RTÉ WRITTEN ARCHIVES RADIO TALK SCRIPTS

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D. Macardle

THE WHIRLIGIG OF TIME.

I. The Young Victorian.

Memories, when one has entered the later decades, behave in a curious way; they advance and retreat, rearranging themselves in new perspectives, revealing hitherto unguessed relationships of action and reaction, cause and effect. Questioned about my own recollections, I felt baffled by the scatter of fragments -- broken plans, altered allegiance, discarded hopes, that were all I could see, until the kaleidoscope turned. Then, I thought, a pattern began to emerge. There was rhythmic movement. A circle, small at first, enlarged itself, multiplied, like the rings of an eddy. Recurrences and reversals occurred. I imagine that for many people destiny moves like this.

"And thus the whirligig of time brings in his revenges," as Shakespeare's Feste says.

Dundalk was an important garrison town and in our nursery the garrison spirit burned bright. Victoria's portrait presided over colour-prints of famous battles and naval engagements. We had the Duke of Wellington, too.

Did my father notice? If he did, it was like him to say nothing. He must have been the most tolerant Irishman - I mean, among effective and thinking citizens, ever born. He had supported Parnell and was a steadfast Redmondite, never ceasing to use his influence for Home Rule. But he had married an English girl, an officer's daughter, herself a little soldier, every fragile inch of her, whose loyalties were intense. He would not thwart them nor quarrel with them.

So our history-book was "Little Arthur's England", and our bed-time reading, "Men Who Have Made the Empire"; my little brothers played with lead soldiers and guns and forts. Our favourite regiment, of course, was our English grandpapa's, the Scots Greys, and, to the three of us, the hero of heroes

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was mother's uncle William, who had been killed, fighting, in the Soudan and had been awarded the Victoria Cross.

How lucky we were to live on the road to the barracks! Glimpses of splendour glorified our days when Mother called us, even from lessons, to watch a troop of cavalry, or, b[illegible] better still,of artillery with gun-carriages, clattering past. Magnificent, the scarlet coats, and black, towering busbies, or fear-skins like Grandpapa's, or glittering helmets with horse-hair plumes. Grandest sight of all was a military funeral. Slowly, it would move to the mournful music of the Dead Mardh in Saul. Silent, we saw the great Union Jack shrouding the coffin, the drum draped in black, the soldiers with their rifles held at the trail; most touching of all, the dead officer's horse with his boots in the stirrups, reversed.

Nothing else, except Christmas and the Assizes, brought much relief from the dulness of Dundalk. There was little in it to please eager young minds. Though our walks brought us views of the Carlingford mountains no one told us about Cuchullain, and Finn MacCumhal, for all we could hear, was a silly old giant who threw stones about. Our fairy-tales were Perrault's, Hans Andersen's and Grimm's. No legends enchanted for us the Irish scene.

I have to forget the prosperous town it is now to visualize Dundalk as it used to be. How we hated the walks with a nurse, or stricter governess, twice a day! How ugly was the town. To live in beautiful England was my dream.

Except where crossing-sweepers were busy, earning their half-pennies, the streets were deep in mud. In winter we had to wear boots - hard, heavy boots. The smell from the river! And the hideous sights outside the butcher shops! The

drunkards,/

drunkards, shouting and reeling about! And, on the way to the cattle boat, the animals, piteously moving and bleating driven with sticks. A cow, fallen from exhaustion, would lie there, being beaten methodically by two men. Worst of all was the sense of hunger and poverty everywhere. From the cottages came the incessant weiling of babies; barefoot, ragged children whimpered and begged. I shall never forget a girl who stood in the gutter, filling abucket from a pump. Upset by the sight of her feet, bluish from cold, I offered her my penny. She refused it with a gentle smile. I liked to hear my mother blest in the streets by poor women to whom she had sent old clothes.

But all this misery - so it seemed, from things our visiting English relatives said - was somehow the Irish people's own fault. Irish shiftlessness, Irish disloyalty, Irish ingratitude, were to blame. And it was to these worthless, ignorant, treacherous people that Mr.Gladstone wanted to give Home Rule!

Gradually I became aware that there were Irish people who had different thought. There was whispered talk, exciting talk that we were not supposed to hear. I heard our nurse and Mary use frightening words: "dynamiters" and "Fenians". There were such Irishmen now in English Prisons. I wondered what would happen if they escaped.

I remember torches in the night.

The hours in the dark before sleep came were dreadful, with the bawling of drunken men coming up from the street. But that night the shouting was different; it sounded happy. There was a red glare and a smell of smoke. I don't remember

who/

who came into the room and led me to the window to look out. It was a strange scene. Men carrying lighted torches; men waving their arms about; people cheering, wild with joy. I was told that imprisoned leaders had been released.

I must have caught some of that fever of exultation, because I don't remember feeling afraid, only much perplexed. And I don't know when it happened or who had been freed: probably John O'Daly or Tom Clarke.

Our daylight life burst into thrilled activity for Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee. A blaze of red, white and blue, it is, in memory, with illuminations, decorations and bands. We spent our pennies on pins and buttons containing tiny portraits of Queen Victoria, and on minute royal standards and flags which we stuck on our Sailor blouses and reefer coats.

But there were people who didn't wear loyal badges or put up flags. There were public meetings and a lot of policemen about. Men in green uniforms marched with bands that we were forbidden to follow. A statue was put up in the market square. It wasn't beautiful. There was a woman all mixed up in a big flag. We called it "The Ghost". What the verse carried on it meant, we couldn't guess.

.... <u>True men by you, men,</u>
<u>Like the men of ninety-eight</u>.

This year was ninety-eight. What <u>could</u> it mean?

"Croppy boys", somebody said. And what di <u>that</u> mean? There were secrets again; there was whispering, I heard, very often, the name of a woman. I thought of her as powerful and dangerous because of the way it was spoken. It was "Maud Gonne" ..... Was she, I couldn't help wondering, an enemy of the Queen?

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The year was to bring an answer to that question but first came one rapturous, shining hour when with my own eyes, I saw the Queen! Victoria came on a visit to Ireland and, sitting on a scaffolding in Dublin with my mother, I watched that glittering royal procession and, at last, the Queen in her carriage go by. Dublin seemed one long, ecstatic roar, I imagine I added to it. I am sure I returned to Dundalk two inches taller and bossed my long- suffering younger brothers around.

But the whispers followed. I heard a shocking story which some awful people told with glee. The Queen had been insulted. A woman - a tall, beautiful woman, they said she was - had followed her procession, dressed all in black, mourning, and had hung out black flags. I heard her name and it was Maud Gonne.

I am not sure whether it was my extravagant celebration of this visit or of some later occasion which provoked a domestic crisis at last. I must have induced the boys to contribute as well as spending my own wordly all, for such a streamer of pennants never was seen. I festooned it and criss-crossed all over the front hall. I am sure every flag of the Empire was there. Pride flourished until my father came home. I had gone too far. He spoke a few pungent workds and every flag had to come down.

My brothers took it philosophically but I was appalled.

Monarchical emblems reigned undisturbed in the nursery - turned school-room by the time of the Boer War. Lord Roberts, wearing his blue garter ribbon, frowned down on us from his place close to Victoria. Wee Bobs would make certain that we won this war! We chanted Kipling's songs about Tommy Atkins and, endlessly, Soldiers of the Queen. In my memory

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there lingers no hint or suggestion from any person that this war was not a fine and righteous thing.

But a black shadow hangs over those days of winter when we knew that the Queen was dangerously ill.

We were doing our prep in the schoolroom, I remember, poring over close print by the dim light of a fish-tail gas-jet, when Mother came in and broke the news to us. The Queen was dead. We were ordered, nevertheless, to go on with our work.

A big tear fell into Butler's Spelling Book. I can't have been heart-broken after all, because, I remember, I was proud of that tear and of the large blister it made on the page. I hoped very much that that blister would last. I t was historical - I would show it to my children.

It seems I had outgrown my childish allegiance. It had become a preserved, artificial thing, like those dead flowers so falsely called "immortelles."

Thought began, I suppose, to replace emotion. I remember confronting my mother, in whose talk with her relatives the Irish were still "they" and the English "we", with the blunt question, "But aren't we Irish?"

I was not satisfied. Probably my father spoke an occasional, mild, enlightening word. Perhaps the more sturdy and sensible temperaments of my brothers were influencing mine.

The boys were sent to an English public school and there they heard a Reverend master challenge the ethics of the Boar war. They also heard the Irish question discussed.

I, however, was still guarded from controversy, although I was old enough, now, to accompany my mother to Granny's dinner parties at Cambricville.

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A remarkable old lady, my father's mother - Chairman of the family business with authority over her six tall sons. She had a secret which, many years later, she confided to me, when, opening for me in private her album full of photographs of de Valera, she revealed that she was a rebel at heart. In those old days, neverheless, officers from the barracks were often her finner-guests. The talk was nearly all about horses, for hunting, racing and polo were common ground, while all affairs of civic and national interest, being entangled with politics, were taboo.

I do not remember ever hearing such questions discussed.

But I remember vividly the day when my second brother and I - it must have been during the holidays - alone together, safe in the seclusion of Granny's brougham, confided to one another our daring, dangerous, yet considered opinion that the Irish people, if they wanted it, out to be given Home Rule.

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From Miss Dorothy Macardle, Benedin, Windgate Road, Howth.

1/9/56

3796

THE WHIRLIGIG OF TIME

II : THE DUBLIN STUDENT.

I don't know whether any psychologist has analysed what makes a rebel. I wonder whether I am right in imagining that some childhood experience of harsh restraint or ~~of~~ injustice is often the seed from which, later, sympathy with oppressed people and anger against tyranny springs. Shelley, when a boy, listened outside a school, and heard the cries of the cruelly punished children within. It was then that he made that impassioned vow:

"Never, never, (so help me God) will I tolerate intolerance!"

Tolstoi records that he remembers from earliest infancy the constraint of the swaddling bands, immobilizing baby limbs, and his helpless infantile striving to break those bonds. Did that memory give him, for life, the burning compassion of a revolutionist?

Those constricting bands are a fair symbol, to my mind, of the artificial shibboleths and conventions which Victorian and Edwardian standards imposed, cramping and frustrating the lives and energies of growing girls, and of mature women, too.

I think it all lasted longer in Ireland, among anglicized families, than in England. There is often a time-lag in such changes where a colonial spirit exists. Remembering how many women belonging to such privileged families repudiated their unionist upbringing and championed the cause of the Irish people, I ~~incline to look for the~~ suspect a seed sown in early life. Did they find themselves intolerably restricted ~~in early girlhood~~ while their brothers were indulged and free? I am proud to have known more than one of those pioneers, and in them all there was something deeper than an ethical sense of justice and much more universal than nationalism. The cause of freedom was a passion with them.

As to myself, what amazes and, a little, shames me as I look back is the ~~slowness and~~ deviousness of the processes which ~~made me their disciple~~ led me to the same goal in the end. I do not believe anyone else of my generation, who was finally to arrive in the Republican rostrum, can have moved so slowly. My mind had to travel in the opposite direction, going west to find the east, in a great circle, in order to reach that port. Yet I am glad to have made this circuitous journey. It meant that, at the end, I had nothing to fear from learning "the other side". I had lived it; knew all its arguments by heart. Besides, it was a good voyage, in a peculiarly happy ship. This protected

me from the common error of indicting a whole nation - even the one against which we found ourselves painfully at war.

Certainly I was no rebel born, but the meekest prig of a child, accepting my English mother's orthodoxies and deep loyalties as my own. Of my Redmondite father I saw little beyond the hour before bed-time dedicated to games of draughts or "Old Maid". I was even obedient to the succession of dull, strict governesses who remained in charge of me and my little sister after the boys had been sent to an English school.

I shall never forget the dread of the future that closed in on me then. For a girl who was not expected to earn her living, - and how many of us there were, in those complacent days! - for a girl like myself, in a provincial town, not given to games or horsemanship or sport, the years stretched like a desert ahead. I could find no scope for effort or hope of achievement, no promise of activity anywhere, unless marriage should come as an escape - and that was not what marriage ought to be. All life's realities seemed to be shut away as though by an invisible wall. The sensation haunts me in nightmares still.

It was through visits to a surgeon that I discovered Dublin, and so completely I lost my ~~head~~ heart to the city that those visits were soon less dreaded than desired. To me, Dublin appeared

the centre of life in all its fulness and freedom. I bombarded Heaven with prayers that we might go to live there and, suddenly, we did. I became a day-student at Alexandra College and all youth's extravagant hopes and eager delights were mine.

In my sixteenth year, I was one of the youngest and moved in awe of the undergraduates who were studying there for the B.A. degree. The Royal University was giving degrees to women then. Marvellous was it to be taught by lecturers who floated about in black academic gowns and were full of learning and of grace. The lessons were enthralling and I was not as backward among the girls as I had feared to be. I met with encouragement. I thought I had wandered into an earthly Paradise.

Now, in 1956, Alexandra College is nearly ~~a hundred~~ years old. It had been a pioneer foundation; I felt that the pioneer spirit informed it still, and I was right. The lecturers were women to whom their work was a vocation. The Head, Miss H.M. White, was a protagonist of the right of women to the highest education and to a full share of professional and political life. Our days were rich with a sense of progress towards ends not solely our own, and were kept happy by the charming, spontaneous relationship that existed between the staff and the students. Friendships thrived in that clear, fresh air. The atmosphere was free from English rigidity and from Irish lassitude alike.

I suppose it was the Anglo-Irish world at its best.

After indulging a furore for one subject after another, I returned to my first love, English literature. I disconcerted my parents by telling them that I wanted more than anything in the world to take my degree and teach. Having failed to seduce me with offers of foreign travel, my mother, with great unselfishness, gave in.

That age of transition was sad for the mothers of girls, I am afraid.

I wonder how many rebels against the Empire English poets have made! From the Arthurian legends onwards, the pages of English writers and speeches of English orators express their ardent love of justice and human brotherhood, and their sense of the rights of man. In class we read Milton; read Shelley's Prometheus Unbound; those lyrics of Byron and sonnets of Wordsworth that are paeons in praise of resistance to tyranny. At home I revelled in Swinburne's rhythms and in his defence of Italian patriots. I was given a volume of Browning by that kindest and most inspiring of teachers, later my dear friend, Mabel Webb. In the dramatic club we produced Julius Caesar and I did enact Brutus, whom I admired.

"That part of tyranny which I do ~~bear~~ bear
I can shake off at will."

Years later, reading those lines to my own class at Alexandra, I paused, flushed and shaken by the thought of Mary MacSwiney, in prison, on hunger-strike. I said nothing, but knew by their startled glances that my pupils had read my mind.

These values, these ~~faults~~ faiths, seemed to me to pervade the whole of our life in College. Miss White, giving her Students Night address, quoted a phrase I can never forget.

"Let justice be done though the sky fall."

After many years, when Miss White was imploring me not to become involved in Sinn Fein and forfeit (unwittingly) the lectureship which I loved, I reminded her of those words.

During the critical period ~~of~~ for Asquith's Home Rule Bill I was obsessed by examinations and I followed its ups and downs not at all. Of its provisions I knew very little; of Irish history, nothing. I scarcely ever read a newspaper. I thought of Irish politics as a source of angry and painful emotions and shrank from the mere mention of them.

The exclusion of the controversy from College was, of course, deliberate. Alexandra was a unionist foundation. Miss White was a member of the social strata known among themselves as "the best people", and many of the Ascendency families entrusted

their daughters' education to her. She might encourage the girls to debate anti-vivisection and even Woman's Suffrage in her Contemporary Club, but never would she be so injudicious as to expose them to political dispute. The withering wind of the Irish question was shut out behind that invisible wall.

Questions of public welfare, nevertheless, were made the students' concern. We were taught that it was out duty to repay the community for our privileges by undertaking useful social work, and this we ~~could~~ were led to do through the College Guild.

The contacts that work brought us awakened thought. The slums; this dreadful strike and lock-out; the tuberculosis, the hunger and despair - what was the root cause of it all?

I wondered - was the government doing enough? Could more be done if Ireland had Home Rule?

So a breach was made in the invisible wall.

~~Other influences were flowing in to alter youth's allegiance~~ in subtler ways. It would have been true of Ireland at that time to say,

"This isle is full of noises:
"Tunes and sweet airs that give delight
and hurt not."

I fell under the dreamy spell of Mr. B. Yeats's early lyrics and wandered with Oisin, entranced. ~~I gathered a circle~~

Still, the fluctuations of the struggle of Asquith and Redmond against the Ulstermen were matters to which I gave no heed. Term-time was crowded with work for exams while summer vacations at Stratford-upon-Avon were filled with Shakesperanean pleasures and projects. It might easily have happened that ideals of justice and freedom withered into mere academic principles in my too-cloistered mind. But Ireland was wooing her errant daughter, and wooing her multitudinous exiles, by subtle means.

I fell under the spell of the entrancing poetry, prose and drama of Yeats. A group of my fellow students gathered round and we read his lyrics and plays aloud.

It was the poems which make no direct appeal to national sentiment, I believe, that had upon us the most penetrating effect. Through those poems, the ancient yet ever-living entity that is Ireland, drew wonder, compassion and love to itself. Her hills and glens were revealed as haunted; magical; her waters and islands as blessed with peace; her stricken people were the secret possessors of a treasury of legend, heroic, magnanimous, sensitive as any belonging to the age of chivalry. And the poems of Yeats in themselves,

in their perfection of craftsmanship, were the equal of any the English poets were writing and comparable to the best of Wordsworth's or Blake's. They were attracting to our sad island the gentle thoughts of lovers of poetry everywhere in the world.

For me there was a deep fascination in the image of the woman, worn with sorrows, yet lovely and undefeated, before whose wandering feet the poet spread his dreams. She not only symbolized Ireland for him but had inspired his thoughts of Ireland, his hopes for Ireland, I believed.

Who was she? Somebody told me: Maud Gonne.

From reading, we students progressed to the Abbey Theatre. There, from excellent two-shilling seats, we saw plays of the Irish renaissance: plays by Yeats and Synge, Padraic Colum, Lady Gregory, T.C. Murray, Lennox Robinson: plays that revealed not only the Ireland of legend but also the Ireland of the country-people - their humour and their troubles; their realistic thinking and imaginative speech.

Perhaps some ancestral chord was touched and unconscious racial allegiance wakened by the genius of those poets and dramatists. I don't know; but I know that before my student years were at an end, Ireland possessed my imagination and my heart.

No IV Forwarded by D. Macardle 8/9/56

From Miss Dorothy Macardle, Benedin, Windgate Road, Howth

THE WHIRLIGIG OF TIME

III THE RIDDLE OF ENGLAND.

Writing about those uneasy beings born half Irish and half English, Desmond McCarthy said that they are destined to go through life "with patriot hearts and alien eyes."

For some of my generation it was worse than that, for Ireland's struggles and sufferings were our own, and so, also, was England's fall from grace. There were years, during which England became a tormenting enigma, impossible to forget or to solve.

Ih my childhood, England meant holidays with my mother and her own people - the beaches of Devon, the pinewoods of Surrey, the hopfields and orchards of Worcestershire and Warwickshire; a vicarage with a fascinating sand-glass in the kitchen and a red hawthorn tree at the gate, where I was petted and spoilt by six or seven adoptive aunts. It meant marvellous days in London; the fairyland of the Exhibition at night, and an awe-inspiring visit to Madame Tussaud's to see the image of Great Uncle William wearing his uniform and Victoria Cross.

During my student years, although it became my dearest

wish to live all my life in Dublin, I saw England as the home of Shakespeare and Milton and of all those great upholders of justice, freedom, and the rights of the individual whose lives are luminous throughout her history. But the England I went to live in, joining my mother in nineteen-thirteen, was the England that Shaw called "Heartbreak House".

His Heartbreak House is dominated by an oligarchy of rich, titled, over-privileged people, without vision or knowledge or common sense. They are people in whom inherited prejudices take the place of judgment, while a lazy, self-confident optimism hides imminent disaster from their sight.

Such types it was who failed to recognise an enemy in the Kaiser and threw away the last chance of having Ireland as a friend - the Lords rejecting Asquith's Home Rule Bill, while generals and politicians signed the Ulster Covenant and encouraged Carson to prepare civil war. In the organ of this class, The Morning Post, Irish national claims were treated with bitter contempt.

The venom which the Home Rule project generated among such people was recalled by Lady Bonham Carter in a recent talk on the B.B.C. Because Asquith, her father, was sponsoring the Bill, all his connections became outcasts from the social circles they used to frequent.

"If Violet Asquith had crossed our threshold, we should have felt obliged to burn the carpet," one well-known hostess said.

In the light of modern psychology that virulent loathing is comprehensible: the conqueror can't tolerate those who resist him, and most people shrink from those they have wronged. But the mood was hard for a green girl to understand.

I had no contact with political circles. It was a less ruthless sentiment, though not a less contemptuous, that one heard expressed in Kensington hotels - the same silly phrases over and over again.

"It would be a shame to deprive the Irish of their grievance. They live on it." And, "They are a nation of children. They shouldn't be trusted with edged tools;" and, "Home Rule would mean Rome Rule", and, "If Ireland could just be held under the sea for ten minutes we might have some peace." Then the Covenantors would be quoted: "Ulster will fight and Ulster will be right."

Lacking knowledge of facts, I couldn't reply, and suffered the resentment of the ignorant, no less hot and bitter for being dumb.

Where, I wondered, was the England of the books and poems, the noble speeches and historic acts?

For answer, my stars were kind.

During the previous summer, revelling in the Shakespeare Festival at Stratford-upon-Avon, I had been visited by an idea.

Excited, and armed with the valour of ignorance and five shillings for stamps from an enthusiast, I had written scores of letters to progressive educationists, suggesting that, during future festivals, teachers and creative writers should meet together at Stratford in Conference. The response was astonishing. The thing snow-balled. F.R. Benson who directed the festivals, and the Chairman of the Theatre, Alderman Flower, declared that this enterprise was important. They surrounded me with eminent persons as a London advisory committee and told me to go mad on the thing.

Go mad on it I did, and my sister, too. I think nobody who could help refused. The most famous poets ~~xxxxxxxxxxxx~~ of the time were among our speakers. We gave them expenses up to three guineas, I think. The period of conference had to be doubled. Mother had to take a house in Stratford. Even during the war teachers and writers met there year after year.

These were men and women devoted to education, the arts, and peace. They were eager, broad-minded people, imaginatively gifted and well informed. I met groups of the same calibre at Oxford, later, when I was a little more knowledgeable about the Irish case. They never ceased to ask me about Ireland, & Sinn Fein. On the river, in gardens, or late at night, in all quiet moments, our talks ~~xxxxxx~~ about Ireland's aspirations went on; and I met with nothing but sympathy, intelligent comprehension and good will.

But they gathered in diminishing numbers. These young men belonged to the generation that ghastly holocaust was cutting down. They and their kind, if they had survived, would have built a wiser England, I believe.

They would have cared about public affairs. They would not have held aloof as the talented, imaginative, idealistic people everywhere so often do, remaining ineffective about great issues; leaving politics to the lovers of power.

Something happened when I was living again in Ireland which made me reflect on this. At that time my own belated education in nationalism was being vigorously undertaken by new friends, among whom Paul Farrell was one. The Benson Company came to Dublin. I had learnt to admire F.R.B.- by then Sir Frank Benson - immensely, and I wanted to recruit him to Ireland's cause. I invited the two actors to meet in my rooms and told Paul to bring out his big guns.

He did. He talked eloquently and at length. F.R.B. listened with all his responsive and sensitive charm. When at last Paul desisted I saw an expression of such gentle sympathy in the other's face that I thought I had my convert.

"Ah, but, no! Sir Frank said softly: "England will never part with Ireland, for England loves Ireland as a man loves his wife."

Unable to frame an adequate answer to that, I was mute. But not so Paul. "A man who beats his wife," he said.

That was a time in Ireland to make realists. The Volunteers had not resumed action since 1916. Constitutional methods, however, were answered by force. While British statesmen were professing adherence to President Wilson's democratic principles - "freedom for small nations" "self-determination"; "government by consent of the governed" men were being arrested in Ireland for uttering words likely to cause disaffection, for making anti-recruiting speeches, and singing patriotic songs. The return of de Valera and other Republicans in by-elections was followed by the prohibition of meetings and suppression of newspapers. The British government prepared to conscript Irish men into the British army to fight abroad, knowing that the men would resist and hoping to put the onus of the first shooting upon Sinn Fein. Non-violent resistance, Sinn Fein, the Church and Labour standing together in quiet, unarmed defiance, defeated that. Sinn Fein's immense victory in the post-war general election was a signal for more arrests.

Nothing is so potent in winning sympathy as reason opposing itself, ready to suffer any punishment, in a just cause, to brute force. At that time Ireland won adherents and admirers in every continent and won to her side English men who were sincere in their allegiance to freedom - men like Erskine childers. But there were not many like him.

Even my own persistent illusions fell. There were two Englands, I told myself sadly, and the one in power understood nothing but force.

By a curious chance, during the height of our armed struggle, I had a brief contact, in London, with English men and women who had become our powerful advocates. Since the incident ended happily I can recall it with amusement now.

Terence MacSwiney and Kevin Barry had died. Two lads were on trial for their lives after an ambush in which, as the I.R.A. knew and declared, they had not taken part. A dossier of the court-martial made it apparent that they were innocent, yet there was little hope for their lives. Their defending counsel, one evening, sent out word that unless someone went immediately to England and secured powerful intervention - letters to General Macready from people whom he could not ignore, the young men were doomed.

No one properly equipped for this mission could be found, so I grabbed a copy of the dossier, pulled on a hat and coat that hung in the hall and, by a hair's breadth, caught the boat. Instructions and letters reached me in London. In their homes and in the lobbies of the House of Commons I had to beard Lord Robert Cecil, Lord Buckmaster, Lord Haldane, Sir John Simon. ~~Mrs. Wintringham, M.P., helped vigorously.~~ All these and others of comparable influence read that dossier and, with grave and grim conviction, sent off letters and telegrams.

But I was much too immature and emotional for that mission; I couldn't rest, relax or sleep. When I came at last to Desmond McCarthy, I was exhausted and on the brink of a break down.

"Leave this to me. I am going to give up my time to it," he said. "You will only have to confirm what I'll say."

He telephoned, saying something about a lady from Ireland in distress about two young fellows who were to be executed, and then hurried me into a taxi. We were lunching with Margot Asquith, he said.

I stood in that shadowed hall, too tired and thankful to have a thought for my own appearance - distraught and dishevelled, I must have been: looking twice my age. A light figure, elegant in black, came flying down the staircase, arms flung wide.

"Are you the mother?" she said.

The dynamo whirred. The Bonham Carters were summoned. Statesmen and Editors were alerted by telephone.

"I'll just send a man with a letter by train to Henry," she said, and scribbled the note.

"Of course you are a Sinn Feiner!" she said to me over lunch. "So would I be if I were in Ireland," and she added advice to Sinn Fein so wildly indiscreet that I don't to this day feel justified in repeating it. Then she bewildered me.

"Tell me in confidence, are they innocent?" she asked.

It was a third England, I supposed - His Majesty's Opposition, that I had met.

Those promises were kept and the two young lives saved.

Of all the people with whom I had pleaded only one had refused to help, and that was an Irishman. — Bernard Shaw.

He said the effort would be wasted. His cynicism about the English froze my blood.

All that was a long time ago. I have learnt that there are more than two or three Englands; a great many more. Now I sometimes perplex myself about another question - how many Irelands are there? But that one I shall not try to answer. Life is too short.

8/9/56
7.15 PM THPE

THE WHIRLIGIG OF TIME

111. The Riddle of England.

Writing about those uneasy beings born half Irish and half English, Desmond McCarthy said that they are destined to go through life "with patriot hearts and alien eyes."

For some of my generation it was worse than that, for Ireland's struggles and sufferings were our own, and so, also, was England's fall from grace. There were years, during which England became a tormenting enigma, impossible to forget or to solve.

In my childhood, England meant holidays with my mother and her own people - the beaches of Devon, the pinewoods of Surrey, the hopfields and orchards of Worcestershire and Warwickshire; a vicarage with a fascinating sand-glass in the kitchen and a red hawthorn tree at the gate, where I was petted and spoilt by six or seven adoptive aunts. It meant marvellous days in London; the fairyland of the Exhibition at night, and an awe-inspiring visit to Madame Tussaud's to see the image of Great Uncle William wearing his uniform and Victoria Cross.

During my student years, although it became my dearest wish to live all my life in Dublin, I saw England as the home of Shakespeare and Milton and of all those great upholders of justice, freedom, and the rights of the individual whose lives are luminous throughout her history. But the England I went to live in, joining my mother in nineteen-thirteen, was the England that Shaw called "Heartbreak House".

His Heartbreak House is dominated by an oligarchy of rich, titled, over-privileged people, without vision or knowledge or common sense. They are people in whom inherited prejudices take

the place of judgment, while a lazy, self-confident optimism hides imminent disaster from their sight.

Such types it was who failed to recognise an enemy in the Kaiser and threw away the last chance of having Ireland as a friend - the Lords rejecting Asquith's Home Rule Bill, while generals and politicians signed the Ulster Covenant and encouraged Carson to prepare civil war. In the organ of this class, The Morning Post, Irish national claims were treated with bitter contempt.

The venom which the Home Rule project generated among such people was recalled by Lady Bonham Carter in a recent talk on the B.B.C. Because Asquith, her father, was sponsoring the Bill, all his connections became outcasts from the social circles they used to frequent.

"If Violet Asquith had crossed our threshold, we should have felt obliged to burn the carpet," one well-known hostess said.

In the light of modern psychology that virulent loathing is comprehensible: the conqueror can't tolerate those who resist him, and most people shrink from those they have wronged. But the mood was hard for a green girl to understand.

I had no contact with political circles. It was a less ruthless sentiment, though not a less contemptuous, that one heard expressed in Kensington hotels - the same silly phrases over and over again.

"It would be a shame to deprive the Irish of their grieveance. They live on it." And, "They are a nation of children. They shouldn't be trusted with edged tools;" and, "Home Rule would mean Rome Rule", and, "If Ireland could just be held under the sea

for ten minutes we might have some peace." Then the Covenantors would be quoted: "Ulster will fight and Ulster will be right."

Lacking knowledge of facts, I couldn't reply, and suffered the resentment of the ignorant, no less hot and bitter for being dumb.

Where, I wondered, was the England of the books and poems, the noble speeches and historic acts?

For answer, my stars were kind.

During the previous summer, revelling in the Shakespeare Festival at Stratford-upon-Avon, I had been visited by an idea. Excited, and armed with the valour of ignorance and five shillings for stamps from an enthusiast, I had written scores of letters to progressive educationists, suggesting that, during future festivals, teachers and creative writers should meet together at Stratford in Conference. The response was astonishing. The thing snow-balled. F.R.Benson who directed the festivals, and the Chairman of the Theatre, Alderman Flower, declared that this enterprise was important. They surrounded me with eminent persons as a London advisory committee and told me to go mad on the thing.

Go mad on it I did, and my sister too. I think nobody who could help refused. The most famous poets of the time were among our speakers. We gave them expenses up to three guineas, I think. The period of conference had to be doubled. Mother had to take a house in Stratford. Even during the war teachers and writers met there year after year.

These were men and women devoted to education, the

arts, and peace. They were eager, broad-minded people, imaginatively gifted and well informed. I met groups of the same calibre at Oxford, later, when I was a little more knowledgeable about the Irish case. They never ceased to ask me about Ireland and Sinn Féin. On the river, in gardens, or late at night, in all quiet moments, our talks about Ireland's aspirations went on; and I met with nothing but sympathy, intelligent comprehension and good will.

But they gathered in diminishing numbers. These young men belonged to the generation that ghastly holocaust was cutting down. They and their kind, if they had survived, would have built a wiser England, I believe.

They would have cared about public affairs. They would not have held aloof as the talented, imaginative, idealistic people everywhere so often do, remaining ineffective about great issues; leaving politics to the lovers of power.

Something happened when I was living again in Ireland which made me reflect on this. At that time my own belated education in nationalism was being vigorously undertaken by new friends, among whom Paul Farrell was one. The Benson Company came to Dublin. I had learnt to admire F.R.B.- by then Sir Frank Benson - immensely, and I wanted to recruit him to Ireland's cause. I invited the two actors to meet in my rooms and told Paul to bring out his big guns.

He did. He talked eloquently and at length. F.R.B. listened with all his responsive and sensitive charm. When at last Paul desisted I saw an expression of such gentle sympathy in the other's face that I thought I had my convert.

"Ah, but, no! Sir Frank said softly: "England will never part with Ireland, for England loves Ireland as a man loves his wife."

Unable to frame an adequate answer to that, I was mute. But not so Paul. "A man who beats his wife," he said.

That was a time in Ireland to make realists. The Volunteers had not resumed action since 1916. Constitutional methods, however, were answered by force. While British statesmen were professing adherence to President Wilson's democratic principles - "freedom for small nations" "self-determination"; "government by consent of the governed", men were being arrested in Ireland for uttering words likely to cause disaffection, for making anti-recruiting speeches, and singing patriotic songs. The return of de Valera and other Republicans in by-elections was followed by the prohibition of meetings and suppression of newspapers. The British government prepared to conscript Irish men into the British army to fight abroad, knowing that the men would resist and hoping to put the onus of the first shooting upon Sinn Féin. Non-violent resistance, Sinn Féin, the Church and Labour standing together in quiet, unarmed defiance, defeated that. Sinn Fein's immense victory in the post-war general election was a signal for more arrests.

Nothing is so potent in winning sympathy as reason opposing itself, ready to suffer any punishment, in a just cause, to brute force. At that time Ireland won adherents and admirers in every continent and won to her side Englishmen who were sincere in their allegiance to freedom - men like Erskine Childers. But there were not many like him.

Even my own persistent illusions fell. There were two Englands, I told myself sadly, and the one in power understood nothing but force.

By a curious chance, during the height of our armed struggle, I had a brief contact, in London, with English men and women who had become our powerful advocates. Since the incident ended happily I can recall it with amusement now.

Terence MacSwiney and Kevin Barry had died. Two lads were on trial for their lives after an ambush in which, as the I.R.A. knew and declared, they had not taken part. A dossier of the court-martial made it apparent that they were innocent, yet there was little hope for their lives. Their defending counsel, one evening, sent out word that unless someone went immediately to England and secured powerful intervention - letters to General Macready from people whom he could not ignore, the young men were doomed.

No one properly equipped for this mission could be found, so I grabbed a copy of the dossier, pulled on a hat and coat that hung in the hall, and, by a hair's breadth, caught the boat. Instructions and letters reached me in London. In their homes and in the lobbies of the House of Commons I had to beard Lord Robert Cecil, Lord Buckmaster, Lord Haldane, Sir John Simon...All these and others of xxxx comparable influence read that dossier and, with grave and grim conviction, sent off letters and telegrams.

But I was much too immature and emotional for that mission; I couldn't rest, relax or sleep. When I came at last, to Desmond McCarthy, I was exhausted and on the brink of a break down.

"Leave this to me. I am going to give up my time to it," he said. "You will only have to confirm what I'll say."

He telephoned, saying something about a lady from Ireland in distress about two young fellows who were to be executed, and then hurried me into a taxi. We were lunching with Margot Asquith, he said.

I stood in that shadowed hall, too tired and thankful to have a thought for my own appearance - distraught and dishevelled, I must have been: looking twice my age. A light figure, elegant in black, came flying down the staircase, arms flung wide.

"Are you the mother?" she said.

The dynamo whirred. The Bonham Carters were summoned. Statesmen and Editors were alerted by telephone.

"I'll just send a man with a letter by train to Henry," she said, and scribbled the note.

"Of course you are a Sinn Feiner!" she said to me over lunch. "So would I be if I were in Ireland," and she added advice to Sinn Fein so wildly indiscreet that I don't to this day feel justified in repeating it. Then she bewildered me.

"Tell me in confidence, <u>are</u> they innocent?" she asked.

It was a third England, I suppose - His Majesty's Opposition, that I had met.

Those promises were kept and the two young lives saved. Of all the people with whom I had pleaded only one had refused to help, and that was an Irishman - Bernard Shaw.

He said the effort would be wasted. His cynicism about the English froze my blood.

All that was a long time ago. I have learnt that there are more than two or three Englands; a great many more. Now I sometimes perplex myself about another question - how many Irelands are there? But that one I shall not try to answer. Life is too short.

RD/

Cá S 15/9/56

THE WHIRLIGIG OF TIME

IV. LIVING WITH MAUD GONNE by Dorothy Macardle.

Dublin between 1916 and 1921 was the focal point of forces so diverse and dynamic that, looking back, I feel almost incredulous. Is it possible that, in the midst of such tension and turbulence, all this imaginative impulse was at work, filling the Abbey Theatre with new and enthralling plays, the bookshops with poetry destined to fame?

So it was; and I, young and free and adventurous in Dublin, was, in turn, lacerated by ambushes and reprisals and irradiated by the bliss, in that dawn, of being alive.

The whole world and the far past contributed stimulus.

In small rooms fitted up with a stage and curtains Elizabeth Young was producing plays by Ibsen and Maeterlinck while, in another, Edward Martin gave us Chekov as well as plays by Irish writers. The Antigone of Sophocles was performed. The new-born literature rarely had any direct reference to the political struggle, but I think it grew out of the soil which the national danger and agony ploughed and harrowed, and dropped its seed into that soil again.

No one saw any reason in our predicament for repressing that creative surge. I remember how, during the rehearsal of a new play, I found Constance Markievicz haunting the wings. It was a moment when she was certain to be arrested on sight and might well be expected to meet with the fate known as "shot trying to escape." I protested that the play was not worth the risk, but she couldn't come to the first night and she _must_ see it, she explained. "Besides", she added lightly, "it will do a lot of good if they shoot a woman now."

That was quite a usual state of mind.

In those days, the illustrious ones, the Olympians, were wonderfully kind to the aspiring young. My delectable post at Alexandra College left me plenty of leisure and, catching the prevalent fever, I wrote plays. My first, naturally, was in blank verse, interspersed with lyrical passages. Such an effusion would be laughed at now, but Elizabeth Young liked it, and played in it, and James Stephens came, and praised it, leaving me dizzy. I was told that only her sudden arrest prevented its being visited by the Queen of the Republic, Maud Gonne, whose name had strangely haunted my childhood and whom I longed to see.

A gloomy three act play, my next venture, went on at the Abbey later in the year. While I sat watching the final curtain descent, a shadow loomed over me and a deep voice bade me come on Sunday to tea. It was W.B.Yeats, Lord of all the Olympians. I could hardly find my voice to accept. He had been lent a house that I was to know well later - 73, St. Stephen's Green. He told me to go on writing plays but to live in the country and learn to know the country people.

"And don't try to imitate me", he said. "I am a bad dramatist." He gave me memorable advice and drew me a diagram of how the suspense in a play ought to ascend - in a series of peaks, the nearest always in view, the highest hidden from sight.

Every evening in the week one or another of a group of notable men and women received. Friends brought their youthful friends. In order to be welcome it was sufficient to have made an attempt that gave promise in any imaginative work and to be able to talk intelligently. One Sunday evening Elizabeth and May Young brought me to A.E's. In a room hung

with his paintings of fairy visions there were coffee and cake and laughter and thoughtful talk. A.E. said he was neutral in the World War: "I don't see how an Irishman can be anything else." I was in an atmosphere of assumptions different from those I had lived among hitherto. Here, Ireland's nationhood and right to complete freedom were axiomatic: the Republic must come.

I was impressed, and moved, but unhappy. The slaughter in Europe had filled me with a horror of violence. The Republic seemed a wildly impossible dream, but Irishmen had died and killed for it and might soon be dying and killing for it again.

It was one night in the Abbey Theatre that this chilling fear was changed to hope.

The play was Lennox Robinson's <u>The Dreamers,</u> I think - about Emmet's rising. In the half-dark, before the curtains lifted, I saw a tall woman come in. A black veil fell back from her lovely head. She came down the steps. Her face and her movements were beautiful. Some of the audience broke into applause and I heard her name murmured all round me: Madame Gonne McBride: Maud Gonne.

After the play had ended she rose and spoke. Very quietly she said that perhaps Emmet's vision would prove to have been not only a dream; that, all over Europe, the tide of republicanism seemed to be rising. Why should not Ireland achieve a republic, too?

The day came when I received a message inviting me again to 73, St. Stephen's Green. It was Madame Gonne

McBride's house. She was living there again and receiving on Tuesdays.

I hesitated. Already, my father had passed me a warning. I was associating too much with Sinn Feiners. The Castle was planning a great many more arrests... Besides, there was my college post and Miss White had reminded me that the College Council was conservative in the extreme. I recognised the Rubicon. But I had come to see the empire as an oppressor and had chosen my allegiance. I decided to go.

The moment when I crossed Maud Gonne's threshold is still alive in my mind. Her bonne, Josephine, had led me upstairs and left me at the door of the lighted room. Voices were arguing, laughing, protesting. I heard a woman say, gently, - I believe it must have been Helena Maloney - "But we mustn't be intolerant! You must remember that some of the best people in Ireland have never been in jail."

Then I went in.

It was not long before I had left my gloomy lodgings in Ely Place and was living in Madame's attic flat. How I loved that low room from which, at night, I could hear the ducks conversing in the Green! There I wrote my lectures for College - all, of course, intended for publication, and a book with which I proposed to revolutionise the interpretation of English poetic metres, and plays. By this time I had come down to earth a little and my plays were in prose. Soon, however, all those manuscripts were stowed away, out of sight, in order that they should tempt me no longer, until the day when Ireland was free.

For now, what I heard at night, was the growl of military lorries. Their searchlights swept my walls. I heard house doors being pounded upon and threatening shouts. It was war. Madame's house was a hive of relief work and proudly I acted as Madame's aide. She was labouring to exhaustion, all day, and going at night to her work underground as a Judge in the Republican courts. Nothing was too arduous nor too humble for her to undertake. Dependants of prisoners and of Volunteers flocked to her house, some of them in desperate need. Her hall was piled with garments collected from her friends and she would fit people out there, behind a screen.

Sometimes, Iseult and I rose while it was still dark to go with Madame to the gates of Mountjoy Jail. There a great throng followed her in singing "Felons of Our Land" and "The Soldiers' Song" and, kneeling in the road, recited the Rosary, while men were being executed within the prison walls.

I was rebuked for my weak reaction. A relief worker, Maud Gonne taught me, must learn to throw off emotional distress. Otherwise she could not stay the course. This hard xxxxx feat she herself accomplished. How we used to laugh in her house. How she kept us entertained!

She possessed the quality that the French love, gaiety of the heart.

But I remember a French man's protest:

"Madame, I come to report Ireland's tragedy. I come to you and you make me laugh! What am I to say?"

At night she would come running upstairs to relax in my sitting-room. While I brewed cocoa, she would recall the past-

the evictions, and strange things that happened - inexplicable things - as if, in her work for the people, she had been helped.

She would take a train, on a sudden impulse, aware of no reason and, getting out at some small town or village, find its people in desperate need of help. Once, on such an impulse, she arrived in a village in Donegal. She was wearing a handwoven dress that some girls had given her. It was green. As she walked up the street, the people at first seemed to shrink from her, whispering to one another and gathering their children in. Then an old woman called to the rest and came out, and kneeling in the road, kissed her dress. A terrible eviction was being threatened. Following her in a throng, the people found courage to show resistance and Madame, negotiating from strength, secured their reprieve. Somebody told her later that there was an ancient prophecy in that region that, in the hour of the people's despair, a tall woman would appear ~~xxx~~ and save them, wearing a green dress.

I remember her voice with its rangeing tones, expressive of wonder, amusement, sorrow; and remember the shadows of her changing face.

Seán McBride, a very young officer in the I.R.A., was often on the run, but sometimes at home. When the Black and Tans had been let loose on Ireland the house was raided for him repeatedly, usually at night. The English Auxiliaries didn't enjoy those raids, with Madame standing by, in silent dignity, while they turned out her wardrobe and drawers. One young officer offered her an apology that I thought odd.

"This does seem a strange occupation, Madame; but, I mean, after Eton and Oxford, what can one do?"

All this time the Pfeiffer Lectureship at Alexandra College was mine and I recall that fact with wonder at the magnanimity of Miss White. With the rigidity of a convert to the cause I had made it a matter of principle to be dismissed rather than resign, and I had refused to give up my relief work. I did, however, give Miss White three promises: I would not allow my political convictions to colour my teaching, nor introduce my pupils to any of my Sinn Fein friends, and, if I ever decided to do Republican work that might incur publicity, I would send her a formal warning in advance so that the Council would have the opportunity to dismiss me in time.

It was a gentlewoman's agreement and I kept it. The day came, however, when I sent that formal letter to Miss White. The letter which I then received was from the Council's secretary and ingeniously gave a non-political reason for their decree: I was dismissed "for being absent from my duties without permission".

That was true; but my absence was beyond my control. I received that letter in Mountjoy jail.

The girls and women taken that November - it was in '22 - filled the hospital wing of Mountjoy jail, in which, for our greater comfort, we had been lodged. I was lucky to have a cell all to myself. A letter from Madame reached me, smuggled in. Her house had been raided and shot up. All my manuscripts had been taken out and burnt in a bonfire in the street. My pupils had found scorched fragments flying about.

A little later, Madame appeared among us. Not even anxiety for her health could cloud my delight in being with her again - so warm and affectionate; so full of gaiety and vehement feeling ; so much herself.

Those are not unhappy days to remember, when I shared a prison cell with Maud Gonne.

RD/