THE REBELLION IN DUBLIN: AN EYE-WITNESS ACCOUNT.

By Warre B. Wells, Assistant Editor "Irish Times."


The first shot in the Irish Rebellion of 1916 was fired shortly after noon on Easter Monday, April 24th. It was fired, with a fine sense of the dramatic, before the seat of Imperial authority in Ireland, Dublin Castle, and killed an unarmed policeman on duty. The act was an epitome of the rebellion—a rising spacious and in a sense sublime in its conception; murderous and, by contrast with that conception, petty in its execution. The insurrection was foredoomed to failure from the outset. It proposed, as an indispensable complement to the seizure of Dublin, a general rising throughout the country. Such a rising was an integral element in the rebel plans, and the nature of those plans must be briefly reviewed if the progress of events in the capital is to be made intelligible. The seizure by a surprise stroke of the capital—the Government buildings, the strategic positions, the nodal points of communication, physical and other—was, immediately, to a large extent successful; but it depended for its ultimate success on other factors. It demanded a larger rebel force than was at once available, and it required that while this larger force was being concentrated the forces of the Crown should be prevented from a rapid and effectual intervention. The concentration of this larger force in turn depended on such a general rising throughout the country as would not merely put the Irish provinces in rebel hands and disperse military forces to deal with the provincial risings, but would also enable surplus rebel troops to be made swiftly available for the reinforcement of the bodies holding Dublin. It depended, that is to say, upon a wholesale arming of rebel forces for which, despite months of secret preparation, no adequate provision existed in the country. It presumed the immediate landing from overseas of a great quantity of arms and ammunition. The interception, three days before the rebellion, of the vessel carrying these warlike supplies was the ultimate cause of the speedy collapse of the insurrection in the capital. This implied that the provincial rising must be largely abortive. The miscarriage of the provincial rising was ensured by the confusion which prevailed at the rebel headquarters on the receipt of the news that the vessel was lost, in which confusion the orders to the...
provinces were first cancelled and then, too late, confirmed. The rebels struck in Dublin, therefore, in circumstances which prohibited them from expecting on the one hand any material reinforcement from the country, and from anticipating on the other hand any serious obstacle to the rapid concentration of military forces upon the capital. They struck with a strength probably inadequate to the task to which they immediately set their hand, and certainly inadequate to the lengthy prosecution of that task.

commanding the junction of the roads from Kingstown were similarly seized; the occupants, in all these cases, were summarily ejected. Nearer the centre of the city a rebel force, commanded by Countess Markievicz, entrenched in St. Stephen's Green, an ornamental park dominating an extensive grouping of road communications. Other bodies occupied and organised for defence adjacent buildings and Messrs. Jacobs' great biscuit factory, and, nearer the river, Boland's Mills at Ringsend. The north side of the river did not offer such a simple scheme of points of strategic advantage, but on this side also every suitable position was occupied.

The efforts of the rebels to seize the arteries of communication were less successful. The General Post Office in Sackville Street was taken at once by a large force, which expelled the staff, some of whom were in league with them, at the point of the bayonet, and all telegraphic communication was promptly cut. At the General Post Office the rebels, under command of P. H. Pearse, "Commandant-General and President of the Provisional Government of the Irish Republic," established their military headquarters. For the rest of the week Dublin was completely isolated, except for the telephone system. The rebels committed a grave blunder in their neglect to seize the Central Telephone Exchange. This was protected by the ruse of an old woman, who informed the force detailed to seize it that the building was full of troops. It was, in fact, garrisoned by nothing more formidable than twenty girl operators, who stood to their posts with a fine courage throughout the rebellion. The maintenance of telephone communication was of the first importance to the military authorities in the development

of rapid and effective measures to suppress it. The railway-stations also were largely immune from the rebel efforts. On the south side the two stations of the Dublin and South-Eastern Railway were both seized; but one of these was found to be unsuitable for defence, and was almost immediately evacuated. Both the terminus of the Great Southern and Western Railway and that of the Great Northern were strongly held by soldiers, and to effort to capture

THE COUNTESS MARKIEVICZ. An extreme Sinn Feiner. Her death sentence was commuted to penal servitude for life.
either was made by the rebels, who had the terminus of the Midland Great Western within the area of their occupation. They attempted to destroy the railway lines some miles out from the city, and were so far successful in these attempts that no trains except troop trains were able to reach Dublin for the rest of the week. By the afternoon of Easter Monday the whole centre of the city was firmly in rebel hands, with a strong cordon of fortified posts in the suburbs, which the more or less abortive risings in the vicinity of the capital were intended to strengthen further with an outer cordon.

One place alone in the central area of the city stood like a rock in the surge of revolution. That place was Trinity College, and the story of its defence is the most stirring chapter in the history of the insurrection. Trinity College occupies a commanding strategic position in the city, and formed a rallying-point of capital importance in the operations for the suppression of the rebellion. To its defence during the first days of the rising was wholly due the fact that the city's commercial centre on the south side of the river was spared that visitation of fire and sack which later obliterated its commercial centre on the north side. The College, a massive pile of grey stone, towering high above the surrounding roofs, completely dominates in front the Bank of Ireland and Dame Street; to the left Grafton Street (leading up to St. Stephen's Green); and to the right Westmoreland Street (leading to the river and across the bridge to Sackville Street)—the three streets which contain the bulk of the banks, the insurance offices, and the important business houses of South Dublin. Its possession by loyal forces effectually prevented the extension of the rebel operations from Sackville Street across the river into the commercial area on the south side, or any serious outbreak of looting in this area; and it prohibited communication by the most direct routes between the rebel headquarters in the Post Office and the outlying rebel bodies in St.
The call to arms overseas had drained the strength of the exchange hear the challenges of the rebel sentries and the frequent shot force. During the night of Easter Monday a picket was posted in the College park, close enough to the station to hear the challenges of the rebel sentries and the frequent exchange of the password, "Limerick," but this picket was withdrawn before dawn. The gates were shut and barricaded; sand-bags were placed in the windows and on the parapets of the roof, and a brisk fusillade was exchanged on the right with the rebel positions across the river. A few soldiers in the neighbouring streets and in the Central Soldiers' Club opposite the College, including some Anzac sharpshooters, were summoned to strengthen the garrison in the defence. Fortunately the rebels were impressed by its parade of strength, and were ignorant of its actual poverty. Trinity College was, perhaps, the one place in the city where no spy was present to aid the rebels. One daring spy did gain admission in the disguise of a soldier, but he was detected before he succeeded in escaping to betray the situation. The rebels, in consequence, made no actual attack on the College. Action was continued with the positions beyond the river; looting in the streets under fire from the College was prevented; several rebel despatch-riders on bicycles who attempted to run the gauntlet were shot; the sharpshooters made good practice on snipers on the surrounding roofs. The garrison held the commercial centre of Dublin on the south side in trust until the advance of the troops into the city relieved it.

The city, except for the area dominated by Trinity College, remained in effective rebel occupation from Easter Monday, throughout Tuesday, into Wednesday. During this period and the subsequent days of desperate street fighting until the end of the week, the social and economic life of Dublin was completely paralysed. The chief business quarter of the city was inaccessible. No trains ran into the city; no trams ran through it. The supply of gas and electric power was cut off as a measure of precaution. The food problem early became acute, and was growing desperate when the rebellion collapsed. Prices rose quickly to a famine level, though the actual shortage was not, in the great majority of cases, aggravated by any attempt of the shopkeepers to mulct the people in their necessity. With all ordinary means of vehicular communication about the city suspended, the citizens, in high station and in low, went foraging for their own supplies. The behaviour of the crowds, in the entire absence for a considerable period over wide areas of any authority, was remarkably orderly; the amount of looting, in view of the unique opportunity which the rebellion presented, was surprisingly small. Dublin was cut off from the world, without letters, and without newspapers, save on one exception was the "Irish Times," which enjoyed an advantage over its contemporaries in that it possessed a suction gas plant of its own, and was not wholly dependent for its motive power upon the city gas supply.

Its office lay in No Man's Land between Trinity College and the rebel positions across the river, and here, under a state of siege, it was published daily until the Friday of Easter week. When mechanical difficulties interrupted its issue until the following Monday. Dublin's only newspaper, however—no newspaper from outside was able to circulate during the week—was prohibited from publishing anything but the official communiques and proclamations. Nobody knew how serious the rebellion might be. Nobody knew the state of the provinces. There were rumours of every province, of large rebel forces marching on Dublin, or a German landing in Kerry. But, as the days passed and the fighting spread, and the great fires, whose glare by night was visible for miles around, broke out, though there was growing strain, there was always calm and nothing in the nature of panic. The people of Dublin kept their heads and went their way with a nonchalance not generally attributed to the Irish temperament. In spite of the military restrictions on movement, under martial law, the citizens followed the progress of the fighting with a close interest that often came near to foolish recklessness, and sometimes paid its extreme penalty. They gave the troops from England a welcome which vastly surprised these unfamiliar men, who imagined at the outset that every inhabitant of the city was a potential enemy. Food was short; but with the soldiers arriving in the city from Kingstown, citizens cheerfully shared, or surrendered to them altogether, the last square meal which they had in immediate prospect. Women and girls

**INGENUITY TO BAFFLE THE REBELS.**

Improvised armoured car, constructed from locomotive smoke-boxes hastily fitted together in Guinness Brewery Yard. A unique vehicle in the streets of the Irish capital.
Ruins of the Imperial Hotel, Dublin, as seen from the top of the Nelson Pillar. Not a room in the building remained intact.

The portico of the gutted Post Office—another scene of devastation. Photograph taken from the lofty Nelson Pillar.

Firemen engaged in the work of putting out the great conflagration during the Sinn Fein outbreak.

Greek bas-reliefs, which adorned the walls of the Dublin Art Gallery, damaged by shot and shell during the rising.

DUST, DEBRIS, AND DESPAIR: SCENES IN DUBLIN AFTER THE S Sinn FEIN REBELLION.
ran out of houses in the suburbs during the hottest action to give food and drink to the troops, or help the wounded into shelter.

On the south side of the city, where the decisive action developed, the advanced guards of the Territorial battalions—railled across England, packed in transports across the Channel, and tramping from Kingstown into Dublin—reached the suburbs on Wednesday morning. They were thrown immediately on their arrival, in an advanced stage of exhaustion, into desperate street fighting of the most hellish kind. Their marching van, a battalion of the Sherwood Foresters, came under heavy rifle fire from strong bodies of rebels posted in the corner houses commanding the junction of Haddington Road and Northumberland Road.

Here, on the afternoon of Easter Monday, a body of the Dublin Volunteer Training Corps, composed of professional men over military age, returning without arms from a route march in the Dublin mountains, had been ambushed by the rebels. Six of its members were killed and ten wounded. The Volunteers made their way to Beggar’s Bush Barracks, reinforced the besieged garrison with nine officers and eighty-one men, and helped splendidly in the defence of the barracks until the arrival of the troops from Kingstown. Thus the Irish Rebellion made history for more than one branch of the armed forces of the Crown. The Trinity College Officers Training Corps was the first university corps that has been required to defend its own university from attack; the Dublin Volunteer Training Corps comprised the members of the first Volunteers in the United Kingdom who shed their blood in their country’s cause; and the military operations in Dublin in Easter week were the first operations conducted almost exclusively by units of the Territorial Force and New Army, the Regular Army being represented scarcely at all except in the higher command. The Territorial battalions first engaged fought under the most trying conditions with a cool courage and an indomitable cheerfulness. The Sherwood Foresters, who came under a sudden and heavy fire at the junction of Haddington Road and Northumberland Road, suffering several casualties, immediately took such cover as was to be found behind walls, and proceeded in a businesslike fashion to the reduction by rifle fire and bombing of the houses in which the rebels were posted. Their colonel, meanwhile, rode his white charger up and down the open street, smoking a cigarette, and by a miracle escaped untouched. With the reduction of this first rebel outpost by the Sherwood Foresters the relief of Dublin had begun.

By this time (Wednesday, April 26th) a military cordon, composed on the north side of reinforcements from the Curragh and the North and on the south side of troops landed at Kingstown, had been thrown round the whole city, inside the wholly ineffective outer rebel cordon, and in immediate contact with the strong inner cordon of fortified posts. From this date the weakness inherent in the rebels’ situation operated progressively towards their downfall. Their numerical deficiency, actually for the execution of their plan of campaign and relatively in
"Liberty Hall," a squat stone building facing the river, the headquarters of James Connolly's "Citizen Army," reduced to ruins.

The havoc at Clery's Stores and the Imperial Hotel, Sackville Street. The Munster and Leinster Bank, to the left, was entirely gutted.

Interior impression of the General Post Office, with troops in possession. On the left is an instantaneous photograph of the collapse of a house in Liffey Street.

General view of Dublin after the rebellion. Many of the landmarks of the city were wrecked as well as a large number of private dwellings. Property to an estimated value of two millions sterling was destroyed, apart from individual private losses.

proportion to the military forces arrayed against them, made it impossible for them to maintain their internal lines of communication. In the result, the isolated strategic points which they had seized became so many traps into which they were gradually penned. Heavy fighting was necessary, however, before this decision emerged. From Wednesday the cordon drew in gradually towards the centre of the city, enclosing the main body of the rebels within it, and leaving behind it detached bodies to be surrounded and submerged. The cordon closed more steadily and against a more obstinate resistance on the south side, where it was further removed at the outset from the centre of the city. By Thursday, St. Stephen’s Green, the seizure of which was apparently intended by the rebels to cover the approaches to the city over the southern canal bridges, was cleared by an operation independent of the main operations. Their occupation of this park was the most faulty piece of rebel strategy. The Green was dominated throughout by the upper stories of the square of houses which encloses it. It was commanded in particular by the towering building of the Shelbourne Hotel, situated at a corner of the Green. This was the most fashionable hotel in Dublin, and its visitors throughout the week experienced a strict siege. The windows were plentifully riddled with bullets by the rebels, but no casualties were recorded. On the roof of the hotel a small force of soldiers early in the week mounted a machine-gun, which raked the Green from end to end. The rebels soon found their position untenable and, having suffered considerable loss, evacuated the Green, retiring to the massive building of the Royal College of Surgeons, upon which the machine-gun from the Shelbourne Hotel continued to play.

After this clearance, the military cordon closed in on the south without encountering much opposition. Fierce fighting meanwhile developed on the north side, where at one point a day and a night were spent in an advance of a hundred and fifty yards down a narrow street. The most determined fighting of all, however, occurred in forcing the approaches from Kingstown on the west, by way of Haddington Road and Northumberland Road, towards the heart of the city. For a distance of half a mile every other successive house was a fortress, which had to be reduced by rifle fire and bombing before the advance could proceed. Behind the advance accurate sniping from the roofs broke out as the troops moved forward, and it was long before the lines of communication were wholly cleared of hidden irregulars. The troops pushed steadily on, not without considerable loss, over Baggot Street and Mount Street canal bridges. They were very desperately engaged in the warren of mean streets inside the latter bridge on the right of the line of advance. Here, against Boland’s Mills, a high stone building overlooking the basin of the Grand Canal, artillery was brought into action for the first time in the course of the operations. A nine-pounder, smartly handled by naval gunners, did good work in enabling a close cordon to be drawn around the Ringsend area towards the mouth of the river, while the main advance proceeded. By Thursday, pickets had penetrated into the heart of the city, and communication was established between the advancing bodies and the garrison of Trinity College, which, with its academic cloisters packed with horse, foot, and artillery, became the advanced base of the military operations.

From this point, while fighting continued against isolated rebel positions, the main operation consisted in the reduction of the area around the Post Office, the chief rebel
stronghold, the seat of the "Republican Government," and the headquarters of the rebels' military command. In this position the military tactics were varied. Whereas there was fighting of the closest kind in the earlier phases of the action, now the rebel defences were methodically reduced by more distant artillery, machine-guns, and rifle fire. From Trinity College to the Post Office in Sackville Street is a distance of some five hundred yards. On Friday, the Liffey, crossed by O'Connell Bridge, intervenes. At the end of Sackville Street abutting on the bridge, the rebels occupied houses and shops immediately commanding the bridge, and bringing the two streets—Westmoreland Street and D'Olier Street—which converge upon it from the adjacent streets. With the destruction of "Liberty Hall," forces were able to move, though still not without considerable risk, across the river, and the operations of the troops on the south side were closely linked up with the operations of the troops pressing in on the north side. The rebel positions immediately commanding O'Connell Bridge were riddled and rendered untenable by artillery and machine-gun fire, largely directed from the roof of Trinity College, and by Friday afternoon, the military lines had been advanced right down to the river by way of Westmoreland Street and D'Olier Street, in the block between which, however, persistent sniping was continued by one or more elusives, the last of whom was not accounted for until several days later.

Meanwhile, on Thursday evening, the great fire had begun. How it originated—whether through the shelling from Trinity College, the explosion of a rebel ammunition store, or some accident of looting—will probably never be known. It broke out on the west side of Sackville Street, immediately in rear of the rebel fortified post fronting on the bridge, and rapidly spread from the west side of Sackville Street, where it had devastated a wide area, across to the east side. The whole of the west side of Sackville Street, comprising forty-seven buildings, was gutted. In all, here and in the surrounding streets, some two hundred and thirty buildings were demolished. They included two churches, a Presbyterian and a Methodist, as well as a Church of Ireland Mission to Seamen church, four hotels, several banks, the bulk of the important business houses, and the Royal Hibernian Academy. Fortunately, few residential houses were within the devastated area, although it contained some tenements, and the loss of life directly due to the fire was small.

On Saturday, April 29th, there came the end of the criminal adventure which had wrought this widespread havoc and destruction in the heart of Dublin. The area of the Post Office was by this time closely invested, and early in the afternoon the rebel headquarters was itself in flames. James Connolly, the military director of the rebel operations, although P. H. Pearse was in nominal command, had been seriously wounded on the Thursday, and his injury contributed largely to the disintegration of the rebel defence. Hopeless as their situation had become, the leaders displayed at the end a cool courage worthy of a better cause. P. H. Pearse spent the closing hours in the Post Office in writing a vindication of the rebellion; Connolly, on Friday, although there was by this time little or no chance of getting it circulated, composed a heartening "Order of the Day" to the rebel forces. Driven out of the Post Office by the flames, the rebel leaders with the garrison retired to the block of buildings fronting on the river, where the Law Courts are situated, known as the Four Courts. The exits from the Post Office were under military fire. To draw this fire and cover their escape, the rebels sent out first about a dozen officers whom they had captured on Easter Monday and kept in close but not harsh confinement during the week. Some of the officers thus sent out were wounded by their comrades' fire, but fortunately none was killed.

The rebel leaders, having made good their temporary escape, held a council of war. Of the fighting which attended this final phase of the rebellion no clear account is possible. It was a confused and desperate affair of ambushes and sniping in streets and alleys where the glare of the fires paled the sun and the crash of falling masonry mingled with the roar of artillery and bombs, the vicious knocking of machine-guns, and the rattle of musketry. The rebel remnant, surrounded by the soldiers and the fire, fought with the courage of despair. The inevitable end came early in the afternoon, when P. H. Pearse went out under a white flag and, after an offer of surrender on terms, which was at once rejected, agreed to unconditional capitulation. He then issued the following document: "In order to prevent the further slaughter of unarmed people, and in the hope of saving the lives of our followers, now surrounded and hopelessly outnumbered, members of the Provisional Government present at headquarters have agreed to an unconditional surrender, and the commanders of all units of the Republican Forces will order their followers to lay down their arms." The "cease fire" was sounded to the military forces throughout Friday and Saturday, until Sunday. The military operations made it impossible, except at long intervals, for brief periods, and at certain points, for the Dublin Fire Brigade to attempt to cope with the conflagration. The fire, fanned by a breeze from the sea, spread from the west side of Sackville Street, where it had devastated a wide area, across to the east side. The whole of the west side of Sackville Street, comprising forty-seven buildings, was gutted. In all, here and in the surrounding streets, some two hundred and thirty buildings were demolished. They included two churches, a Presbyterian and a Methodist, as well as a Church of Ireland Mission to Seamen church, four hotels, several banks, the bulk of the important business houses, and the Royal Hibernian Academy. Fortunately, few residential houses were within the devastated area, although it contained some tenements, and the loss of life directly due to the fire was small.

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Edited by H.W. Wilson, author of

"With the Flag to Pretoria," "Japan's Fight for Freedom," etc.

Major-General Henry D'Urban Keary, C.B., D.S.O.
Second in command to General Gairing in Mesopotamia.