



4.0 The seven members of the Provisional Government

4.4 Patrick Pearse

Patrick Henry Pearse (1879-1916) was born at 27 Great Brunswick Street (now Pearse Street), Dublin, the son of James Pearse, an Englishman with a stone-carving business, and his wife Margaret Brady. Brought up as a devout Catholic, he is supposed to have been influenced in his childhood by his maternal aunt Margaret who regaled him with stories of mythological Irish heroes and patriot revolutionaries such as Theobald Wolfe Tone and Robert Emmet. During his years at the Christian Brothers' secondary school in Westland Row, he developed an intense interest in the Irish language and Irish literature, in furtherance of which he joined the Gaelic League at the age of seventeen. He attended University College, Dublin, graduating with a good degree in English, French and Irish. He later studied law at Trinity College, Dublin and the King's Inns, and was called to the bar.

The Gaelic League became practically a way of life for Pearse. He was active on various committees and contributed articles to *An Claidheamh Soluis* on a wide range of topics—literature, history, education, emigration, politics, religion. The articles chart his intellectual progress over several years, revealing him as liberal, progressive and anti-sectarian. At this stage of his career his concern was more with cultural than political nationalism. He took on the editorship of *An Claidheamh Soluis* in a paid capacity for the period 1903-9, giving it a more literary orientation, but also becoming involved in various controversies, some with members of the Catholic clergy with whom he was more than able to fight his corner. Meanwhile, he wrote poems and stories of considerable literary quality in Irish and

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English. He generally spent his summer holidays at Rosmuc, Co. Galway, where he drew inspiration from the Irish speakers and the rural way of life.

Pearse taught Irish part-time in various schools and in University College Dublin. In 1908 he established a bilingual boys' school, Saint Enda's (Sgoil Éanna), at Cullenswood House in Ranelagh, transferring it two years later to a mansion set in fifty acres of parkland at Rathfarnham, where it operated as a boarding school. The ethos of the school was distinctively Irish and was enlivened by occasional plays and pageants. The teachers included Thomas MacDonagh (French and English), Pearse's brother Willie (art and English), and Con Colbert (drill), all three of whom took part in the 1916 Rising and were subsequently executed. He also established Saint Ita's, a school for senior girls and mixed preparatory at Cullenswood House.

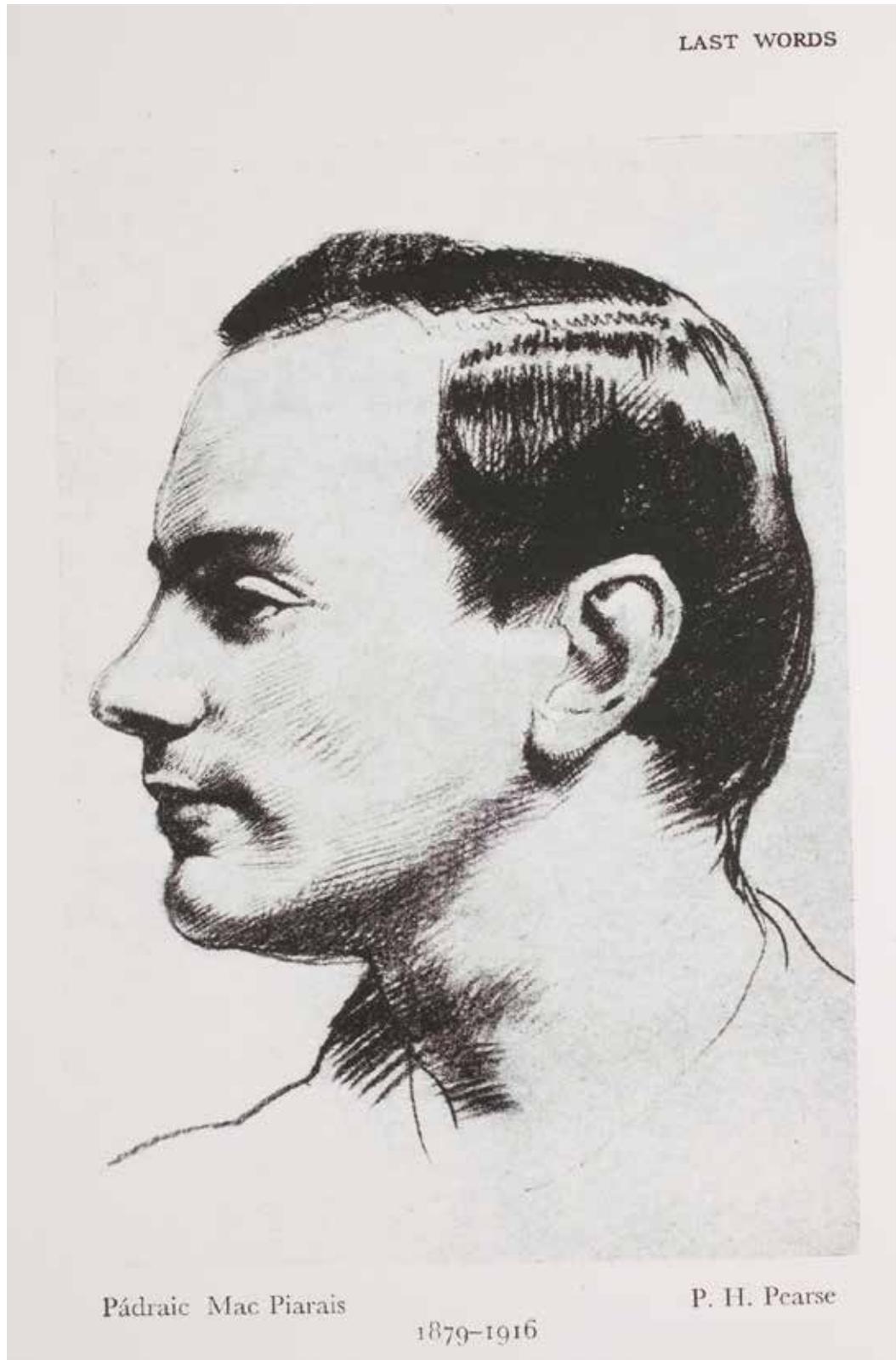
Politically, Pearse was a moderate nationalist, supporting the Home Rule bill as late as 1912, but threatening revolution if it were not enacted. In November 1913, he was one of the twelve-member steering committee that set up the Irish Volunteers; he later held the important office of director of military operations. In December 1914 he was sworn into the Irish Republican Brotherhood by Bulmer Hobson. While on a lecture tour for St Enda's in the United States, he came under the influence of John Devoy and Joseph McGarrity who completed his conversion to extreme republicanism. In September 1915 he was elected to the Supreme Council of the IRB and co-opted to the Military Council where he had a major role in planning the Rising.

Pearse drafted the Proclamation of the Irish Republic, some of the content being suggested by others, particularly James Connolly and Thomas MacDonagh. Because of his rank in the Volunteers and because he was widely respected, his fellow signatories of the Proclamation nominated him president of the Provisional Government. His title of commandant general was nominal as James Connolly was in charge of military operations. As president, Pearse read the Proclamation outside the General Post Office on Easter Monday.

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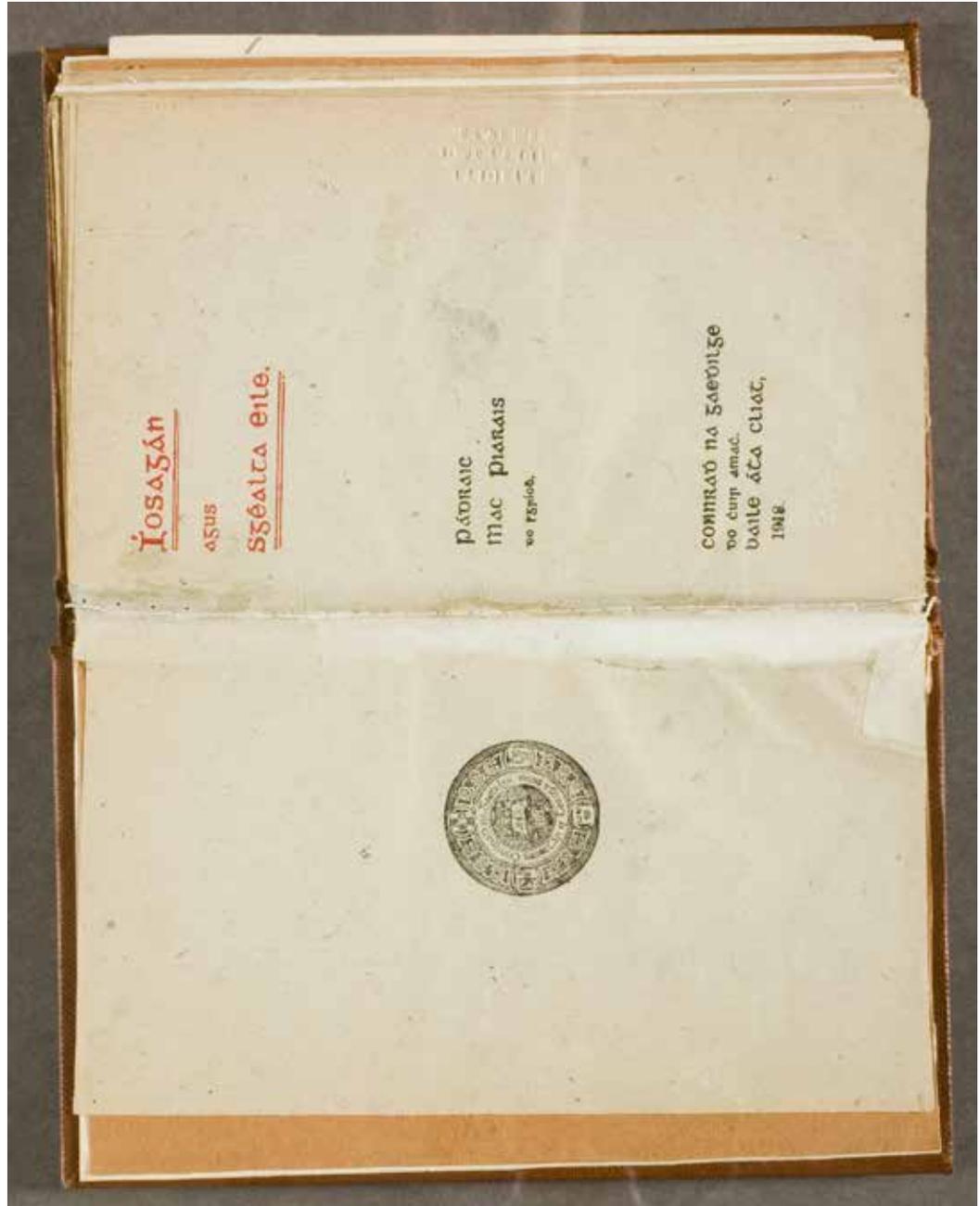
At the meeting of the five available members of the Provisional Government in 16 Moore Street on Saturday morning, Pearse urged that they surrender to prevent further loss of life. He was tried by court-martial and executed by firing squad in Kilmainham Jail on 3 May. He was unmarried.

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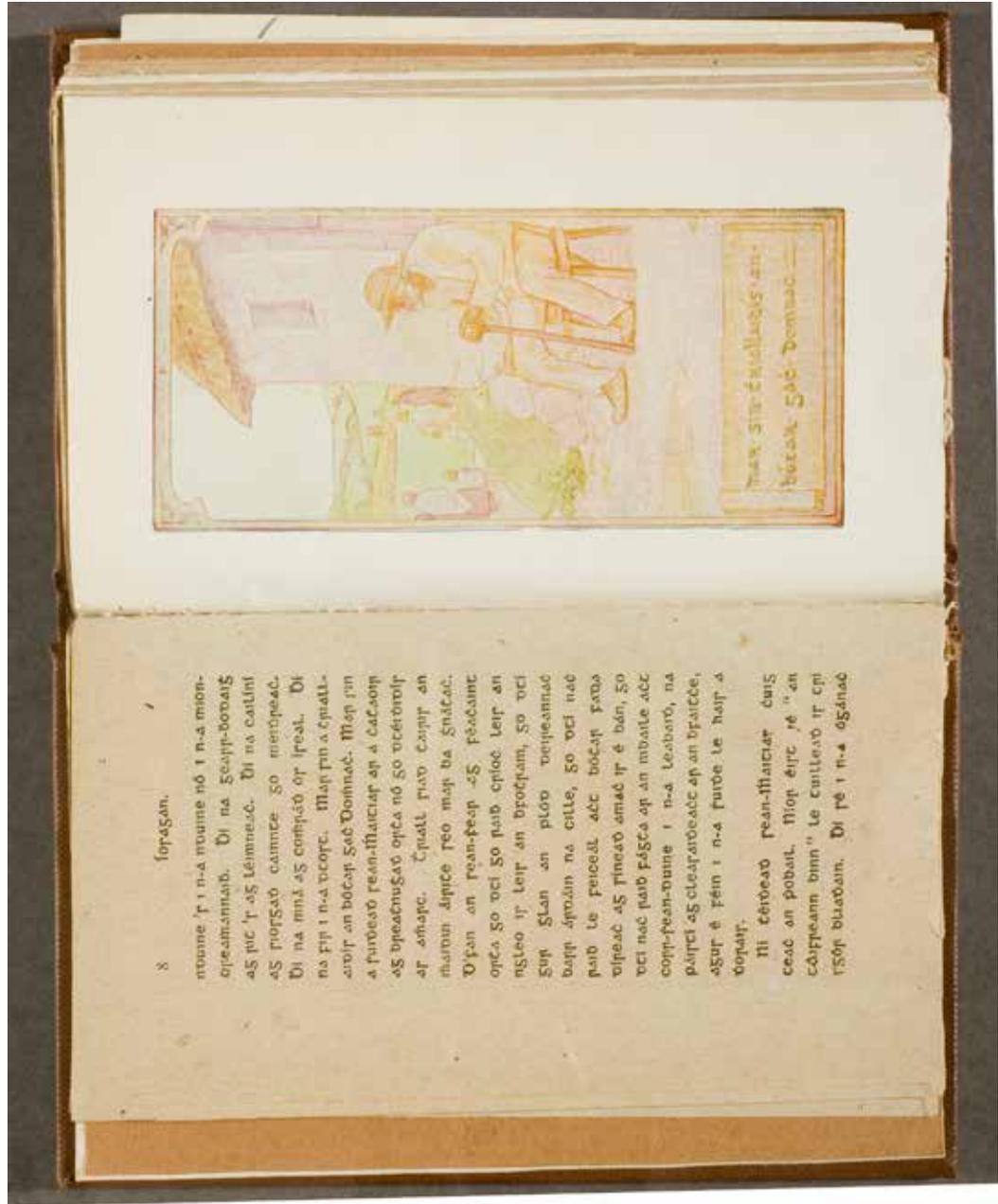
A charcoal portrait of Patrick Pearse by Seán O'Sullivan RHA. He has been described as being of average height and of sturdy build. (National Museum of Ireland).

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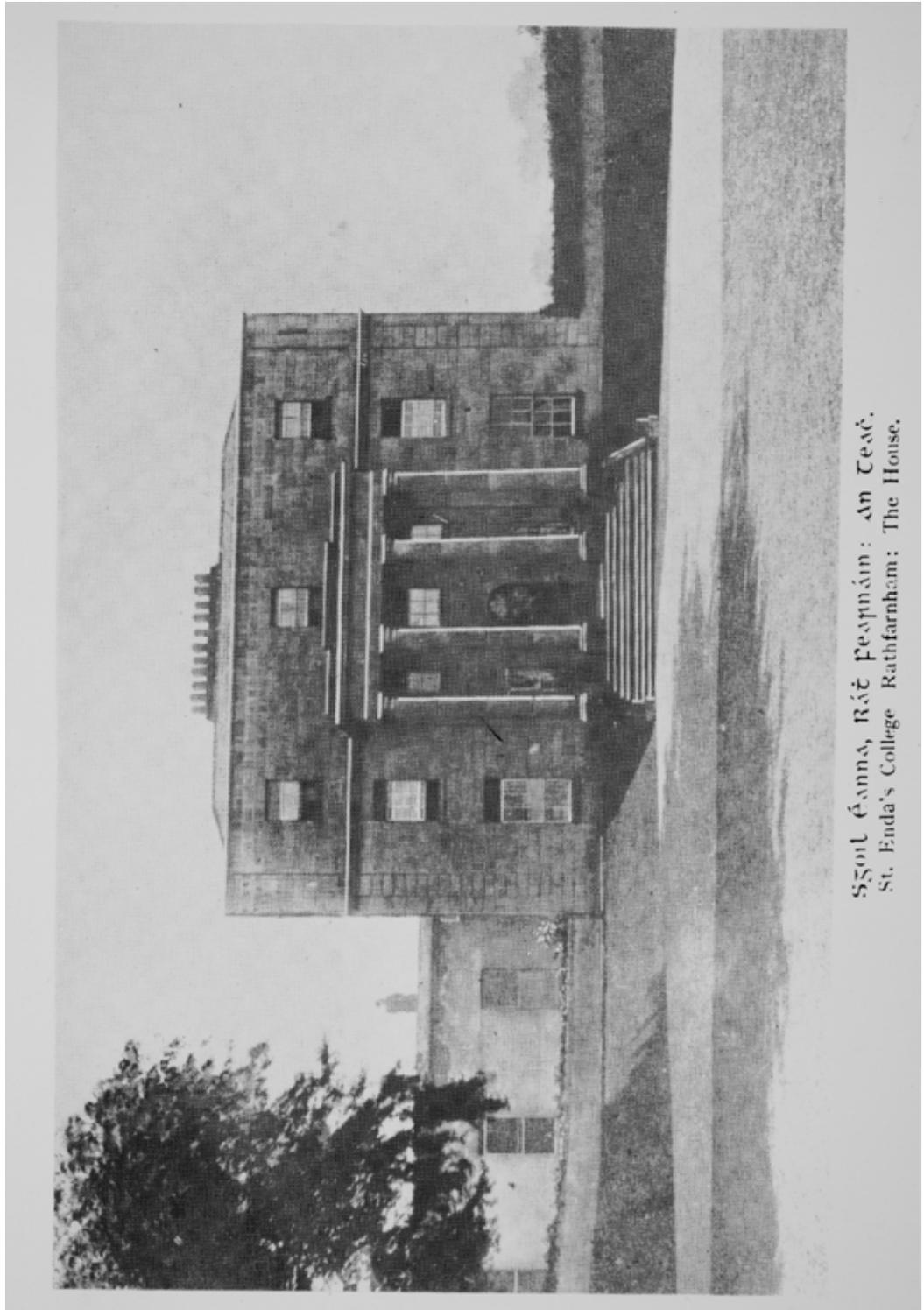
Pages from one of Pearse's collections of stories.

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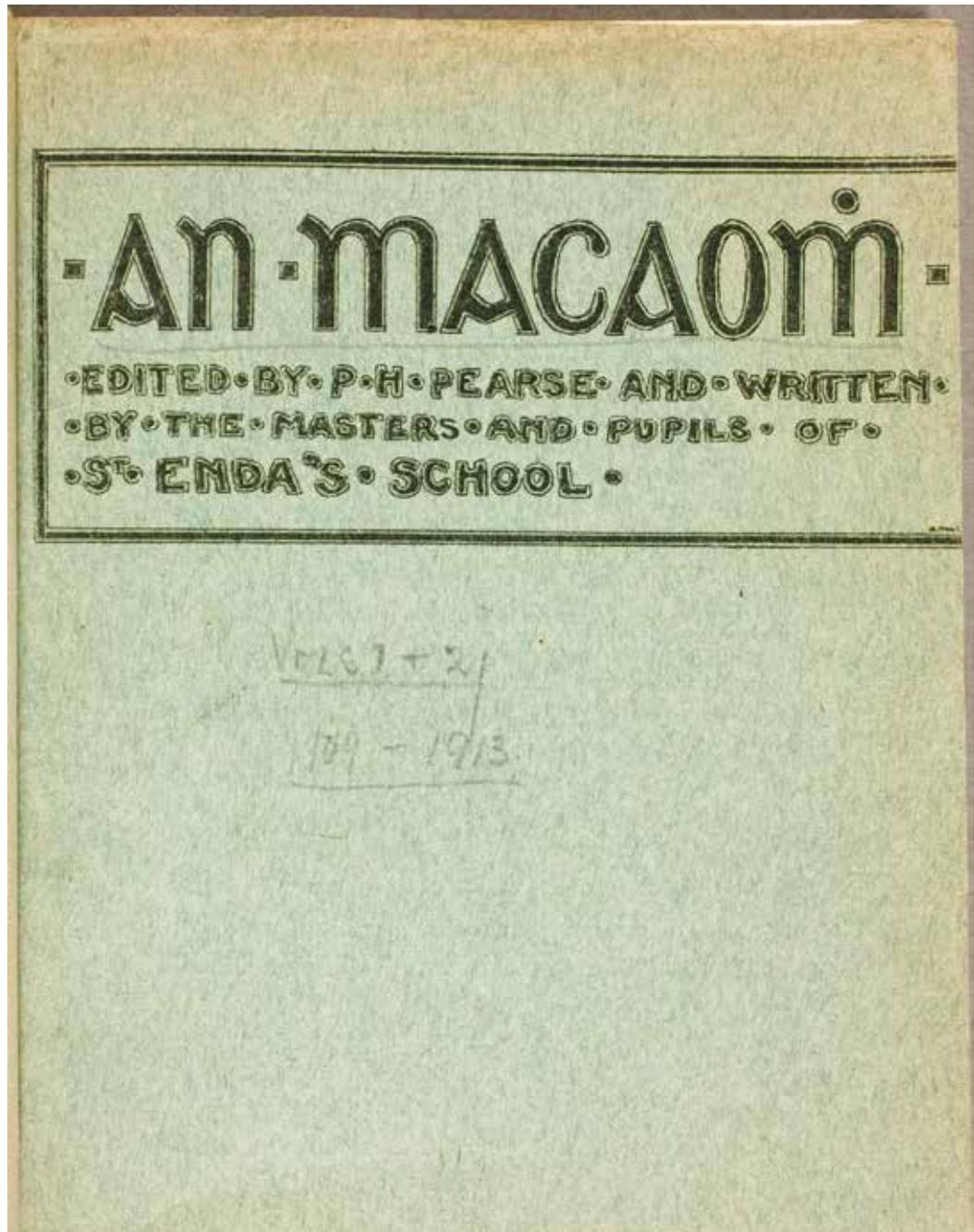
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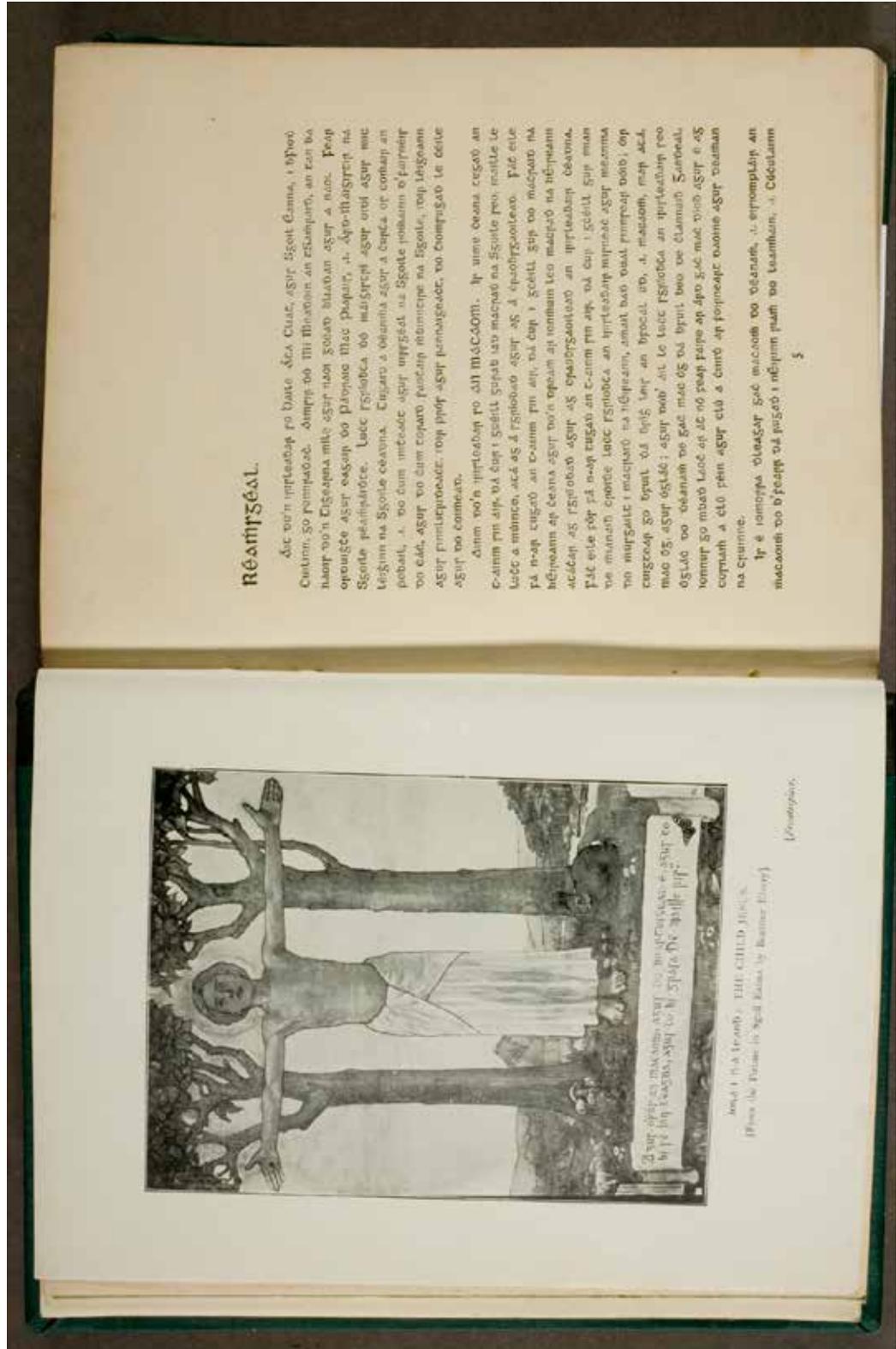
Postcard featuring Saint Enda's School (Scoil Éanna), Rathfarnham, Co. Dublin.

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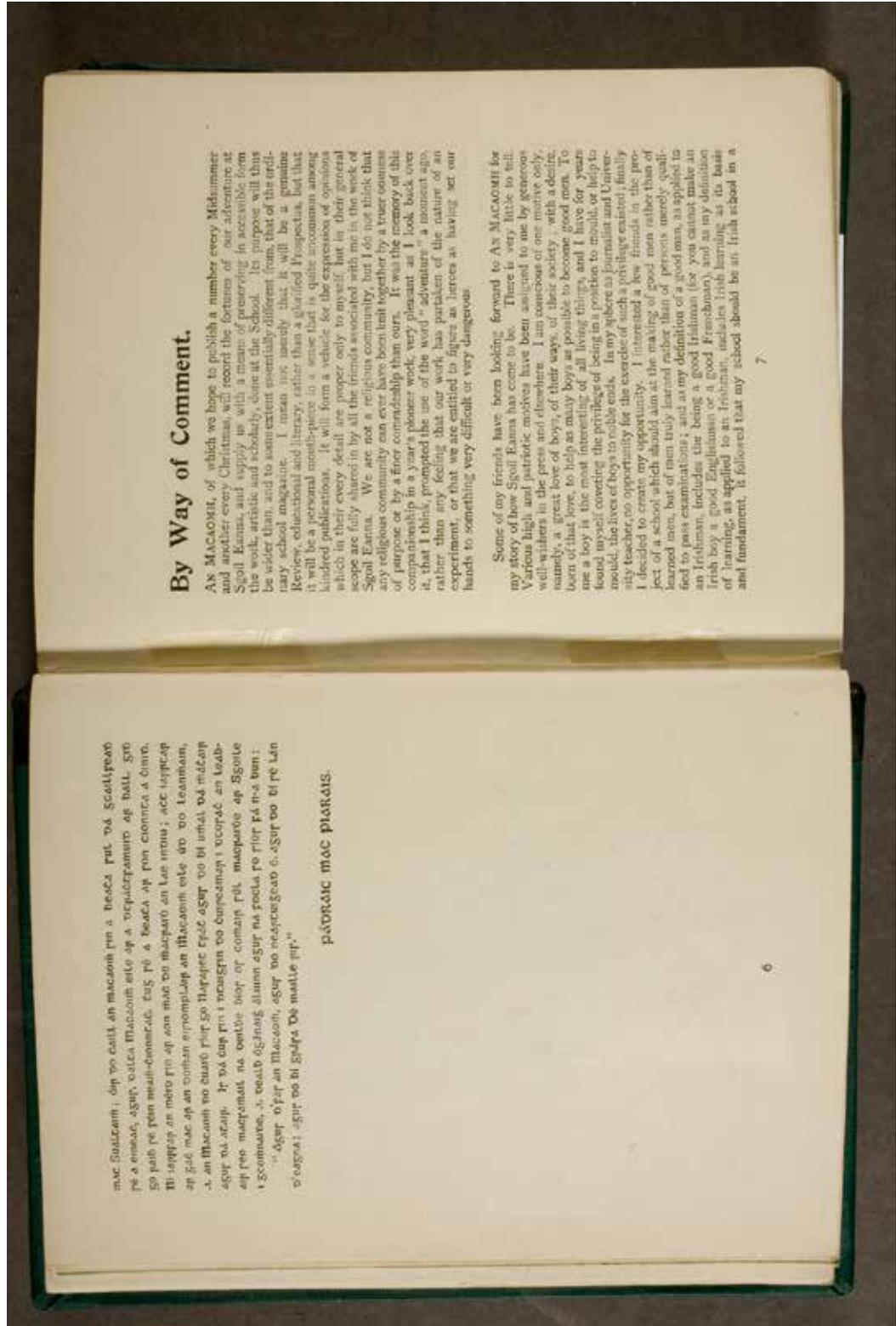
The Saint Enda's School magazine, An Macaomh (The Youth). Four issues were published between 1909 and 1913. This introduction reveals some of Pearse's enlightened views on education. (An Macaomh, Vol. I, No. 1, Mid-Summer 1909).

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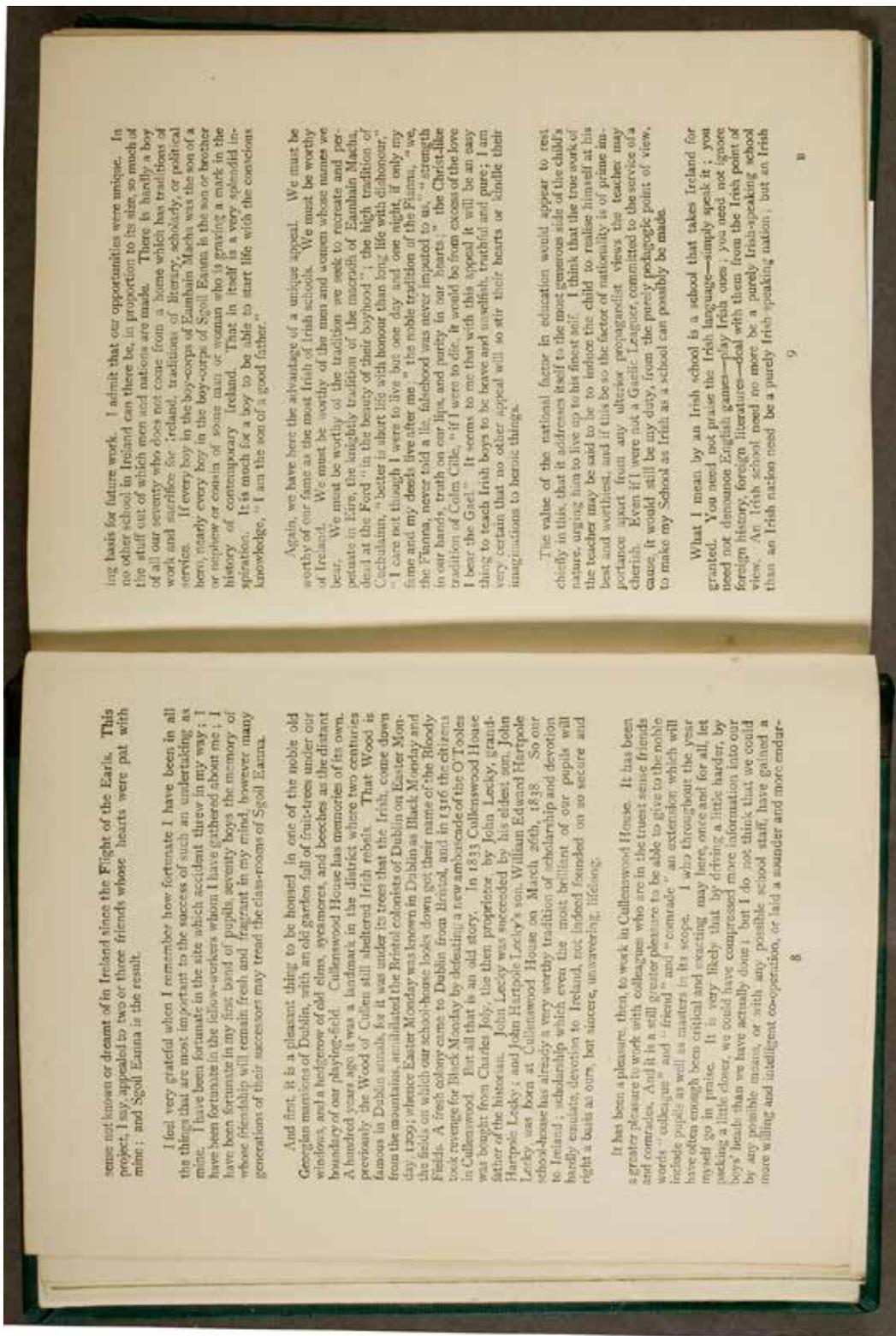
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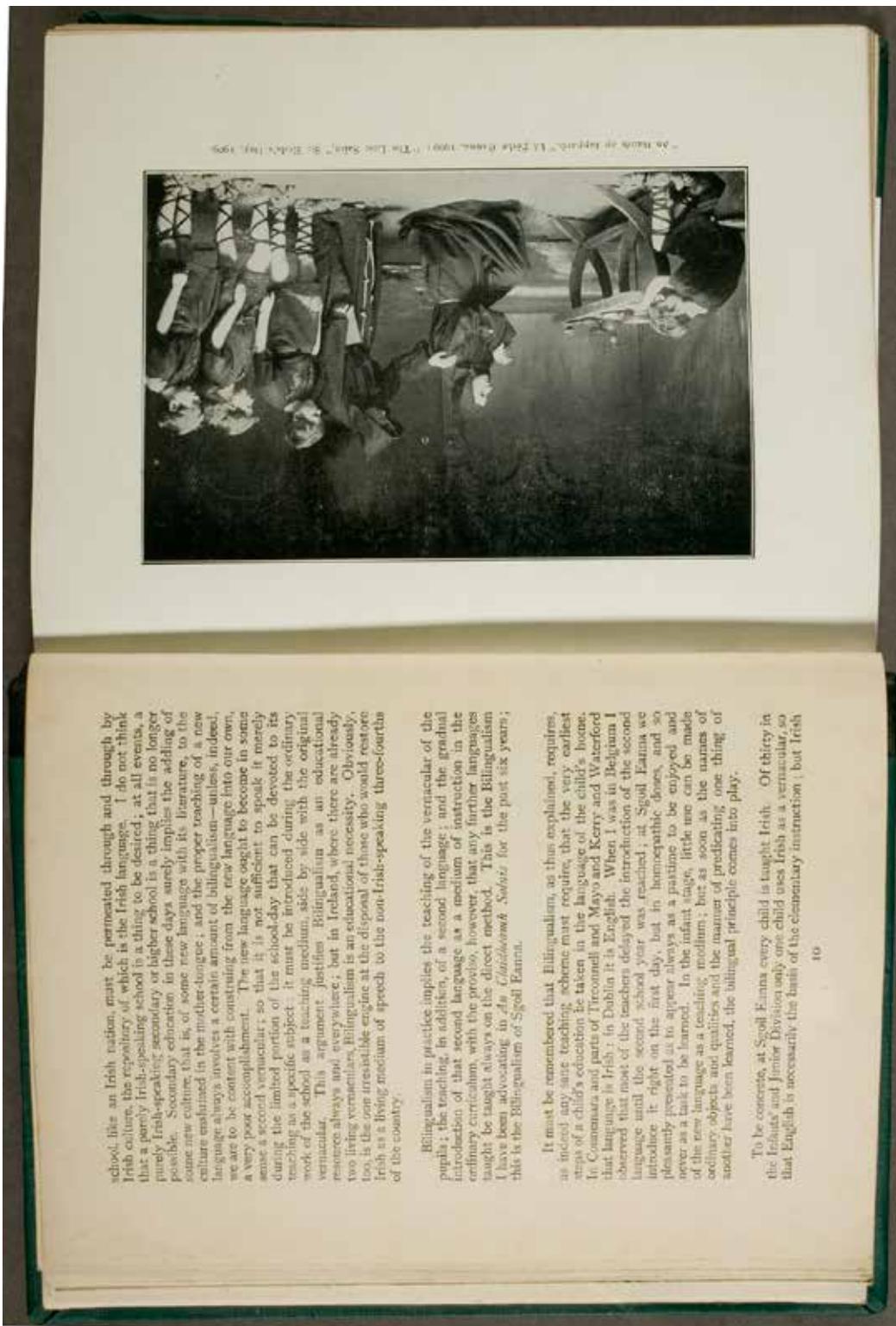
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Patrick Pearse



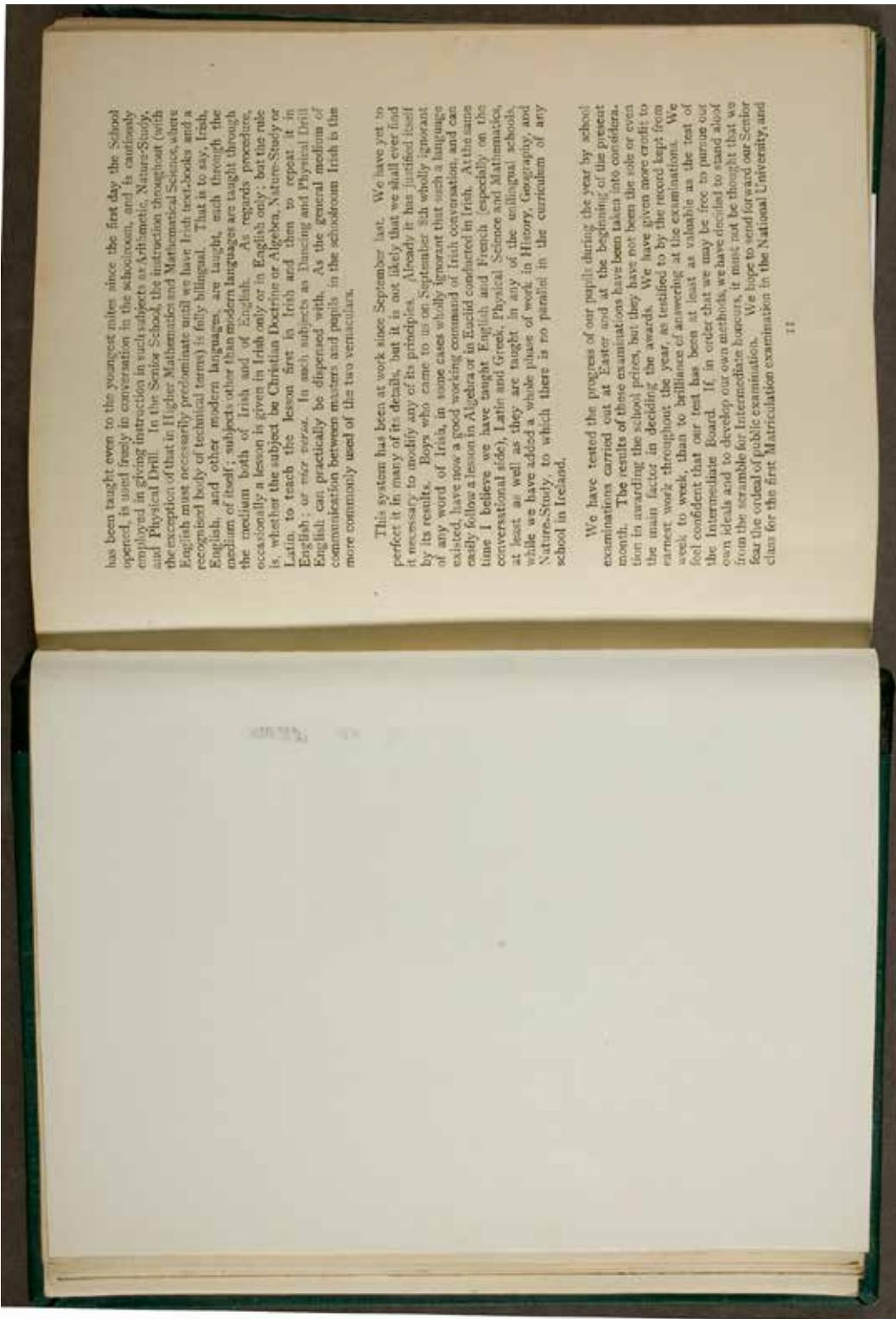
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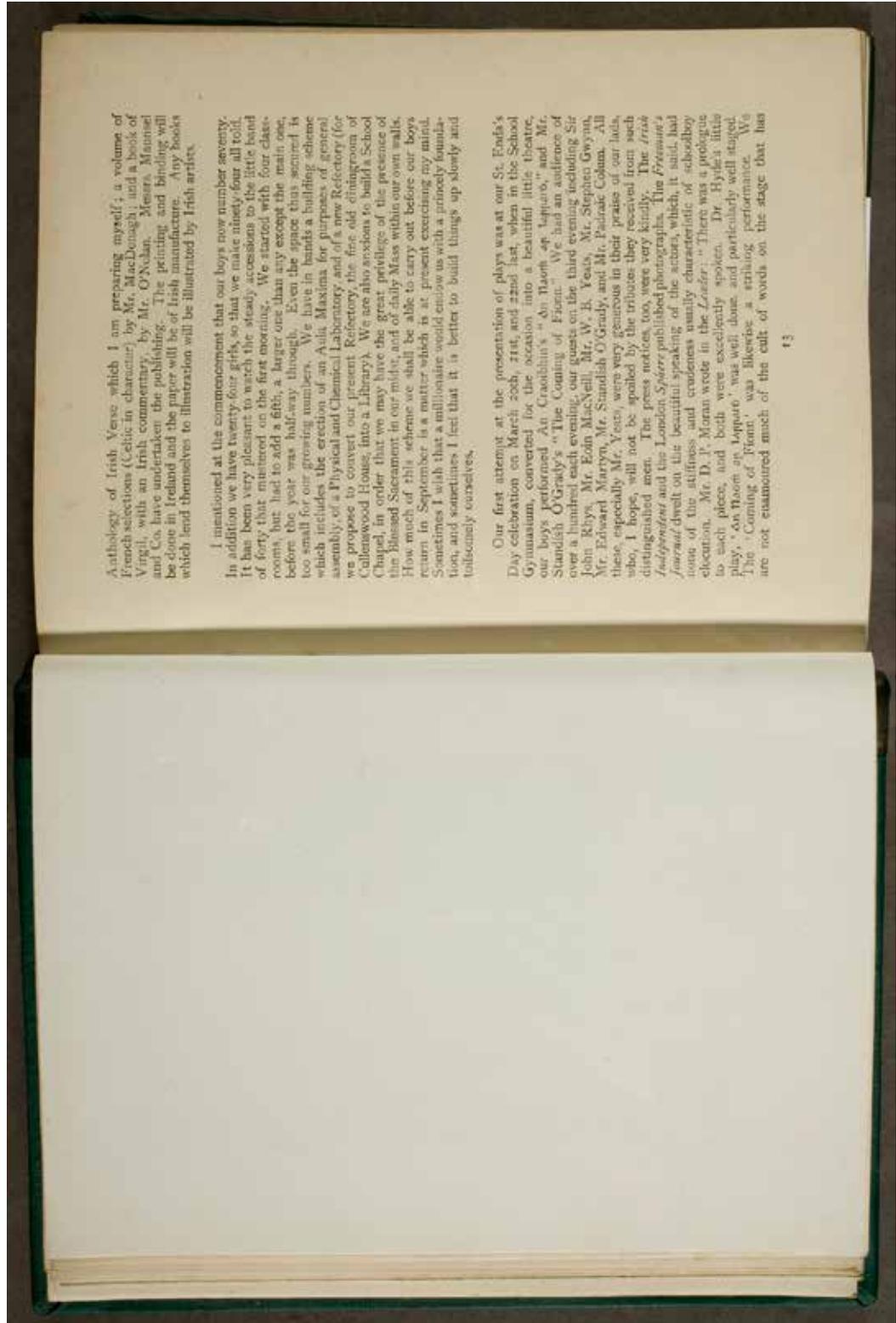
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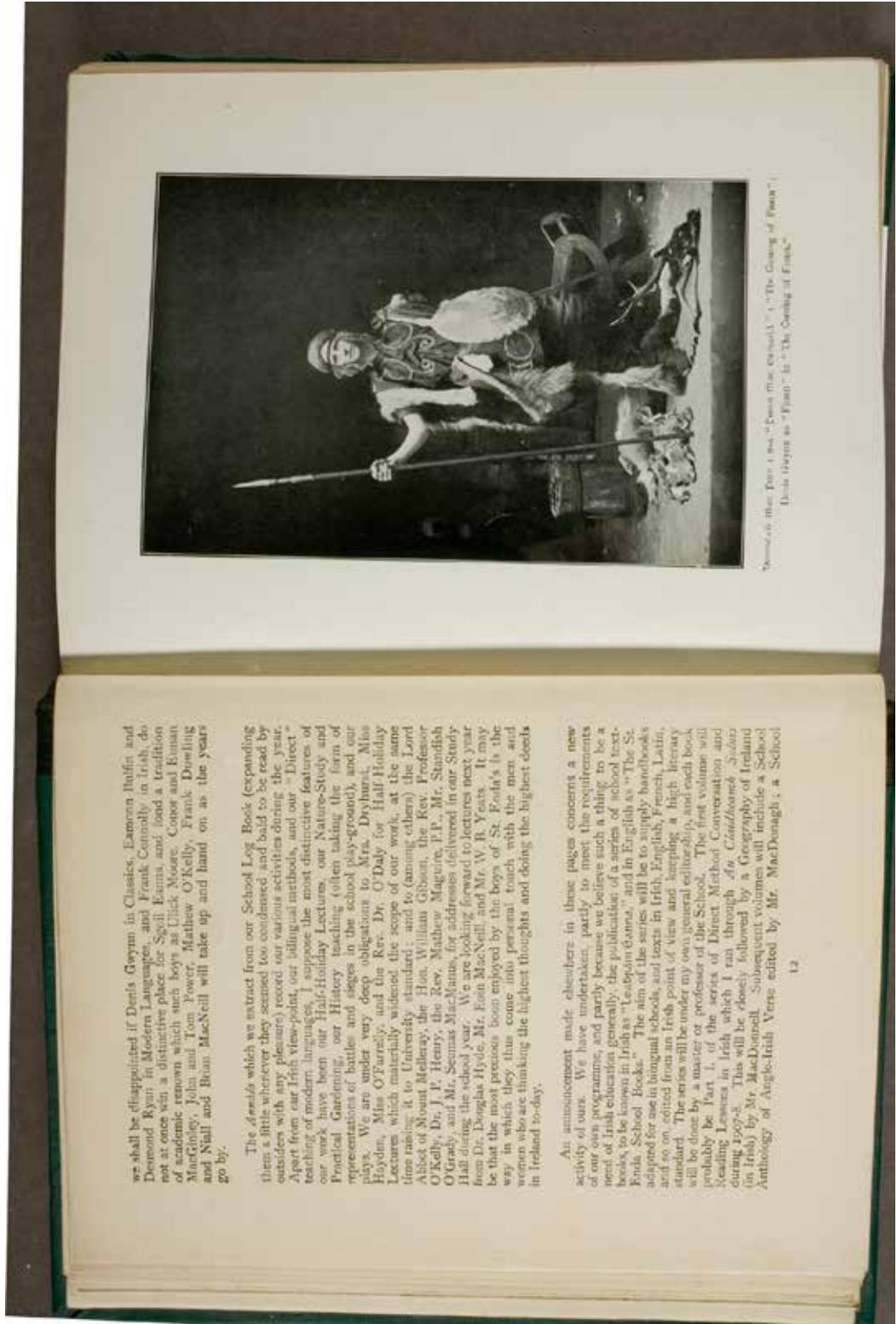
Anathology of Irish Verse which I am preparing myself; a volume of French selections (Celtic in character) by Mr. MacDonagh; and a book of Virgil, with an Irish commentary, by Mr. O'Neelan. Messrs. Maunsell and Co. have undertaken the publishing. The printing and binding will be done in Ireland and the paper will be of Irish manufacture. Any books which lend themselves to illustration will be illustrated by Irish artists.

I mentioned at the commencement that our boys now number seventy. In addition we have twenty-four girls, so that we make ninety-four all told. It has been very pleasant to watch the steady accessions to the little band of forty that numbered on the first morning. We started with four classrooms, but had to add a fifth, a larger one than any except the main one, before the year was half-way through. Even the space thus secured is too small for our growing numbers. We have in hand a building scheme which includes the erection of an Aulla Maxima for purposes of general assembly, of a Physical and Chemical Laboratory and of a new Refectory (for we propose to convert our present Refectory, the fine old dining-room of Callenwood House, into a Library). We are also anxious to build a School Chapel, in order that we may have the great privilege of the presence of the Blessed Sacrament in our midst, and of daily Mass within our own walls. How much of this scheme we shall be able to carry out before our boys return in September is a matter which is at present exercising my mind. Sometimes I wish that a millionaire would endow us with a princely foundation, and sometimes I feel that it is better to build things up slowly and tastefully ourselves.

Our first attempt at the presentation of plays was at our St. Enda's Day celebration on March 20th, 21st, and 22nd last, when in the School Gymnasium, converted for the occasion into a beautiful little theatre, our boys performed An Craibhin's "An Tuam ar b'apúir," and Mr. Standish O'Grady's "The Coming of Fionn." We had an audience of over a hundred each evening, our guests on the third evening including Sir John Killy, Mr. Eoin MacNeill, Mr. W. B. Yeats, Mr. Stephen Gwynn, Mr. Edward Murray, Mr. Standish O'Grady, and Mr. Padraic Colum. All these, especially Mr. Yeats, were very generous in their praise of our acts, who, I hope, will not be spoiled by the tributes they received from such distinguished men. The press notices, too, were very kindly. The *Irish Independent* and the *London Spire* published photographs. The *Evening Journal* dwelt on the beautiful speaking of the actors, which, it said, had none of the stiffness and crudeness usually characteristic of schoolboy elocution. Mr. D. P. Moran wrote in the *Leader*: "There was a prologue to each piece, and both were excellently spoken. Dr. Hyde's little play, 'An Tuam ar b'apúir,' was well done, and particularly well staged. The 'Coming of Fionn' was likewise a striking performance. We are not undiminished much of the cult of words on the stage that has

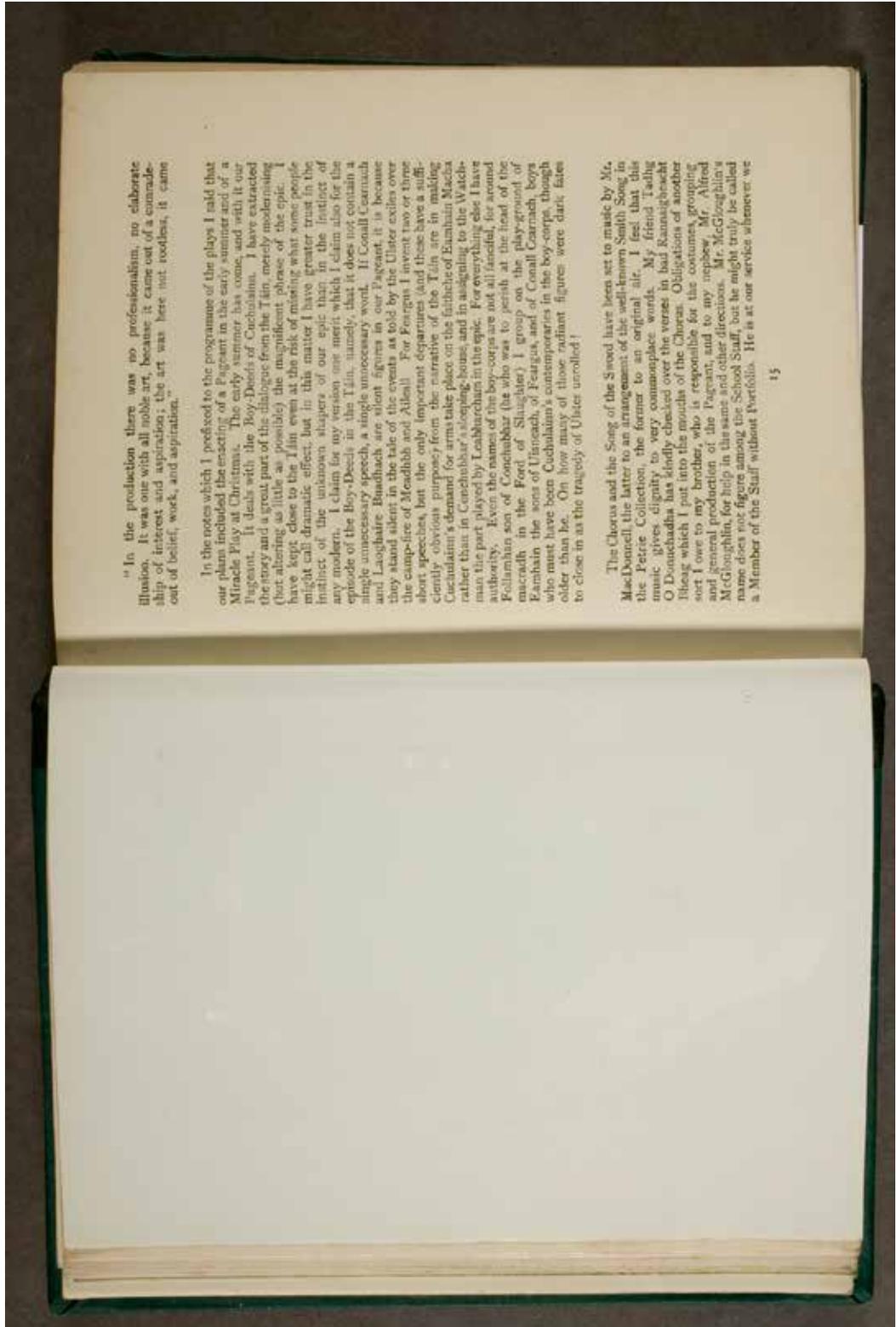
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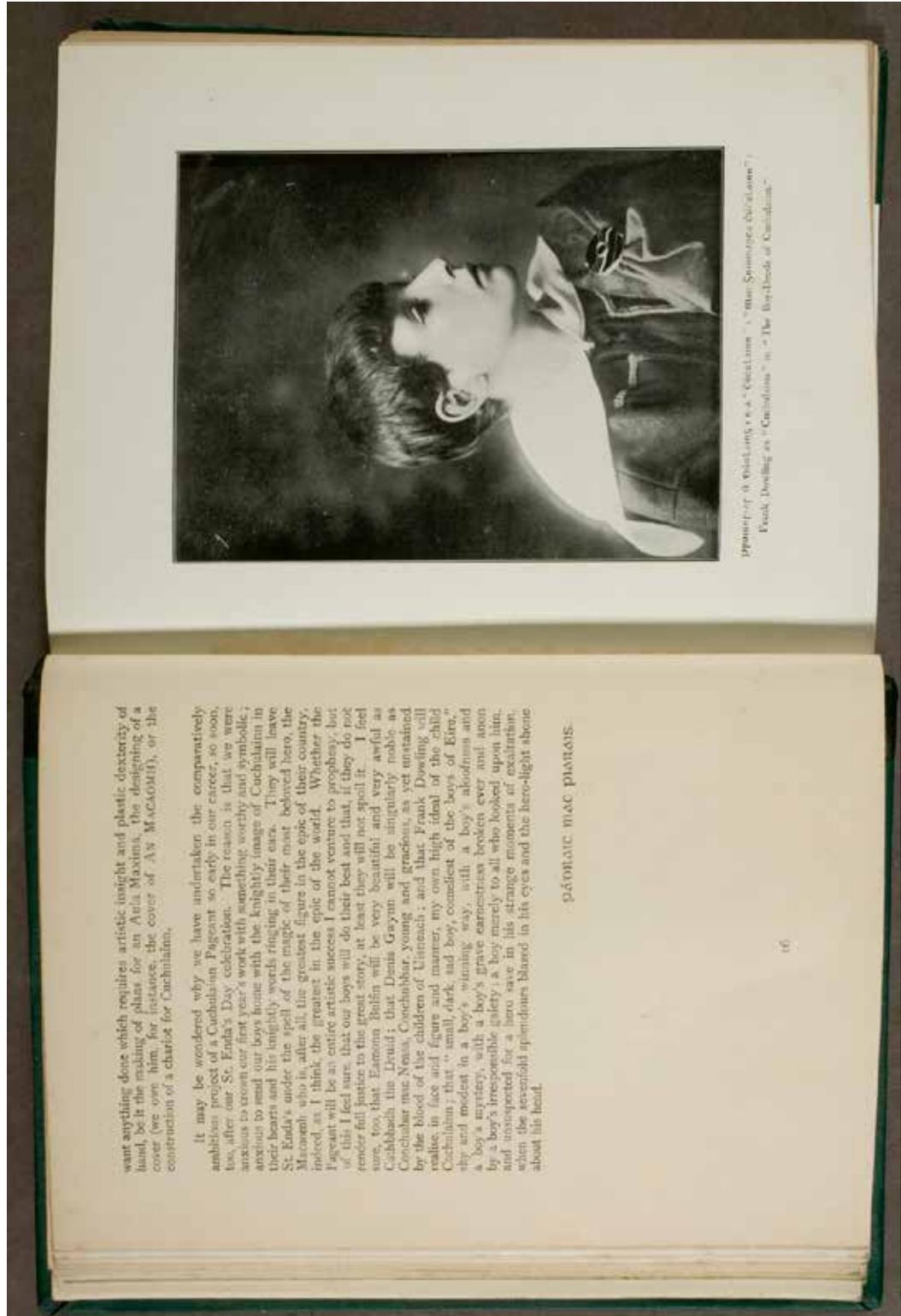
"In the production there was no professionalism, no elaborate illusion. It was one with all noble art, because it came out of a comradeship of interest and aspiration; the art was here not rootless, it came out of belief, work, and aspiration."

In the notes which I prefixed to the programme of the plays I said that our plans included the erecting of a Pigeant in the early summer and of a Miracle Play at Christmas. The early summer has come, and with it our Pigeant. It deals with the Boy-Deeds of Cuchulainn. I have extracted the story and a great part of the dialogue from the Tain, merely modernising (but altering as little as possible) the magnificent phrase of the epic. I have kept close to the Tain even at the risk of mistaking what some people might call dramatic effect, but in this matter I have greater trust in the instinct of the unknown shapers of our epic than in the instinct of any modern. I claim for my version one merit which I claim also for the episode of the Boy-Deeds in the Tain, namely, that it does not contain a single unnecessary speech, a single unnecessary word. If Conall Ceannach and Laoighaire Buidhach are silent figures in our Pigeant, it is because they stand silent in the tale of the events as told by the Ulster exiles over the camp-fire of Meadhbh and Ailbh. For Feargus I invent two or three short speeches, but the only important departures (and these have a sufficient literary purpose) from the narrative of the Tain are in making Cuchulainn's demand for arms take place on the faithless of Eamhain Macra rather than in Conchobair's sleeping house and in assigning to the Watchman the part played by Leabharthain in the epic. For everything else I have authority. Even the names of the boy-corps are not all invented, for several Follamhan sons of Conchobair (the who was to perish at the head of the macra) in the Ford of Slaughtail) I group on the play-ground of Eamhain the sons of Uisneach, of Feargus and of Conall Ceannach boys who must have been Cuchulainn's contemporaries in the boy-corps, though older than he. On how many of those radiant figures were dark fates to close in as the tragedy of Ulster unrolled!

The Chorus and the Song of the Sword have been set to music by Mr. MacDonnell the latter to an arrangement of the well-known Smith Song in the Petrie Collection, the former to an original air. I feel that this music gives dignity to very commonplace words. My friend Tadhg O'Donohue has kindly checked over the verses in his Rannsigheacht littear which I put into the mouths of the Chorus. Obligations of another sort I owe to my brother, who is responsible for the costumes, grouping and general production of the Pigeant, and to my nephew, Mr. Alfred McLaughlin, for help in the same and other directions. Mr. McLaughlin's name does not figure among the School Staff, but he might truly be called a Member of the Staff without portolá. He is at our service whenever we

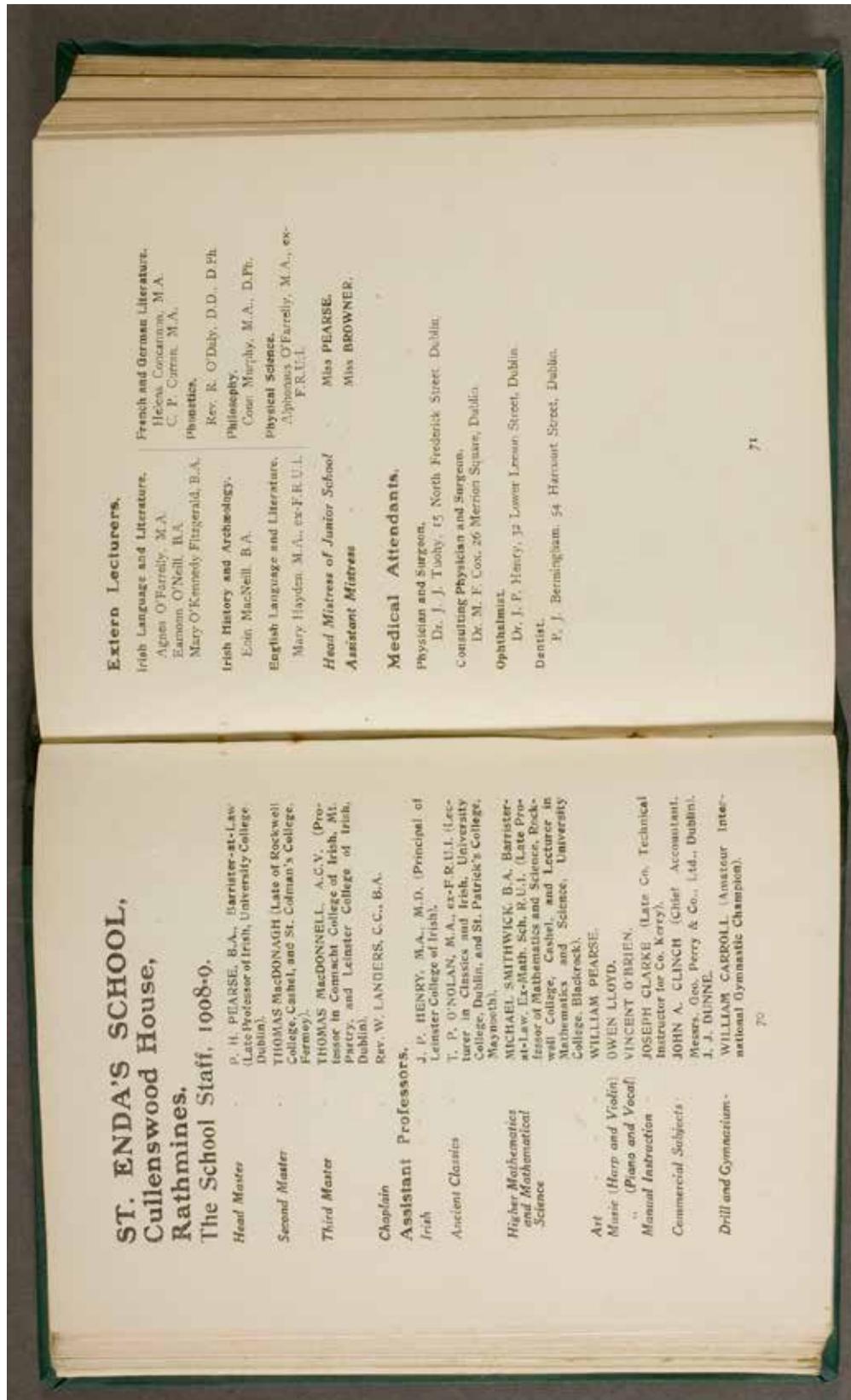
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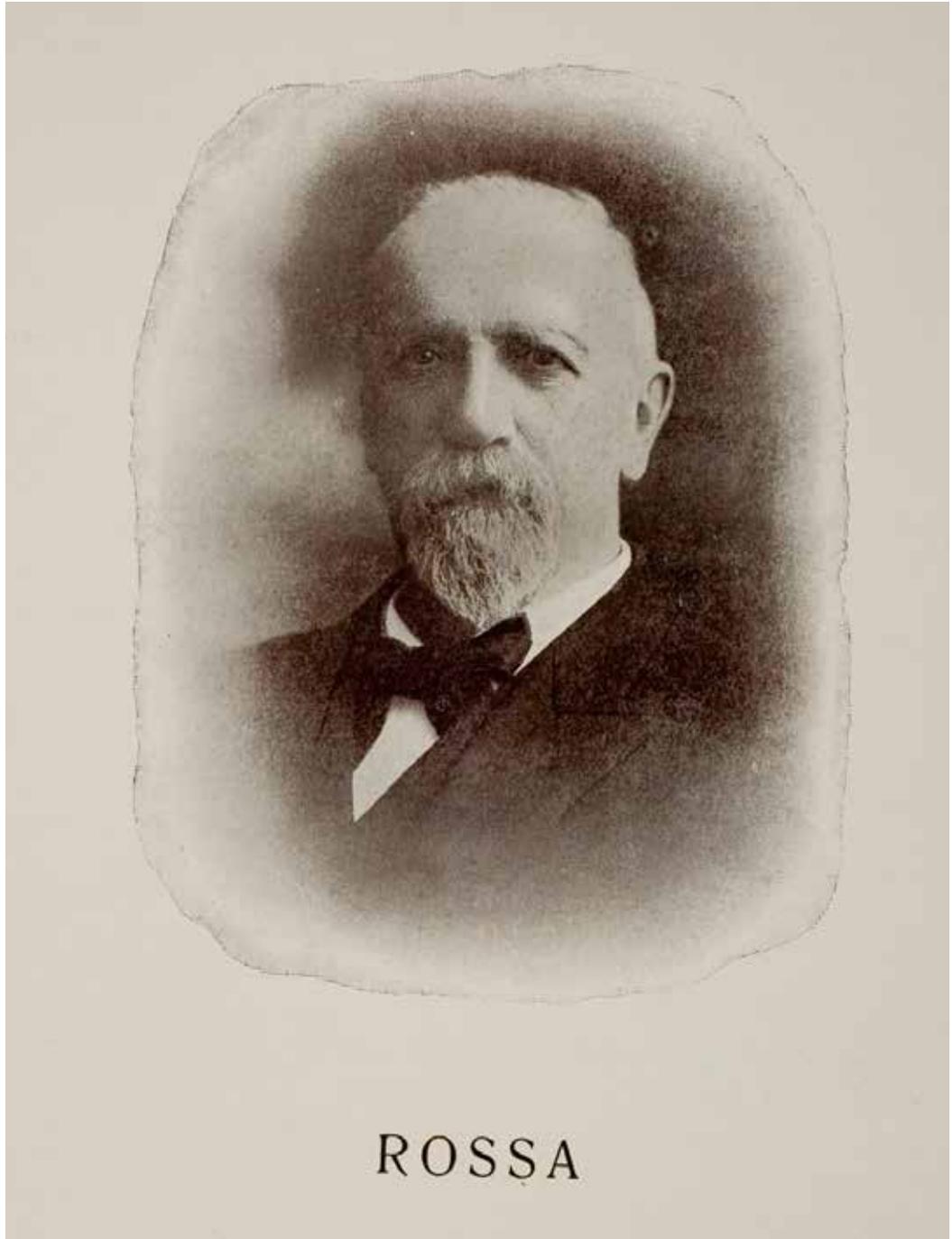


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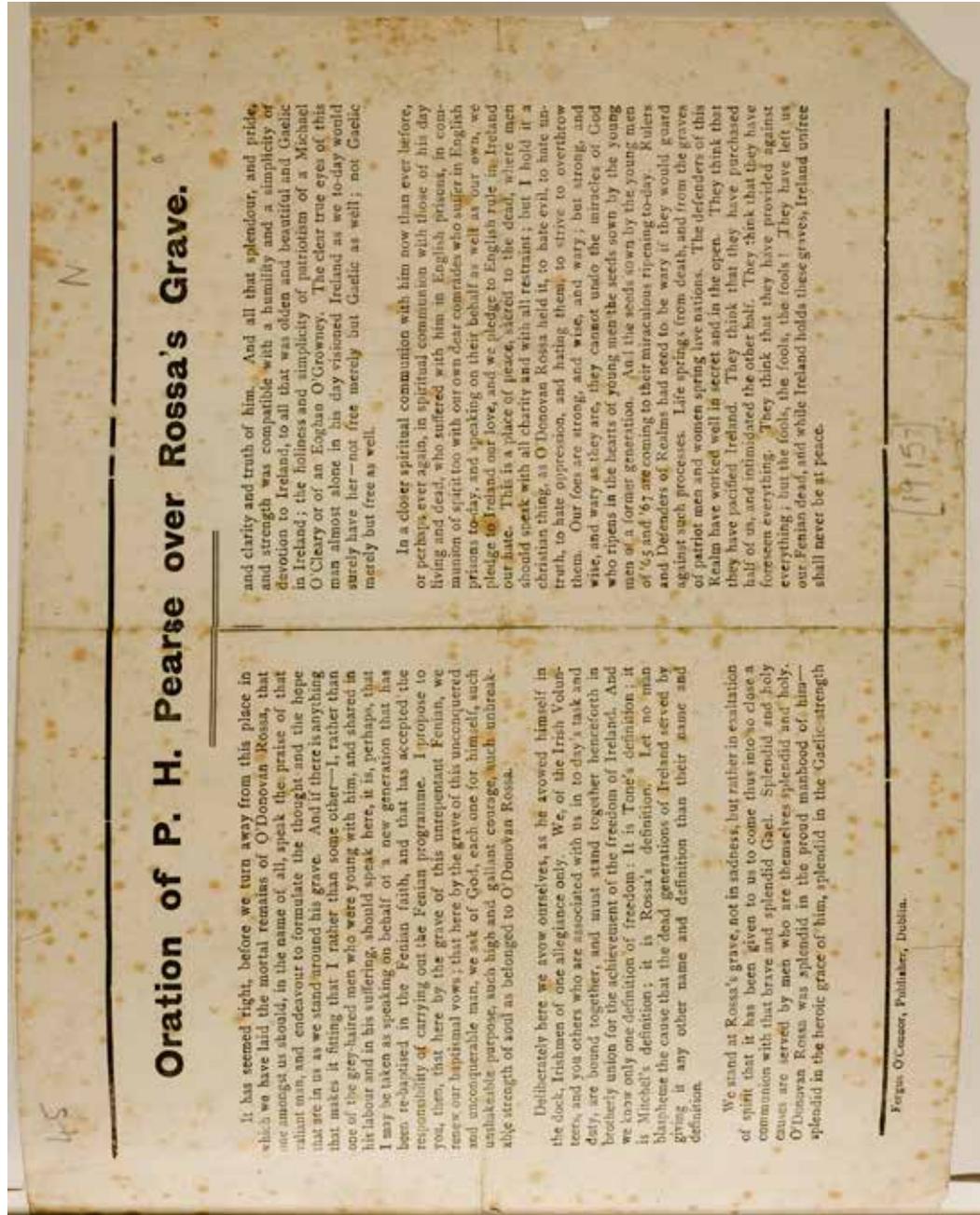
Jeremiah O'Donovan (1831-1915) from Ross Carbery, Co. Cork, best known as O'Donovan Rossa. His life was dedicated to securing an Irish republic; for the new generation of separatists he symbolised the spirit of Fenianism and revolt. Following his death in New York, his funeral in Dublin on 1 August 1915 was a rallying point for extreme nationalists.

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The scene in Glasnevin cemetery where Pearse dressed in the uniform of the Irish Volunteers delivered a stirring oration over Rossa's grave. In the photograph he appears to be putting his script back in his pocket. (Keogh 163).

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A printed text of Pearse's oration.

Oration of P. H. Pearse over Rossa's Grave.

and clarity and truth of him. And all that splendour, and pride, and strength was compatible with a humility and a simplicity of devotion to Ireland, to all that was olden and beautiful and Gaelic in Ireland; the holiness and simplicity of patriotism of a Michael O'Clery or of an Eoghan O'Growney. The clear true eyes of this man almost alone in his day visioned Ireland as we to-day would surely have her—not free merely but Gaelic as well; not Gaelic merely but free as well.

In a clover spiritual communion with him now than ever before, or perhaps ever again, in spiritual communion with those of his day living and dead, who suffered with him in English prisons, in communion of spirit too with our own dear comrades who suffer in English prisons to-day, and speaking on their behalf as well as our own, we pledge to Ireland our love, and we pledge to English rule in Ireland our hate. This is a place of peace, sacred to the dead, where men should speak with all charity and with all restraint; but I hold it a Christian thing, as O'Donovan Rossa held it, to hate evil, to hate untruth, to hate oppression, and having them to strive to overthrow them. Our foes are strong, and wise, and wary; but strong, and wise, and wary as they are, they cannot undo the miracles of God who ripens in the hearts of young men the seeds sown by the young men of a former generation. And the seeds sown by the young men of '45 and '67 are coming to their miraculous ripening to-day. Rulers and Defenders of Realms had need to be wary if they would guard against such processes. Life springs from death, and from the graves of patriot men and women spring love nations. The defenders of this Realm have worked well in secret and in the open. They think that they have pacified Ireland. They think that they have purchased half of us, and intimidated the other half. They think that they have foreseen everything. They think that they have provided against everything; but the fools, the fools, the fools! They have left us our Fenian dead, and while Ireland holds these graves, Ireland unfree shall never be at peace.

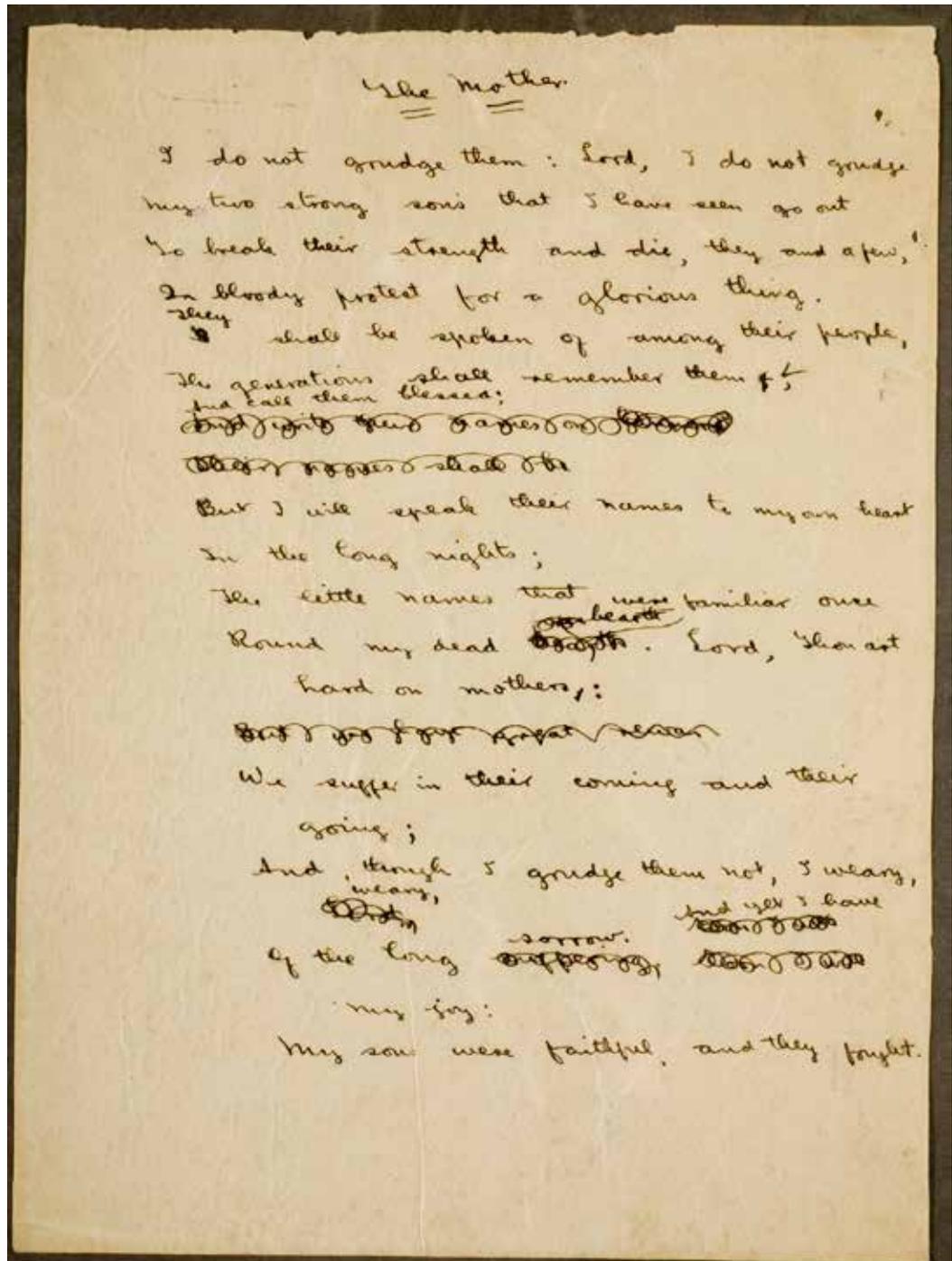
It has seemed right, before we turn away from this place in which we have laid the mortal remains of O'Donovan Rossa, that one amongst us should, in the name of all, speak the praise of that radiant man, and endeavour to formulate the thought and the hope that are in us as we stand around his grave. And if there is anything that makes it fitting that I rather than some other—I, rather than one of the grey-haired men who were young with him, and shared in his labour and in his suffering, should speak here, it is, perhaps, that I may be taken as speaking on behalf of a new generation that has been reborn in the Fenian faith, and that has accepted the responsibility of carrying out the Fenian programme. I propose to you, then, that here by the grave of this unrepentant Fenian, we renew our baptismal vows; that here by the grave of this unconquered and unconquerable man, we ask of God, each one for himself, such unshakable purpose, such high and gallant courage, such unbreakable strength of soul as belonged to O'Donovan Rossa.

Deliberately here we avow ourselves, as he avowed himself in the dock, Irishmen of one allegiance only. We, of the Irish Volunteers, and you others who are associated with us in to-day's task and duty, are bound together, and must stand together henceforth in brotherly union for the achievement of the freedom of Ireland. And we have only one definition of freedom: It is Tone's definition; it is Mitchell's definition; it is Rossa's definition. Let no man blaspheme the cause that the dead generations of Ireland served by giving it any other name and definition than their name and definition.

We stand at Rossa's grave, not in sadness, but rather in exaltation of spirit that it has been given to us to come thus into so close a communion with that brave and splendid Gael. Splendid and holy causes are served by men who are themselves splendid and holy. O'Donovan Rossa was splendid in the proud manhood of him—splendid in the heroic grace of him, splendid in the Gaelic strength

Fergus O'Connor, Publisher, Dublin.

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4.4 Patrick Pearse

Transcript

The Mother by Pádraic Pearse

I do not grudge them: Lord, I do not grudge
 My two strong sons that I have seen go out
 To break their strength and die, they and a few,
 In bloody protest for a glorious thing,
 They shall be spoken of among their people,
 The generations shall remember them,
 And call them blessed;
 But I will speak their names to my own heart
 In the long nights;
 The little names that were familiar once
 Round my dead hearth.
 Lord, thou art hard on mothers:
 We suffer in their coming and their going;
 And tho' I grudge them not, I weary, weary
 Of the long sorrow – And yet I have my joy:
 My sons were faithful, and they fought.

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The following is the substance of what I said when asked to day by the President of the Court Martial at Richmond Barracks whether I had anything to say in defence:

I desire in the first place to repeat what I have already said in letters to General Sir John Maxwell and to Brigadier General Lowe. My object in agreeing to an unconditional surrender was to prevent the further slaughter of the civil population of Dublin and to save the lives of our gallant followers who, having made for six days a stand unparalleled in military history, were now surrounded and (in the case of those under the immediate command of Headquarters) without food. I fully understood now, as then, that my own life is forfeit to British law, and I shall die very cheaply, if I can think that the British Government, ~~which~~ ^{as it} has already shown itself strong, ~~will~~ ^{will now show itself} magnanimous enough to accept my single life ^(in forfeit) and to give a general amnesty to the brave men and boys who have fought at my bidding.

In the second place I wish it to be understood that any admissions I make here are to be taken as involving myself alone. They do not involve ~~me~~ and must not be used against anyone ^{myself} who acted with me, not even those who set their names to documents with me [The Court assented to this].

I admit that I was Commandant General Commanding in chief the forces of the Irish Republic which have been acting against you for the past week, and that I was President of their Provisional Government. I stand over all ~~that~~ of my acts and words done or spoken in these capacities.

When I was a child of ten I went down on my

Pearse's recollection of his address to the court-martial, 2 May 1916. (Ms. 17,306).

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bare knees by my bedside one night and promised
 God that I should devote my life to an effort to
 free my country. I have kept that ~~promise~~ ^{promise}
 As a boy and as a man I have worked for
 Irish freedom, I have helped to organise, to
 arm, to train, and to discipline my fellowcountry
 men to the sole ~~end~~ ^{end} that, when the time came,
 they might fight for Irish freedom. The time, as
 it seemed to me, ~~came~~ ^{did come}, and we went into
 the fight. I am glad we did. We seem to have lost.
 We have not lost. To refuse to fight would have
 been to lose; to fight is to win. We have kept faith
 with the past, and handed on a tradition to the
 future. ~~I~~ ^{we} repudiate the accusation of the prosecutor
 that ~~we~~ ^{we} sought to aid and abet England's enemy,
 Germany is no more to ~~us~~ ^{us} than England is. ~~We~~ ^{we} asked
 and accepted German aid in the shape of arms
 and an expeditionary force. We asked for ~~no~~ ^{neither}
 accepted German gold, nor had other traffic with
 Germany but what I state. ~~Our~~ ^{my} aim was to win
 Irish freedom ~~without~~ ^{but} we struck the
 first blow ourselves, but should have been
 glad ~~of~~ ^{of} an ally's aid. ~~But~~ ^{we} ~~are~~ ^{are} ~~not~~ ^{not} ~~glad~~ ^{glad}
 I assume that I am speaking to Englishmen, who
 value their own freedom ~~and~~ ^{and who} propose to be fighting for
 the freedom of Belgium and Serbia. Believe that we,
 too, ~~wish~~ ^{wish} freedom and desire it. To us it is more
 desirable than anything in the world. If you strike
 us down now, we shall rise again and renew
 the fight. You cannot conquer Ireland. You
 cannot extinguish the Irish passion for freedom. If
 our deed has not been sufficient to win, then
 our children will win it by a better deed.

P. H. Pearse
 24 May 1916
 Kilmuckin Inis

4.4 Patrick Pearse

Transcript**P.H. Pearse: Address to Court Martial. Statement written in Kilmainham, 2 May 1916.**

The following is the substance of what I said when asked today by the President of the Court Martial at Richmond Barracks whether I had anything to say in defence:

I desire in the first place to repeat what I have already said in the letters to General Sir John Maxwell and to Brigadier General Lowe. My object in agreeing to an unconditional surrender was to prevent the further slaughter of the civil population of Dublin and to save the lives of our gallant followers who, having made for six days a stand unparalleled in military history, were now surrounded and (in the case of those under the immediate command of Headquarters) without food. I fully understand now, as then, that my own life is a forfeit to British law, and I shall die very cheerfully if I can think that the British Government, as it has already shown itself strong, will now show itself magnanimous enough to accept my single life in forfeiture and give a general amnesty to the brave men and boys who have fought at my bidding.

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I admit that I was Commandant General Commanding in Chief the forces of the Irish Republic which have been acting against you for the past week, and that I was President of their Provisional Government. I stand over all my acts and words done or spoken in those capacities.

When I was a child of ten I went down on my bare knees by my bedside one night and promised God that I should devote my life to an effort to free my country. I have kept that promise. As a boy and as a man I have worked for Irish freedom, first among all earthly things. I have helped to organise, to arm, to train, and to discipline my fellow-countrymen to the sole end that, when the time came, they might fight for Irish freedom. The time, as

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it seemed to me, did come, and we went into the fight. I am glad we did. We seem to have lost. We have not lost. To refuse to fight would have been to lose; to fight is to win. We have kept faith with the past, and handed on a tradition to the future.

I repudiate the assertion of the prosecutor that I sought to aid and abet England's enemy. Germany is no more to me than England is. I asked and accepted German aid in the shape of arms and an expeditionary force. We neither asked for nor accepted Germany [sic] gold, nor had any traffic with Germany but what I state. My aim was to win Irish freedom: we struck the first blow ourselves, but should have been glad of an ally's aid.

I assume that I am speaking to Englishmen who value their freedom and who profess to be fighting for the freedom of Belgium and Serbia. Believe that we, too, love freedom and desire it. To us it is more desirable than anything in the world. If you strike us down now, we shall rise again and renew the fight. You cannot conquer Ireland. You cannot extinguish the Irish passion for freedom. If our deed has not been sufficient to win freedom, then our children will win it by better deed.

P.H. Pearse, Kilmainham Prison. 2nd May 1916.