

NORA CONNOLLY O'BRIEN

"Ireland as distinct from her people is nothing to me; and the man who is bubbling over with love and affection for 'Ireland' and can pass unmoved through our streets and witness all the sorrow and suffering, the shame and degradation wrought upon Irish men and women—aye, wrought by Irish men and women—without burning to end it, is a fraud and a liar in his heart, no matter how much he loves that combination of chemical elements he is pleased to call 'Ireland.'"

—JAMES CONNOLLY.

As I passed through Beresford Place on a December afternoon and glanced up at the bold square front of the Irish Transport Union headquarters, a glint of sunlight fell on the gold letters, 'Liberty Hall,' above the doorway. Broad stone steps led to the doorway over which, soon after the European War was declared, hung the scroll, with the proud, defiant words: "*We Serve Neither King Nor Kaiser, But Ireland.*" Those were the days when James Connolly was organising his Citizen Army, when up and down those worn steps thronged eager men, impatient to strike their blow for the Irish Republic. And on those steps, alongside their Commandant, James Connolly, I could picture a slight, smiling girl, as militant and eager as any of them.

Nora Connolly, at that time, was a frequent visitor to Liberty Hall although she lived in Belfast. She asked nothing better than to share in the preparations for the Easter Rising.

Her introduction to public affairs began very early. When Connolly was organising the Irish Socialist Republican Party in Dublin, he began to take her to meetings. She was still a small child when he took her with him on a lecture tour of Scotland, visiting Glasgow and Edinburgh. Then the family went to America, where Connolly worked as an insurance agent at Troy. This town was a great collar-making centre. Nora remembers her father explaining how the whole town lived on collars. "Even ourselves," he added, "for if the workers don't earn money by collar making, they can't pay insurance." Soon

after, to underline this, a big strike came, and with it the end of their livelihood. The family moved on to New Jersey, where Connolly secured work in Singer's. Nora also started work at a milliners—dividing her time between the shop and the workroom. Now, however, she was taking a keen interest in Labour meetings. Her father addressed open-air meetings each week near where she worked, and during her supper hour she stood and listened. "When I was smaller," she told her father, gaily, "you used to take me to meetings as your daughter; now I come to them myself, as a worker."

The family went to New York, which Connolly made the headquarters for his organising work. Here he founded the Irish Socialist Federation. He also founded a little journal, *The Harp*. Nora became business manager, looking after the affairs of the paper while her father was away on lecture tours. Irish emigrants were often known as "harps" in those days—a bantering term intended to denote the superiority of native-born Americans. "You use that name to turn it from a term of derision to one of honour," said Nora.

"Exactly," said her father, smiling.

"What I remember about my father, even in those days," says Nora Connolly, "was the wonderful way in which when I asked him anything he would not tell me directly, but would help me find it out for myself. 'What you learn yourself,' he would say, 'you will always remember!'"

Nora often went with him to Sunday meetings when he travelled some distance, keeping up the custom he started when she was a child. She speaks of her father's understanding and sympathy, how he would listen gravely, and then, with a twinkle which destroyed all solemnity, help her in her difficulties.

Eventually it was decided to publish *The Harp* in Ireland, though it was edited in America, because Connolly's view was that this would give it far more influence. Then came the momentous decision—in 1910—that the family should return to Dublin. His friends wanted Connolly back to help in the Labour and the National cause. A big welcome was given to the family at the Antient Concert Rooms, Dublin, but the lasting impression of home-coming which Nora received was of the terrible conditions in the Dublin tenements, whose close acquaintance she soon made, while canvassing in an election struggle. Their squalor horrified her. She went to her father, despondent. "It is because of these things we are working, Nora," he told her. "We have to change all that!"

Connolly was put in charge of the newly-formed Transport Workers'

Union in the Belfast area. Nora found work in a wareroom along with other clothing workers, though she horrified them by describing it as a factory. All sorts of petty and imaginary differences of status were exploited to prevent workers coming together.

A strike of the mill girls brought Nora to the front. Connolly was known for his services to the dockers, and so, when the mill girls struck, they came to him for assistance. They objected to the new rules displayed in the mills forbidding talking, laughing and singing at work. But behind the dispute was the concentrated bitterness and resentment of years.

Nora tells how she listened to old, shawled women talking as they crouched over the fire. "It's over forty-five years since I started work in the mills," said one. "I was just turned eight when I began. I worked in steam, with the few rags I wore sodden through, often up to my ankles in water." Others took up the tale in the same fierce, bitter way, adding new horrors to their industrial story.

All the mills were on strike, and all the mill workers seemed to be gathered at the Custom House steps when Nora went down to the meeting with her father.

"What would you say to them if you were speaking?" he asked, with a smile.

"I'd tell them about the women workers' strike in New York," she answered, "how they were all of different nationalities and not able to understand each other—but all understanding that they must unite to win their struggle. And I'd tell them how much easier it should be for the mill-workers here."

"Good!" said Connolly. "That would do fine!"

He spoke at the huge meeting, and Nora thrilled to its enthusiasm. Then he leant down and asked her how she felt. She had had a headache that morning, and she was pleased that he found time to remember it in the midst of this great meeting.

"Oh, all right," she answered. "Fine!"

"That's good!" he said. Then, to her amazement, she heard herself announced as the next speaker.

She couldn't refuse. Connolly held out his hand and helped her up on the steps. The crowd was very quiet, and listened intently. Then they cheered and she was down on the ground again. She had made her first speech.

The mill girls had no union and no reserves. They were forced to go back, but before they went Connolly gave them advice. "Do not go back in ones and twos," he said, "but go back in a body, singing."

If at work one girl laughs and is reproved, you must all begin to laugh; if a girl sings and is checked, all should begin to sing. If one is dismissed, all must walk out."

These practical lessons in solidarity were not lost on Nora when she came to help in National organisation and work. During the big Dublin strike of 1913 she paid several visits to Dublin, where her father was helping to direct the strike. At Liberty Hall she saw Madame Markievicz supervise the cooking in the big kitchens which were being used to prepare food for the strikers' families. A clothing department had also been organised. From there she went to Croydon Park—which belonged to the union—and saw Captain Jack White drilling the Citizen Army Volunteers. She describes him in her book, *The Unbroken Tradition*—one of the best books on the Easter Rising—as "a tall, soldierly figure, blowing a whistle and gesticulating with great fervour." She remembers, too, how he gnashed his teeth in rage when a column misinterpreted an order.

"Easy now, Captain," said Connolly, "remember, they're only volunteers."

Captain White turned like a flash. "Yes," he said. "And aren't they great!" He forgot his rage in admiration of these men of a few weeks' training.

In Belfast, Nora Connolly had joined the girls' branch of the Fianna—it was, she says proudly, the only girls' sluagh in Ireland. These were the rays of rising National feeling. In Belfast the challenge of the Ulster Volunteers stimulated Nora and her friends to action. A group of them founded the Young Republican Party. Nora designed and made their banner in the Republican colours—a rising sun on a green background, with the name of the party in white letters. Padraic Pearse welcomed its formation in *An Claidheamh Soluis*, and hoped that their example would be followed all over Ireland.

At one meeting of the group, prominent Republicans from Dublin appeared and joined in the discussion. One told them that it was their task to hand on the torch of the struggle for liberty to the next generation, and so keep up the tradition of their race.

"That is not our task," cried Nora, indignantly. "Our task is to finish the work and achieve liberty."

The young Republicans cheered.

Gleefully she told her father of the meeting, and asked him if she wasn't right.

"Mm," he mused. "It depends. Did you really mean it or did you just say it to get applause—like a politician?"

"I think if people believe in anything they should try to bring it about in their time," said Nora.

You are justified," he answered. "You don't need my approval or that of anyone else. You are able to justify yourself!"

Nora was soon giving all her spare time to National activities. She organised the Belfast branch of Cumann na mBan, helped in anti-recruiting and Republican meetings and was busy in the Fianna. The Cumann na mBan had first aid classes and rifle drill. Cathal McDowell taught rifle drill—he afterwards fought in Boland's Mill.

Once Connolly asked her how she was getting on at the rifle practice.

"I only got 37 out of 50," Nora told him. "Miss Carney scored 49."

Winifred Carney was one of the Dublin Post Office garrison.

Nora herself taught first aid. "Learning how to puncture and how to mend punctures," laughed Connolly.

She went as delegate to the Fianna Convention in Dublin. A field opposite Madame Markievicz's cottage on the Three Rock mountain was the camping ground, studded with tents.

After the Convention only a small group remained, and these crowded into the cottage, for it was raining hard. They waited in the cottage round the fire, hoping that some of the Dublin Fianna would brave the rain and come out to see them. At ten o'clock they got up from the fire, reluctantly, to go to the tents. A sudden "Hello!" was heard, and half-a-dozen Fianna boys, very wet and wildly excited, burst in. They brought the news of the Howth gun running. Thousands of rifles, they said, had been landed, and they had helped to bring them in. The boys told the story of the attack at Bachelor's Walk, where soldiers had knelt and fired into the crowd.

Next morning they were preparing to go into Dublin when a taxi drew up at the entrance to the field. A Fianna captain jumped out and said he had twenty rifles to be put into Madame's cottage. Very proudly the girls helped to carry them in. One of the neighbours told Nora, after the taxi had gone, that the rifles were not safe there. So she went into Dublin and arranged with Liam Mellows to have them taken away. To disarm suspicion it was decided that the girls should sit on the rifles. Nora and her sister Ina spent the day sitting on convoys of rifles, and a rifle each was their reward.

Connolly, who was in Belfast, 'phoned up and asked Nora if they had seen "the new walking sticks."

They said they were bringing two home. To make sure they arranged for a car to take them to Belfast. But before they went they took part

in the big funeral procession for the five victims of the Bachelor's Walk shooting.

It was not long after this that Nora had her first important mission. She went to America with a message to the heads of the movement there. "Five people," said her father, "are in danger of being hanged if the message is discovered—one of the five will be yourself." It was arranged that if the message was delivered, she would wire "arrived safely," if anything interfered she would just wire "arrived." She accomplished this mission successfully.

Her visits to Liberty Hall continued. She loved to be there seeing the men of the Citizen Army preparing for the Rising. One vivid memory is of a police raid in the paper shop at the side of Liberty Hall. The police came in search of seditious papers. At this time Liberty Hall was like an arsenal, and was under constant armed guard by the Volunteers. The Gaelic Press was also there. A girl came running through the shop to tell Connolly. He went down and saw a policeman with a batch of papers in his hand. He drew his revolver and, covering the man, said: "Drop them or I'll drop you!" He dropped them. Then Connolly demanded to see his warrant, and rather hurriedly the police left to get one. The interval before they returned was occupied by Nora and Madame Markievicz in filling up Connolly's direction 250 mobilisation forms for men of the Citizen Army to report at once with full equipment.

The police came back with their warrant, which the inspector read to Connolly.

"Well," he said. "Here is the shop, up to this door"—the door leading to Liberty Hall—"through this, you will not go!"

He stood at the door with his gun.

"We have no desire to enter Liberty Hall," said the inspector.

"I don't doubt you!" said Connolly, grimly.

The police found nothing, and soon withdrew. But, in the meantime, from all parts of the city, armed Volunteers were pouring into Liberty Hall. "They came," said Nora, "their faces black with coal dust, some powdered with cement and grain, up from the ships, out from the dockyards, machine shops, factories, deserting carts, lorries, vans." One group left a concrete column they had been erecting, half complete. Two enthusiasts, who were working in a yard overlooking the canal, jumped over the wall, swam the canal and arrived in dripping clothes.

She was present when her father gave a lecture on street fighting. After the lecture he asked the Citizen Army men to stay behind.

Walking slowly in front of them he said: "Boys, up till now you have been playing at soldiers. Now you are going to be real soldiers. If any of you for any reason wants to draw back, do it now. There will be no hard feelings and no hard words."

Not a man stirred.

"Boys," said Connolly, his eyes shining, "I never doubted you!"

Somehow, Nora reflected, he had a way of making men live up to their highest selves in order to keep his good opinion.

One day she arrived and found a scene of great excitement. Boxes of cartridges and bits of burning wood and coal were scattered around. Behind a fireplace, which was never used, 5,000 rounds of ammunition had been bricked in. But that night some of the Volunteers had decided to light a fire. They had just got it going when the adjutant, who knew about the ammunition, came in and smelled burning cardboard. They were just in time, for when the fire was raked out—with their hands—some of the boxes were scorched.

"It is a good thing you saved the ammunition," commented Connolly, dryly, "or some of the men would have been late for parade in the morning!"

An occasion which lingers in Nora's memory was the funeral of O'Donovan Rossa, when the Citizen Army marched and her father spoke to them from the steps of Liberty Hall. She admired their green uniforms and the slouch hats turned up at the sides. These were the golden days of the rebel movement for her. All the leaders of the fighting men were there, detachments had come from all over Ireland. She listened to her father's defiant speech and was thrilled. After the march she returned to Liberty Hall and sat on the steps, waiting for her father.

She turned over the pages of the O'Donovan Rossa souvenir, reading Connolly's words:

"For slavery is a thing of the soul before it embodies itself in the material things of this world. . . . When the soul is conquered, the articulate expression of the voice of the nation loses its defiant accent, and, taking on the colour of whining compromise, begins to plead for the body. The unconquered soul asserts itself . . ."

A hand touched her shoulder.

"Day-dreaming, Nora?"

Her father stood before her.

"No, it's your article; it's wonderful!"

"I'll never want an admirer when you're around," he laughed.

The time was rapidly approaching for action. Citizen Army men were hard at work adjusting French bayonets to fit German rifles.

"We have beaten the diplomats," said Connolly gaily. "We have effected a union of German and French arms to be used for one purpose."

Nora was asked to undertake the task of bringing Liam Mellows back from England—where he had been deported after imprisonment—to take part in the Rising. It was left to her to locate him and devise a way of getting him back. She found him at Leek, near Stoke-on-Trent. Nora arranged for him to get back to Ireland, disguised as a priest, and managed the journey successfully.

On the eve of the Rising, Nora had to decide whether she would go with her father to Dublin or not. Reluctantly she decided that her place was with the Northern contingent. Her mother and the rest of the family went to Dublin. On Easter Saturday the Northern mobilisation began outside Dungannon. Some six or eight girls, trained in first aid, travelled down with Nora. All were in high spirits.

Soon after they arrived at the huts a volunteer accidentally shot himself through the hand, and Nora was called. Quickly she got to work, stopping the blood and bandaging the wound.

"That settles it!" cried an enthusiastic volunteer. "If you can do that, you're coming with us!" He brought a huge hand down on her shoulder, appreciatively.

"How do you know I don't want to make wounds as well as bind them up?" asked Nora.

"You can do both with us!" he cried, clapping her on the shoulder again.

Hopes were suddenly dashed by the arrival of a messenger who announced that there would be no fighting in the North.

"Can you guarantee that this is from the district Commandant?" asked Nora, amazed.

"Yes, it is!" she was told.

She and the other girls were given their choice to go to Dublin or back to Belfast. They elected to go to Dublin at once and set out on the midnight train.

As they embarked they saw, leaving a train, a contingent of about 200 volunteers who were arriving in high spirits and who evidently knew nothing of the change in plans.

Nora reached Liberty Hall early in the morning and demanded to see her father at once.

"Is it urgent?" asked the officer in charge. "The Commandant has been up all night, and only went to bed an hour ago!"

"It is urgent," said Nora. "I am his daughter, and I have just travelled up from Belfast. I must see him now!"

She was shown into a little room where her father was sleeping.

"What is wrong?" she said, going over to him and kneeling by the low bed. "Are you not going to fight?"

"Not going to fight!" said Connolly, rousing himself. "If we don't fight now, we have nothing left to hope for. Nora, it would be better for an earthquake to swallow us up!"

She told him about what had happened—about the message and the eager contingent arriving. As she spoke, she saw two big tears roll down his cheeks.

"This is very different from what we have been led to believe," he said. "Are you sure of this?"

"Do not take my word!" said Nora. "Ask the other girls. They were there, too!"

Connolly cross-examined the girls and heard the full story.

"Get me six men who know the city," he said to the officer, sharply. "Now," he continued. "I want each of you to go round with these men to the addresses I give and tell your story as you told it to me. Then ask them to come here."

Each was sent to a rebel leader. Nora was taken to Sean MacDermott. They came back, and the girls were sent away to get some rest. Connolly asked Nora to stay. She cooked breakfast for the men who came. Sean MacDermott, Tom Clarke, Joe Plunkett—his neck swathed in bandages, Michael Mallin, Padraig Pearse, Tom MacDonagh. A Council Meeting was held.

After the meeting Nora saw her father. He was in excellent spirits and was singing to himself. It was the first time she had seen him in uniform.

"Is it all right, daddy?" she asked.

"Yes, it's all right—all right now!" he answered, softly, with deep-toned satisfaction.

Outside Liberty Hall people were stirring. Citizen Army men were saying goodbye to their friends who were wishing them luck. Some were pulling a handcart piled with stuff out of an entry.

Nora was told to report at 8 o'clock at the hall, and there she learnt that she was to carry a message from Pearse to the North. Her father called her.

"At 12 o'clock, Nora," he said, "the fight begins. We don't know

what may happen then. Have you a revolver? You will have to protect yourself and the girls."

For a moment he allowed his feelings to rise to the surface. "God protect you, Nora," he said. "We may never see each other again!" Nora felt like crying, but she had the feeling that she must not let him down.

Pearse came in and spoke solemnly to the girls. Then he went off to write his message. MacDonagh joked in the interval. "Here we are starting a rebellion and all you are thinking about is how soon you can get out of the city!" he jeered.

Two despatches were written. "Tell them fighting has begun in Dublin," said Pearse. They were shown the Proclamation of Easter Week straight from the Press. "Try to memorise it," they were advised, "and tell the people in the North about it." Nora asked for a copy, but was told that it was too dangerous a document for the girls to carry. So, on the morning of the battle, she set out as an emissary to the North.

In earlier days she had brought the Howth rifles to the North: now she returned with a message. But to whom could she deliver it? The forces of the North were scattered. Eoin MacNeill's order cancelling the Easter manoeuvres, published in the Sunday paper, had finally completed the disintegration. Nora Connolly, in her *Unbroken Tradition*, explains MacNeill without bitterness:—

"He was not of the type to which revolutionists belong. His mind was of the academic order which must weigh all things, consider well all actions and count the cost. A true revolutionist must never count the cost, for he knows that a revolution always repays itself, though it cost blood and through it life be lost and sacrifice made."

In Tyrone the men were demobilised. Nora sent messengers to different districts, the principal dispatch being taken by her sister. The commander of the local unit held out hopes of action, and Nora remained with them to organise the first aid corps. They went out into the country and waited for the answer to the message. On Wednesday a man burst into the farmhouse crying that the word had come. They packed rations and supplies, but then discovered it was only a false alarm. This exhausted Nora's patience, and she determined to go after her sister, Ina, and—if nothing could be done in the North—to return to Dublin.

She travelled to a farm at which she met the man to whom her sister had delivered the dispatch.

"My God, why did you come here!" he cried.

He explained that soldiers had raided the place that afternoon and had captured 3,000 rounds of ammunition in the turf stack.

"In the turf stack," echoed Nora. "The first place they would look! Why did you put it there?"

"I know, Miss Connolly," he answered, "but I am in hiding. I have had no time to see about anything."

He told her that nothing could be done and that he would have to leave. But he asked her to make the place her home as long as she wished to stay.

"I want to find my sister and go to Dublin," said Nora. "I would be ashamed to stay here while the people in Dublin are fighting. Can I get to where my sister is staying to-night?"

"No, your sister took a dispatch to Clogher, and is still there. It is over the mountains. Stay here to-night and you can set out in the morning."

In the middle of the night Nora was awakened by a terrible banging, and a girl ran in.

"Miss Connolly," she cried, "what will we do? They are here again."

"Put on my coat," said Nora. "Then go down and let them in."

"Why should I put on your coat?" said the girl.

"Because there are things in the pockets which I don't want them to find."

Nora also thought of the hundred rounds of ammunition and the revolver in her suitcase. She whipped them out and took them into bed with her.

When the R.I.C. search party entered, they found only a sleepy girl and a harmless suitcase, though their suspicions were aroused by a roll of bandage. They returned a second time.

As soon as they had gone, the girl entered and told Nora she must leave at once. Her mother came in and was equally insistent.

"I am not going to leave here at 2.30 in the morning, in a strange district," said Nora. "I would only fall into the hands of the soldiers or police." She turned her back to them and let them talk on without an answer.

At 6 a.m. she rose and, after a hurried breakfast, she was ready for the road. The girl told her that Clogher was about five miles distant. She walked for hours, carrying her heavy suitcase, growing more

exhausted and weary. She was afraid she had taken the wrong road, but could see no other. At last she met an old man and asked him for Ballygawley—a landmark on the road.

"Daughter dear," he replied, "you are six long weary miles from Ballygawley!"

She trudged on, going a few yards at a time, for she was almost worn out when she started. She was resting by a ditch, hopelessly, when she saw two girls cycling towards her along the road. It was her sister and a friend. They took her suitcase, balanced it on a bicycle, and helped her along. Instead of five miles, the distance was fifteen miles over a bad mountain road.

This walk, however, was just a rehearsal for the big trek from Dundalk to Dublin which the two sisters were faced with when they tried to get to the capital. Only military trains were running beyond Dundalk. They set off hopefully on their fifty miles' tramp. At Dundalk they had to pass a police barracks. They left their suitcases there, too, so as not to arouse suspicion in the villages they passed through. They spent the night in the fields, but, though they wrapped themselves in all their clothing, they could not sleep. In the morning they set off again, along the road to Drogheda. All the time they were thinking and saying how great it would be to tell their father about their adventures, which they had always shared with him. They could not realise how different things would be when they arrived. It was their first rebellion.

They followed the milestones—Dublin, 25 miles—Dublin, 18 miles—it seemed quite near. Nora's feet were burning, and, looking over a hedge, she saw cool brown earth in a field. Pulling off her shoes and stockings, and scrambling through, she sat and thrust her bare feet into the cool, newly-ploughed soil. They both sat dozing when—from the direction of Dublin—there came the slow, sinister boom of big guns. The Rebellion announced itself.

There was no more dozing, and Dublin was eighteen miles away. Nora was dragging her right leg along painfully when a passing motor offered them a lift. The driver, who had come out to Drogheda for bread, took them within six miles of Clontarf.

As they neared Dublin they saw soldiers, with artillery and supply wagons, coming away, and they were troubled. Could it be that the rebels were beaten? They refused to believe this.

When, on Sunday evening, they reached Drumcondra, where they had friends, their faces were burnt red by the sun and their clothes were white with dust. Here they first heard the news of the surrender. Next morning they started out for Dundrum, where their mother was

staying. On the day Nora saw a poster of the *Daily Sketch*, with a photo of her father, and the lettering: "*James Connolly—the Dead Rebel Leader*." By this time she knew he was wounded and a prisoner in Dublin Castle.

Nora found her mother in great distress over the report of Connolly's death. But she was overjoyed to see the girls again. Then a message came saying that Mrs. Connolly could see her husband if she went to Dublin Castle. On the second visit Nora went with her. She saw her father lying in bed, a cage protecting his shattered leg, looking very weak and tired.

"Are you in much pain?" she asked him.

"No," he answered. "But I have been court-martialled to-day and the strain was very great."

She realised later that he knew about his sentence then, though he said nothing. But Nora had lost hope. She knew that they would not hesitate to shoot him now.

A sense of desolation overwhelmed her. She thought of her fruitless journeyings, her weary trudges, and now—this!

"I have done nothing, daddy," she said. "Everything went wrong. I did nothing!"

He drew her down to him and smiled.

"Do you realise, Nora," he said, "that if you hadn't come from the North and told us what you had seen, all this might not have happened at all! You did as much as any of us!"

She had always come to him to be comforted, and he did not fail her now.

On Thursday at midnight they were sent for again. Dublin Castle bristled with armed soldiers.

"Well," he greeted them. "You know what this means!"

"Hasn't it been a full life," he told his wife, as she sobbed, "and isn't this a good end!"

"Don't cry," he said to Nora. "There is nothing to cry about!"

He asked Nora to smuggle out the written statement he had made at his courtmartial. She did so, and it is published in her *Unbroken Tradition*.

He talked to them about going to America, where he thought they would have a better chance. Then they had to leave him. At dawn he was carried out, propped up in a chair, and shot.

Passports were refused to the family, but in August, 1916, Nora succeeded in getting to America. Here she held tremendous meetings, telling what had happened in Easter Week. In Boston she addressed

an enormous overflow meeting, and it was the same everywhere. It took her some time to get used to the idea of policemen running along by her car and jumping up to shake hands with her. She remembered the police in Dublin.

When she arrived in England, on her return, she was served with an order forbidding her to land in Ireland. The Lord Lieutenant wrote: "It is utterly impossible and extremely inadvisable to allow you to return to Ireland." But, by disguising herself as a boy and spending 35 hours in a dark, stuffy fo'castle, she managed to make the crossing from Liverpool.

She was active in the 1918 Election campaign, when Sinn Féin swept the country. She was married not long before the Treaty and, prior to this, was working for the Irish Transport Union in Liberty Hall. During the Treaty struggle she was imprisoned in Mountjoy and Kilmainham gaols. Eventually her release was secured by an application under the Habeas Corpus Act, this decision marking an attempt by the civil courts to re-assert their authority. The Government replied by rushing through the first Public Safety Act. Her husband, Seamus O'Brien, who has also been active in the National struggle, was imprisoned at the same time in Mountjoy. Through all these vicissitudes Nora Connolly has remained loyal to the cause for which so many have suffered imprisonment and faced the firing squad.

HELENA MOLONY

THE most valuable heritage of the Irish Labour movement to-day is the Connolly tradition, and if there is one person who embodies this more than any other, it is Helena Molony, for she worked side by side with Connolly to create it. The Connolly tradition is that point of view which regards true Nationalism and true democracy as being irrevocably linked, or, as Helena Molony put it, that they are two sides of one movement. Like Connolly, she looks back to the time when by Irish law and custom ownership was vested in the clan, and not in the chief, as in the feudal law imposed by England. Consequently, Miss Molony sees that the restoration of Irish independence, the undoing of the Conquest, means the reassertion by the Irish people of the title to their own land and natural resources. The glory of such a conception, which means a frontal attack on poverty and social misery as well as on capitalist greed, shines through all her activities, and this alone would entitle her to rank as one of the most significant figures in the Irish movement of to-day.

"How did you come into the National struggle?" I asked her.

A sudden light came into her eyes.

"I was a young girl dreaming about Ireland," she replied, "when I saw and heard Maud Gonne speaking by the Custom House in Dublin one August evening in 1903. She was a most lovely figure, and she inspired me—as she did many others—with a love of Ireland. To me she epitomised Ireland—the Ireland of the poets and dreamers. I had been reading Douglas Hyde—his history and legends. She gathered all this up and made it real for me. She electrified me and filled me with some of her own spirit. I found in her—as I have found ever since—a mixture of the poetic and practical, for to me the poets are always the most practical. In those days she gave hard practical service to the Irish people, for she succeeded in defeating the proposal that Dublin should present an Address of Loyalty to the King on his visit to the city. To accomplish this—the first time for hundreds of years—was a big thing. She made me want to help, and, encouraged by my brother Frank, I went to join *Ingheana na h-Eireann*. At the offices of