

## CHAPTER TWENTY-EIGHT

MEANWHILE, in Ireland, the division between the constitutional Nationalists and the Sinn Feiners had widened. Redmond's Volunteers had sent their young men to France and to Gallipoli. The Republican Volunteers were drilling by night on the hillsides. Presently in London, when I went there, people were saying to me: "What is this Rebellion that Sir Matthew Nathan is always talking about? Is it nonsense?"

"It isn't nonsense," I said. "Unfortunately Sir Matthew is right. And presently you will know."

Sir Matthew had become a great friend of ours. We often stayed with him at the Under Secretary's Lodge, and he with us at Killeen. He foretold the Rebellion of 1916. But no one in England would listen to him, not even Birrell, the Chief Secretary.

We still had our Dublin house in Elgin Road, and, during the spring of that year Sir Matthew often came to dine with us. One night in April we had a small dinner party. There were present, Lady Edina Ainsworth, Lord Basil Blackwood—who was afterwards killed in the War—he was then private secretary to Lord Wimborne, John Healy, editor of the *Irish Times*, and Sir Matthew Nathan. Towards the end of dinner there was a knock at the door and the parlourmaid ushered in a young naval officer. He had an air of haste and excitement.

"Is Sir Matthew Nathan here?"

Sir Matthew answered: "Yes, I am Sir Matthew Nathan."

The sailor looked at him. "But how am I to know that you are Sir Matthew Nathan?"

Fingall spoke: "I am Lord Fingall, and I can assure you that this is Sir Matthew Nathan, the Under Secretary."

The young man looked from one to another.

"But how am I to know that you are Lord Fingall?" Mr. Healy stepped in: "I am John Healy, Editor of the *Irish Times*, and I can assure you that you are speaking to Lord Fingall and to Sir Matthew Nathan."

But we were dealing with the cautious Service. In the end the young man said: "I am afraid I shall be obliged to ask you to come back with me to the Under Secretary's Lodge, to see if your own servants will recognise you before I can give you some important papers."

Sir Matthew went away with him and we were left speculating—the wild terrified speculations of those War years. What had happened? I thought: had the Fleet been sunk, or some such disaster?

When I went to bed, I could not go to sleep. Presently I said: "I am going to ring up Sir Matthew."

Fingall said: "You can't, at this hour. You must wait until morning."

I said: "I am going to." And I did. I got the Under Secretary's Lodge, and Sir Matthew came to the phone. I said to him:

"I can't go to sleep, thinking that something awful must have happened. Just say whether it is something terrible or not."

Sir Matthew's voice, calm as always, came through the telephone: "On the contrary, the tidings that the young man had to bring were *most* satisfactory."

I went back to bed, greatly relieved.

We were at Kilteragh for Easter. On Easter Sunday, Sir Matthew and his sister-in-law, Mrs. Nathan, came to lunch. He told us what the tidings were that the naval officer had brought: the news of the landing and capture of Sir Roger Casement on the coast of Kerry.

Sir Matthew had spent that morning at the Viceregal Lodge with Lord Wimborne, and he assured us that with Casement's arrest and the cancelling of the next day's Volunteer Parade by John MacNeill, all immediate danger had been averted. We could go to Fairyhouse Races on Easter Monday