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BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21

STATEMENT BY WITNESS

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 200

Witness

Rev. Fr. Aloysius, O.F.M. Cap.,

Capuchin Friary,

Church St.,

Dublin.

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ORIGINAL

W.S. 200

The attached account of the Rising in 1916 is the text of a lecture delivered by me in 1944 to the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union in Liberty Hall.

It was based on notes written by me at the time of the events which they describe and it contains all the first-hand information I have of that period.

These notes have already been published in the Capuchin Annual of 1942.

I have since been informed that my statement that de Valera and his men arrived in St. Patrick's Park for the surrender, which was based on information received at the time, is incorrect.

Signed:

J. A. Coyne P.F.M. Coy

Date:

28 Feb. 1949

Witness

J. A. Coyne

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21
BUREAU STATALE MILITAIRE 1913-21
NO. W.S. 200

Memories of Easter Week 1916

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1513-21
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I have been asked to recall for you some memories of a stirring period in the story of our country. There are amongst you those who could tell that story more interestingly and from more intimate knowledge, because they were in closer touch with the events of Easter Week. For that reason I hesitated to comply with the request, and I am here simply because I could not refuse to do a favour when asked by men who on many occasions had shown themselves kindly and courteous to me and had gone to a great deal of trouble and inconvenience to help me. It is, too, a pleasure for me to be with you. As a Priest I am the minister, that is the servant of all classes - or perhaps rather I should say, I know no class, for every soul is equally precious. But my ministry has been chiefly cast amongst the working class of Dublin, and I am proud to think that I may call them my friends: I have always felt at home with them.

And now that I come to tell my tale, such as it is, I realise how rapidly history is made. The great Encyclical 'Rerum Novarum' is acclaimed the world over as the 'Workers' Charter' - and yet how few now living can recall the death of Pius IX, and the election of Leo XIII - the author of the immortal encyclical! It seems but yesterday to me. The statue of Charles Stuart Parnell adorns your principal thoroughfare, and to the younger generation it is an ancient land mark. I can remember the first great victory of the man and his triumphant entry into Cork when he was hailed as the 'uncrowned King of Ireland': Then there was the glorious epoch when a united people stood enthusiastically behind the solid ranks of the Irish Party in its struggle for the independence of Ireland - then the rise of the Sinn Fein Movement and the beginning of the Volunteers and the Citizen Army: And then to come to the period with

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which we are concerned tonight, the Rising and its sequel : this is 1944 and it means that we are 28 years removed from historic 1916. It means that any man 28 years or under was not born, and that over that age many were but babies or little more than infants and incapable of understanding or appreciating what was happening around them. And so I am talking to ^{some} ~~many~~ whose only acquaintance with the events of the time must be through newspaper chronicles - in many instances inaccurate and misleading - or through talks such as this tonight. I am not tonight concerned with the political aspect or implications of the events - but with the historical aspect only. History in years to come will be constructed from various contacts pieced together into a whole and with the important events sifted from the trivial and insignificant. It was my office as Priest that brought me into touch with the happenings of the period. I shall follow notes which at the time I jotted down as an aide-memoire and ^{which} ~~wich~~ later appeared in the Capuchin Annual - Indeed I can give you little more - just the notes expanded here and there.

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Circumstances created so many contacts between Church Street and the participants in the Easter Week Rising that ^{people} ~~many~~ were led to think that we were in the secret and were aware of the preparations. But that is not so. The truth is that it all came on us as a surprise, as it did on most people. On Sunday night the Opening Concert of the Father Mathew Feis was held in the Father Mathew Hall. The House was full and I remember well how Miss Joan Burke sang the Minstrel Boy with a spirit that electrified the large audience - the atmosphere seemed charged and I rarely saw ^{a gathering} ~~an audience~~ so enthusiastic. Of course there had been rumours of all sorts in the City that day. There had been preparations for a Parade of Volunteers and it had been called off; and that was enough to account for the tense spirit and the pitch of enthusiasm that characterised the meeting. Perhaps some of those present were in the know - perhaps some of the artistes had an inkling or suspicion of something. I do not know.

Next morning - Easter Monday - I walked over to Gloucester Street to say Mass at the Convent. On my way I noticed some Fianna scouts on bicycles, -and, later, passing to Gloucester Street, I met Padraig Pearse and another Volunteer on bicycles. They rode by without recognising me - they were evidently intent on reaching their objective in time. Padraig Pearse wore a loose overcoat or makintosh which covered some baggage. They had come into Gloucester Street from Rutland Street, I understand, and the volunteer who accompanied Padraig, I was later informed was Willie Pearse. I at once concluded that there was something in the air - probably they had decided to attempt the parade in spite of the authorities. On my way back to Church Street I passed several individual volunteers - some on bicycles.

Shortly after 12 o'clock as we were at luncheon we were startled by rifle fire; and very soon word was brought to the Friary that a little boy had been shot near the Father Mathew Hall, and a wounded man was also brought to the Friary, and a number of terrified children crying came to us for shelter. By 1.30 p.m. barricades had been erected in Church Street and were manned by Volunteers. The Father Mathew Feis was in session and the children were hastily got under the stage for safety until it was judged wise to send them home. An Australian who happened to be in Dublin passing through Church Street stopped to speak to me - I was standing at the Church Gate. He told me that he was a doctor and he offered his services to render any assistance needed. He attended to the wounded man who had been brought to the Friary. Towards night volleys of firing became more frequent - and at midnight

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it became so violent that it seemed to be at our very gates. The volunteers rang the house bell to tell us that the military were actually in Bow Street. They were mistaken however. What had happened was that an attack was made by volunteers on the quays on a military detachment with ammunition.

On Tuesday morning volleys of rifle fire were frequent. A request was made by the Richmond Hospital for the services of some of the Fathers as wounded men were arriving

there. A few of the Fathers went and took up residence at the Hospital for the remainder of the week. *The doctors and nurses, and Sr. Charity of S.V. de P. then arrived & N. P. Union were most anxious in their attention to the sick. And ministers & doctors know the danger & keep the workhouse*
The Volunteers took over the Father Mathew Hall as a hospital for *Dr. Hughes & O'Mahon* *Provision*

first aid, and Cumann na mban girls attended to emergency cases. Some of our Fathers were also constantly in attendance. Serious cases were removed to the Richmond.

Rumours had been current the previous day that the G.P.O. and Castle had been taken by the Volunteers and that the Magazine (Powder) in the Park had been blown up. *News* had reached us of the death of Sean Connolly who had been shot at the City Hall or Castle.

The Volunteers took possession of the newly built (but unfinished) Corporation Houses in Church Street. The windows were protected with sandbags.

Next day (Wednesday) the wildest rumours were in circulation, but no incident of special interest was reported. The rifle firing and machine gun firing *was* continued through the day. On Thursday very extensive fires could be seen and as far as we could locate them they were principally in O'Connell Street, and G.P.O. and Clery's seemed to be involved. The rifle and machine gun volleys were almost continuous.

The Volunteers had taken prisoners - soldiers from Linenhall Barracks and a D.M.P. man, and had them working at filling sandbags in the Father Mathew Hall. On Friday the machine gun firing was continuous and there were many explosions from bombs or hand grenades. W

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We heard ^{the} heavy boom of cannon from the direction of the Bay. This was Friday and owing to difficulties of transport food as running short and it was difficult to obtain milk. The Volunteers worked very hard to bring up provisions. And I should here recall the fearless conduct of the young Fianna who braved all danger and kept communications going between various posts and rendered valuable assistance in maintaining supplies. A sad occurrence was reported today from the North Dublin Union - Two young fellows climbed to top of the clock tower only to be caught by snipers from Broadstone and fatally wounded.

The firing was very intense all through Friday night and without cessation until 3 to 4 p.m. on Saturday afternoon. Many explosions, and many buildings could be seen blazing. The number of wounded was increasing and many cases were brought to

the Father Mathew Hall. By 4 p.m. the Military were as far as the junction of King Street and Church Street and were firing on the Church Street barricades. The

Gumann na mBan girls at the Father Mathew Hall were very excited and naturally feared for the poor wounded under their care. A message had been sent under a white flag

to acquaint the military that the Hall was being used as a hospital but it had no effect. [Father Augustine despatched Michael O'Folghludha with a white flag to se-

cure a doctor but he was detained by the military. A second messenger bearing a white flag and red cross flag and a note to the Commander was sent. In the note

Father Augustine informed the Commander that he was a Priest and asked for the favour of an interview at the barrier as the Hall was used as hospital and had several very se-

rious cases. The reply was oral: The military would grant none of the amenities

of war but would treat them as outlaws and rebels. [The position was desperate and

Father Augustine and myself decided that there was no option but to go ourselves

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and seek an interview with the Officer in command, accompanied by Volunteer Doyle who carried a white flag, we passed the barrier and between two soldiers with fixed bayonets we went to North King Street until we reached opposite the new houses near Lurgan Street where we were told we should wait the arrival of Colonel Taylor who was in charge. While we waited there three large companies of soldiers marched by and an armed car and an ambulance stood ^{near} by. The Colonel then arrived and listened to our statement: he made no answer but unceremoniously turned and walked off. A long time elapsed - to us it seemed an hour, so anxious were we for the safety of the poor patients in the Father Mathew Hall. Then we saw Col. Taylor at the corner of Church Street, and we approached him. He very coolly informed us that a truce had been arranged. While with the Colonel Miceal O'Foghludha came to complain that the soldiers had prevented him from going for a doctor. Just as he was speaking some shots rang out from a house between N. King St. and N. Brunswick Street; and turning to Foley Col. Taylor brutally shouted at him to stop the firing or he would shoot him, and ordering him to the other side of the street, he kept him covered by his revolver. Poor Foley exhausted and hoarse tried to tell the Volunteers that there was a truce and asked them to cease firing. Father Augustine stepped forward and appealed to them, too, and informed them that Col. Taylor had told us that following advice to surrender from Pearse, a truce had been made. The Volunteers believed it was only a ruse of the Military and would not believe it. However they agreed to keep the truce for the night on our undertaking to see Pearse in the morning at the earliest moment and satisfy ourselves and them of the genuineness of Pearse's message. We then returned to Father Mathew Hall and gave word to those in charge of the wounded. Arrangements were at once made to transfer the wounded to Richmond Hospital.

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And now we come to the second chapter of the tragic story - the Sunday of the Surrenders. Father Augustine and myself celebrated Mass about 7 O'C and after a cup of coffee and a very light meal of bread only we walked to the Castle to seek a permit to see Pearse. We had an interview with Brigadier General Lowe who was in command of the British Military forces. He received us very courteously and promptly granted us the permit to see Pearse at Arbour Hill. The General suggested that we should see Connolly also as he was responsible for the Citizen army, and he took us to the room in the Castle where Connolly was a patient. In our presence he asked Connolly if his signature to the letter advising surrender was genuine. Connolly's reply was: "Yes, to prevent needless slaughter" He added that he spoke only for his own men. General Lowe then placed his car at our disposal, but he appealed to us to proceed to Jacob's Factory after we had seen Pearse and assured the Church Street Volunteers of the genuineness of the message. He told us that the Volunteers in Jacob's were still holding out and that he had not succeeded in getting the message to them. It would, he said, be a great charity if we could do this as otherwise he would be obliged to attack and demolish the factory with great loss of life.

We drove to Arbour Hill, saw Pearse, and were assured by him that he had signed the letter. The text of the message was;

" In order to prevent the further slaughter of Dublin citizens, and in the hope of saving our followers, now surrounded and hopelessly outnumbered, the members of the Provisional Government present at Headquarters have agreed to an unconditional surrender, and the commandants of the various districts in the City and country will order their commands to lay down arms.

P.H.Pearse

29th. April 1916.

It was signed by J. Connolly with the note that he signed only for men under his command.

We now learned that Father Columbus had already obtained a copy of the message and had brought it to the notice of the Volunteers in the district and that they had surrendered.

We then proceeded in the direction of Jacob's, and leaving car and chauffeur a little above Whitefriars St. Priory we went on foot to the Factory. We were admitted through Peter Street entrance and brought to Commandant Thomas McDonagh. Miss O'Farrell had already arrived with a copy of Pearse's letter

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Here we met Major McBride who said that he would oppose any attempt at surrender. McDonagh said that as Pearse and Co nolly were under arrest they were not free men and the letter written by them in custody could have no weight. He was next in command now that the others were under arrest, and he could not enter into negotiations with anyone except the General Officer commanding the British Military. He was prepared to meet him anywhere for parley - in the Factory or elsewhere. He said that they had ample provisions and could hold out for some weeks. McDonagh believed that a Peace Conference in Europe was on the point of being summoned and was convinced that Ireland would command attention and a right to participate if it were a belligerent. We undertook to convey his message to Gen. Lowe, and at his request we accompanied him to Infirmary Road where he consulted Gen. Maxwell. After consultation with Maxwell he informed us that he was prepared to meet McDonagh and asked us to convey a letter to McDonagh in which he stated that he was willing to meet him at the N. East Corner of S. Patrick's Park at 12 or 1 o'clock, and undertook to give McDonagh safe conduct back to the Factory.

We accompanied McDonagh and another volunteer to St. Patrick's Park at hour appointed and Gen. Lowe and McDonagh met and conversed for some time on footpath and then withdrew to Gen. Lowe's Car in which they continued the parley.

The parley over, McDonagh returned to us and told us that he had decided to advise surrender and that there was a truce until 3 p.m. Meantime he was to consult the men at Jacob's, South Dublin Union, and Marrowbone Lane and give final decision to General Lowe at 3 p.m. We then thought to return to Church St. but Gen. Lowe begged us to see the whole thing through as any hitch might be fatal and he was anxious to prevent further bloodshed. He placed his motor at our service and with McDonagh we returned to Jacob's. A council of officers was held there. Perhaps I should here remark that we took no ~~place~~ part in the conference and that all the decisions were the free decisions of the men involved.

Our next business was to accompany McDonagh to the S.D. Union. At Basin Lane we got out of car which remained at the barrier and continued our journey on foot.

At the Union we met Eamonn Geannt. The officers had a consultation and decided to surrender. Returning on foot to barricade at Basin Lane McDonagh, a Volunteer, Father Augustine and myself we very nearly got a hot reception. One of the British soldiers fired at us - the four of us escaped, I don't say because the soldier was a poor aim, but because, we were told, he had a drop of drink ;

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One of the officers hastened to apologise and told us that the soldier was put under arrest.

THE SURRENDER .

At 3 p.m. we were again at St. Patrick's Park . Thomas McDonagh taking off his belt handed it with his revolver to Gen. Lowe. It was then agreed that McDonagh should return and arrange the surrenders at Jacob's, Marrowbone Lane, and S.D. Union. This time we were accompanied by Gen. Lowe's son, and another officer and first we went to Marrowbone Lane. I remained outside with motor and there was considerable delay. I understand that there was some difficulty in persuading the company to surrender as they were well fortified and had ample provisions. After that we went again to S.D. Union. E. Ceannt speaking to one of the officers told him that it would surprise him to see the very small number that had held the place.

And now we are back at Jacob's. The Volunteers were lined up in basement prepared to leave. Fr. Augustine was taking messages from them for their relatives. Fr. Monahan had arrived to offer his services. Suddenly we heard a tremendous crash and sounds like bombs exploding , and a volunteer came to tell us that the looters had smashed the window and were breaking in to the offices at Bishop Street side. Fr. Monahan and myself went at once and with difficulty got to the scene as a water main had been burst and the place was flooded. The looters were busy and we found them getting out into the street with the stolen goods. I stood at the window and addressed them - if ever I managed to put fire into my words it was then. Side by side with the manly and straightforward conduct of those who had borne the brunt of the trying week I thought their conduct wretched and despicable and I did not mince my words. The result was that the crowd promised to leave and go to their homes and the looters -at least a goodly number of them - threw back the looted articles.

and undertook to convey messages to their friends

Father Augustine and myself said goodbye to the men at Jacob's and withdrew.

When we reached St. Patrick's Park we saw E. Ceannt's contingent arrive from S.D. Union and ground arms. E. de Valera with his forces also arrived. Amongst the forces were several girls - some armed.

And now we were glad to get back to Church Street - glad to get something to eat - it was about 7 p.m. and we had been fasting from early morning.

This concludes the second chapter. And now I have to recall a sad week -the week of the Executions.

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On 30th. April and succeeding days prisoners were removed from Richmond Barracks and transferred by cattle boats from North Wall to English and Scottish Jails -Knutsford, Stafford, Wakefield, Wandsworth - and as they marched silently along the quays they were on some occasions hooted by the crowd. In a few days, however, the executions were to change the attitude of the people and anger was to stir them against the Government for the brutal treatment of brave men and admiration for the heroism of the men who had offered their lives for Ireland was to seize on all.

THE EXECUTIONS

It was the first week of May. Early in the morning of Monday the son of Superintendent Dunne D.M.P. called to Church Street with a message from Father Murphy the Military Chaplain to the effect that he would be glad if I could call to the Castle as James Connolly a prisoner and patient in hospital had expressed a wish to see me. I went right away with young Mr Dunne and Father Murphy told me that he had made all necessary arrangements and had the required permissions for me. With Captain Stanley R.A.M.C. I went to the ward or room in which Connolly was a patient. At the door the sentry challenged Capt. Stanley saying that his instructions were to allow no one to see the prisoner unless with special permit. Capt. Stanley then went to seek the necessary permit. The sentry asked me if I were Father Aloysius and said that I could go in. However, I delayed as the nurses were engaged with the patient, and meanwhile Capt. Stanley arrived back with his permit. We entered the room together. Two soldiers were on guard with rifles and fixed bayonets. I protested and insisted that I should be allowed to see the patient alone. I was informed that it could not be done. I asked Capt. Stanley if he was a Catholic, and he said he was not. Well, I said, perhaps you cannot understand the position. Confession is a serious and a secret function. I cannot go on with the men present - I must have privacy. I have not spoken to Connolly before and do not know but he may not be keen in hearing. In any case I must feel satisfied that he can speak to me and I to him without danger of being over heard. Captain Stanley said that he had no power to make other arrangements and I suggested that we should see Father Murphy. On the way we met Gen. Lowe and Capt. Stanley told him about the situation. The General said he was sorry but it was regulation. Well, I said, I have given my word that I am on no political mission and am not going to use the opportunity for any political purpose - that I am acting only as a minister of religion - as a Priest. If my word as a Priest cannot be accepted, then he had better get some other Priest - I should refuse to undertake the duty if he could not give me the privacy I asked for. The General said he had no doubt about my word - but it was the rule governing such cases - I could help the prisoner to escape - that is the way the regulations looked at it - or if Connolly attempted to escape I might not be strong enough to prevent it. My answer was that I 'd not interfere - it was n't my job. If they could not make provision for such an event without having soldiers actually in the room - I

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officers remarking that ' they were the cleanest and bravest lot of boys he had ever met'. Again it is a pleasure to acknowledge goodness whenever and wherever it is met, and I must here record another act of humanity and kindheartedness on the part of Lord Powerscourt. Meeting me at the Castle on the occasion of one of my visits to James Connolly he asked me if I could visit or get one of the Fathers to visit the wife of one of the prisoners - Wm. Halpin of the Citizen army. The poor fellow, he said, was anxious about the wife as she was in a delicate state of health when he was leaving home. Halpin, he told me, had been taken in an exhausted condition from a chimney and it would be a help and comfort to him if we could reassure him about his wife's health. I undertook to visit Mrs Halpin and Powerscourt said I could see the prisoner afterwards and at any time I wished.

This brings me to TUESDAY 2nd May. I had seen the Parish Priest of SS. Michael and John's the previous evening and I arranged to bring Holy Communion to James Connolly, and on the morning of Tuesday James Connolly received Holy Communion.

At 11 a.m. Tuesday Father Augustine and myself were at Headquarters of Gen. Maxwell by appointment and had an interview with him. We availed of the opportunity to speak of the honourable and clean records of the men who had been engaged in the struggle. But we were given no information - simply thanked for being instrumental in preventing further bloodshed.

I had just gone to bed - fairly exhausted and expecting a good rest when I was called to learn that a military car was at the gate and a letter was handed to me telling me that the Prisoner Pearse desired to see me and I had permission to see him; and that failing me he could see any other Capuchin Father. With that I accompanied the military and we drove in the direction of Charlemont Bridge. The sniping from the roofs was so fierce that the car did not venture to proceed farther and turning back we went direct to Kilmainham. The soldiers had told us that they had a couple of calls to make. Later we heard that the proposed calls were to Mrs McDonagh and Mrs Pearse whom they had intended bringing to the prison before the executions.

At Kilmainham I learned that Thomas McDonagh had also asked for my ministrations. I spent some hours between the two cells and the preparation these two men made to meet death was simply inspiring and edifying. When I met Pearse I said ' I am sure you will be glad to know that I gave Holy Communion to James Connolly this

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morning' ' I can't forget the fervour with which, looking up to heaven, he said
 "THANK GOD. IT IS THE ONE THING I WAS ANXIOUS ABOUT."

I heard the confessions of Pearse and McDonagh and gave them both Holy Communion. They received the M.B. Sacrament with intense devotion and spent the time at their disposal in prayer. They were happy - no trace of fear or anxiety. Pearse had written some notes for his mother. He said that he knew I could not take them, nor would he wish me to do so, but would be glad if I could ask the officer in charge to have them conveyed to his mother. The officer assured me that he would have his wishes carried out. Between 2 and 3 a.m. all visitors were ordered to leave. I thought that it would be my right to remain to the end. But the officer said I should leave.- Insisting that the order could not include the clergyman I requested him to phone Headquarters, and having done so, or at least having told me that he had done so, he said the order was confirmed and that there was to be no exception. I was grieved that I was not permitted to be by the side of the men to the end. But I felt at any rate that I was leaving them in the best dispositions, and when I reached Church Street I offered Mass for them.

In the morning of Wednesday about 9.30 I called to Kilmainham. Thomas McDonagh's sister - Sr. Francesca, had left with him a rosary beads which was a cherished heirloom in the family, and I had promised to see it was not lost. I took the occasion to lodge an official complaint and protest. I said that in every civilised country the clergyman was permitted to remain with the prisoner, to be present at the execution and administer Extreme Unction. The protest had its effect, and at the later executions the Priest was allowed to remain.

On Wednesday morning later I drove out to see Mrs McDonagh to break the news to her, and also to St. Enda's to break the news to Mrs Pearse. Naturally I did not think there would be any further executions, and I told Mrs Pearse that I believed Willie would be spared. " No, she said, I believe they will put him to death, too. They were inseparable. Willie would never be happy to live without Pat."

That same night a message came to the effect that some of the Fathers would be required - and Willie Pearse, Plunkett, Daly, and O'Hanrahan were executed. On Friday morning Major McBride was executed and attended also by one of our Fathers.

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On Friday 5th May Major J. M. B. was
executed

SUNDAY 7 May. A priest called early in the afternoon of Sunday 7th. May to

(JOHN DILLON) beg me to do what I could to stop the executions. He suggested
that I should see John D. Nugent M.P. for College Green Division

I called to Nugent and he said that he would be only too glad to do anything
possible and he was sure that John Dillon would gladly give any assistance;

he would get in touch with Dillon. Later in the evening he called to Church

Street to tell me that John Dillon ~~wished~~ wished very much to see me. I took

a car to N. St. Georges St and had a talk with Mr Dillon. He said that he disagreed

with the policy of the men and feared they had put back the Home Rule Movement for

years. But, he said, in spite of all that he admired their courage and respected

their convictions. He had always had esteem and admiration for Patrick Pearee. They

were all Irishmen, he said and brave Irishmen. Anything he could do to prevent fur-

ther executions he certainly would do. He took my car and drove straight to the

Castle and got through a telegram to John Redmond at Westminster. On his way back

from the Castle he called to Church St. to let me know what he had done. He asked

me if I thought he should cross to London. I thought it wiser he should remain for

the present and keep Redmond au courant with how things were shaping here.

That same night we got word that there were to be four more executions -and on

MONDAY morning Ramonn Ceannt, Gen. Colbert Sean Houston and M.L. Mallin were

executed and were attended by Fathers Augustine and Albert. I

I went to Dillon again immediately I got word and he was horrified. I said that

I was now convinced that he should cross to London and raise hell in the house.

He could not cross next morning but assured me that he would do so at the first

possible moment. In fact he did so on Tuesday or Wednesday for Thursday morning's papers reported that he had moved the adjournment of the House to discuss the executions and that Asquith undertook to give opportunity for discussion on the following night, promising that meanwhile there would be no more executions.

In the afternoon of THURSDAY I called to see Connolly at the Castle. He seemed very feverish and told me that he had not slept the previous night. I suggested that I should call again in the morning to hear his confession and give him Holy Communion again. He thanked me but said he would not like to put me to the trouble of coming again in the morning when I had so kindly come that evening. When I insisted that it would be no trouble - that in any case I should come in the morning to give him H. Communion and I could hear his confession before that, he thanked me again and said he would be glad as he really felt very unwell just then. I left him, but a very uneasy feeling took possession of me. I asked for Captain Stanley and after a long wait was told that they had searched everywhere and could not find him

on Tuesday 9th May it was announced that Thomas Kent (Coole, near Fermoy Colerick) was executed and on Thursday 11th May, Samson De Valera, and Thomas Ashe were sentenced to death but the sentence was commuted to penal servitude for life.

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and could not find him. I left but when I reached the Castle gates the same uneasiness troubled me - I simply could not go on. So returning to the Castle I succeeded in seeing Capt. Stanley. I asked him if there was any danger of any thing happening that night. He assured me that nothing could happen, for, he said, you saw in the papers that Asquith promised there would be no executions pending the Debate which is on tonight. But about 9 O.C - Stanley was at Church Street to say that my services would be needed about 2 .am. next morning (Friday) . He was not at liberty to say more, but he knew that I'd understand what it meant.

At 1 a.m. the car came for me. I heard Connolly's Confession and gave him Holy Communion again. Then I left while he was being given a light meal. I had a long talk with Stanley in the Castle Yard. He told me that he had been very much impressed by Connolly, and that Surgeon Tobin had been very struck too by his character. He told me an amusing story he had from Surgeon Tobin. I don't know if I ought to narrate it.

Now the time appointed - Connolly was to be taken to Kilmainham. I had a few words. I said that the men who would execute him were soldiers - probably they knew nothing about him - and like soldiers would simply obey orders and fire - And I wanted him to feel no anger against them - but to say as Our Lord said on Calvary - "Father, forgive them" and to say a prayer for them. ' I do, Father, he answered - I respect every man who does his duty."

James Connolly was then brought down to the car and laid on a stretcher in it. I sat in the ambulance car with him - and said a last word to him before they took him from the car in Kilmainham Yard. He was put sitting on a chair. And the order was given. They fired and Father Eugene McCarthy who had been in attendance on Sean McDermott earlier, went over and anointed Connolly. I had stood just behind the firing line. It was a scene I should not ask to witness again. I had got to know Connolly - to wonder at his strength of character and marvellous power of concentration. I had got to regret that I had not known him long - and now I had to say goodbye - All I could do was to return with a heavy heart and to offer the Holy Sacrifice for his soul. Now I thank God that I knew him.

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I have little more to say. Friday morning's papers reported a sensational speech by John Dillon in the House of Commons. It was a fierce attack on the British Government for the brutal treatment of

I have little more to say. Friday morning's papers reported a sensational speech by John Dillon in the House of Commons. It was a fierce attack on the brutal conduct of the British authorities: 'It is not murderers who are being executed' he said, 'but men who fought a clean - a brave fight.' The Prime Minister rose and his reply startled the House. He announced that he was crossing himself that very night to investigate. Evidently word was conveyed to the Castle to have McDermott and Connolly out of the way before his arrival. Who was responsible I don't know. I visited Richmond Barracks on Friday to see the prisoners and, amongst others chatted with Sean T. O'Kelly, Lawrence O'Neill (Lord Mayor, and my old friend Alderman Tom Kelly, and got an account of Asquith's visit from them. I understand there was some unusual breakfast fare - rashers and eggs as well as my memory serves me. The prisoners were not impressed. I am afraid, neither was I.

I have told my tale. I have narrated facts that came under my own personal observation. It is a small contribution to the story of our country - and no history of Ireland can be written without its chapter of the events of Easter Week and the sequel. The executions had rallied the whole nation behind the memories of the men who died and the leadership of their comrades who survived. I do not intend to express any views concerning the sad days of civil war and bitter strife that divided homes and sundered

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lifelong friendships. Let us try to forget what is painful - let us remember what is heartening and inspiring. We are a small nation but an ancient and a glorious one.

If we have divergences of view let us calmly discuss and sincerely re^lesolve, and let the interests of Ireland, our common country, prevail over class differences or political opinions. God has preserved us from the terrible experiences of the nations that are today locked in the bloody and inhuman conflict of the present senseless war. God grant we may never forget our national and our religious struggles and triumphs and may the heritage of these sacred memories deepen the attachment of the Youth and of future generations to God and Fatherland.

MEMORIES OF EASTER WEEK, 1916. BY
 REV. FATHER ALOYSIUS, O.F.M. Cap. No. W.S.

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21

BURO STAIRE MILEATA 1913-21

I have been asked to recall for you some memories of a stirring period in the story of our country. There are amongst you those who could tell that story more interestingly and from more intimate knowledge, because they were in closer touch with the events of Easter Week. For that reason I hesitated to comply with the request, and I am here simply because I could not refuse to do a favour when asked by men who, on many occasions, had shown themselves kindly and courteous to me, and had gone to a great deal of trouble and inconvenience to help me. It is, too, a pleasure for me to be with you. As a priest I am the minister, that is, the servant of all classes - or perhaps rather I should say, I know ^{no} class, for every soul is equally precious. But my ministry has been chiefly cast amongst the working class of Dublin, and I am proud to think that I may call them my friends; I have always felt at home with them.

And now I come to tell my tale, such as it is. I realise how rapidly history is made. The great Encyclical "Rerum Novarum" is acclaimed the world over as the "Workers' Charter" - and yet how few now living can recall the death of Pius IX, and the election of Leo XIII - the author of the immortal encyclical. It seems but yesterday to me. The statue of Charles Stuart Parnell adorns your principal thoroughfare, and to the younger generation it is an ancient landmark. I can remember the first great victory of the man and his triumphant entry into Cork when he was hailed as "the uncrowned king of Ireland". Then there was the glorious epoch when a united people stood enthusiastically behind the solid united ranks of the Irish Party in its struggle for the independence of Ireland - then the rise of the Sinn Fein Movement and the beginning of the Volunteers and the Citizen Army; and then to come to the period with which we are concerned tonight, the Rising and its sequel; this is 1944 and it means that we are

28 years removed from historic 1916. It means that any man 28 years or under was not born and that over that age many were but babies or little more than infants and incapable of understanding or appreciating what was happening around them. And so I am talking to some whose only acquaintance with the events of the time must be through newspaper chronicles - in many instances inaccurate and misleading - or through talks such as this tonight. I am not tonight concerned with the political aspect or implications of the events - but with the historical aspect only. History in years to come will be constructed from various contacts pieced together into a whole and with the most important events sifted from the trivial and insignificant. It was my office as Priest that brought me into touch with the happenings of the period. I shall follow notes which at the time I jotted down as an aide-memoire and which later appeared in the Capuchin Annual. Indeed I can give you little more - just the notes expanded here and there.

Circumstances created so many contacts between Church St. and the participants in the Easter Week Rising that people were led to think that we were in the secret and were aware of the preparations. But that is not so. The truth is that it all came on us as a surprise, as it did on most people. On Sunday night the Opening Concert of the Father Mathew Fete was held in the Father Mathew Hall. The house was full and I remember well how Miss Joan Burke sang "The Minstrel Boy" with a spirit that electrified the large audience - the atmosphere seemed charged, and I rarely saw a gathering so enthusiastic. Of course, there had been rumours of all sorts in the city that day. There had been preparations for a parade of Volunteers and it had been called off, that was enough to account for the tense spirit and the pitch of enthusiasm that characterised the meeting. Perhaps some of those present were in the know - perhaps some of the artistes had an inkling or suspicion of something. I do not know.

Next morning - Easter Monday - I walked over to Gloucester Street to say Mass at the Convent. On my way I noticed some Fianna

scouts on bicycles and, later, passing to Gloucester St., I met Padraig Pearse and another Volunteer on bicycles. They rode by without recognising me - they were evidently intent on reaching their objective in time. Padraig Pearse wore a loose overcoat or mackintosh which covered some baggage. They had come into Gloucester St. from Rutland St., I understand, and the Volunteer who accompanied Padraig, I was later informed, was Willie Pearse. I at once concluded that there was something in the air - probably they had decided to attempt the parade in spite of the authorities. On my way back to Church St. I passed several individual Volunteers - some on bicycles.

Shortly after 12 o'clock, as we were at luncheon, we were startled by rifle fire, and very soon, word was brought to the Friary that a little boy had been shot near the Father Mathew Hall and a wounded man was also brought to the Friary, and a number of terrified children crying, came to us for shelter. By 1.30 p.m. barricades had been erected in Church St. and were manned by Volunteers. The Father Mathew Feis was in session and the children were hastily got under the stage for safety until it was judged wise to send them home. An Australian who happened to be in Dublin, passing through Church St., stopped to speak to me. I was standing at the Church gate. He told me that he was a doctor and he offered his services to render any assistance needed. He attended to the wounded man who had been brought to the Friary. Towards night volleys of firing became more frequent - and at midnight it became so violent that it seemed to be at our very gates. The Volunteers rang the house bell to tell us that the military were actually in Bow St. They were mistaken however. What had happened was that an attack was made by Volunteers on the Quays on a military detachment with ammunition.

On Tuesday morning volleys of rifle fire were frequent. A request was made by the Richmond Hospital for the services of some of the Fathers as wounded men were arriving there. A few of the Fathers went and took up residence at the Hospital for the

remainder of the week. The doctors and nurses, and Sisters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul then attached to the N.D. Union, were most assiduous in their attention to the sick, and medicals and doctors (Drs. Myles and O'Carroll) braved all the dangers to keep the institution in provisions. The Volunteers took over the Father Mathew Hall as a hospital for first aid, and Cumann na mBan girls attended to emergency cases. Some of our Fathers were also constantly in attendance. Serious cases were removed to the Richmond.

Rumours had been current the previous day that the G.P.O. and Castle had been taken by the Volunteers and that the Magazine (Powder) in the Park had been blown up. News had reached us of the death of Sean Connolly who had been shot at the City Hall or Castle.

The Volunteers took possession of the newly-built (but unfinished) Corporation Houses in Church St. The windows were protected with sandbags. Next day (Wednesday) the wildest rumours were in circulation, but no incident of special interest was reported. The rifle and machine gun firing was continued throughout the day. On Thursday very extensive fires could be seen and, as far as we could locate them, they were principally in O'Connell St. and G.P.O. and Clery's seemed to be involved. The rifle and machine gun volleys were almost continuous. The Volunteers had taken prisoners - soldiers from Linenhall Barracks and a D.M.P. man, and had them working at filling sandbags in the Father Mathew Hall. On Friday, the machine gun firing was continuous and there were many explosions from bombs or hand grenades. We heard the heavy boom of cannon from the direction of the bay. This was Friday, and, owing to difficulties of transport, food was running short and it was difficult to obtain milk. The Volunteers worked very hard to bring up provisions, and I should here recall the fearless conduct of the young Fianna who braved all danger and kept communications going between various posts and, rendered ~~valuable~~ valuable assistance in maintaining supplies. A sad occurrence

was reported today from the N.D. Union - two young fellows climbed to top of the clock tower only to be caught by snipers from Broadstone and fatally wounded.

The firing was very intense all through Friday night and without cessation until 3 to 4 p.m. on Saturday afternoon. Many explosions, and many buildings could be seen blazing. The number of wounded was increasing and many cases were brought to the Father Mathew Hall. By 4 p.m. the military were as far as the junction of King St. and Church St. and were firing on the Church St. barricades. The Cumann na mBan girls at the Father Mathew Hall were very excited and naturally feared for the poor wounded under their care. A message had been sent under a white flag to acquaint the military that the Hall was being used as a hospital, but it had no effect. Father Augustine dispatched Micheal O Foghludha with a white flag to secure a doctor, but he was detained by the military. A second messenger, bearing a white flag and red cross flag and a note to the Commander, was sent. In the note, Father Augustine informed the Commander that he was a priest and asked for the favour of an interview at the barrier as the Hall was used as hospital and had several very serious cases. The reply was oral: the military would grant none of the amenities of war but would treat them as outlaws and rebels. The position was desperate and Father Augustine and myself decided that there was no option but to go ourselves, and seek an interview with the officer in command. Accompanied by Volunteer Doyle, who carried a white flag, we passed the barrier and, between two soldiers with fixed bayonets, we went to North King St. until we reached opposite the new houses near Lurgan St. where we were told we should wait the arrival of Colonel Taylor, who was in charge. While we waited there, three large companies of soldiers marched by and an armoured car and an ambulance stood near. The Colonel then arrived and listened to our statement; he made no answer, but unceremoniously turned and walked off. A long time elapsed - to us it seemed an hour - so anxious were we for the safety of

the poor patients in the Father Mathew Hall. Then we saw Colonel Taylor at the corner of Church St. and we approached him. He very coolly informed us that a truce had been arranged. While with the Colonel, Micheal O'Foghludha came to complain that the soldiers had prevented him from going for a doctor. Just as he was speaking some shots rang out from a house between N. King St. and N. Brunswick St. and, turning to Foley, Col. Taylor brutally shouted at him to stop the firing or he would shoot him, and, ordering him to the other side of the street, he kept him covered by his revolver. Poor Foley, exhausted and hoarse, tried to tell the Volunteers that there was a truce and asked them to cease firing. Father Augustine stepped forward and appealed to them, too, and informed them that Col. Taylor had told us that, following advice to surrender from Pearse, a truce had been made. The Volunteers believed it was only a ruse of the military and would not believe it. However, they agreed to keep the truce for the night on our undertaking to see Pearse in the morning at the earliest moment and satisfy ourselves and them of the genuineness of Pearse's message. We then returned to Father Mathew Hall and gave word to those in charge of the wounded. Arrangements were at once made to transfer the wounded to Richmond Hospital.

And now we come to the second chapter of the tragic story - the Sunday of the surrenders. Father Augustine and myself celebrated Mass about 7 o/c. and after a cup of coffee and a very light meal of bread only we walked to the Castle to seek a permit to see Pearse. We had an interview with Brigadier General Lowe who was in command of the British Military forces. He received us very courteously and promptly granted us the permit to see Pearse at Arbour Hill. The General suggested that we should see Connolly also, as he was responsible for the Citizen Army, and he took us to the room in the Castle where Connolly was a patient. In our presence he asked Connolly if his signature to the letter advising surrender was genuine. Connolly's reply was "Yes, to prevent needless slaughter". He added that he spoke only for his own men.

General Lowe then placed his car at our disposal, but he appealed to us to proceed to Jacob's Factory after we had seen Pearse and assured the Church St. Volunteers of the genuineness of the message. He told us that the Volunteers in Jacob's were still holding out and that he had not succeeded in getting the message to them. It would, he said, be a great charity if we could do this, as otherwise he would be obliged to attack and demolish the factory with great loss of life.

We drove to Arbour Hill, saw Pearse, and were assured by him that he had signed the letter. The text of the message was -

"In order to prevent the further slaughter of Dublin citizens, and in the hope of saving our followers, now surrounded and hopelessly outnumbered, the members of the Provisional Government present at Headquarters have agreed to an unconditional surrender, and the commandants of the various districts in the city and country will order their commands to lay down arms".

P.H. Pearse.
29th April 1916.

It was signed by J. Connolly with the note that he signed only for men under his command.

We now learned that Father Columbus had already obtained a copy of the message and had brought it to the notice of the Volunteers in the district and that they had surrendered.

We then proceeded in the direction of Jacob's, and, leaving car and chauffeur a little above Whitefriars St. Priory, we went on foot to the factory. We were admitted through Peter Street entrance and brought to Commandant Thomas McDonagh. Miss O'Farrell had already arrived with a copy of Pearse's letter.

Here we met Major McBride who said that he would oppose any attempt at surrender. McDonagh said that as Pearse and Connolly were under arrest they were not free men and the letter written by them in custody could have no weight. He was next in command now that the others were under arrest, and he could not enter into negotiations with anyone except the General Officer commanding the British military. He was prepared to meet him anywhere for parley - in the factory or elsewhere. He said that they had ample

provisions and could hold out for some weeks. McDonagh believed that a Peace Conference in Europe was on the point of being summoned and was convinced that Ireland would command attention and a right to participate if it were a belligerent. We undertook to convey his message to Gen. Lowe, and, at his request, we accompanied him to Infirmary Road, where he consulted General Maxwell. After consultation with Maxwell he informed us that he was prepared to meet McDonagh and asked us to convey a letter to McDonagh in which he stated that he was willing to meet him at the N. East corner of St. Patrick's Park at 12 or 1 o/c. and undertook to give McDonagh safe conduct back to the factory.

We accompanied McDonagh and another Volunteer to St. Patrick's Park at hour appointed and Gen. Lowe and McDonagh met and conversed for some time on footpath and then withdrew to Gen. Lowe's car in which they continued the parley.

The parley over, McDonagh returned to us and told us that he had decided to advise surrender and that there was a truce until 3 p.m. Meantime he was to consult the men at Jacob's, South Dublin Union and Marrowbone Lane, and give final decision to General Lowe at 3 p.m. We then thought to return to Church St. but Gen. Lowe begged us to see the whole thing through, as any hitch might be fatal, and he was anxious to prevent further bloodshed. He placed his motor at our service and, with McDonagh, we returned to Jacob's. A council of officers was held there. Perhaps I should here remark that we took no part in the conference and that all the decisions were the free decisions of the men involved.

Our next business was to accompany McDonagh to the D.D. Union. At Basin Lane we got out of car which remained at the barrier and continued our journey on foot. At the Union we met Eamon Ceannt. The officers had a consultation and decided to surrender. Returning on foot to barricade at Basin Lane, McDonagh, a Volunteer, Father Augustine and myself, we very nearly got a hot reception. One of the British soldiers fired at us - the four of us escaped -

I don't say because the soldier was a poor aim, but because, we were told, he had a drop of drink. One of the officers hastened to apologise and told us that the soldier was put under arrest.

THE SURRENDER.

At 3 p.m. we were again at St. Patrick's Park. Thomas McDonagh taking off his belt, handed it with his revolver to Gen. Lowe. It was then agreed that McDonagh should return and arrange the surrender at Jacob's, Marrowbone Lane, and S.D. Union. This time we were accompanied by Gen. Lowe's son, and another officer, and first we went to Marrowbone Lane. I remained outside with motor and there was considerable delay. I understand that there was some difficulty in persuading the company to surrender as they were well fortified and had ample provisions. After that we went again to S.D. Union. Eamon Ceannt, speaking to one of the officers, told him that it would surprise him to see the very small number that had held the place.

And now we are back at Jacob's. The Volunteers were lined up in basement prepared to leave. Father Augustine was taking messages from them for their relatives. Fr. Monahan had arrived to offer his services. Suddenly we heard a tremendous crash and sounds like bombs exploding, and a volunteer came to tell us that the looters had smashed the window and were breaking in to the offices at Bishop St. side. Fr. Monahan and myself went at once and with difficulty got to the scene as a water main had been burst and the place was flooded. The looters were busy and we found them getting out into the street with the stolen goods. I stood at the window and addressed them - if ever I managed to put fire into my words it was then. Side by side with the manly and straightforward conduct of those who had borne the brunt of the trying week, I thought their conduct wretched and despicable and I did not mince my words. The result was that the crowd promised to leave and go to their homes and the looters - at least a goodly number of them - threw back the looted articles.

Father Augustine and myself said goodbye to the men at Jacob's and undertook to convey messages to their friends, and withdrew.

When we reached St. Patrick's Park we saw E. Ceannt's contingent arrive from S.D. Union and ground arms. E. de Valera with his forces also arrived. Amongst the forces were several girls - some armed.

And now we were glad to get back to Church St. - glad to get something to eat - it was about 7 p.m. and we had been fasting from early morning.

This concludes the second chapter. And now I have to recall a sad week - the week of the Executions.

On 30th April and succeeding days, prisoners were removed from Richmond Barracks and transferred by cattle boats from North Wall to English and Scottish jails - Knutsford, Stafford, Wakefield, Wandsworth - and as they marched silently along the quays they were on some occasions hooted by the crowd. In a few days, however, the executions were to change the attitude of the people and anger was to stir them against the Government for the brutal treatment of brave men and admiration for the heroism of the men who had offered their lives for Ireland was to seize on all.

THE EXECUTIONS.

It was the first week in May. Early in the morning of Monday the son of Superintendent Dunne, D.M.P., called to Church St. with a message from Father Murphy, the Military Chaplain, to the effect that he would be glad if I could call to the Castle as James Connolly - a prisoner and patient in hospital - had expressed a wish to see me. I went right away with young Mr. Dunne and Father Murphy told me that he had made all necessary arrangements and had the required permission for me. With Captain Stanley, R.A.M.C. I went to the ward or room in which Connolly was a patient. At the door the sentry challenged Capt. Stanley, saying that his instructions were to allow no one to see the prisoner unless with special permit. Capt. Stanley then went to seek the necessary permit. The sentry asked me if I were Father Aloysius and said that I could go in. However, I delayed, as the nurses were engaged with the patient, and meanwhile Capt. Stanley arrived back with his permit. We

entered the room together. Two soldiers were on guard with rifles and fixed bayonets. I protested and insisted that I should be allowed to see the patient alone. I was informed that it could not be done. I asked Capt. Stanley if he was a Catholic, and he said he was not. "Well" I said, "perhaps you cannot understand the position. Confession is a serious and a secret function. I cannot go on with the men present. I must have privacy. I have not spoken to Connolly before and do not know but he may not be keen in hearing. In any case, I must feel satisfied that he can speak to me and I to him without danger of being overheard". Captain Stanley said he had no power to make other arrangements and I suggested that we should see Father Murphy. On the way we met Gen. Lowe and Captain Stanley told him about the situation. The General said he was sorry but it was regulation. "Well" I said "I have given my word that I am on no political mission and am not going to use the opportunity for any political purpose - that I am acting only as a minister of religion - as a priest. If my word as a priest cannot be accepted, then he had better get some other priest. I should refuse to undertake the duty if he could not give me the privacy I asked for". The General said he had no doubt about my word, but it was the rule governing such cases. I could help the prisoner to escape, that is the way the regulations looked at it; or, if Connolly attempted to escape I might not be strong enough to prevent it. My answer was that I'd not interfere - it wasn't my job. If they could not make provision for such an event without having soldiers actually in the room, I just could not go on with my work. The General yielded, and said he would be satisfied if the sentries were posted outside the door. I may say that I had little doubt that I'd get my way - and I got it.

The General then told me that he had seen General Maxwell and had reported to him the part we had taken on the previous day in making the negotiations possible and preventing further bloodshed, and that Maxwell had expressed a wish to meet us. Hoping it might afford us an opportunity of saying a word on behalf of the prisoners I agreed to meet the General.

CONNOLLY.

Then I was taken to James Connolly and allowed to see him alone. I said to him that I had given my word that it was as a priest I was visiting him "I know that, Father" he answered. "You wouldn't get this privilege otherwise, and it is as a priest that I want to see you. I have seen and have heard of the brave deeds of priests and nuns during the week, and I believe they are the best friends of the workers". He asked me if I had heard anything about Sean Connolly - he had been told he was shot and he had great regard for him. I told him it was unfortunately true. Then he said "Now we had better turn to No. 1". I heard his confession.

Coming away I met Captain Stanley again. He said that it would be a consolation to those in the Sinn Fein ward if a priest could drop ^{in to say} a word to them, and take word to their relatives that they were alive and how they were. Availing of his kindness I went through the ward and visited each bed. Some wanted prayer books and again Captain Stanley told me that he would distribute them for me. I must here stop to pay tribute to Captain Stanley. All thro' these days - and I had many occasions to meet him, he showed himself a kind-hearted and christian man. In religion as well as politics differing - he respected the convictions and admired the courage of the men and was anxious to do every service he could for them in keeping with his duty. Connolly himself told me that Stanley had been extremely kind to him. Wherever he is today, May God reward his good nature and his human feelings for those who were in sore need of it.

In the afternoon I called to the Castle Yard to ask for permit to visit prisoners who might need my services. The permit was readily granted and signed by Lord Powerscourt, who acted, I understand, as Assistant Provost Marshal. Lord Powerscourt and some other officers paid a tribute to the bravery of volunteers - one of the officers remarking - 'they are the cleanest and bravest lot of boys he had ever met'. Again it is a pleasure to acknowledge goodness whenever and wherever it is met, and I must here record

another act of humanity and kindheartedness on the part of Lord Powerscourt. Meeting me at the Castle on the occasion of one of my visits to James Connolly, he asked me if I could visit or get one of the Fathers to visit the wife of one of the prisoners - Wm. Halpin of the Citizen Army. The poor fellow, he said, was anxious about the wife as she was in a delicate state of health when he was leaving home. Halpin, he told me, had been taken in an exhausted condition from a chimney and it would be a help and comfort to him if we could reassure him about his wife's health. I undertook to visit Mrs. Halpin and Powerscourt said I could see the prisoner afterwards and at any time I wished.

This brings me to Tuesday. 2nd May. I had seen the Parish Priest of SS. Michael and John's the previous evening and I arranged to bring Holy Communion to James Connolly, and on the morning of Tuesday James Connolly received Holy Communion.

At 11 a.m. Tuesday, Father Augustine and myself were at Headquarters of Gen. Maxwell by appointment and had an interview with him. We availed of the opportunity to speak of the honourable and clean records of the men who had been engaged in the struggle. But we were given no information - simply thanked for being instrumental in preventing further bloodshed.

I had just gone to bed - fairly exhausted and expecting a good rest - when I was called to learn that a military car was at the gate and a letter was handed to me, telling me that the Prisoner Pearse desired to see me and I had permission to see him, and that, failing me, he could see any other Capuchin Father. With that I accompanied the military and we drove in the direction of Charlemont Bridge. The sniping from the roofs was so fierce that the car did not venture to proceed further, and turning back, we went direct to Kilmainham. The soldiers had told us that they had a couple of calls to make. Later we heard that the proposed calls were to Mrs. McDonagh and Mrs. Pearse, whom they had intended bringing to the prison before the executions.

At Kilmainham I learned that Thomas McDonagh had also asked for my ministrations. I spent some hours between the two cells and the preparation these two men made to meet death was simply inspiring and edifying. When I met Pearse I said "I am sure you will be glad to know that I gave Holy Communion to James Connolly this morning" "I can't forget the fervour with which, looking up to heaven, he said "Thank God. It is the one thing I was anxious about".

I heard the confessions of Pearse and McDonagh and gave them both Holy Communion. They received the M.B. Sacrament with intense devotion and spent the time at their disposal in prayer. They were happy - no trace of fear or anxiety. Pearse had written some notes for his mother. He said that he knew I could not take them, nor would he wish me to do so, but would be glad if I could ask the officer in charge to have them conveyed to his mother. The officer assured me that he would have his wishes carried out. Between 2 and 3 a.m. all visitors were ordered to leave. I thought that it would be my right to remain to the end, but the officer said I should leave - Insisting that the order could not include the clergyman. I requested him to 'phone headquarters and, having done so, or at least having told me that he had done so, he said the order was confirmed and that there was to be no exception. I was grieved that I was not permitted to be by the side of the men to the end, but I felt at any rate that I was leaving them in the best dispositions, and when I reached Church St. I offered Mass for them.

In the morning of Wednesday about 9.30, I called to Kilmainham. Thomas McDonagh's sister - Sr. Francesca - had left with him a rosary beads which was a cherished heirloom in the family, and I had promised to see it was not lost. I took the occasion to lodge an official complaint and protest. I said that in every civilised country the clergyman was permitted to remain with the prisoner, to be present at the execution and administer Extreme Unction. The protest had its effect, and at the later executions the Priest was allowed to remain.

On Wednesday morning later, I drove out to see Mrs. McDonagh to break the news to her, and also to St. Enda's to break the news to Mrs. Pearse. Naturally I did not think there would be any further executions, and I told Mrs. Pearse that I believed Willie would be spared. "No" she said, "I believe they will put him to death too. They were inseparable. Willie would never be happy to live without Pat".

That same night a message came to the effect that some of the Fathers would be required - and Willie Pearse, Plunkett, Daly and O'Hanrahan were executed. On Friday morning, Major McBride was executed and attended also by one of our Fathers..

A priest called early in the afternoon of Sunday, 7th May to beg me to do what I could to stop the executions. He suggested that I should see John D. Nugent, M.P. for College Green Division. I called to Nugent and he said that he would be only too glad to do anything possible and he was sure that John Dillon would gladly give any assistance. He would get in touch with Dillon. Later in the evening he called to Church St. to tell me that John Dillon wished very much to see me. I took a car to North St. Georges St. and had a talk with Mr. Dillon. He said that he disagreed with the policy of the men and feared they had put back the Home Rule Movement for years. But, he said, in spite of all that he admired their courage and respected their convictions. He had always had esteem and admiration for Patrick Pearse. They were all Irishmen, he said, and brave Irishmen. Anything he could do to prevent further executions he certainly would do. He took my car and drove straight to the Castle and got through a telegram to John Redmond at Westminster. On his way back from the Castle he called to Church St. to let me know what he had done. He asked me if I thought he should cross to London. I thought it wiser he should remain for the present and keep Redmond au courant with how things were shaping here. That same night we got word that there were to be four more executions, and on Monday morning Eamon Ceannt, Con Colbert, Sean Heuston and Ml.Mallin were executed and were attended by Fathers Augustine and Albert.

I went to Dillon again immediately I got word and he was horrified. I said that I was now convinced he should cross to London and raise hell in the house. He could not cross next morning but assured me that he would do so at the first possible moment. In fact, he did so on Tuesday or Wednesday, for Thursday morning's papers reported that he had moved the adjournment of the House to discuss the executions and that Asquith undertook to give opportunity for discussion on the following night, promising that, meanwhile, there would be no more executions.

On Tuesday, 9th May, it was announced that Thomas Kent (Coole, near Fermoy, Co. Cork) was executed. And on Thursday, 11th May, Eamon de Valera and Thomas Ashe were sentenced to death, but the sentence was commuted to penal servitude for life).

In the afternoon of Thursday I called to see Connolly at the Castle. He seemed very feverish and told me that he had not slept the previous night. I suggested that I should call again in the morning to hear his confession and give him Holy Communion again. He thanked me, but said he would not like to put me to the trouble of coming again in the morning when I had so kindly come that evening. When I insisted that it would be no trouble - that in any case I should come in the morning to give him Holy Communion and I could hear his confession before that, he thanked me again and said he would be glad, as he really felt very unwell just then. I left him, but a very uneasy feeling took possession of me. I asked for Captain Stanley and after a long wait, was told that they had searched everywhere and could not find him. I left, but when I reached the Castle gates the same uneasiness troubled me - I simply could not go on. So returning to the Castle I succeeded in seeing Captain Stanley. I asked him if there was any danger of anything happening that night. He assured me that nothing could happen, for, he said, "you saw in the papers that Asquith promised there would be no executions pending the debate which is on tonight". But about 9 o'clock - Stanley was at Church St. to say that my services would be needed about 2 a.m. next morning (Friday). He

was not at liberty to say more, but he knew I'd understand what it meant.

At 1 a.m. the car came for me. I heard Connolly's confession and gave him Holy Communion again. Then I left while he was being given a light meal. I had a long talk with Stanley in the Castle Yard. He told me that he had been very much impressed by Connolly and that Surgeon Tobin had been very struck too by his character. He told me an amusing story he had from Surgeon Tobin. I don't know if I ought to narrate it.

Now the time appointed - Connolly was to be taken to Kilmainham. I had a few words. I said that the men who would execute him were soldiers - probably they knew nothing about him - and - like soldiers - would simply obey orders and fire, and I wanted him to feel no anger against them, but to say, as Our Lord said on Calvary, "Father, forgive them" and to say a prayer for them. "I do, Father" he answered "I respect every man who does his duty".

James Connolly was then brought down to the car and laid on a stretcher in it. I sat in the ambulance car with him and said a last word to him before they took him from the car in Kilmainham Yard. He was put sitting on a chair and the order was given. They fired, and Father Eugene McCarthy, who had been in attendance on Sean McDermott earlier, went over and anointed Connolly. I had stood just behind the firing line. It was a scene I should not ask to witness again. I had got to know Connolly - to wonder at his strength of character and marvellous power of concentration. I had got to regret that I had not known him longer and now I had to say goodbye. All I could do was to return with a heavy heart and to offer the Holy Sacrifice for his soul. Now I thank God that I knew him.

I have little more to say. Friday morning's papers reported a sensational speech by John Dillon in the House of Commons. It was a fierce attack on the brutal conduct of the British

authorities. "It is not murderers who are being executed" he said, "but men who fought a clean, a brave, fight". The Prime Minister rose and his reply startled the House. He announced that he was crossing himself that very night to investigate. Evidently word was conveyed to the Castle to have McDermott and Connolly out of the way before his arrival. Who was responsible I don't know. I visited Richmond Barracks on Friday to see the prisoners and, amongst others, chatted with Sean T. O'Kelly, Lawrence O'Neill (Lord Mayor) and my old friend, Alderman Tom Kelly, and got an account of Asquith's visit from them. I understand there was some unusual breakfast fare - rashers and eggs, as well as my memory serves me. The prisoners were not impressed, I am afraid; neither was I.

I have told my tale. I have narrated facts that came under my own personal observation. It is a small contribution to the story of our country - and no history of Ireland can be written without its chapter of the events of Easter Week and the sequel. The executions had rallied the whole nation behind the memories of the men who died and the leadership of their comrades who survived. I do not intend to express any views concerning the sad days of civil war and bitter strife that divided homes and sundered lifelong friendships. Let us try to forget what is painful - let us remember what is heartening and inspiring. We are a small nation but an ancient and a glorious one. If we have divergences of view let us calmly discuss and sincerely resolve, and let the interests of Ireland, our common country, prevail over class differences or political opinions. God has preserved us from the terrible experiences of the nations that are today locked in the bloody and inhuman conflict of the present senseless war. God grant we may never forget our national and our religious struggles and triumphs, and may the heritage of these sacred memories deepen the attachment of the youth and of future generations to God and Fatherland.

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