

Casualties Among the Young

EDWARD NEWHOUSE

THE girl at the switchboard said the president of the company was out of town and, confidentially, would continue to be out of town for the duration of the strike. It didn't look like much of a story and I started back to the railroad station. The young Italian organizer who had previously given me the particulars stopped me before strike headquarters and walked part of the way.

We were passing a corner house and he said, "You come up here. This fellow has eight kids. His wife is on the picket line but he ought to be around. I can't stay but you take a look at the place and let him give you an earful."

We went up the wooden stairs and knocked on the door for a long time before a little girl stuck her head out of the window. She said, "My Pop's not home." But when she saw who it was she opened the door and told us he had gone to join the pickets and wouldn't be back until supper-time.

The young Italian said, "Well, I have to beat it but you go in, take a look around before you leave town. Show him the house, Gracie."

The little girl stared after him as he ran down the stairs and then stared at me. She was about six and very dirty and looked at me sidewise as she brushed the straight blonde hair from one eye. "My Pop's not home," she repeated.

When I went into the kitchen she hung back and watched me from the doorway. All they had in the kitchen was the stove and the table and two chairs. Water was running over a pail and a scrubbing brush hung from the sink. A little boy, even younger and dirtier than the girl, came out of the room and smiled at me. He was nude to the waist and plucked persistently at both his nipples.

The little girl said, "Stop that."

I went through a small room that had a couple of mattresses and some blankets on the floor and a picture of Joan Crawford stuck on the wallpaper. In the front room there was another boy, lying in a bed without sheets or a pillowcase. He turned his head toward me. He must have been about nine.

"Hello," I said.

"My Pop's not home," he said in the tone his sister had used. "He won't be home all week."

"I'm not a bill collector. Lie back."

"He came with Ralph," the little girl said.

The boy in bed relaxed a bit but looked at me just as intently as the other two. He was very sallow and seemed to have no eye-

brows at all, only two great eyes and a great shining forehead. The underwear hung around his shoulders in folds.

They were alone in the house and I did not want to ask questions because it wasn't necessary. The younger boy ran to the window-sill and brought me a cast-iron lion with a slot in its head.

"This is my bank," he said, "give me some money."

"Don't give him anything," the sick boy said.

I put a coin into the lion but the kid shook it out skilfully and showed it to the girl, and he said, "I'm gonna buy candy."

They both started to run but the sick boy stopped them and asked to look at the coin and he said, "Buy a box of farina too." Then the other two ran away and he continued to look at me.

"What hurts?" I said.

"Nothing. I'm just sick."

"Why did you ask for farina?"

He brought out a few cardboard labels from under his pillow and he said, "If I collect five more of these I can join a club."

I looked at them and they were torn from a farina box and the club was Uncle Al's Farina Boys. My kid brother had a lot of buttons pinned on his cap and there was a yellow one which had those words on it but I had never known what they stood for.

"What do you do in that club?"

"You get a button and they read your name on the radio."

"Is that all?"

"No, you get a magazine."

"Who's Uncle Al?"

"He reads your name."

I put my hand to his forehead to see if he was running a temperature but it was cool and fragile.

"There's nothing wrong with me, I'm just sick," he said. He shuffled the cardboards and he wouldn't take his eyes from mine. "You gonna wait for my father?"

"No, I have to go now." I turned to go but I saw him stretch out his hand and I didn't know just why but apparently he wanted to shake hands with me. So I shook his hand and bent down and kissed his cheeks, which puzzled him greatly and puzzled me too after I left. It puzzled me so much that I walked in the wrong direction and had to take a trolley back to the railroad station.

I had a difficult time getting the New York number. Heller was on the desk and I could hear him shouting for minutes after he picked up the receiver.

"Hello, hello," he said, "Well?"

I told him. Forty men had been laid off

for union organization and the other men made to do their work. There were kids of fourteen working on floors the inspector never entered. No sanitary or drinking facilities to speak of. Toilets leaked, lighting was bad.

"Go on," Heller said, "Get to the point."

Some of the men had been cut from twenty to twelve dollars. The office manager had got a girl pregnant. Fred Eaton had eight children, one sick in bed, and earned thirteen and a half dollars. The company has no statement to make at this time.

I asked for Schoen, the intelligent rewrite man.

"Schoen?" Heller said, "Schoen? I'll get you Schoen. Maybe you want Walter Winchell, too? I'll send a boy over to The Mirror. Here's Johnny, give him a lead on it and about fifteen lines."

I gave Johnny a lead and tried to think of fifteen lines. I made it twelve lines because my train was pulling in.

I got into the end car with a couple of well-dressed men. There wasn't anybody else in the car except two girls. I saw the men exchange glances and seat themselves opposite the girls, who were attractive, and attractively dressed in traveling outfits and an air of accessible gentility. I did not care to watch the drama unfold. I sat so I would not see them.

We went past great New Jersey industrial units. Sometimes there wasn't a residence or a tree or an animal in sight, just hills of slag and discarded machinery. We were running into a railroad yard near Perth Amboy when another train shot past us, going South. There was a long, shrieking whistle and our train came to a jerky stop. Raritan Bay was visible to the east, shiny in the declining sun and dotted with small craft. Something must have gone wrong in back of our car because several conductors walked swiftly under the windows.

We had been stalled about fifteen minutes before I took the trouble to open a window and see what was up. The conductors and a sizeable crowd were gathered along the tracks about a hundred yards back and people were running toward the spot from the beach and from the other cars. I got out too and ran, feeling for the folded-up copy paper in my pocket. The crowd was silent and helpless. They saw the paper and pencil in my hand and made way.

There were three of them but two had been injured, only, and carried away. The other boy was dead and lay with his head against the southbound track. One of the women had seen the whole thing and kept repeating the details, monotonously and with

astounding calmness. She had seen all three, digging for clams, and kidded them about watching the squirts. All three, but she only knew the Jennings boy. She'd been on her way home and she saw both trains coming, clear as day, and she hollered too and maybe they heard, maybe they didn't, but they stepped out of the way of one plumb into the other, right straight into the other. They'd been digging clams for supper, see them clams scattered along the cinder.

I took down their names and nature of their injuries mechanically. The Jennings boy was dead. You wouldn't have thought it looking at him from one angle, it was necessary to see the back of his head. Most of the crowd was looking at the back of his head. They scarcely said anything and moved around stealing glances at each other. They seemed stupefied and callous although it might not have been callousness at all. After a while

they were all gathered on the side where they could see the crushed skull. The woman who had seen it all repeated the details.

From where I stood the boy was just a pale and ragged child sleeping. He had the yellow button of Uncle Al's Farina Boys pinned to his shirt but there was nothing notable about that, every third boy carried it in those days. Instead of being large, his forehead was narrow and covered with moist strands of brown hair. There would have been no sense in shaking his hand or kissing his cheek.

I began walking away slowly but then I started running with the pencil and the paper in my hand. Faces from the windows asked me what happened but I ran until I got to the engine and both the engineer and the fireman were leaning out.

I said, "What's your name?"

"Thomas O'Flaherty," he said. "This is the first accident I had in eighteen years. I

heard the other fellow's whistle, but I didn't even have a chance to blow mine. Those kids were right on top of me. I got kids of my own, why did God have to do this to me?"

I didn't take any of that down. A man came from the other side of the engine and said, "Sorry, Tom, you'll have to start now."

I saw the conductors getting on again. The thing to do then would have been to go around to the hospital and all three homes and ask questions and call the paper and ask for Schoen, the intelligent rewrite man. Heller would have slugged that for page one in the late edition but I thought let them pick it up from the wire service. I ran back to the car where I had left my hat. I thought let them pick it up from the goddam teletype. I felt winded sitting in my old seat and the pencil was still in my hand but some of the copy paper had dropped away and I crumpled the rest and threw it out of the window.

When Ireland Revolted

BRIAN O'NEILL

This Easter week marks the twentieth anniversary of the 1916 uprising in Dublin. The rising has more than an Irish interest; for it was the first people's revolt against the imperialist war of 1914-1918. Lenin was one of the few Socialist leaders outside of Ireland who understood its full significance. He hailed Easter week in Dublin as the beginning of the world crisis of imperialism and an indication that in the struggle of the workers for a Socialist world, the oppressed colonies would be their powerful allies.

The rising began on Easter Monday, April 24, when little more than 1,000 men, armed only with rifles and revolvers, took possession of strategic buildings in Dublin and set up an Irish republic free of British rule.

Three streams of Irish thought were personified in the leaders of the revolt. Padraic Pearse, a poet of rare quality, represented the cultural renaissance of Ireland that had taken such forms as the Gaelic League, the Abbey Theater which "went to the people" for its subjects, and the so-called "Celtic Twilight" school, led by W. B. Yeats, John M. Synge, etc.

Thomas Clarke represented the militant nationalism of the Irish bourgeois democrats, organized, after the defeat of the Fenians in 1867, into the Irish Republican Brotherhood; and James Connolly, greatest of Marxians writing in English at the time, represented the working class and revolutionary Socialism.

The rising lasted from Easter Monday to the Saturday following. For two days the insurgents were supreme, but then the British government poured 20,000 fully equipped troops into Dublin, whose tanks and heavy

artillery did great damage and compelled the Irish leaders to surrender.

The imperialists took a savage vengeance. Connolly, Pearse, Clarke, Sean McDermott, Eamon Ceannt, the poets Joseph Plunkett and Thomas MacDonagh and eight other Irish leaders were court-martialed and shot; Roger Casement was hanged in London, over 2,000 others were tried and deported.

Defeated though it was, the rising opened a new phase in Ireland's revolutionary struggle for freedom. Brian O'Neill, a brilliant young Marxian of the new revolutionary generation in Ireland, has completed a study of the Easter revolt which is being published in Dublin this week. The following chapter from his book describes the military aspects of the revolt and analyzes the political factor that was perhaps the chief cause of its defeat.—THE EDITORS.

AT 9:30 on Tuesday morning Pearse wrote a statement to be issued in Irish War News, the little printed paper published from the General Post Office for the first and last time that afternoon. He wrote sanguinely.

"At the moment of writing the Republican forces hold their positions and the British forces nowhere have broken through. There has been heavy and continuous fighting for nearly twenty-four hours, the casualties of the enemy being much more numerous than those on the Republican side. The Republican forces everywhere are fighting with splendid gallantry. The populace of Dublin are plainly with the Republic, and the officers and men are everywhere cheered as they march through the streets."

Pearse was anticipating when he said there

had been twenty-four hours of continuous fighting. As he wrote he could hear the chatter of machine guns mingling with the crack of rifles from the south of the city; the second day was beginning briskly.

The British forces had evolved a plan by Tuesday morning. In the darkness, at 3.45 a. m., a troop train arrived at Kingsbridge Station from the Curragh, and with it Brigadier-General W. H. M. Lowe, of the Reserve Cavalry Brigade, to take command. General Lowe had already large forces at his disposal:

2,300 men of the Dublin Garrison.

1,500 dismounted cavalry of the Curragh Mobile Column.

840 men of the 25th Irish Reserve Infantry Brigade.

A battery of four 18-pounders of the Royal Field Artillery from Athlone.

Lowe decided to break through to Trinity College, in College Green. A small garrison held Trinity for the Government; with his position strengthened there, and a clear line of communication established from Kingsbridge and the Castle he would be able to move up troops into the centre of the city and cut through the Republican network. The College dominated the whole centre of the city.

Small bodies of British troops got through during the night and took up position on the roofs of the Shelbourne Hotel and the United Services Club, overlooking the north side of Stephen's Green.

It had been a raw, cheerless night for Michael Mallin's men in the Green. Sentries stood at all the gates; the remainder had spent the night in the summer-house or in the trenches dug under the shrubbery.