

THE INSURRECTION OF DUBLIN: BY JAMES STEPHENS

This book, by a distinguished poet and novelist, is a page from life. He was on the spot during the week of terror in the Irish capital, and most of the book was written from day to day while the fighting was going on. We would ask our readers to remember that James Stephens is not a Catholic; and also that he is a poet. He says:—"The day before the Rising was Easter Sunday, and they were joyfully crying in the churches 'Christ has risen.' On the following day they were saying in the streets 'Ireland has risen' . . . The auguries were good, and, notwithstanding all that has succeeded, I do not believe she must take to the earth again, nor ever again be buried. The pages hereafter were written day by day during the insurrection, and, as a hasty impression of a most singular time, the author allows them to stand without any emendation." Thus begins the foreword, written at the close of the book while the dead were as yet unburied. "I have faith in man," says Mr. Stephens, "I have very little faith in States man. But I believe that the world moves, and I believe that the weight of the rolling planet is going to bring freedom to Ireland. Indeed I name this date (May 8, 1916) as the first day of Irish freedom, and the knowledge forbids me mourn too deeply my friends who are dead. . . . Is it wrong to say that England has not a friend in Europe? I say it. Her Allies of to-day were her enemies of yesterday, and politics alone will decide what they will be to-morrow . . . and yet I am not entirely right, for she has one possible friend unless she should decide that even one friend is excessive and irks her. That one possible friend is Ireland. . . . I believe that what is known as the mastery of the seas will, when the great war is finished, pass irretrievably from the hands of any nation, and that more urgently than ever in her history England will have need of a friend. It is true we might be her enemy and might do her some harm—it is truer we could be of very real assistance to her."

Pictures of the Fight.

This book is not a history. It does not aim at giving a detailed account of the Rising. The author went about and saw with his own eyes many strange events, and heard many strange sayings which he has jotted down with the fidelity of a diarist. Redmond Howard's book has already been noticed in these columns, and as a history it is more important than Mr. Stephens', which, however, takes us into the heart of the business and makes us see what he saw and hear the talk of the fighting men and the bystanders as he heard it himself. He was one of the thousands in Dublin who never suspected the danger of any fighting at all until they heard the rattle of rifle-fire and the thunder of big guns, and his vision of it all is the vision of an intelligent and sympathetic outsider. On the Monday, he tells us, nobody had any idea of how many men might be in Stephens Green, and only small parties were seen. "Among these were some who were only infants—one boy seemed about twelve years of age. He was strutting the centre of the road with a revolver in his small fist. A motor car came by him containing three men, and in the shortest of time he had the car lodged in his barricade, and dismissed its stupified occupants with a wave of his armed hand." On Wednesday the sun was shining down on the streets of the old city. "There were no morose faces to be seen. . . . Every person spoke to every other person, and men and women mixed and talked without restraint." The men were more reticent in their opinions but the women were "actively and viciously hostile to the rising. . . . The view expressed was: 'I hope every man of the will be shot.' . . . Dublin laughed at the noise of its own bombardment in the sunlight. Afterwards—in the rooms, when the night fell, and instead of silence that mechanical barking of the maxims and the whistle and scream of the rifles, the solemn

roar of the guns, and the red glare covering the sky. It is possible that in the night Dublin did not laugh, and that she was gay in the sunlight for no other reason than that the night was past." People say in the streets of the Volunteers: "Of course they will be beaten." And they add, wistfully we imagine, "but they are putting up a decent fight." For as Mr. Stephens says being beaten does not matter in Ireland, but not fighting does. "They went forth to battle and they always fell—the history of the Irish race is in that phrase."

Kelly's Corner.

"I was looking on O'Connell Bridge and Sackville street, and the house facing me was Kelly's—this house was being bombarded. I counted the report of six different machine guns which played on it. Rifles innumerable and from every sort of place were potting its windows, and at intervals of about half a minute the shells from a heavy gun lobbed in through its windows or thumped mightily against its walls. For three hours the bombardment continued, and the walls stood in a cloud of red dust and smoke. Rifles and machine guns pattered over every inch of it, and, unfailingly, the heavy gun pounded its shells through the windows. One's heart melted at the idea that human beings were crouching inside that volcano of death, and I said to myself, 'Not even a fly can be alive in that house.'" Two men in the street, met by chance, spoke to Mr. Stephens. One, a gentleman who had come to the city for a holiday, said: "I am an Irishman, and I hate (pointing to the shells that were bursting through the windows) to see that done to Irishmen." The other, a laborer, spoke of Connolly's Citizen Army, described by the police as the "most deserted-from force in the world." "They were no deserters. Men," he said, "do not desert from a man like Connolly—they would not be afraid of anything."

Sheehy-Skeffington.

On Thursday it was rumored that Sheehy-Skeffington was killed. "I hope this is another rumor, for, as far as my knowledge goes, he was not with the Volunteers, and it is said that he was antagonistic to the forcible methods for which the Volunteers stood. . . . He was the most absurdly courageous man I ever met with or heard of. . . . He was a pacifist who was compelled to revolt. . . . I am sure that to the end he railed against oppression, and that he fell marvelling that the world can be truly as it is. . . . So far as I know the only crime of which he had been guilty was that he called a meeting of the citizens to enrol special constables to prevent looting."

Friday.

On the fifth day of the battle men are still smiling and women still laughing. "None of these people were prepared for insurrection. The thing had sprung on them so suddenly that they were unable to take sides. . . . It is believed that there are more than sixty thousand soldiers in Dublin alone, and that they are supplied with every offensive contrivance which military art has invented. . . . The Volunteers still hold Jacob's Biscuit Factory. It is rumored that a priest visited them and counselled surrender, and they replied they did not go there to surrender but to be killed. . . . Each night we have got to bed at last murmuring, 'I wonder will it be all over to-morrow.'"

Sunday.

"The Insurrection has not ceased. . . . From the window of my kitchen the flag of the Republic can be seen flying afar. . . . At half-past two I met Mr. Commissioner Bailey, who told me that it was all over and that the Volunteers were surrendering everywhere. . . . The raids have begun in private houses. Count Plunkett's house was entered by the military, who remained there a very long time. Passing home about two minutes after Proclamation hour I was pursued for the whole of Fitzwilliam Square by bullets. . . . In the morning on looking from my window I saw four policemen marching into the street. They were the first I had seen for a week. Soon now the military tale