remember, it was just before Sgoil Éanna was started; but he was as delighted with the novelty and as interested in it as any schoolboy. I really believe, however, that most of the pleasure he derived from his new purchase was the making of records. It was a machine which made good records in wax; and sometimes, when the humour came over him, Pat would spend hours at the business, extracting the most exquisite pleasure from his attempt at record-making.

The brothers Pearse.

He would keep Alfred and Willie at it, too; and even I was inveigled into trying what I could do. We made a record of the first scene of *Macbeth*, and immediately rubbed it off again. In fact, we were constantly making records and rubbing—or paring—them off!

Pat used to glory in ridiculous records, such as comic interviews between great celebrities and some business managers. I remember one particularly funny one supposed to take place between Madame Pati and a business agent. My brother as a comic ‘star’ was a ‘scream.’

Another record which he made—a serious one—is, I think, still up in the Hermitage. My mother said that she could not bear to hear it, as Pat’s voice would awaken too many poignantly sad memories. Alfred very kindly wrote it out for me, as I could not recollect it properly myself.

It is a short address about Ireland; and I am not sure whether he really delivered it during some lecture, or simply composed it especially for the phonograph. However, I know that my readers will appreciate it, so I am giving the text, just as my brother spoke it into his phonograph:

‘Mr Chairman,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

If you ask me what the Gaelic League stands for, I answer that it stands for the old, old ideal of Ireland a nation!’

(Alfred, Willie, and I, as the audience): ‘Hear! Hear!’

Lecturer: ‘Why do we seek to preserve the living Irish language? Not because it is an ancient and venerable language; not because it is a rich and beautiful language; not because it enshrines a valuable and unique literature; *not* for any of these reasons—though all these reasons might be urged with perfect justice. *Not,* I say, for *any* of these reasons, but simply and solely because it is the *Irish* language! Because—’

Audience (wildly): ‘Hear, hear!’

Lecturer: ‘Because it is *our* language; bone of our bone; flesh of our flesh; which has grown with our growth, and which is part and parcel of ourselves. We—’

Audience (with great gusto): ‘*Hear, hear!* Good man!’

Lecturer: ‘We seek, then, to preserve this language because we believe it to be an integral part of Irish nationality!’

Audience (becoming rather rowdy): ‘He-ar! He-ar!’

Lecturer: ‘Nationality is a very complex thing. It consists of many elements. We do not claim that language is nationality. Be we *do* claim—and we think we can prove—that language is an essential element in the compound nationality; and, therefore, without an Irish language we can have no Irish nation!’

Here, I think, the record was used up, and the lecturer paused, very breathless, between laughter and the hot smell of the wax. Making records on our make of phonograph was rather exhausting work, as the wax had a choking effect on the throat and voice.

Although my brother always retained his boyishness, he *grew up* sooner than any of us! I well remember how surprised I was—and rather contemptuous, I fear—when I first heard him call ‘mother’ instead of ‘mama,’ as we all used to before! Afterwards came a queer

feeling of *blankness* as I began to realise that Pat was rapidly becoming—a *man!*

He went on a visit to Aran—a *boy*; and, to my profound astonishment, he returned—a *man!* Even his boyish treble had changed to the deeper tones of manhood. But my brother still had his boyish eagerness of manner and his beautiful gentleness. He was still passionately attached to home and to his beloved 'Little Mother.'

Writing of his visits to Aran reminds me of a comical incident connected with them. Like all men, Pat objected to writing letters when he was on holidays. He said it spoilt the holidays, which ought to be a complete change from ordinary life. But, like all women, especially mothers, our mother wanted to hear from her son as often as possible!

'It's just that I want to know you are well and safe!' she told him in a pathetic manner. 'When you don't write, I keep thinking all sorts of horrors, and worrying over you, fearing you are sick.'

Pat smiled placidly, and promised to let her know that he was safe and well. He did so in his own dry humorous manner. By the first possible post an anxious lady received the promised message—short and to the point. It consisted of a sheet of paper with the one word 'Pearse,' written boldly across the top! Our mother's face was a study; but she knew that Pat was safe, and was obliged to be content!

Pat's letters were not always as brief as this, however. Our cousin Mary Kate has sent me a copy of a letter which he once wrote to her when she was at a boarding-school. She still has the original and treasures it highly. Writing to me about this memoir, she says:—

'While I was at school Pat wrote me a letter which I carried about with me for four years and read daily. It was my most cherished possession! I enclose you a copy; and if it is the sort of thing you want, you may use it.'

The following is the letter, which, I am sure, will interest my readers:—

25th December, 1895.

My dear Mary Kate,

They tell me you are anxious to receive a letter from me, and I should be just as anxious to send you one if I only knew what to say. Two girls, when they write to each other, are never at a loss for things to talk about; but it is natural for a boy to feel a little embarrassed when writing to one of the opposite sex—even though she is his cousin.

It is a long time now since I have seen you—I think, over a year. Believe me, it is not for want of will that I do not go out to see you. I really haven't had the time.

I often think of the jolly times we spent at Grandfather's—playing in the hay loft, swinging in the yard, and hiding in the bedrooms. Those days I reckoned among the happiest of my life.

I want you to do me a favour, and that is—to say a 'Hail! Mary' for me whenever you think of it—and I am sure you will think of it often.

It is almost unnecessary for me to wish you a happy Christmas—for you know yourself that I wish you as many of the happiest possible Christmasses and brightest possible New Years that you can ever hope to enjoy.

Believe me, then, my dear Mary Kate,
With renewed good wishes,
Your affectionate cousin,

Pat.

I can well understand how that letter warmed the young heart of the schoolgirl, recalling as it did the halcyon days of childhood and the faithfulness of her boy chum!

15: A Social Evening and Other Diversions

After my brother left school he started a Debating Society called 'The New Ireland Literary Society.' He was elected President and many a fine lecture he gave to an admiring audience.

On one occasion he organised a Social and asked me to be the accompanist for the evening. Shakespearian recitals and some recitations were also included in the programme.

The recitals from Shakespeare were really quite good, Pat, as Hamlet, being especially dramatic and convincing, despite the fact that he wore ordinary evening dress, and acted on a small platform without even a back-cloth.

There was sheer tragedy in his low, horrified exclamation:

O my prophetic soul!
My uncle!

and intense shuddering fury and hatred in the muttered soliloquy:

My tables, my tables—meet it is I set it down,
That one may smile, and smile, and be a villain.

And then came one of his bewilderingly quick changes, this time from horror and hot anger to a bitter, cold sneer:

At least I'm sure it may be so in Denmark.

In the scene where his companions tried to prevent Hamlet from following the Spirit of his beloved father, Pat was tremendously effective.

His young voice was vibrant with love and gracious reverence as he addressed the strange spectre:

I'll call thee Hamlet,
King, Father, Royal Dane: O, answer me!

Then, turning like a fury on his friends, he flung them off, his voice ringing with noble scorn:

Unhand me, gentlemen;
By heaven, I'll make a ghost of him that lets me.

But his anger died again as the figure beckoned him, and nothing but triumph and profound pity remained.

It waves me still.
Go on; I'll follow thee.

If the musical part of the entertainment had been as good as the dramatic portion, it would have been very good indeed. Unfortunately, however, my brother's musical knowledge was extremely vague, and this was the cause of my being greatly mortified.

I asked him, very naturally, to tell me the keys in which the singers intended having their songs played. Pat appeared surprised.

'Have they no music?' I wanted to know then, more surprised than he.

No, they had no music. I sighed, for that meant merely vamping, and I was only about fourteen at the time.

'Well, then,' I said, 'what *key* will they sing in?'

'Oh, the common or garden key!' replied my brother with great cheerfulness, but little sense.

'But,' I insisted, appalled at such a statement, 'there is no such key as "the common or garden key"! Can't you *see into* the thing? Some people have high voices, and some low, and others medium! They couldn't *all* sing in the same key! The *pitch* would be different.'

'Oh!' he replied, quite light-heartedly, 'these fellows all sing in the *medium* voice! The common or garden key, you know!'

'I *don't know!*' I wailed. 'Even the medium voices sing in different keys.'

'Quite so,' he agreed; 'the common or garden key.'

I almost wept at his inability to understand, and blissfully unconscious of his absurdity, he left me.

On the night of the entertainment, before it had begun, I managed to get the principal singer over to the piano, and told him to hum the song as he would sing it. He did so, and I found he had a nice voice. Afterwards his song would also have been very nice if he had only remained in the one key, instead of roaming through about six! For three verses of 'The Risin' of the Moon' I chased him madly all over the piano, wondering which of us would break down first. By the time the moon had fully risen the piano part was ended, and I was a complete wreck! Pat's 'common or garden key' seemed to have rather an elastic compass!

Yet, in later years, Pat went to every opera that came to Dublin, Wagner's heavy works being his particular favourites. He saw the famous 'Ring' operas in Germany, whither he had gone to study the language, and to learn all that was possible about modern education.

Our very dear old friend Miss Byrne, who nursed Pat when he was a baby, tells us how he used to coax his step-sister Emily to sing a certain song which had caught his baby attention.

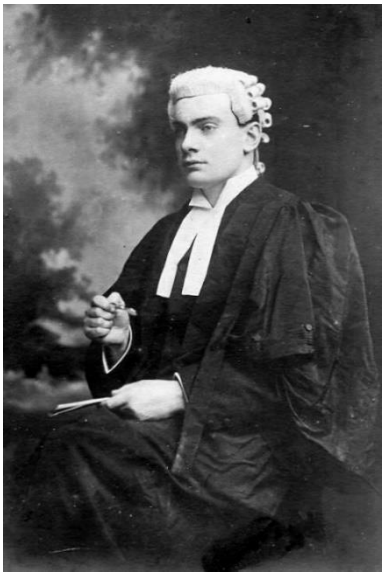
He would toddle over to her and entreat her eagerly: 'Sing "In the goamey, O me dahey!"' which translated, means: 'In the gloaming, O my darling!'

By this it would appear that Pat, when a wee boy, recognised the difference between the airs and had special favourites. Yet he never, by any chance, was able to sing more than two notes in a scale. I used to try him with the scale sometimes, and the result was always excruciatingly funny!

He would start off with a most tremendous seriousness and intone in rather a wavering manner: 'Doh!' More quaveringly still, and very much out of tune, would come 'Ray!' Then, with an appalling suddenness, he would go completely off the scale, and his 'Me!' would be at least five notes too high! It was really rather odd, as he could distinguish false notes when others sang them, and could appreciate music well sung.

Pat learnt the piano for some time, but he never made much progress. In fact, he never went beyond ‘Vesper Hymn’ and ‘Nelly Bly,’ very easily arranged. Even now, if I hear the old tune ‘Nelly Bly,’ I think of Pat and of our old house at Brunswick Street.

Both Maggie and Pat were taught dancing by a Madame Lawton, whilst they were attending Miss Murphy’s private school, Pat was a good dancer, being exceedingly light and graceful. The dances taught then were the beautiful old-fashioned dances, such as the mazurka, the gavotte, the polka, the waltz, *properly* danced, and the quadrilles. Miss Byrne and my brother were almost always partners in the waltz and quadrilles.



Pearse in his barrister’s robes.

Afterwards Pat essayed the Irish dances and learnt the ‘Rinnce Fada’ and ‘The Walls of Limerick.’ He never managed really elaborate Irish dances, however.

A favourite indoor pastime with my brother was draughts; and another pleasing game called ‘Dick Turpin’s Ride from London to York.’ But I always felt that Pat had a sneaking sympathy with the bold outlaw Dick, even though he used to play the soldiers who were chasing Dick, and play them remarkably cleverly.

Both my brothers were very fond of boating, a liking which was shared with equal fervour by Alfred and myself. Unfortunately, however, Pat was a very poor sailor, always becoming ill the moment our small craft crossed the Bar and left the shelter of Kingstown Harbour. But on the Liffey, out at beautiful Chapelizod, where the waters are smooth and calm, he was in his element, although his powerful, vigorous style of rowing was more suitable for the sea than for the river.

His strokes were strong and determined—an index to his dominant character; oars were better in his hands than light sculls. But he could make a boat fly over the water with his powerful, if somewhat

uneven strokes. I never went with the trio on the river; but they used to tell me all about their exploits.

Neither Pat nor Willie could swim at that time; but Alfred tells us how in later years they learnt to do so, for diverse reasons.

'Pat, though studious, and far from athletic in his young days,' writes Alfred, 'made up his mind that it is a duty on the part of man to be physically as well as mentally fit: so he determined to become so.

He learnt to swim in two months when he was thirty years of age. I remember he and Willie and I used to go over to the North Bull to swim. On one occasion, when Willie was leaving the water he lost his balance, and spluttered and struggled for a considerable time in *two feet* of water before he could stand up again. Pat and I stood by laughing at him, when we saw the reproachful look he cast at us. Indeed, I don't think that I ever heard Pat laugh so heartily. He knew, of course, as I did, that Willie was not in the least danger.'

I myself remember that the three of them bought some sort of curious-looking *wings*, which were guaranteed to save the most clumsy novice from drowning. I imagine, however, that the swimmers must have looked extremely odd with the little wings sprouting from their backs.*

Sometimes Pat would take up some hobby, and then drop it. I remember that he and Willie once took it into their heads to become vegetarians—just exactly *why*, I really cannot say. In the beginning Pat said that it was because it was cruel to eat the flesh of living beings. But when I pointed out to him that if I had not killed scores of living beings—to wit, greenflies and caterpillars—he would not be eating such delicious lettuce and radishes, he became thoughtful and evidently pondered over the matter.

After that he casually remarked that it was more *healthy* not to eat meat; and he and Willie used to go to the Vegetarian Restaurant, in College Street, and take most of their principal meals there. However,

---

∗ Cartlann note: The word 'backs' is a guess as the entire line was blank in our copy. If you happen to know for certain the conclusion of this sentence please contact us on our social media or at cartlanntranscribe@outlook.com.

it is my belief that their lives became a misery to them, as vegetable diet was not strong enough for their vigorous constitutions. So they very quietly and unobtrusively dropped this practice, and began to take ordinary food again.

Pat was a passionate lover of beautiful scenery; and trees were a sheer delight to him. He liked flowers, of course; but he simply worshipped trees! And I thoroughly understand him on that point. But many a time he and I had stiff arguments on the relative beauty of the various counties of Ireland.

I maintained—as I *still* maintain—that Killarney is unsurpassed for sheer beauty; he would have it that 'The Twelve Pins' in his beloved Connemara district beat the Long Range, Killarney—ay, and even the Gap of Dunloe—hollow! I was not convinced; so he took me to Connemara, and showed me the wild, wonderful loveliness of the West.

But it was just a bit *too* wild for my liking, and too desolate—with no bird voices, and little verdure—so I was still true to my first ideal. Then Pat capped the climax by contemptuously declaring that St Stephen's Green was far and away more beautiful than Killarney! I was so indignant that I refuse to discuss the subject any more.

But—I have not been in the Green since the fateful year of 1916! I passed it by on that tragic Easter Monday and wondered why the Volunteers were holding it; but I little dreamed why! I wonder if my brother thought how strange it was to be encamped in the old familiar gardens where he had so often played in childhood!

16: Ireland's Glories and Ireland's Destiny as Pádraig Pearse Conceived Them

A very characteristic letter of my brother was that which he wrote to his beloved boys in St Enda's, when he himself was in the midst of a lecturing campaign many hundreds of miles away from them, during his visit to America.

It has already been published in *The Story of Success* by Desmond Ryan; but for the sake of those who have not read that little volume, I am reproducing the letter here. After all, a good thing cannot be repeated too often; and this letter is an inspiration to *any* boy or girl in *any* school throughout the length and breadth of Ireland.

'It conveys,' writes Desmond Ryan, 'a fine sense of the personality behind Pearse's words. In a similar spirit were his religious instructions, his daily comments upon discipline from his rostrum in the Study Hall morning and evening before prayers, his appeals to individual boys in his study.

'There was a strength in his every gesture, a quiet authority in his tone, a keen knowledge of every one of his students. He made no idle boast when he claimed to know each boy's character as well as he knew the Gaelic-speaking West and the literature of Gaelic chivalry. He could be severe upon occasion, but he rarely had necessity. Someone has written of Pearse that he had a power. This message is eloquent of the power he had in Sgoil Éanna. Here it is:—

> To Sgoil Éanna: Greeting.
>
> *You are all, I have no doubt, reassembled after the Easter vacation and working hard. So many invitations poured in upon me to lecture and to tell the Americans what fine fellows you are, that I was unable to get home, as I had hoped, in time to be in my place to welcome you back from your holidays. However, I shall be on the sea in a very few days from the time this reaches you, and in a week or so thereafter you will again my sonorous voice*

saying: ‘Amach libh,’ ‘Iompodh timpheall,’ ‘in bhur dtost,’ ‘Céard é so?’ *etc., etc.*

I have already promised to give you a special holiday in commemoration of my safe return and happy escape from sea-sharks and land-sharks. In the meantime, I want to appeal to you, and I do so most earnestly, to put all your heart into the work that remains to be done during the short month or six weeks that are left of the school year. Let every boy do his best. Let every boy do his best at his weak subjects especially. Do a six weeks’ work that it will be a pleasure to yourselves to look back upon, whatever the results of the examination may be.

Show what Sgoil Éanna can do. Remember, you have a great reputation. You have a great reputation now even in America. You must live up to that reputation. It would be disgraceful to have an undeserved reputation.

Let every boy start right now, and not slacken until the word is given for ‘home’ some fine day during the third week of June.

I do hope, finally, that you are making some effort to speak Irish. Remember that that rifle is still unwon. I want to give it away this summer, but it can only be given on condition that some boy wins it by a genuine effort to speak Irish.

‘Beannacht chugaibh anois go bhfeicidh me sibh. Beir buaidh chatha agus cosgartha, a Sgoil Éanna!’

‘Mise,
‘Pádraig Mac Piarais.’

. . . . .

Personally, I think that it would be a good thing if every Irish boy and Irish girl knew that letter by heart, and a still better thing if each and every one of them were to strive with all their might to put into practice what the gentle schoolmaster has told them so beautifully.

Pádraig himself always loved school, and he succeeded in making school a place that other boys could love.

. . . . .

My brother—himself a poet—was passionately fond of the songs of the Gael, and had a profound knowledge of this wide and fascinating subject. The folk songs of Ireland, especially, made a strong appeal to his artistic and ascetic temperament. The inspirations for his own fine poems and 'silver songs' came to him, I fancy, from his innate love for all things beautiful and fine, and from the world of nature which he loved and reverenced.

Pearse in his Headmaster's robes.

In one of his lectures, when he was President of the New Ireland Literary Society, his subject was 'The Folk Songs of Ireland,' and he sums up in one short paragraph just exactly what these wonderful songs are: 'The song, then, was originally man's hymn of praise to nature, and, through nature, to God.'

He ends this lecture with a fine eulogy of these lovely songs, composed as they were by simple Irish peasants: 'Pure they are and spotless as the driven snow, like the souls and lives of those who sing them; sweet they are as the scent of the wild mountain flowers which grow in their native homes; musical they are as the ripple of the streamlet, as the note of the blackbird, as the laugh of a happy and innocent girl; grand they are and time-honoured as the Gaelic race itself. May they never die away on the hillside and in the valley; may they continue to be sung by the hearth-sides of our people for many a day to come … May our language, and our literature, and our folklore

live; and if they live, then, too, will our race live. *Go bruinne an bhrátha*.'

How well I remember the night my brother rushed home to tell his 'Little Mother' that he had been appointed editor of *An Claidheamh Soluis*, the official journal of the Gaelic League. She had been hoping and praying for this recognition of her boy's services, and Pat wanted *her* to be the first to share his triumph. His intense eagerness to tell her his brave news and her sudden joy when she heard it were both very touching.

My brother, although somewhat of 'a dreamer of dreams,' could show his appreciation of the things he idealised in a very practical and kindly manner. When I was quite small I heard the concert harp played in the Round Room, Rotunda; and from that moment I loved its exquisite and unique music passionately. After that, I was always longing for a harp of my own; but at the time there was no way of satisfying my desire. But my brother was quietly watching out for an opportunity to purchase a harp for me, and he at length found a dear little Irish harp and presented me with it.

I still remember the intense rapture with which I at last held the long-wished-for treasure in my trembling arms. I just *loved* my harp; and I am proud to say that, despite many vicissitudes, the same precious little instrument can sing today as sweetly as it sang in those far-off happy days so long gone by! Not content with generously giving me *one* harp, Pat procured, some years later, an Irish-made harp for me; and it was on this stout little Northern that I used to give all the harp lessons to the boys up at St Enda's.

Undoubtedly there was music in Pádraig's soul; music which manifested itself not only in his poems, but also in his prose writings. Yet, although the last of his 'silver songs' is indeed sung, his 'fledgling dreams' have not been quite dashed. *One dream* at least came true—St Enda's!

I feel that I cannot conclude this part of my memoirs in a more fitting manner than by quoting a few passages from some of my brother's lectures which were delivered between 1906 and 1908:—

‘The intellectual life and atmosphere of the present day are,’ he said, ‘nothing if not unnatural. The Gael, on the other hand, like all the Celts, is distinguished by an intense and passionate love for nature. The Gael is the high-priest of nature. He loves nature, not merely as something grand and beautiful and wonderful but as something possessing a mystic connection with and influence over man.

‘In the cry of the seagull as he winged his solitary flight over the Atlantic waves; in the shriek of the eagle as he wheeled around the heights of the Kerry mountains; in the note of the throstle as he sang his evening lay in the woods of Slieve Grot; in the roar of the cataract as it foamed and splashed down the rocky ravine; in the sob of the ocean as it beat unceasingly against the cliffs of Achill; in the sigh of the wind as it moved, ghost-like, through the oaks of Derrybawn—in all these sounds the ancient Gael heard a music unheard by other men. All these sounds spoke to his inmost heart in whispers mysterious and but half understood; they spoke to him as the voices of his ancestors, urging him to be noble and true—as the voices of the glorious dead calling to him across the waters from Tir-na-nOg …

‘Nothing seems to me so certain, nothing seems to me so logical a consequence of our temperament, of our history, of our present circumstances, as that, if we are to have any future, it must be an intellectual future.

‘And if there anyone who would not prefer such a future? 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, 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 mines and the factories of England, the Continent and the United States—live the life intended for man?

Have they intellect? Have they soul? Are they conscious of man's dignity, of man's greatness? Do they understand the grandeur of living, and breathing, and working out one's destiny on this beautiful old earth? The sea, with its mighty thunderings, and its mysterious whisperings; the blue sky of day; the dark and solemn canopy of night spangled with myriad stars; the mountains and hills steeped in the magic of poetry and romance—what are these things to them? 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, a 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 use through the storms of centuries—the bequest of our hero-sires of old.

'And when we are a power on earth again, we shall owe that power, not to fame in war, in statesmanship, or in commerce, but to those two precious inheritances, intellect and soul.

'"The Intellectual Future of the Gael" is a subject which must, from its very nature, be of the deepest interest to us, a subject which must be fascinating to all who take an interest in the intellectual life of mankind—and this is, after all, the true life, for life without intellect is death.

'To all these, then, but especially to us—to us Irishmen, young, ardent, enthusiastic, trying to grope amid the darkness for a path to higher things—no question can be of more absorbing interest than this: What has destiny in store for this ancient race of ours? Is our noon-day of glory gone by for ever? Or have we still a future before us more glorious than we have dreamt of in our moments of wildest enthusiasm? …

‘Others have been struck before now by the fact that hundreds of noble men and true have fought and bled for the emancipation of the Gaelic race, and yet have failed.

‘Surely, if ever cause was worthy of success, it was the cause for which Laurence prayed, for which Hugh of Dungannon planned, for which Hugh Roe and Owen Roe fought, for which Wolfe Tone and Lord Edward and Robert Emmet gave their lives, for which Grattan pleaded, for which Moore and Davis sang, for which O’Connell wore himself with toil!

‘Yet these men prayed and planned, and fought and bled, and pleaded and wrote, and toiled in vain!

‘We have struggled as no other nation has struggled; we have bled as no other nation has bled; we have endured an agony compared with which the agonies of other nations have been as child’s play.

‘Time after time we have lifted the chalice of victory to our lips; time after time we have essayed to quaff its delicious contents; yet time after time has it been dashed to the ground!

‘Today, after a continuous fight lasting for eight long centuries, we are, heaven knows, farther off than ever from the goal towards which we have struggled!

‘Who can look at our political and national life at the present moment, and continue to hope? The men whom we call leaders* are engaged in tearing out each other’s vitals, and there is no prospect that they will ever stop! The people are listlessly looking on—for the first time in Irish history they seem to be sunk in apathy. We are tempted to cry aloud in our despair, “O God! will the morning never come?”

‘Yes, the morning *will* come, and its dawn is not far off. But it will be a morning different from the morning we have looked for.

---

* The allusion is to dissensions existing at that time amongst leading politicians of the Irish Parliamentary Party.

‘The Gael is not like other men; the spade, and the loom, and the sword are not for him.

‘But a destiny more glorious than that of Rome, more glorious than that of Britain, awaits him. To become the saviour of idealism in modern intellectual and social life, the regenerator and rejuvenator of the literature of the world, the instructor of the nations, the preacher of the gospel of nature-worship, hero-worship, *God-worship!*—such is the destiny of the Gael!’

Pearse, *centre*.

PART III
SOME THINGS THAT FRIENDS HAVE TOLD ME

By Mary Brigid Pearse

17: A Schoolfellow's Tribute

I think that a few reminiscences from the pen of an old school companion, Mr Eamonn O'Neill, would be appreciated by my readers. Eamonn was a Christian Brothers' boy, of course, and attended the Christian Brothers' Schools, Westland Row.

Their reminiscences reveal many characteristics which belonged to my brother, and which his school companion was quick to notice.

. . . . .

Some Notes on the School and Post-School Life of Pádraig Pearse

'Pádraig was extremely reserved at school,' writes Mr O'Neill, 'and kept very much to himself. Such reserved and shy boys are usually unpopular; yet it was not so with Pádraig. All liked and respected him, for they felt that his reserve and shyness were not signs of weakness, but of strength.

'He was a great reader. He was especially good at English composition, and got a special prize for an essay at the Intermediate Examinations. He had a particular liking for mathematics.

'Despite his shyness, he joined the school boxing and football clubs. I have seen him box with a more skilful opponent; and I have seen in him signs of a hot temper. At one school match, when the Westland Row team was playing a stronger and older team of working boys, Pádraig worked like a Trojan. The school team was very badly

beaten, and many of the boys had been knocked out. Only half the team were able to fight to the end, Pádraig being among the few remaining.

‘Another day he kicked at a ball and missed it badly. Someone on the side-line laughed at him, and Pádraig rushed out and knocked him down. He surprised his fellows; but the knocked-down one became a friend and admirer afterwards.

‘Pádraig was very prominent in the School Debating Society. Even when he was only about sixteen he showed he had the makings of a fine speaker. He had a good deal of the “grand manner” in speaking. This effective manner was very much appreciated at the Frankfort (Booterstown) Feis once.

‘There was a big crowd scattered around, as it was a fine summer’s evening. But most of the crowd were in the tents partaking of ices and tea. Pádraig got up to speak on the Language Movement. The guests gradually gathered round; they moved over towards him; they laid down their cups and saucers and ices, and ceased speaking. Soon they were absolutely silent, held by a most impressive speech. Someone else got up to speak after Pádraig, but, at once, all returned to their tea and ices, and gossip.

‘Some five or six of the Westland Row boys who had left the school started the New Ireland Literary Society. It met weekly in Whelan’s famous old hotel, the Star and Garter, at the corner of O’Olier

Street and Fleet Street. Pádraig was elected President, and read many papers on the Irish language and Irish literature, three of his addresses before the Society being printed and published later by Gill, under the title of *Three Lectures on Gaelic Topics*.

'At that period he was making a close study of Irish literature, and was specially interested in the Fenian tales. He contributed some English poetry to the Society magazine, as well as some historical translations of early Irish poems. I published in *Samhain* some years ago one of these translations, which I knew from memory.

'We closed down the Society when we saw that the Gaelic League, then in its infancy, was calling out for active workers. Pádraig joined the Central Branch, then in 57 Dame Street, and, from the beginning, became a zealous and untiring worker. His life for the next dozen years was one of the most arduous toil for the language—teaching, editing, speaking, and attending a wearying round of committee meetings. He was Secretary to the Gaelic League Publishing Committee, and the Committee during his term of office did great and original work. Irish writers always found in Pádraig a most helpful and considerate friend.

'He saw early the prime importance of the Irish-speaking districts, and visited Aran and Connemara very frequently. He went to *learn* in the Irish-speaking districts. He recognised that they had in their possession the traditional soul of Ireland, and he *steeped* himself in their love and traditions.

'His editorship of *An Claidheamh Soluis* was an epoch in the language movement. He made it a paper that was eagerly sought for every week. His educational articles were full of thought; and he really said all there was, or is, to say about the proper policy for Irish educationalists. He went to Belgium later, to understand bilingual teaching on proper lines, and came back with many sound ideas worthy of imitation in Ireland.

'I remember that at one of the early Ard-Feises he attended as a member of the Executive Committee in a silk hat and frock coat. He did this out of respect for the assembly, but I remember that it lost him some votes at the elections. Some of the ultra-democrats have always

canvassed against him simply on the grounds that a man who wore a top hat and frock coat could not be a true Gael!

‘This, of course, was utter rubbish. But, at the time, he and I and a few others had a hard fight to dissociate people in the Gaelic League from the idea that to be a true Gaelic Leaguer one had to wear untidy tweeds and rarely get one’s hair cut. We insisted, as far as possible, on officers of the League wearing evening dress at the more important functions.

‘I think that the Gaelic Leaguers have since receded from this fashion. If they have done so, they have done wrong, for the opposition must be fought with the opposition’s weapons. It is no disparagement to say that in a cultured Ireland there should be other standards than present standards, Pádraig held these views; and I think he would hardly quite approve of Leaguers getting into little narrow views, instead of working broadly to keep up the interest of every class.

‘We all believed in school, and out of school, that Pádraig would have no ordinary life. I think that if he had taken up his work at that Bar, he would have had a most interesting career.’

Eamonn O’Neill.

18: Travels Abroad—Connemara and Aran

‘There is a grey eye which ever turns to Eirinn.’

Although my brother Pádraig travelled a good deal, his thoughts were ever of home. Like Columcille, of old, Pádraig’s heart would yearn for his beloved Ireland; his grey eyes would be wistful with longing for a glimpse of her heather-clad hills. The poet-saint’s outpourings of love and sorrow most fittingly describe my brother’s passionate desire for ‘the fair hills of holy Ireland.’

> ‘From the high prow I look over the sea; and great tears are in my eyes when I turn to Eirinn.
>
> ‘To Eirinn, where the songs of the birds are so sweet, and the clerk’s sing like the birds.
>
> ‘If death comes suddenly to me, it will be because of the great love I bear the Gael.’

And the swift keen death that Pádraig met so proudly came to him because he loved the Gael so well—because he loved his country so dearly—Oh! so dearly—better than he loved his young vigorous life.

I fancy that my brother had a great reverence for St Colmcille, ‘The Dove of the Church.’ He named one of the dormitories in St Enda’s ‘Naomh Colmcille,’ so that the boys sleeping there would be under this saint’s protection.

My sister has written an interesting little contribution for these pages which I am giving here. Maggie and Pat spent some time together in France and Belgium, and she remembers how he felt and spoke when away from home.

She writes as follows:—

A Few Traits in the Character of Pádraig Pearse

‘My brother was not fond of being away from home—he rather dreaded it; but during his rare visits to the Continent he took a keen

delight and interest in his new surroundings, especially in things artistic.

'He said to me when visiting the Palais de Beaux Arts in Antwerp:

'"I come to these countries to see pictures and people."

'The pictures appealed to the artist in him; the people to his wonderful sympathy with human nature—its virtues and failings, its griefs and joys!

'Pádraig was particularly interested in the coloured races, and was happy in having an opportunity of visiting the Chinese Theatre in Antwerp.

'Apart from his patriotic love of Ireland—which is too widely known to be commented upon here—he had a strong *personal* love—if one may use such an expression—for the land itself: its mountains, lakes and rivers; its quiet country places and its dear, great cities.

'On one occasion, upon his arrival at the North Wall, having visited almost every city in Belgium, he was driving through the city homewards. He looked steadily and quietly around him; then, with a note of pride in his voice, he remarked:

'"I am not ashamed of it! It is as good as any we have seen!"

'My brother was a man of deep religious feeling and gave evidence of this characteristic in early life. Long before he had reached his thirteenth year he was a constant attendant at the public devotions in the Church of St Andrew's, Westland Row; the Church where he had been baptised and confirmed and where he had made his first Confession, and received his first Holy Communion.

'He was particularly fond of the Holy Week ceremonies, and was never absent from them. Each year, also he endeavoured to gain the Portiuncula in the Franciscan Church, Merchants' Quay.

'But his greatest devotion was to the tragedy of Calvary—to Christ Crucified, and to the Crucifix.

'He showed this very quietly, but very plainly, in the arrangements of the little Oratory at St Enda's. He placed the Crucifix in the most prominent position on the altar, and would not allow it to be disturbed or outplaced by any statue or picture.

‘Sometimes I would *insist* on putting a statue in more prominence than the Crucifix. He would look at the altar, then look with a smile at me; and though a little disappointed, kneel down, and proceed with the usual prayers.

‘He would never tolerate the use of artificial flowers. He would have real flowers—yes—the best procurable—on God’s altar!’

Margaret Pearse.

Even when my brother was in Aran—those western isles which he loved so intensely—his thoughts were ‘homing’ ones. He used to be glad to go to Aran; but I fancy he was a great deal more glad to come back—home! Home meant everything to him—home, and his mother.

Yet the West was for ever calling to him—and he answered the call many a time and oft.

I have beside me a beautiful and sympathetic account of Pádraig’s visits to Aran, which, I am sure, will be read by all with deep interest.

It was written by Mrs M. Connolly, of Gort Mor, Connemara. One of her sons was educated at St Enda’s, and Pádraig used to stay at her house in Connemara, and she cherishes the memory of those happy days.

A Voice from the West

‘On a beautiful April day many years ago Patrick Pearse came for the first time to Connemara,’ writes Mrs M. Connolly.

‘As an Examiner to the Gaelic League, he had been given his choice of two centres—Donegal or Rosmuck. Although he had many friends and acquaintances in the former county, he had never been in the extreme West, and so he decided he would go to Galway.

‘The scenery and whole atmosphere of the place gripped him from the first! Indeed, the charm of Iar Connacht never, to the last day of his life, relaxed its hold on his imagination.

‘Half an hour after his arrival when lunch was ready, he was nowhere to be found. At last when he was seen, hatless, on an

eminence, turning from side to side, with his head thrown back, as if he could never see enough of the mountains, the wide moors, the lakes studded with islands, which lay around him. He only remained the weekend on his first visit; but St John's Eve found him back again. He had heard some stories of the customs of the district, and was anxious to be present at the bonfires which form part of the old-time ceremonies. He remained to the very end, and brought his burning sod of turf home as carefully as did the little urchins of the family with whom he was staying.

'His chief characteristic was his simplicity and his love for children. He entered into all their fun; understood intimately the child mind, and became one of themselves. The little girls of the aforesaid family brought their dolls to him to have their illnesses prescribed for. Then Pádraig was to be seen gravely informing an anxious looking little maid as to whether the treasure was to be allowed to sit up, or if it had safely passed the crisis in measles, or whatever ailment it had been suffering from.

'Pádraig aided and abetted a small boy in his wickedness of introducing a pair of undesirable puppies into the family. He contrived a hiding-place sufficiently far from the house to prevent their music being heard, until such time as the *bean a' tighe* could be safely approached on the subject. He would sit on the stairs while the imps sprawled all over him, soiling his collar.

'It was in Iar Connacht that Pádraig found material for *Íosagán*, *An Mháthair*, etc. The characters he took from local sources. His desire for the stories of the people, their habits, customs, and salutations was insatiable. Many a night the *fear-an-tighe* and himself had to be threatened with dire punishment before they could be induced to adjourn their sitting when midnight had struck.

'Once Pádraig brought down a cinematograph operator and gave an entertainment in an adjacent school. But first of all he provided a plentiful supply of barnbracks and sweets for the children. It was the first time that anything like it had ever been seen in the district and many funny remarks were passed thereon.

‘One old woman tried hard to get behind the screen to see the *real people!* Her remarks should be quoted in Irish in order to give the real full value. Pádraig had beautiful rural scenes shown. That night was made the theme for another of his stories, *The Road*.

‘Pádraig kept on coming year after year, at all seasons, whenever he could spare a week, to Iar Connacht, as if he could never see enough of Connemara. All this time he was trying to acquire some land on which to build a cottage—a real old Irish style of one. He wanted beyond anything to buy an island in the lake just beneath the spot where he eventually *did* build his little house. But the fates—in the person of the landlord—were unpropitious.

‘After many failures, however, Pádraig succeeded at last in buying a piece of rough mountain, and on it he had a three-roomed thatched cottage built. He wished to be able to see the mountains every time he looked out of window or door. So his *houseen* faced the north, and he had his wish.

‘He came down a couple times a year after his cottage was built; and in the summer usually brought some of St Enda’s boys and his mother and sisters. The boys had camps set up on the brow of the lake in warm weather.

‘With the windows wide open to the superb air of mingled sea and mountain breezes, Pádraig sat at his desk weaving out of his fertile brain the beautiful fancies, the unmatchable stories—some so pathetic (like *Eoineen of the Birds*)—which have brought tears to the eyes of thousands who have since had the privilege of reading them. The sorrowful stories were written in his later years, when the troubles of his country were engrossing his attention; the brighter ones were penned during his earlier visits to Connemara.

‘Pádraig was as courteous to the poorest peasant woman in Iar Connacht as he would be to the most fashionably-dressed lady in Dublin. He was never anything but considerate, unselfish, and kindness itself to all with whom he came into contact. He was a splendid listener, but never talked much himself.

‘*Go ndeanadh Dia trocaire ar d’anam, a Phádraig uasail!*’

M. Connolly.

. . . . .

Truly, it was a strangely insistent voice which called to my brother—that soft, crooning voice from the West—caressing and tender, and alluring, as are the fragrant, wet winds which murmur over its brown bogs. And Pádraig was ever faithful to that earnest call, and went, time and again, to Connemara, and still further, to Aran of the Saints. And there, with the musical Gaelic voices in his ears, and the wide clean sea and grey rocks all around him, the great dream of his life materialised, changing from a dream to a wonderful reality! That constant, ever present dream of founding a school for boys, a school which would also be a—*home!*

On Aran’s holy isle, where many centuries before the glorious St Enda had raised the banner of Christ, a vision of St Enda’s School must have risen before Pádraig, with the gentle saint of Aran as its patron.

At the foot of the Dublin hills, in the historic Hermitage, St Enda’s School now stands, its massive grey walls enshrining many a treasure. It is a hallowed memorial of the dead patriot.

Pearse at the funeral of Jeremiah O’Donovan Rossa, in Irish Volunteer uniform, holding hat with head down.

August 1st, 1915.

19: With the Girls at St Ita's

I have been very fortunate in securing the following charming contribution for inclusion in this memoir. It is from the pen of Miss Mary Hayden, who was a great friend of my brother. I am sure that these delightful reminiscences will be much appreciated:—

My Recollections of Pádraig Pearse

'When first I knew Patrick Pearse he was not much more than a boy in years, being still under twenty. After that, until about 1914, I saw a great deal of him, especially in summer when we often went cycling together.

'In some respects, however, he was not boyish, even in the beginning of our acquaintance. He did not seem to care for games or athletic exercise of any kind. Perhaps in the last couple of years of his life he learned to use firearms: but I cannot myself fancy his trying to kill any living thing, not to say a human being.

'His personal habits were curiously ascetic. Of intoxicants he did not even know the taste; he did not smoke; he took little interest in what he ate; to such discomforts as excessive heat, or cold, or wet, he appeared indifferent.

'When I knew him best he seemed not much interested in actual politics, though his love for Ireland was then, as always, intense and passionate. It was through the education of the rising generation that he looked for the regeneration of the country. I once had a long argument with him about the Councils Bill which was offered to Ireland in 1907. He thought that it ought to have been accepted. "It would give us control of our education, and that is the main thing," he said.

'To questions of party intrigue, or even to inevitable complications or details, he paid little attention. Always he was apt to think on broad lines; to consider the ends rather than the means; an inevitable result of his idealism.

‘It was in the world of children, animals, and flowers that Pearse was most at home. He loved all these intensely, and yet *generally*. Rarely did he show any particular favouritism or make any special pet. He could not bear to see even the humblest creature suffer. He once greatly surprised a Connacht fisherman by telling him that the fish—whose dying struggles the fisherman was watching with apparent amusement—were, as he himself was, *Mac Dé*.

‘At a Gaelic League meeting he created a good deal of indignation amongst some persons in the audience which had met to hear his lecture on “Our Brothers and Sisters.” The subject was kindness to animals. He maintained that, regarding this matter, the modern Irish were far behind the English; and that this was especially the case in Irish-speaking districts. “The Gaels are too poor to attend to animals!” one man interrupted. “Does it cost more to pat a dog than to kick it?” was Pearse’s retort.

‘Though school-keeping somewhat lessened his former idealistic conception of the human boy, it in no way diminished his interest or cooled his affection. To the end he idealised little girls and the very young.

‘Once, at a relatively heavy cost to himself, he brought a cinema operator down to entertain the school children in a far-off Irish-speaking village in Connacht. All day long he was busy cutting up cake and parcelling sweets. When, in the evening, the youngsters came—*hundreds* of them—he explained to them in Irish each picture as it appeared. How they enjoyed themselves! But I think that Pearse enjoyed himself more than any child there.

‘Akin to his idealising of children was Pearse’s attitude towards women. Their lower, or even their lighter side, he very little understood. He looked on the purity, the power of self-sacrifice, which is to be found more commonly in women than in men, as something divine. On this side he could understand them, for these qualities were strong in his own nature. Anything coarse disgusted him; from a doubtful story or jest he shrank as from a blow. Never, in all the years I knew him, did I ever hear from his lips even the mildest “swear-word.”

‘Pearse was, on the whole, a silent man, except when in the society of a few people whom he knew well. Rarely did he reveal his deeper feelings even to them. All his life he was a devout Catholic, but of religion he seldom spoke. The unseen world appeared very close to him; and the belief which he often (by way of jest) professed in ghosts, fairies and old legends, was, I think, only half-assumed.

‘Once he discussed with me a project of writing a sort of spiritual or intellectual autobiography, beginning at his early boyhood. I wonder was any of it ever written! If it ever was it must be a strange and interesting human document—not only because Pearse’s mind was of a strange and unusual type, but also, and even more so, because he was so absolutely free from affectation of any kind; so perfectly simple. In that, too, he was unusual.

Mary Hayden.

. . . . .

The autobiography of which Miss Hayden writes was subsequently begun by my brother; but, as I have already stated, it was never finished. The greater part of what he *did* write on the subject had been set down in this little book. I am quite certain that readers have found it every bit as interesting as Miss Hayden felt it would be.

It is worthy of notice that Miss Hayden lays particular stress on my brother’s burning desire to have the education of the children under Irish control. She tells us that it was to the youth—the rising generation—that he looked for the regeneration of the country.

To further this noble cause Pádraig founded not only a school for Irish boys, but also a school for Irish girls which did fine work even in the short time it was in existence.

He took for its patroness the great St Ita, who had fostered so many illustrious saints. This school was started in the historic district of Cullenswood, where St Enda’s had also begun some years before. Cullenswood House sheltered many happy-hearted Irish girls, all of whom loved and revered their ‘Head,’ Pádraig Pearse.

Mary Bulfin, daughter of Senôr Bulfin, was one of the pupils at Sgoil Íde, and, at my request, she has written a perfectly delightful little article dealing with the beloved Head of this unique Irish school. It was Mary who took the role of the Blessed Virgin in Pádraig's *Passion Play*, and her interpretation of the part was exquisitely gracious and dignified. Her contribution makes the most fascinating reading:—

Pádraig Pearse Among His Pupils

'Mr Pearse, the Head, as we called him, used to come and talk to us for an hour or so every Wednesday afternoon. One of these talks I remember very distinctly.

'He came late in the evening, and as only the boarders were present we went into the reception room. The girls sat round the table and Mr Pearse stood at the foot. Instead of talking to us about the sagas and about Wolfe Tone and Emmet, as he usually did, he talked to us about his own school-days. When he was quite a small boy he had attended a school presided over by ladies.

'"It was a good school, I think," Mr Pearse said. "We were taught to make things. I was very bad at that. Girls are much better than boys at making things. My sisters were very good at making things. They still make beautiful things. My brother also was good, but I was very awkward, even for a boy.

'"Still, I remember one thing that I made at that school. I made it out of wool, different sorts of wool, of different colours. I don't know what it was," he confessed naively and he paused for a moment, and gazed hard at the wall beside the fireplace. "I think," he continued, hopefully, "it was something you hang on a wall to put things in!" and he looked at us with such a funny air of puzzled inquiry that we all laughed.

'But he stood there smiling. He never laughed aloud, I think; but he had a queer little secret smile that made one feel he was having a great chuckle away down inside in himself!

'"Whatever it was," Mr Pearse went on, "I was very proud of having made it, and I *liked* making it!"

Annual prize-giving day at Scoil Éanna. Pearse seated on the right. Douglas Hyde present, seated at Pearse's right, facing left.

'I do not remember how he got from the "article" he had made to Euclid, or whether, in the meantime, he had progressed to another school; but presently he was telling us that he had not been much good at Euclid. "I could not do cuts in Euclid," he informed us; "at least, I did them, but my teacher always said that I had done them all wrong. One day he said to me: 'Patrick Pearse, you'll never be any good at mathematics! But there is one thing you are really good at, and that is the science of argument! You should go in for the law!'

'"Well, I did go in for the law, and I became a barrister. But I didn't like being a barrister. It seemed to me that lawyers and doctors have to live by taking advantage of the weakness and disease of their fellows. I thought that I'd rather be a blacksmith."

'Then he went on to say that he was sure he would have made a very bad blacksmith, but, apart from this, he was sure that he could live a more noble and more useful life as a blacksmith than as a barrister.

He discussed the various professions and life in general and, as usual, came back to the one great rule of life that he always insisted upon.

‘“Live up to the best that is in you,” he said; “and if your way of life or your profession in life does not allow you to live up to that best that is in you, then you must *change* your way of life, or your profession.”

‘Looking back on those addresses delivered on so many different subjects during the two years that Sgoil Íde lasted, it seems to me that this was the one theme that ran through them all. This, and another, which might be said to be an extension of the first: “Service is better than sacrifice.”

‘I have heard many sermons in many churches delivered with passionate fervour by great preachers, ranging in rank from curate to cardinal, but never one of them all seemed to me to offer as sure a guide—either in the little things of life, or in the great moments of crisis—as these simple sentences!

‘The girls of Sgoil Íde considered Mr Pearse a very great and marvellous person. We were tremendously in awe of him; yet we never hesitated to appeal to him in our difficulties.

‘I remember an incident that rather astonished our staff. It occurred at our first Sgoil Íde céilidhe on Hallow Eve. Some of the girls wanted to waltz; but Thomas MacDonagh, who was very resplendent in kilts, was acting as M.C. and would allow only Irish dances. We appealed to one of our mistresses, but she said that she was *sure* Mr Pearse would not like us to waltz. Immediately two of the girls sailed over to Mr Pearse, who was standing by himself, looking very imposing and distinguished in his evening dress. “Mr Pearse,” said one, “may we dance a waltz?” “If we call it a two-handed reel,” suggested the other, by way of compromise. “Of course you may dance a waltz,” answered the Head at once. “But why do you want to call it a two-handed reel?”

‘The matter was explained to him and he said: “Dance anything you like; but if it is a waltz, call it a waltz. Don’t call it a two-handed reel.”

‘So Mr MacDonagh announced presently that, by special permission of the Head, the next dance would be a waltz. The next day,

however, Mr MacDonagh expressed great surprised that Mr Pearse should have allowed a waltz, and still greater surprise that the girls should have had the temerity to approach him on such a subject.

'Mr Pearse seemed to get on particularly well with the very little ones in the school. There was one, a little, fragile, pale child, of whom he was especially fond. Nellie Jennings was her name; and although she was extremely shy and silent with the mistresses, and even with the girls, she always found plenty to say to Mr Pearse. Often the two might be seen having quite an animated chat, especially if no one else was around.

'In the Holy Week of 1911 Mr Pearse produced a *Passion Play* in the Abbey Theatre. This play represented the chief incidents in the Passion of Christ as related in the Gospel.

'Thomas MacDonnell, a master of St Enda's, impersonated Christ. He also composed the music sung by the boys in the opening scene—that of the Garden of Gethsemane. Mr MacDonnell also composed a very beautiful *caoine* for the women on Calvary.

'Mr Willie Pearse's impersonation of Pilate was considered wonderful, I remember, and was much discussed at the time. Personally, the thing that most impressed me about Pilate was the astonishing variety of his frowns. Mr Willie could frown a thousand ways at once; and during the *Passion Play* we used to watch in awed fascination the perfectly marvellous things he did with his forehead. The Head himself was the impenitent thief—one of the thieves anyway—and Mr Thomas MacDonagh the other.

'I have a very distinct memory of Mr MacDonagh, on the night of the dress rehearsal, diving through a crowd of boys to get to the right side of the stage at a critical moment—and beginning to chant forth his speech while picking up a small boy whom he had knocked over!

'The Head was also the voice in the mob that called out to Pilate: *Má sgaoilfid tú an fear seo, ní cara Chaesar tú*. That sentence is the only bit of the whole play that has stayed in my mind.

'Oddly enough, the thing I remember most vividly is Micheál Mac Ruadhrí as Barabbas. I never in my life saw anything so villainous as the smile of the mild and genial Micheál when, clad in a leopard

skin, he made his bow before Jesus. He looked a most devilish, horrible ruffian—however he managed it.

'Mr Pearse didn't seem to worry much about rehearsals. He told us simply and clearly what he wanted done; and once he was sure that each one really knew what he or she had to do, he was satisfied. He seemed to have a divine belief that everyone would rise to the occasion and perform their individual parts adequately at the actual performance, no matter how woodenly they behaved at the rehearsals. It was part of his general belief in human nature, I think.'

Mary Bulfin.

Upper left, head bent:

Pearse again at the funeral of O'Donovan Rossa.

20: Prophet and Martyr

The following intensely interesting little contribution is from the facile pen of Mr F O'Nolan, Chilham House, Rathfarnham. Mr O'Nolan was once a master in St Enda's College, under the headship of my brother himself. I read this article with the utmost attention, and would have liked it to be six times as long, I found it so absorbing in every detail.

It is the last—but by no means the least—of the many contributions which I have received from kindly and sympathetic friends. Writing to me on this matter Mr O'Nolan says:

> 'I understand that what you require is simply an appreciation of the personality of the extraordinary man who affected his generation so profoundly. This undoubtedly I can give.
>
> 'I was introduced to the late President, Patrick Henry Pearse, in the portico of the Royal University, by a mutual friend, about the year 1914. Although no words passed between us beyond those which convention dictated, I had the distinct impression that I had been summed up and catalogued.
>
> 'I afterwards asked my friend (I was then a stranger in Dublin) who this remarkable person was, and he replied: "He's an extraordinary fellow. He'll make his mark—that goes without saying. But no one knows how he'll do it!"
>
> 'From that time I followed Patrick Pearse's career with intense interest. I went to hear him speak at a Gaelic League meeting in Belfast in the early 'nineties, and brought away an intensified conviction that here was a mighty moral force.
>
> 'Afterwards I came into personal contact with the future President while he was editor of *An Claidheamh Soluis* and I a clerk in the Secretariat of the Gaelic League. During that period I never heard him speak a single word that was not necessary. To say that he was working—working—working all the time, conveys but a faint idea of his concentrated energy.

‘The next time I saw him was at Cullenswood, Oakley Road. On the way there I met Thomas MacDonagh, who told me that An Piarsach was awaiting me, and had practically decided to admit me to St Enda’s as a master.

‘During the interview that followed, Pearse sat half reclining in an easy chair, his hands clasped behind his head. Yet in that posture the impression he conveyed of tremendous reserves of energy was, if anything, greater than ever. He spoke in abrupt, nervous phrases. He referred kindly to what he called our colleagueship in Gaelic League work. The fire of the prophet and martyr blazed out unmistakably when he spoke of the great venture that the transfer of the school to Rathfarnham involved. It is perhaps not to my credit that what moved me most was not what he said—his personality was too overwhelming; it was the man himself one felt and thought of, not his words.

‘As to the time I spent under his headmastership in Rathfarnham, I cannot speak freely. I have never ceased to regret that I was not with him up to Easter Week, 1916; but he himself agreed that I ought not to stay.

‘My most vivid recollection of him there was in the refectory during the dinner hour, when he sat at the head of the table to which only boys who were fluent speakers of Irish were admitted. It was then one had the best opportunity of observing the headmaster’s fatherly tenderness, his deep insight into boys’ hearts and characters, his astounding power of realising naturally and serenely the noblest ideals of conduct and operations the most humdrum and commonplace.

‘As I was passing out one afternoon he stopped me. There was a gently humorous expression on his face. “Would you have any objection,” said he (in Irish, of course) “if I served you a summons?” “Even a summons,” I replied, “would at your hands be an honour.” “Here it is then,” he said. And he handed me a summons to appear at Green Street police court to answer a charge of riding a bicycle after dark without a light.

‘That day, while I was in class, a police sergeant had called at St Enda’s and sent for me to serve the summons on me. I refused to leave the class for this purpose. He sent for me three times, and then asked to see the headmaster. The President looked at the summons presented for his inspection, and said affably to the sergeant: “I am an officer of the High Court” (he was, of course, a barrister-at-law), “and will see that this summons is served in due form.” The sergeant saluted respectfully and retired.

‘How sorry I am that I did not preserve that summons—served on me by the President of the Irish Republic.

‘Public order is the first essential, and must be preserved at all costs. The sergeant represented the only machinery then in existence for its preservation. The President, therefore, was acting appropriately to his character and office when he condescended to endorse authoritatively the ministration of an humble instrument of that public order of which he himself was then the real custodian and figurehead.’

F. O’Nolan.

I can easily imagine how my brother must have chuckled over the serving of that summons, and how thoroughly he must have enjoyed the unusual episode. He would enjoy helping a policeman out of a difficulty just as much as he enjoyed masquerading as ‘a man of the road’!

Alfred once told me a diverting little tale about Pat and a well-known boxer of that time.

‘During the period when Tommy Burns was in Dublin to meet Jim Roche for the world’s championship,’ he said, ‘Pat took a keen interest in boxing. He began to study this sport comparatively seriously, and became a fairly fast and heavy hitter, as I know to my cost. He expected me to practise with him and stand up against him; yet he was four stone heavier than I.

‘He was proud of the fact that on one occasion, in the Dolphin Hotel, he was mistaken for Tommy Burns, and cheered by a crowd who were waiting to see the champion.’

But although my brother would enter heartily into the sport of boxing, and could learn, in all seriousness, to shoot straight and sure, it was not merely brute force that attracted him. Fine things—infinitely higher and nobler—were his constant ideals. He believed that the regenerating of Ireland—the uplifting of the Gael—would come by purely intellectual means: art, literature, music, religion.

The following beautiful passages, taken almost at random from lectures entitled ‘Gaelic Prose Literature’ and ‘The Intellectual Future of the Gael,’ both of which he delivered when still quite a boy, will exemplify what I mean: —

‘Centuries ago, when the European civilisation and literature of today were unknown, Éire had her day of empire; but hers was the empire, not of brute force, but of intellectuality. Time was when this land of ours was the literary centre of Christendom, when the learned of the world found their chief reading in these very prose tales that we have been considering.

‘Gaelic literature, like the Gaelic race, has long been dying, but it is “fated not to die.” When we remember the past, and when we look into the future, we are driven to admit, laying all enthusiasm aside, or, at least, avoiding extravagance in our enthusiasm, that in centuries yet to come these self-same epics, these self-same old *scéalta*, with their simple and beautiful imagery, with their grand and sonorous descriptive passages, with their strange old-world Celtic eloquence, may still be inspiring and rejuvenating the heart of man, and lifting him to higher and nobler ideals …

‘The mission of the Gael, however, will not be confined to the propagation of this literature. The Gael is, in the fullest sense of the word, an idealist; he is, in fact, the idealist amongst the

nations. All that is beautiful, noble, true, or grand will always find in him a devotee.

‘Another thousand years will have rolled over the earth, and the bard, and the *seanchaidhe*, and the teacher of the Gael, will once more be held in honour.

‘Men’s gods will no longer be empire, ambition and gold; but the homage that is paid to those things today will be paid in that happy age as it was in the days of yore, on the hills and in the valleys of Éire, to the mysterious potencies of nature, the beauty and virtue of women, the heroic dignity of man, the awful and incomprehensible majesty of the Divinity.

‘This will be the gospel of the future; and to preach this gospel—world-old, yet new, so true, yet so little realised, so beautiful and so ennobling—will be the mission of the children of the Gael.’

Pearse speaking at Dolphin’s Barn, August 30th, 1915.

EPILOGUE
I

P. H. Pearse's Farewell Letter to His Mother From Kilmainham Prison

My Dearest Mother,

I have been hoping up to now that it would be possible to see you again, but it does not seem possible. Good-bye, dear Mother. Through you I say good-bye to 'Wow-wow,' Mary Brigid, Willie, Miss Byrne, Micheál, Cousin Maggie, and everyone at St Enda's. I hope and believe that Willie and the St Enda boys will be safe.

I have written two papers about financial affairs and one about my books, which I want you to get. With them are a few poems which I want added to the poems in MS. in the bookcase.

You asked me to write a little poem which would seem to be said by you about me. I have written it, and a copy is in Arbour Hill Barracks with the other papers. Father Aloysius has taken charge of another copy.*

I have just received Holy Communion. I am happy, except for the grief of parting from you.

This is the death I should have asked for if God had given me the choice of all deaths—to die a soldier's death for Ireland and for freedom. We have done right. People will say hard things of us now, but later on will praise us.

Do not grieve for all of this, but think of it as a sacrifice which God has asked of me and of you.

Good-bye again, dear, dear Mother. May God bless you for your great love for me and for your great faith in me, and may He remember all that you have so bravely suffered. I hope soon to see Papa, and in a little while we shall be all together again.

---

* See page 33

'Wow-wow,' Willie, Mary Brigid, and Mother, good-bye. I have not words to tell you of my love for you and home, and how my heart yearns to you all.

I will call to you in my heart at the last moment.

Your son,

Pat.

Pearse, and behind him Elizabeth O'Farrell, Cumann na mBan, delivering the letter of unconditional surrender.

29th April, 1916.

II

The Last Scene

Pádraig Pearse walked from his cell to the execution ground with an easy step, and without betraying any emotion; with the same calmness and deliberation which he was wont to show when mounting a public platform. His face was untroubled; serenity of soul and strength of spirit were equally reflected in his looks. That supreme moment seemed of little importance for him; as if it merely marked another step forward in his career. Death would be important only after the volley which would assure him the twofold immortality: that of the Christian entering the eternal communion of God, that of the patriot taking premier rank among the heroes of his nation.

. . . . .

In this grey morning wrapped in mist and rain,
You stood erect beneath the sullen sky,
A heart which held its peace and noble pain,
A brave and gentle eye.

The last of all your silver songs are sung,
Your fledgling dreams on broken wings are dashed—
For suddenly a tragic sword was swung,
And ten true rifles crashed.

By one who walks aloof in English ways
Be this high word of praise and sorrow said:
He lived in honour all his lovely days,
And is immortal, dead!

Theodore Maynard.