**MONTGOMERY HYDE - CASEMENT BOOK EXTRACTS**

**3RD EDITION**

Most of *The Black Diaries* historical text was actually written in Paris by Maurice Girodias for whom it became something of an obsession. He presented the poem as exhibit one, writing on page fifteen that “It seems most unlikely that British Intelligence went so far as to forge incriminating poems in order to substantiate the charge of homosexuality made against him.” In a footnote, the poem is not referenced to its original source, instead the following appears: “This poem by Roger Casement, entitled *The Nameless One*, is to be found at the National Library in Dublin. It was published for the first time by Mr H. Montgomery-Hyde, M.P. for Belfast North.”

When Hyde died he left most of his papers to the Public Record Office in Belfast. That is except for the bulk of his Casement documentation, both books and manuscripts, which he had already sold, in 1970, to an Irish antiquarian dealer. In a letter to the Casement author, Roger Sawyer, he wrote “I no longer have the considerable collection of Casement material which I amassed over the years”, not mentioning that this was his usual practice with such papers once he had mined a subject to exhaustion. It also provided further income for a man who, as he said “never had much money and always spent what I’ve made, pretty quickly.”

All that remains in PRONI is the correspondence that came after the disposal, apart from the sale catalogue itself. A purchase was then made by Professor Roger Louis of the University of Texas at Austin for the Humanities Research Center there. He had earlier published extensively on E.D. Morel and the Congo – Casement inevitably figuring prominently in his work. Professor Louis told Harford Hyde, in a letter dated 3 October 1972, that he had largely completed about three hundred printed pages of a study or lengthy essay dealing with “the Congo episode…the Putumayo adventure…the Findlay affair” and a final part to be called ‘A Re-Assessment of the Black Diaries Controversy’ – based on your papers which are invaluable in this regard.” This work, however, never appeared.

Professor Louis, a distinguished diplomatic historian, later described his work to this author as something that “now ranks as an abandoned project. In any event it would not have been a biography but a study of Casement in the Congo, the Putumayo, and the way in which his experience in Congo and Latin America helped to shape his views as a nationalist.” There is apparently nothing available in the way of original material at Austin to illuminate the matter of the poem or whether Hyde recorded any details of his discovery of it.

Hyde himself was somewhat disingenuous in replying to a 1974 approach made on the poem by a Mrs Moira O’Scannlain, writing from an address in Sutter Street, San Francisco. She wrote first on 24 October, suggesting that the poem’s author must have been Oscar Wilde, especially as she thought the title – “the exact title escapes me” might be “The love I dare not speak.” Mrs O’Scanlainn did not attempt to disguise her sympathies, declaring “as a child of six, I sat on Casement’s knee when he visited, with F.J. Bigger, my native city, Derry. I loved his gentle face and have never lost that memory. So pure a soul as I saw mirrored in his serene eyes (even a child has perception) could never have entertained the obscenities expressed in the (forged) diaries.”

The author’s response was to say “the manuscript of the poem is in the National Library in Ireland. I did not include it in any anthology of Casement’s writings [as she had notioned.] The only book on Casement which I have written is an account of his trial.” He then added “as for Casement being a practising homosexual there is no doubt about this either. Indeed he admitted it to his defence counsel, Serjeant Sullivan, at the trial and Serjeant Sullivan so informed me when I talked with him at his house in Dublin when I was writing my book.” He concluded with a kindly paragraph saying this did not “detract from Casement’s merits as an Irish patriot and his achievements in exposing terrible atrocities in the Belgian Congo and Putumayo.”

Hyde’s reward, dated 10 November, was a four page rambling missive indicating she had known him in the Department of Education in 1926 – when he was only nineteen and actually at university. It did, however, include some pertinent questions. O’Scannlain who had by this time procured a copy of The Black Diaries quizzed him again about the poem, raising both a doubt about its title and its authenticity. She pointed out that there was in print another poem by Casement with an identical title – one written in 1898 “on the massacre of the Armenians by the Sultan of Turkey, (which begins ‘Embodied pest!’).”

Then she asked “How and when did the poem beginning ‘No human hand’ come into your possession? How is it authenticated as Casement’s? (I should also appreciate your conjecture as to the date of its origin).” By this time one has the feeling that she was not acting alone in the matter. Hyde apparently chose not to enter into any further correspondence as there is no reply in the file. Perhaps he felt he was on weak ground. But unfortunately by so omitting to reply there is no trace, in one place or another, of his answers to those critical questions.

It was no discovery that there was another Casement poem of the same title as that beginning “No human hand…”. That other, written on 29-30 November 1898, “outside Lagos bar on the Gretchen Bolen on the way to London” dealt with that “Pharaoh in reverse (and)…anointed Kurd…Sultan ‘Abdul the Damned’” and his role in the Armenian Massacres. It had been published as recently as 1958 in Herbert Mackey’s collection of Casement poetry and writings, The Crime Against Europe. As one has come to expect with Casement matters, the confusion is further compounded by the fact that James Clarence Mangan used the same title for a poem in the 1840s.

And unnoticed until now there is yet another poem, so entitled, in Casement’s papers in the NLI. It is to be found in a notebook along with certain items dated 1882 and 1883, when Casement was a teenager. The volume seems initially to have been a school exercise book but he also used it for writing poetry over at least a decade. This first of his three so-named poems opens with the line “And tell how chained to a spot he hates.” It bears a resemblance to that in contention, indeed it could be described as an adolescent precursor, dealing with dark deeds and flagrant sins so drastic as to shake the author’s faith in God. Two memorable lines read “And tell how love in his bosom lighted/A hopeless passion that dried his blood.” This nine verse poem also has a slight Ottoman aspect as it mentions Libya’s deserts. One overly-simple explanation for the plethora of Casement poems so entitled may simply be that he was given to inscribing The Nameless One at the head of a poem, pending a fixed descriptor.

Perhaps Hyde could not respond to Moira’s questions as the answers were in the papers he had sold a few years earlier. But we now have two distinguished authors and the journalist Peter Singleton-Gates quoting in full a poem without providing a scrap of other information about it – except for Hyde saying it was in the NLI. The only one of the three who actually said he had seen it there was in fact Montgomery Hyde. Its first appearance in print turns out to have been in the second of two Sunday Times articles written by him and published on 21 and 28 April 1957 respectively.

In these articles Hyde declared, “I have recently been able to examine the Casement papers in the NLI.” He suggested that the hitherto unpublished poem by Casement would have “some bearing on the question of whether or not he was a homosexual.” Describing what he saw there as a “manuscript of a poem by Casement entitled The Nameless One”, he added “In my view it betrays strong homosexual feelings in its author.” He then proposed that readers could now judge for themselves. But no NLI reference was provided for it – then or later – nor was one ever to be. To all intents and purposes the original, if original it was, no longer exists. This author had, over two years, inspected all the hundreds of likely Casement-related folders and not spotted it.

The reheated dispute brought about in 1957 by Alfred Noyes’ book also produced a flurry of letters, claims, and counter-claims in both The Sunday Times and The Observer. On 12 May in the former, Frank MacDermot, a one-time TD and a regular contributor to this and other controversies, described Bulmer Hobson and P.S. O’Hegarty as “wishful thinkers and heated partisans” in relation to the Normand diary theory. O’Hegarty, who “values a book more than he does his wife or children” according to his old friend Dr McCartan, “is a first edition man so you know the type,” made no attempt to demolish the poem’s provenance. Meanwhile stung by an attack from Noyes that totally ignored the poem and its implications, Hyde replied by reiterating that he at least had taken “the trouble to go to the NLI and look at the Casement papers there.” Noyes was to be condemned since “he didn’t even pay a flying visit”, the phrase used to disparage Hyde’s trip to Dublin. …

The second stage, that of suggesting the poem was never in the NLI cache at all, and was therefore an invention, has either never needed to be stated or the document’s apparent absence has not been realised. It was, to say the least, unlikely that Hyde either wrote the poem himself or completely invented its existence in the NLI. It presumably arrived within Gertrude Parry’s largest donation of papers in 1930, which by 1957 still formed the bulk of its Casement archive. She understandably chose not to select it for her own 1918 publication of sixteen of his poems. Perhaps someone will yet find the third The Nameless One in the NLI and detail the form it takes, but it is has been attributed to Casement and disattribution requires more evidence than its absence in Dublin.

In May 1999, this author arranged to visit the United States, partly with a view to inspecting the Maloney Papers in New York’s Public Library since preliminary research on his behalf had revealed non-specific mention of poetry in the catalogue. While at an American Conference on Irish Studies meeting in Virginia, the Casement enthusiast and lecturer, Lucy McDiarmid, confirmed what he hoped. A copy of The Nameless One in Casement’s writing existed in New York. She too had been convinced it must be somewhere and, investigating locally at first, had found it in the NYPL. On going to Fifth Avenue the poem was finally seen. It covers one sheet of paper. On the reverse the title is repeated, suggesting that this is a copy and not the first version. In the final line the writer had hand-altered “my broken heart” to “a broken heart” although in Hyde’s 1959 published version it read “my”. This indicates again that what was seen by Hyde in Dublin was an earlier, and perhaps the original, manuscript.

Casement, however, chose also to specify on the back just where, when and why he had written the poem, providing incontrovertible proof of its authenticity. He explained that these were “Lines written in Very Great Dejection at Genoa. November 15 1900 before sailing on “Sirio” for Barcelona.” These facts of Casement’s travel can be confirmed elsewhere from letters (see below). A number of other poems like Love the Overthrower are also to be found in New York alongside the lost item. On one Casement inscribed a Dublin address for “Muiris Joy, 18 Longwood Avenue, S. Circular Rd., Eblana” – this was Maurice Joy who would in 1916 be his first biographer. Dejected in Italy, Casement had made the cardinal error of going back to follow up a holiday romance to find his welcome no longer warm.

Montgomery Hyde had risked his Unionist parliamentary career and ultimately lost it in 1959, not through homophobia or hyper anti-nationalism; rather the opposite. He was no charlatan nor anybody’s pawn, least of all one of his own former comrades in the intelligence service. He was certainly not rewarded, indeed his widow Robbie was obliged to seek a benevolent grant from The Royal Society of Literature to survive. But he was no forger. If accused of any literary crime the only charge ever made was one of plagiarism. The missing poem was, however, not the only item in Dublin to have developed legs…

**BIBLIOGRAPHIES**

**H. (Harford) Montgomery HYDE** *Trial of Roger Casement*, William Hodge, London 1960 in the *Notable British Trials* series: introduced with an account of the arrest and execution by the former Unionist MP for North Belfast. Hyde also reproduced, only in the revised 1964 Penguin edition entitled *Famous Trials 9: Roger Casement*, a fortnight’s extract from the 1911 Black Diary which, up to this volume, remained otherwise unpublished. The MP’s parliamentary efforts to get the diaries examined by experts form another appendix. An earlier, censored, transcript of the trial proper was published, in 1917, in the same series, edited by G.H. Knott.

Hyde’s *The Other Love*, Heinemann, London 1970, remains the definitive book on British homosexual history. It is written in a racy no-holds-barred style with original accounts of lives lived as sexual outlaws. He was an indefatigable biographer and author on historical subjects, but sex, and homosexuality in particular, dominated his output. He was unusually liberal and freethinking, a product of the 1920s. He died, thrice married, on 10 August 1989 at the age of eighty-one, proving that Unionists are not always what they are presumed.

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**H. (Harford) Montgomery HYDE** *The Other Love: An Historical and Contemporary Account of Homosexuality in Britain*, Heinemann, London 1970 (unequalled history of homosexual trials and scandals), and *A Tangled Web: Sex Scandals in British Politics and Society*, Futura Publications, London 1987.

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**Jeffrey DUDGEON** *H. Montgomery Hyde: Ulster Unionist MP, Gay Law Reform Campaigner and Prodigious Author,* Belfast Press 2018, ISBN 9780953928798. <http://amzn.to/2BCOp0J> (Amazon). <http://amzn.to/2GtS705> (Kindle): Montgomery Hyde died in 1989 by which time he had become history. Only a very few remembered him or his gay campaigning role let alone the fact he had been an Ulster Unionist MP throughout the 1950s. Thirty years later, he can hardly be conceptualised. Too many, at best, see him as an aberration for Belfast, but he was a recognisable type of progressive, yet traditional, British politician. No one else played as long or as effective a part in changing views towards gays when only a handful of people, let alone MPs, put their head above the parapet.

“Harford” as he was known to his friends, “H. Montgomery Hyde” to his readers, and “Montgomery Hyde” to the electors of North Belfast, led the battle in the House of Commons for decriminalisation of homosexuality. And he paid as great a price as any parliamentarian could for his courage – he lost his seat.

Very much a child of the 1920s, he was dedicated to researching and writing about those two most prominent gay men of the 20th century – Oscar Wilde and Roger Casement, both Irish outlaws. None the less, he managed to publish another forty books on a wide range of subjects including perhaps his finest works ‘The Rise of Castlereagh’ and ‘The Other Love’. A cheerful and good natured figure, Harford lived and loved well and is deserving, at the least, of this short book outlining his struggles and achievements.