

OLUSCOIL NA hÉIREANN

THE NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF IRELAND

TEXT OF THE INTRODUCTORY ADDRESS DELIVERED BY PROFESSOR JEREMIAH J. HOGAN, K.S.S., M.A., B.LITT. (OXON), PRESIDENT, UNIVERSITY COLLEGE, DUBLIN, APRIL 14TH, 1966, ON THE OCCASION OF THE CONFERRING OF THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF LAWS *honoris causa* ON AN SEANADÓIR MÁIGHRÉAD M. NIC PHIAIRAIS.

CHANCELLOR AND MEMBERS OF THE UNIVERSITY

It seems proper on this occasion to emphasise the academic and scholarly aspects of the career of Patrick Pearse. Of the signatories of the Proclamation he was, next to Thomas MacDonagh, the one most closely connected with the University. In 1898, at the age of nineteen, he matriculated into the Royal University of Ireland. Three years later, as a student of the old University College, Dublin, he took the B.A. degree with Honours and an Exhibition in Modern Literature ; he was subsequently registered as a graduate of this National University.

So far as can be discovered, Pearse mingled little with the brilliant group of rather younger men who were his College contemporaries. But since the time of Newman and O'Curry, Irish studies had been well kept up in University College, and Pearse, already initiated through the Gaelic League, worked with enthusiasm under Father Edmund Hogan, whom he called 'absolutely the best translator of romantic Gaelic prose'. After graduation he had charge for some time of introductory Irish classes in the College. Later, in 1908, he took a more advanced class, of which Professors Liam Ó Briain and Michael Hayes were members.

Pearse's best scholarly work is in his editions of two Fenian tales, *Bodach an Chóta Lachtna* and *Bruidhean Chaorthainn*. His effort for Irish as a spoken language is represented by his editorship of *An Glaidheamh Soluis* for the Gaelic League, and his own later *Barr Buadh*; here the Irish language is for the first time employed in modern political discussion. Of his work as a teacher and an educational theorist, I can only say here that it was important in sowing the seeds of a new Ireland.

As an original writer his poetry, Irish and English, though small in amount, includes very fine things. But more of his poetry flowed not into verse but into stories and plays, and into oratory. His stories of children, mothers, old people, the landscape and the creatures of the earth, are unique in their gentle feeling and fresh imagination, and in their combining of the modern European form of the short story with the authentic life and language of Connemara. His impassioned oratory, finer perhaps in English than in Irish, is so different from the stories that one might think it came from another man.

Pearse's Irish studies influenced his political creed, deriving from the French Revolution, Tone, and the Fenians, but reinforced by the fierce resistance of the Gael in poems of the seventeenth century, and not less by the simplicity and apartness from things modern and English that he found in the Irish-speaking people of the west.

I conclude with a word on Pearse and Easter 1916. War is just if it is necessary. Only a minority of Irishmen at that time thought it necessary, but Pearse and his companions did ardently so believe. They fought defensively, as I take it, because they remembered the swift failure of many other risings, and thought this the means by which they, the weaker party, might maintain war for a significant time. The executions, which Pearse foresaw, completed, and perhaps were necessary to complete, the establishment of the Rising as a decisive event.

Patrick Pearse declared Irish independence, sustained it in arms, and confirmed it by his death. As the first head of an Irish State, he bore himself with the highest dignity. He was, as he has ever since been regarded, the chief creator of the terrible beauty of 1916.

Senator Margaret Pearse, who today represents her family, was closely associated with the life and work of both her brothers, Pádraig and Liam Pearse, who died as comrades in arms fifty years ago. She too taught in Scoil Éanna ; and she accompanied her brother Pádraig to Belgium on his important investigation of the bilingual system in that country. Her presence here today to accept our degree is a very great honour to the National University.

PRAEHONORABILIS CANCELLARIE, TOTAQUE UNIVERSITAS :

Praesento vobis hanc meam filiam quam scio tam moribus quam doctrina habilem et idoneam esse qui admittatur *honoris causa* ad Gradum Doctoratus in Utroque Jure, tam Civili quam Canonico; idque tibi fide mea testor ac spondeo totique Academiae.