

## The Death of Mrs. Diggins

There are catastrophes of such slow & gradual accumulation that their dreadfulness — the whole, paleontological difference between before & after, is seldom comprehended by the mind. Each <sup>separate</sup> shock of ~~anxiety~~ blinds the senses, ~~overwhelming~~ <sup>shattering</sup> the ~~understanding~~ <sup>understanding</sup> of the whole. It is ~~not~~ only with some poignant contrast, or after some <sup>brief</sup> moment of ~~kind~~ oblivion, that realization wakes.

A hundred times, in the years of the Terror, Mrs. Diggins & I sat together in the White Cross Office interviewing sick & wounded volunteers, or rested, talking desultorily, at the day's end, too tired to go home.

How fine, quiet & practical was her service of the tortured people! She to her it was a simple duty, and personal regard for their <sup>heroism</sup> ~~turned~~ <sup>turned</sup> it into tenacious friendships. ~~for the~~ ~~sufferers~~ ~~caught~~. A trained & clever nurse. She was able to do much-needed work, <sup>dressing the wounds</sup> ~~visiting~~ of hunted men who lay ~~dangerously wounded~~, hidden, doomed to the gallows if they were captured, in stocks & bands; advising in difficult



Cases, treating by "suggestion" those suffering from shock. She had no pleasure, in those years, but to fill each day with labour until she could toil no more. Pains & dances exultated her? She was extraordinarily brave.

Not long after my release from jail I went to the White Cross Office with a crippled Volunteer, & sat, while he was with the doctors, half-drowsing by the fire. It grew very late. She came in and sat down in a low chair. I asked her if she was tired... It was the infinitely familiar scene, I suppose - she & I together - the patient row of war-worn boys - I talked away to her, forgetting there had been a break... The sudden, air-rushing flood of memory, the realisation of all that had happened between then & now, was so anguished I can never forget. It never came again until, at the very moment when some one called to me "We have war Dublin", I saw, in the newspaper I had bought, her name, & the news of her desperate end.

Memory sharpened. I saw her pale, clear-cut little face, thin with suffering, her eyes swollen



from crying, as I saw it - three days after the  
treaty had been signed. She had not been  
able to stop crying, she told us, since she  
heard the news.

What mental wrestlings, what torments of  
conflict & indecision, what rending clash of  
loyalties followed in her sensitive spirit, none  
of us will ever know. For she was a woman  
of Spartan steadfastness: whatever allegiance  
she gave she would hold to & serve, even to the  
blinding of her own eyes & the  
slaying of her own heart. That she did violence  
to her nature in turning against us, no one can doubt;  
but, having given allegiance to the State she  
was no neutral; she served her party as she  
had served the Republic once, not allowing old  
friendships to intervene. And in her White House  
work she laboured kindly & impartially, never  
letting partisan ship obtrude, fighting for the claims  
of Republicans at her own cost. She

There are people so essentially honest  
that even when an evil cause or a false philosophy  
of life captivates them, their central integrity  
remains untouched. Such people even



A lover of truth caught in a coil of lies...  
~~their opponents, when those they have charged &~~  
~~accused, must recognize. Dr. Figg was one~~  
~~of the few active supporters of the free~~  
~~State against whom we never felt tempted to~~  
~~say more than "She is a great loss to us, indeed".~~

What such a spirit suffers when the  
net of invisible act closes, while the inevitable  
sequence of events moves on its ruthless cover,  
only Dante's imagination could conceive. It would  
not be right for us to look into that agony  
or preach lessons from this poor, brave woman's  
death. She held us as enemies, yet  
laboured for many of us faithfully. We  
will bring no tribulation that she would shrink  
from, only sorrow for all that made  
her suffer & a memory of her true service,  
& a prayer that she may rest in peace.

Her husband, Daniel Figg, lived on the Per-Frank-  
side, Exbury he came that early did so, & Figg thought  
this meant Resistance was impossible.  
She followed her husband. Dorothy Macarrie  
He was publicly disgraced over the  
death of a girl dancer after an abortion, & her wife shot  
her in the mountains.

Unpublished  
Article  
by  
Dorothy Macarville  
(1924)



Ramon de Valera

No drama ever played on the world's stage can have produced more sudden reversals of fortune, more ~~a~~ surprising manifestations of human character than the Irish Revolution of the past eight years. Here are poets turned heroes, scholars become outlaws, civic leaders become convicts, in a month, and here, again, prisoners have become governors & outlaws generals; rebels on whose head a price was set and dining with England's King; and the President of the Irish Republic is a solitary prisoner in the hands of men whom his example roused from subjection, ~~his~~ whom his achievements led to the brink of victory & his confidence placed in power.

Amidst the storms & changeable portents of these years the figure of Ramon de Valera ~~stands~~ has stood, ~~and~~ to the eyes of friends & enemies, like a rock. While Imperialists raged against his obstinacy Republicans rejoiced in his endurance & unshaken faith. The "Times" decries "Mazzini, Gandhi & De Valera" as men who "refused to make success secure, by compromise, in their own time"; the Republicans of Ireland, by whom the names of O'Connell & Redmond are well-nigh forgotten, rank De Valera with Emmet & Wolfe Tone.

To a degree that gives a sense of destiny his position seems to have been thrust upon him. No man could do less to court popularity or power, or practise fences of the arts by which these are cheaply won. He is no blimpet-blowing militarist or flag-waving demagogue; his vision is of no ~~subtle~~ swift, overwhelming victory, but of freedom achieved by sacrifice & patient labour, ~~and~~ of a State founded on justice & moral law, and of lasting peace.

It is rarely that allegiance is given to such doctrines as these, yet, for reasons of their own, the Irish people have put their faith in De Valera as in the Lord's Anointed, - regard him as the incarnation of that immortal spirit which, reborn in every generation, challenges the battalions of Empire in defence of Ireland's right, - have given ~~render~~ him, already, the <sup>pride</sup> ~~last~~ homage that, in all Ireland's history, they render to very few.

In 1917, when De Valera was nominated the Republican candidate for East Clare, old men & women who could not read or write & scarcely understood English travelled from the coast & the mountains to vote for "the man with the Spanish name". He was "the man of the prophecies", "the man from Spain", the predicted Deliverer of the Gael.

It was as a soldier that he was known to the young men. The last Commandant to surrender in Easter Week he was the only one to survive <sup>the force of public indignation following the execution</sup> ~~causing his death-sentence to be commuted to one of penal servitude for life.~~ It was after that, in English prisons, where men from every part of Ireland were continually engaged in a struggle with their guards for treatment as prisoners-of-war, that De Valera showed those qualities of character which designated him for the leadership of the nation in the greatest crisis of Ireland's history.

This formidable quality was recognized by the enemy at once & thenceforth his life was a sequence of imprisonments, escapes & evasions. His gas-breaking feat in Lincoln, his secret arrival in Ireland, his journey's to & from America, eluding an Empire's vigilance,



his triumphant progress through the United States, - above all, his achievement in conducting the government of the Republic, maintaining communications, interviewing journalists & meeting his colleagues despite the concentrated "Intelligence" of Dublin Castle, ~~survived the English~~ & delighted the hearts of the people of Ireland, who love daring always, for it's our sake & are fired by it, & the courage by which mountains are removed. Their faith in DeValera & his destiny rose higher with every peril that he passed.

His enemies, meanwhile, who would have wished to dismiss him as "adventurer" or "fanatic" were disconcerted by the cool deliberation of his utterances, his large grasp of international situations, his steadfast adherence to fundamental principles & the ~~hard~~ logic of his statement of Ireland's case. When all the great nations were acclaiming President Wilson's doctrine "that no people shall be forced under a ~~major~~ sovereignty under which it does not desire to live" it was difficult to silence a man who so much claimed its application to his own nation & who had an overwhelming majority behind him seizing every opportunity to reiterate the people's will & his free. The only answer English statesmen found to make was the campaign of devastation carried out by the Black-and-Tans.

In the making of this ~~at~~ potent <sup>leader</sup> champion at the time of Ireland's need a unique variety of ~~exposed~~ circumstances combined variety of circumstances ~~see~~ combined. In spite of his foreign name & American citizenship Ireland is his mother country; his



Faith, religious & national, is Ireland's faith; the language spoken in his home is Irish; his outlook on life is that of an Irish man. His intellectual interests led him to an academic career; he was a distinguished student of mathematical science & Chancellor of the National University; but his childhood was spent with his mother's family in a cottage in County Limerick. "I come from the people", he maintains: "When I wish to know what it is that the people of Ireland want I have only to look in my own heart." His ability to deal expertly with diplomats & politicians, yet hold fast to the essential ideas of Ireland's independence may perhaps be traced to this union in his personality of the cosmopolitan & intellectual with the strong native strain.

It was a strange duel that was fought during the summer & autumn of 1921 between this champion of an impoverished subject race & one of the most machine sexpert-politicians of the modern world. The correspondence in which Mr Lloyd George, with ripost-sophistries & subtlet phrasal, endeavored to lure De Valera from his stand on basic principle & the De Valera, in brief, logical replies replying, stripped every suggestion of its disguise & offered guarantees, association, friendly relations but no shadow of allegiance or submission to England, is as interesting a study in policy & temperament as may be found.

To the Irish imagination this struggle appeared supremely significant: a duel between the champion of a yet-unborn

World order founded on moral law & the grand exponent of the old - the predatory system "of sheer militarism, destructive fractional mobility & fatal to the world's peace", according to which might is right. It was De Valera versus Machiavelli: had the duel been fought to a finish who knows which might have won?

When the agreement ~~which he also~~ whose rejection he & his cabinet had ordered was signed & presented as a fait accompli to De Valera's Republican Ireland waited in acute anxiety to know what he would do. Not alone the public situation but the personal temptation involved were extraordinary. In years De Valera had lived a hunted man in enforced absence from his young wife & children, his life for knowing them leaving them in anxiety, danger & comparative poverty, his own life forfeit, without prospect of security or peace. It was given to him now, by accepting compromise, to become one of the foremost statesmen in the British Empire, one of the most surliest figures on the world's stage. His unhesitating repudiation of that "ignoble document" & his resignation from office placed him, for the Republicans of Ireland, among the patriots who have stood every test.



He is a prisoner now, rigorously isolated, allowed no air. Could even with other prisoners, spend in his cell night & day. When the American Commission, visiting Dublin to investigate a case of disputed funds required De Valera's production at the Consulate as a witness. The <sup>Irish</sup> State authorities refused. They declared they had not <sup>enough in Dublin</sup> troops to present a rescue.

~~He has been in prison six months now since he was dragged from~~ He was returned as Deputy for Limerick, after his arrest, with a majority of <sup>receiving more than double the number of votes given to his Free State opponents</sup> 9,566 <sup>thousand</sup> votes. He has been six months in prison now, but his presence is as strongly felt & his influence is as powerful among the Republicans of Ireland as ever: his standards, his policy & his teaching are understood & ~~at~~ confidently upheld. His belief is that the Irish people have never abandoned their desire for independence, that only misrepresentations of the Treaty & England's threat of "immediate & terrible war" induced ~~them~~ any section of the nation to consent to it; & his purpose is to hold the way open, through a policy of abstention from the oath-bound parliament & through the educational labours of Sinn Féin for the demand ~~to be renewed~~ for independence to be renewed.

"I love De Valera", a priest was heard to say, "but still not follow him in politics. He is too honest & too moral." "De Valera lost this war through refusing to allow reprisals on prisoners", a Republican soldier said.

It may be true that he is too honest to succeed rapidly in

politics, too scrupulous to succeed rapidly in war. But  
the Republicans of Ireland have as doubtless  
that in the end, however slowly, freedom will come.  
They hold that Time works with the forces of justice truth  
against falsehood & liberty against oppression; that  
prison walls cannot prevent the fulfilment of destiny  
& that De Valera will live to make Ireland free. The  
message he sent to the Republican army a year  
ago, on the death of General Liam Lynch is remembered  
& believed:..... "Your cause is immortal. Weariness from  
" the excruciating struggle, false teachers, temporary losses  
" & defeats may defer, but cannot prevail against  
" its ultimate triumph. The sacrifices you are making  
" will insure it, & they who in ignorance calumniate  
" you today will tomorrow do you honour."

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Dorothy Macardle.