

Two Voices in the Rising
Contributed by Brian P. Hegarty Jr.

The Rose Tree by William Butler Yeats

'O WORDS are lightly spoken,'
Said Pearse to Connolly,
'Maybe a breath of politic words
Has withered our Rose Tree;
Or maybe but a wind that blows
Across the bitter sea.'
'It needs to be but watered,'
James Connolly replied,
'To make the green come out again
And spread on every side,
And shake the blossom from the bud
To be the garden's pride.'
'But where can we draw water,'
Said Pearse to Connolly,
'When all the wells are parched away?
O plain as plain can be
There's nothing but our own red blood
Can make a right Rose Tree.'

A Letter Given to his daughter Nora Connolly on eve of his murder by the British

To the Field General Court Martial, held at Dublin Castle, on May 9th, 1916:

I do not wish to make any defence except against charges of wanton cruelty to prisoners. These trifling allegations that have been made, if they record facts that really happened deal only with the almost unavoidable incidents of a hurried uprising against long established authority, and nowhere show evidence of set purpose to wantonly injure unarmed persons.

We went out to break the connection between this country and the British Empire, and to establish an Irish Republic. We believed that the call we then issued to the people of Ireland, was a nobler call, in a holier cause, than any call issued to them during this war, having any connection with the war. We succeeded in proving that Irishmen are ready to die endeavouring to win for Ireland those national rights which the British Government has been asking them to die to win for Belgium. As long as that remains the case, the cause of Irish freedom is safe.

Believing that the British Government has no right in Ireland, never had any right in Ireland, and never can have any right in Ireland, the presence, in any one generation of Irishmen, of even a respectable minority, ready to die to affirm that truth, makes that Government for ever a usurpation and a crime against human progress.

I personally thank God that I have lived to see the day when thousands of Irish men and boys, and hundreds of Irish women and girls, were ready to affirm that truth, and to attest it with their lives if need be.

JAMES CONNOLLY
Commandant-General, Dublin Division
Army of the Irish Republic

Patrick Pearse:

An Irish teacher, barrister, poet, writer, nationalist and political activist who was one of the leaders of the Easter Rising in 1916.

Patrick Henry Pearse, was an Irish nationalist leader, poet, and educator. He was the first president of the provisional government of the Irish republic proclaimed in Dublin on April 24, 1916. Pearse took command of the rebellion and read out the declaration of independence at the General Post Office while a new tri-colored flag was hoisted over the Post Office. He was also one of the signers.

The 19th century had witnessed the decay of the Irish language and of national pastimes. Ireland was quickly being absorbed into the British Empire and its own identity being lost. The Gaelic League was founded by Dr. Douglas Hyde in 1893. In the words of Dr. Hyde, "In order to de-Anglicize ourselves we must at once arrest the decay of the language. We must strive to cultivate everything that is Irish in spite of the admixture of Saxon blood in the northeast corner.....that this island must remain Celtic at the core." Dr. Hyde unwittingly created a revolution. The movement for the revival of the Irish language was to be a powerhouse radiating influence in many directions.

The Gaelic league succeeded to spread through Ireland. While the Irish Parliament were aimed at getting Home Rule, there was a growing body of opinion that would not be satisfied with anything less than complete independence. Pearse published a collection of writings and poems in 1914. To quote Pearse and to think about his mindset at the time is to read one of his poems.

I set my face

To the road here before me

To the work I see

To the death I shall get

For men such as Pearse nationalism had a religious tone, not a sectarian sense. He was passionate about a free Ireland. He drew many parallels between the love of country and the love of god. The choice of Easter as the time for the rising emphasized the spiritual aspect of the patriotism of the leaders.

Where Dr. Hyde wanted to produce a dove for peace; Pearse reminded Hyde and others that the Gaelic League had brought into Ireland "Not Peace, but a sword."

In Pearse's own words: *The coming Revolution by Patrick Pearse, November 1913:*

This does not show any fundamental difference between my leader and me; for while he is thinking of peace between brother Irishman, I am thinking of the sword-point between banded Irishman and the foreign force that occupies Ireland and his peace is necessary to my war. It is evident that there can be no peace between the body of politic and a foreign substance that has intruded itself into its system.

Whether Home Rule means a loosening or a tightening of England's grip upon Ireland remains yet to be seen. But the coming of Home rule, if come it does, will make no material difference in the nature of the work that lies before us; it will affect only the means we are to employ, our plan of campaign. There remains under Home Rule as in its absence, the substantial task of achieving the Irish Nation.

I do not think it is going to be achieved without stress and trial, without suffering and bloodshed; at any rate, it is not going to be achieved without *work*. Our business here and now is to get ourselves into the harness for such work as has to be done.

I hold that before we can do any work, any men's work, we must first realize ourselves as *men*. Whatever comes to Ireland, she needs men. And we of this generation are not in any real sense men; for we suffer things that men do not suffer, and we seek to redress grievances by means which men do not employ. We have, for instance, allowed ourselves to be disarmed; and now that we have a chance of re-arming, we are not seizing it.

Ireland unarmed will attain just as much freedom as it is convenient for England to give her; Ireland armed will attain ultimately just as much freedom as she wants. These are matters which may not concern the Gaelic League, as a body; but they concern every member of the Gaelic League, and every man and women of Ireland. I urged much of this five or six years ago in the addresses to the governing body of the Gaelic League. But the League was too busy with resolutions to think of revolution, and the only resolution that a member of the League could not come to was the resolution to be a man. My fellow Leaguers had not (and have not) apprehended that the thing which cannot defend itself, even though it wears trousers, is no man.

I am glad, then, that the North has "begun." I am glad that the Orangemen have armed, for it is a goodly thing to see arms in Irish hands. I should like to see the AOH armed. I should like to see the Transport workers armed. I should like to see any and every body of Irish citizens armed. We must accustom ourselves to the thought of arms, to the sight of arms, to the use of arms. We may make mistakes in the beginning and shoot the wrong people; but bloodshed is a cleansing and sanctifying thing, and the nation which regards it as the final horror has lost its manhood. There are many things more horrible than bloodshed; and slavery is one of them.