

ROINN



COSANTA.

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21

## STATEMENT BY WITNESS

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 381.....

## Witness

The Hon. George Gaven Duffy,  
81 Bushy Park Road,  
Terenure, Dublin.

## Identity

Irish Envoy in Italy and France 1920-1921;  
Signatory of the Anglo-Irish Treaty 6/12/1921.

## Subject

- (a) Copy of "Lecture on Sir Roger Casement".
- (b) Covering letter from Hon. George G. Duffy.

## Conditions, if any, stipulated by Witness

Nil

File No. S.515 .....

Form BSM 2

MATERIAL COLLECTED BY BUREAU REGARDING ROGER CABMENT.

- A. Personal Statements of Evidence.
  - B. Contemporary Documents.
  - C. Press Cuttings made during the  
lifetime of the Bureau.
  - D. Notes on files relating to persons  
who have not given evidence.
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Material Collected by Bureau regarding Roger Casement.

A. PERSONAL STATEMENTS OF EVIDENCE.

- W.S. 4 - Diarmuid Lynch - Distribution in 1915 of a pamphlet containing the texts of a series of articles written anonymously by Roger Casement at some years earlier and published in The Gaelic American, New York, and later in Irish Freedom.
- W.S. 85 - Bulmer Hobson - Roger Casement, 1904-1914.
- W.S. 86 - Bulmer Hobson - Comment on R. Monteith's "Casement's Last Adventure".
- { W.S. 117 - Maurice Moriarty - Landing of Casement, Monteith & Bailey, Banna, Co. Kerry, 1916.  
and annex to W.S. 117.
- W.S. 123 - William Mullins - S.S. "Aud" and Roger Casement.
- W.S. 126 - Jack McGaley - Arrest of Casement and Bailey, Holy Week, 1916.
- W.S. 168 - Joseph Melinn - Landing of Casement and Monteith, Easter, 1916.
- W.S. 381 - G. Gavan Duffy - Copy of "Lecture on Roger Casement" in 1950.
- W.S. 537 - Michael McDunphy - Note on the painting of The Trial of Roger Casement, 1916, by Sir John Lavery.
- W.S. 551 - Very Rev. T. Canon Duggan - The Casement Brigade in Germany.
- { W.S. 558 - Rev. Fr. J.M. Cronin - His recollections of Casement's last days in Pentonville Prison, including his reconciliation with the Catholic Church.  
and annex to W.S. 558.
- W.S. 1365 - Bulmer Hobson - His memories of Roger Casement.

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B. CONTEMPORARY DOCUMENTS.

C.D. 173 - Dr. Herbert Mackey - Passages from the manuscript written by Roger Casement in the condemned cell at Pentonville Prison.

C.D. 1 - Photostat copy of letter dated 1/6/14 from Roger Casement to Colonel Warburton re training of the Belfast Corps of the Irish Volunteers.

C.D. 45 - George Gavan Duffy - Casement Documents:

(a) Correspondence and manuscript:

Mrs. J.R. Green: - Writings before Execution;

Gaffney: - Casement in Germany;

MacNeill: - The Unionist Machine.

(b) Correspondence re Irish Volunteers.

(c) Counsel's papers in the trial of Roger Casement, 1916.

C. PRESS CUTTINGS MADE DURING THE LIFETIME OF THE BUREAU.

D. NOTES ON FILES RELATING TO PERSONS WHO HAVE  
NOT GIVEN EVIDENCE.

- S. 55 - Office file, Roger Casement - Extract from "Old Meadow", page 39, Cardinal Bourne's memorandum on Casement's reception into the Catholic Church.
- S. 1862 - Dr. James Walsh,  
Editor "Catholic Times" - Correspondence re article entitled "Last Letters of Roger Casement". Name of author not disclosed.

At the suggestion of Rev. Fr. Cronin, see W.S. 588 above, letters were addressed to Very Rev. J. McCarroll (S.1863) and Monsignor H.E. Daly (S.1864) in October, 1951, regarding Casement's reconciliation with the Catholic Church. The former did not reply and the latter died in 1949.

A letter was sent also in October, 1951, to Professor Denis Gwynn (S. 74) regarding a personal statement by Dean Ring on Casement's reconciliation with the Catholic Church, but a reply was not received from him.

10/19/51

ORIGINAL

81, BUSHY PARK ROAD,

TERENURE,

DUBLIN.

W.S. 381

FOR Y. I.

1913

W.S. 381

S. 516.

May 5, 1950.

Dear Commandant Fealy :-

Thank you for the return  
of my script & for giving me a  
copy of the transcript.

The text needed little  
amendment & I enclosed  
corrected copy, as requested.

Yours sincerely,

George Grehan Duffy.

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ls, at 14 Parnell  
ril, 1950.

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He left the British Consular Service finally in June,  
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Lecture on Sir Roger Casement given by the Hon. George Gavan Duffy to London-Irish Gaels, at 14 Parnell Square, Dublin, on 16th April, 1950.

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Roger Casement was born on 1st September, 1864, at Sandycove on Dublin Bay. His mother died when he was very young and most of his youth was spent with an uncle at Ballycastle in County Antrim. He was not yet fifty-two when he was executed at Pentonville Prison on 3rd August, 1916.

Roger was of a dark and rather Spanish type of countenance, handsome, very tall, a man of most distinguished appearance. The retainer of one of his old friends in the North wrote to him in prison: "My tall, dark, beautiful gentleman, my heart is broke since I heard they had taken you", and that description of the old servant just fits the man. He was a man of the highest integrity, and of the highest courage. He was a man of exceptional personal charm, a beautiful character, one of the most generous I have ever known, specially interested in the poor and the oppressed. He was, for instance, keenly enthusiastic about bringing relief to Gorumba during times of great distress and starvation. He was impetuous and determined. As to his judgment, opinions will naturally differ. He had travelled widely and could be a fascinating talker. He had, of course, made history by his Congo and Putomnyo revelations. His interest in Irish affairs had waned when the Parnell split occurred, but it was keenly revived by the Boer War, when he was in South Africa.

He left the British Consular Service finally in June, 1913. As it happened, the Volunteers were started in the

following November, and Sir Roger was put on the Executive, and then spent several months organising the Volunteers.

I think I shall begin at the end of his story. He was, as he himself said, a Catholic at heart. He ought to have been a Catholic, but, through no fault of his own, was brought up a Protestant. When in prison he wanted to see a priest, and he, in fact, saw more than one good priest, but it was most desirable that he should get into touch with one to whom he could open his whole heart. That would depend on the personality of the particular priest. I knew slightly Father Edward Murnane; I knew he was Irish, although I had no idea what his political opinions might be, but I knew he was a man of outstanding character and a saint. His work, over long years, for the Irish people at Dockhead, one of the poorest parishes in London, is beyond all description. Providentially Father Murnane came into close contact with Roger during the last month of his life.

Father Murnane wrote to my wife on 4th July, 1916: "God will bless you and yours for all you are doing for this dear soul. The Cardinal sent for me last evening and gave me full faculties to deal with Sir Roger. So I wrote to Father Carey last night to get Sir Roger to ask for permission for me to see him alone on spiritual matters, as often as necessary. I mean to see him daily. As soon as the permission comes all will be well. And bless God who has chosen you to be His instrument in bringing peace to this dear soul and joy to the millions who are praying for him all over the world. And pray for me that I may do my share faithfully and well".

On the evening before Roger's execution, 2nd August, 1916, Father Murnane sent me this letter: "I found your telegram on my return from him, and our last interview will ever



"remain in my mind and heart. He faced death like a gallant gentleman, <sup>with the added courage and confidence of a good Catholic.</sup> He talked freely of his death, and was looking forward to his Confession to-night and to his First Holy Communion tomorrow morning. He sent grateful messages to all who prayed for him and loved him, and I was to tell all that he died for Ireland, and he wished them to know that he had no bitterness in his heart... He was wonderful! The peace, the tranquillity and the courage with which he faced death and talked of it! It was like the last hours of some glorious martyr, and I reminded him of Our Lord's words - "He that shall lose his life for Me shall find it"<sup>and that he</sup> He was one more added to the glorious roll, <sup>of Irish martirs.</sup> He bowed his head and made the Sign of the Cross as I blessed him and bade him good-bye till <sup>we</sup> meet him <sup>in Heaven. He hears</sup> ~~at Holy Mass and Holy Communion at~~ <sup>before his first and last</sup> ~~five~~ 7 o'clock... My heart is divided between joy and sorrow". And, of course, as you know, he was executed the next morning.

To-night I have the opportunity of talking to a number of ex-London Gaels - and the London Gaels are the truest body of Irishmen I have known - I want to take the opportunity, not to give you my own opinions of Roger Casement, for he was my friend and I am not unprejudiced, but to give you a picture of the events leading up to his death as he saw them himself. I want, when I come to it, to give you his story as I had it from his own lips, because, be it adjudged right or wrong, it is absolutely sincere and it is due to him to let him tell his own story.

You will understand that the story thus taken down was meant for the information of the three Barristers who were briefed to defend him at the trial; and, as they were merely his professional advisers and had no political sympathy whatever with his cause, he felt in honour bound, where they were concerned, to suppress certain names; and, though the

identity of those names is ~~probably~~<sup>fairly</sup> well known to-day, I think the best course is to repeat to you just what Sir Roger himself gave out, either in summary form, or, where the matter is of special importance, in his own words. There is, of course, not a word in his statement, nor was there a word at the trial, to suggest any difference with John Devoy, who, as is <sup>now</sup> well known, was no admirer of his. To his own story I shall add only two or three details about the trial itself, which may be of interest as not being general public property.

In 1916 I was a London solicitor. As His Excellency here (Mr. Nunan) could tell you, quite a number of Irish boys had the misfortune to have me as their solicitor at the time of conscription, with the result that my able defence secured them two years' hard. I was spending Easter in 1916 with my family in a remote part of Tírconmaill when the wildest rumours reached us of strange events in Dublin, of which the occupation of Dublin Castle by the German Army was only one tit-bit.

The news of Roger Casement's arrest in Kerry on Good Friday, April 21st, had been suppressed; then a paper during the week following Easter announced it officially. I knew that Roger might have difficulty in finding a solicitor in London to defend him in the English atmosphere of the day, so, having known him earlier in County Antrim and in London, I went back to London. I had, in fact, received the year before, from a friend of his, three cases of his papers which the friend thought it unwise to retain and <sup>he</sup> wanted to dispose of them. I remember spending an arduous week-end with Art O'Brien, whom I called in, going through these documents to see what might be utterly seditious in them. I went <sup>back</sup> to London, <sup>and</sup> on 1st May, 1916, I applied in writing to see him

as his solicitor. I got no reply until 8th May, when permission to see him in the Tower was given to me verbally, and on 9th and 11th May I had two very long interviews with him at the Tower of London.

I may say that I had great difficulty in finding leading counsel to defend him, and eventually I resorted to the Four Courts in Dublin to obtain a competent man, unafraid of English opinion; and although that man differed in every conceivable way from Sir Roger's attitude on Irish affairs, and from my own, he was an Irishman who understood his client's outlook perfectly, and it is due to him to say that he served his client brilliantly and loyally to the end. F.E. Smith and three other eminent counsel appeared for the prosecution, but in my judgment, Sergeant Sullivan, who was an able and expert lawyer and quite fearless, dominated the proceedings. Although he was one of the three Irish Sergeants-at-Law, that is the leaders of the Irish Bar, he had never taken silk in England, where he was only a member of the Junior Bar and a stranger in the English Court. In a crowded court he had, with his mass of papers, a very cramped seat in the second row of the Junior Bar; the front seat on his side, reserved for the Senior Bar, was empty. It did not seem to occur to them to invite him to take a seat in the empty King's Counsel bench, where he would have had plenty <sup>of</sup> room.

On my first visit to Sir Roger in the Tower I did not meet him in a reception room, but was taken straight to his cell, a dreadful gloomy place on ground level, where two warders were guarding him. Scotland Yard knew that he had <sup>not</sup> sent for me, and, I suppose, they were suspicious and arranged for me to confront him in the cell, in order to observe what would happen. I <sup>have</sup> heard, but cannot vouch <sup>for it;</sup> that he had sent for a solicitor in London, who refused to appear

for him. He was naturally overjoyed at last to see a friend. This was May 9th, and he had been closely sequestered since his arrest on April 21st. The detectives were evidently satisfied that Roger knew me, and we were then given a pleasant, large, airy, well-lit room, nicely furnished with comfortable chairs, lounges and tables, and used by the Tower officers as a recreation room. The officers retired to a billiard-table in a room adjoining, where they were separated from us by a big glass partition. They left us the large room. All the evicted officers were perfectly courteous. I had brought my confidential stenographer, and he and I and Sir Roger were left absolutely alone, uninterrupted, for as long as we pleased.

Roger had not yet recovered from his dreadful journey and landing. He had had a hectic time after arrest. To me he appeared very ill indeed. In fact, he had been very ill when he left Germany. We talked, I think, for between two and three hours. Despite his illness, he was mentally alert and full of vigour, and I think it was a comfort to him to have the chance of unburdening himself to a friendly ear.

I arranged to undertake his defence for the trial <sup>opened</sup> ~~(which began)~~ on June 26th, and began taking a statement from him, which was completed at another long interview two days later. The statement covered his time in Germany and his journey, and, when typed, ran into over sixty pages of brief paper. He had no difficulty at all in pouring out a clear, consecutive account of his doings and experiences. Thus I was able to get from his own lips, and have preserved, his own detailed story of events from his landing in Germany down to that time.

The story I propose to give you is his own, but

necessarily abbreviated. I shall act merely as his chronicler, with only an occasional interpolation where something needs to be explained.

Here is Sir Roger's own story. In June, 1914, he went to the United States. His purpose was to get arms and money for the Volunteers. He did not anticipate an early outbreak of war. In August, 1914, after the outbreak of war, he published in America "Ireland, Germany and the Freedom of the Seas", preaching open rebellion. To him, the Home Rule Bill, passed by the royal assent on September 14th, 1914, was "a promissory note payable after death," a measure designed to secure Irish recruits for the British Army, while they would get nothing in return. He looked upon the war as an English attack on Germany, made for the purpose of destroying the German fleet and German trade, <sup>the</sup> the fighting to be done by the French, the Russians and the Irish. He was determined that Ireland must remain neutral in the struggle.

In October, 1914, he went to Germany against the advice of the Clan na Gael and of various friends in the States, and afterwards he always took sole responsibility for his visit to Germany. He went to Germany for the express purpose of trying to keep Ireland out of the war. He hoped to stop recruiting in Ireland for the British Army, by getting from Germany a declaration that she had no intention of injuring Ireland if she won, and desired for the Irish people only national freedom and national prosperity. What finally decided him to go was an article in a Liverpool daily paper, which expressed the hope that King George would go to Ireland to open the Irish Parliament, and then foreshadowed the enlistment of 300,000 Irishmen, when the English could stay at home and develop their trade. That

article and a speech in the House of Lords by an English statesman re-echoing it, were what decided him to go to Germany.

Casement eventually reached Berlin, and in November, 1914, obtained the desired declaration from the German Government. It was afterwards published.

He also persuaded the German Government to ask the Vatican for two Irish priests to minister to Irish prisoners-of-war. Two Irish priests came from Rome, and their mission was entirely spiritual and quite unconnected with his own activities. He also induced the Germans to move all the Irish prisoners into a single camp, where they would be together, at Limburg. Thinking of Major MacBride and the Boer War, he conceived the hope that he might form an Irish Brigade from the Irish prisoners in Germany, confined to single men on account of the great risks they would run, ~~in~~ <sup>with</sup> the mission to fight for Ireland.

In December, 1914, Casement obtained from the German Government, in writing, a Treaty or Agreement pledging the Germans to help Ireland when they could, if we first showed that we were willing to help ourselves. It stipulated that an Irish Brigade was to be formed from the Irish prisoners-of-war to fight under the Irish flag, and solely for Ireland, and under no circumstances to be employed for any German end. The German Government undertook to send the Irish Brigade to Ireland with a supporting body of Germans, if a naval victory made that plan practicable; and if we established an independent Government, Germany would recognise that Government and do her best to support our independence. The Treaty could not be published until the Irish Brigade was formed, as an earnest of our good faith. Sir Roger considered the Treaty very important, as involving our recognition by a

great power, thus putting us internationally on the map.

In December, 1914, and January, 1915, Sir Roger visited the camp at Limburg several times to broach his plan to the men, and his efforts were continued by certain other persons during the ensuing months.

By March, 1915, Sir Roger thought that the war was going so badly for Germany that she was unlikely to be able to furnish us with any military aid. In April, 1915, a messenger from Ireland reached him, who urged him to renewed efforts to form the Brigade and who went on to Limburg to help him in that scheme. In May, 1915, Casement went again to Limburg to renew his own efforts.

By this time the Brigade numbered 52, later increased to 55 men, only a small proportion of the prisoners-of-war. For many, the soldiers' oath had proved the stumbling block, and, though Sir Roger does not say so himself, these men had probably never heard of him at home, and were wary of the man who was a stranger to them and was making a very strange proposal.

The Brigade men were now moved to another camp at Zossen, and put into uniform with special quarters, where they would be free from molestation by the unfriendly elements.

The German Government refused to publish the Treaty unless an Irish Brigade were recruited of at least 200 men. By this time, May, 1915, it was perfectly clear to all concerned that the attempt to form an Irish Brigade was a failure, and Sir Roger's main hope of the Brigade now was to be able to use its existence to help to secure a hearing after the peace. In June, 1915, Casement told the messenger from Dublin to tell Headquarters that he did not think it possible

to get the Brigade formed, that he now saw no way in which Germany could help Ireland, and that his mission to Germany had failed. Incidentally he wrote three letters to Devoy, I think, to the same effect in the summer of 1915.

Casement had written urgently to America for one or two Irish officers to be sent for the Brigade. In October, 1915, Robert Monteith arrived after an incredibly difficult journey, as an officer to take charge of the men at Zossen.

In December, 1915, Sir Roger, who was liable to fever from his African days, fell very ill and had to go to a sanatorium in Munich in Bavaria.

The important developments began in March, 1916. Early in March, Casement got a message from the General Staff to the effect that they had heard from John Devoy that something was going to happen in Ireland, and asking for arms. He got up from a bed of sickness and hastened to Berlin.

On 16th March the General Staff showed him a letter from Devoy, stating that the men at home were determined on a Rising on Easter Sunday, April 23rd, whether help came from Germany or not, and also that they wanted officers, cannon, machine guns, rifles and ammunition. The General Staff refused to send officers speaking a different language, nor could they send any cannon, but they would send arms and ammunition and were fitting out a steamer for the purpose. There was some discussion as to how much they would send in the way of rifles, with which I need not trouble you.

Sir Roger was determined that he should go to Ireland himself, whatever happened, but, being convinced that meant certain death, he was most anxious to go alone. However, Captain Monteith, who was his loyal aid and confidant



throughout, declared so emphatically that he must go too that Casement yielded to his insistence. Eventually, as you know, they took a third man, who was unwisely pressed on Casement. Sir Roger positively refused to send the 55 men of the Irish Brigade. He urged the Germans to provide him with a submarine, which would go ahead of the arms ship, on the plea that this was necessary to arrange for the landing of the arms, but the Germans said that a submarine voyage in Irish waters would be altogether too dangerous, and refused to supply one.

On 19th March Casement, <sup>secretly</sup> sent a man whom he could trust ~~secretly~~ to make his way to Dublin, and report on the position to Volunteer Headquarters, particularly on the inadequacy of the military aid available. Although Sir Roger did not know it, I fear his messenger was captured en route by the British. The reason for Sir Roger's keen anxiety to communicate with Dublin was that he was convinced that the whole Rising had been planned in the confidence that Germany would give aid to the Rising, which he knew she would not and could not give.

At the end of March the German General Staff threatened to stop the arms ship, and to let Ireland know that that was Casement's fault. The reasons were these: firstly, they said his dispatch of a messenger to Ireland was a breach of faith - which he denied; secondly, they insisted that, if Casement would not send the 55 men to Ireland, he must at least send a firing party of 12 men.

Casement said it was for him to decide who should go to Ireland, and that the dispatch of twelve men was unnecessary, and, from a military point of view, futile. He said he could not send a batch of soldiers on a hopeless mission, to

be treated as felons or traitors. That was no fate for a soldier. He was glad to have the full support of Captain Monteith, who was with him through the difficult time, in refusing to send the men on the expedition, but the General Staff was very angry. On the other hand, the Foreign Office was most sympathetic and largely took Casement's view and supported him in every possible way.

I think I ought to give you some extracts from Roger's own text in his own words, because I want to convey to you exactly the position as he saw it at that time. Whether he would have modified his views if he had been in touch with developments at home, from which he was very much cut off, I think it is impossible to say. He felt that the arms ship must go at all costs, but "the situation was so absolutely without hope that...whatever I did was wrong; there was no right thing to do except to go myself with the guns and leave the outcome to the thing we call Fate". "...I do not think any man in the world was ever placed, and by his own acts, it must be fully admitted, in a more soul-destroying situation." "...I was still and always obsessed with the dread of the Rising - a thing I felt to be so desperate that I shuddered to count the days to Easter Sunday. Had I accepted the Rising and thrown myself into the spirit of the thing as a reckless, foolhardy attempt of brave men, I might have shaken off the sense of passive despair and gone to aid the Rising with the same sort of reckless courage that fills a soldier on a forlorn hope. But I was too old a man for this, too far-seeing in a way that my critics will scarcely allow, seeing how reckless had been my previous action in coming to Germany at all, not to perceive that a rebellion in Ireland, under the circumstances and with the measure of help being furnished, was a thing that could have no possible hopeful issue." "...Briefly, my state of mind was that,

if Ireland fought, she should fight for herself, and this, to be attempted with any hope of success, involved the obtaining of effective foreign aid."

"The one last hope I clung to, when everything else in this world had slipped from my grasp, was that I might arrive in Ireland in time to stop the Rising, and then face the fate I knew must be mine. To do anything else was impossible, out of the question. To stay in Germany with the ship gone and the certainty that her arrival on 23rd April meant beyond recall the abortive Rising, was to condemn myself to a life of shame and self-contempt, and the contempt of all men; so..I saw nothing else but to go to Ireland and still try to get there before the steamer." "Besides, there was just a ray of hope that a brave fight might be made, that there were possibilities of the Volunteers doing far more than we could see as likely, in which case we should be dying with our countrymen in a struggle against odds, but still a struggle that was not altogether a made one.."

"I absolve the German Government from blame for the Rising, and I think they sent as much material in their ship as there was any safe prospect of being able to land with the means at our disposal in Ireland." "Germany was fighting for her life with her back to the wall."

I resume his narrative, though I must necessarily shorten it.

On the afternoon of April 6th, a special messenger reached Sir Roger, from a neutral country, bearing a letter signed with a pen-name that he knew. The letter said four things:-

(1) that the Rising was fixed for Easter Sunday night,

23rd April.

- (2) that the ship with the large consignment of arms should arrive not later than Easter Monday at dawn - this was, in fact, a different date from that already arranged.
- (3) That officers were imperative.
- (4) That a submarine should be sent to Dublin Bay.

When he communicated this letter to the Germans, they said it was hopeless to send a submarine into those waters, and refused. But Devoy had written that the chief weakness at home was the lack of trained staff officers, and the reiteration of the demand for officers made Sir Roger more determined than ever to get to Ireland before the ship, if possible.

As to officers, the Germans pointed out that to send German officers, without their own men, to command a foreign militia, was impossible from a military point of view. They would send no officers. It was hopeless to persuade the Germans against their will to send their <sup>German</sup> officers on an adventure that directly concerned us, and them only indirectly, after Casement had absolutely refused to send ~~to Ireland~~ <sup>the Irish</sup> soldiers from Zossen to almost certain death for no useful purpose, since a handful of men could make no difference.

However, at the last moment Casement succeeded, through extraordinary persistence, in obtaining a submarine in which he should go in order to reach Ireland ahead of the arms ship. Accordingly, on April 12th, Casement and his two companions left Wilhelmshaven and should have reached Ireland in their submarine on Monday 17th, or Tuesday 18th April, but for an unfortunate breakdown in the submarine,

which had to put into Heligoland to be made right. In fact, they landed on Banna Strand, near Tralee, in the very early morning of Good Friday, April 21st.

Monteith, who had done his best to keep up the spirits of the men in Zossen, and who had been a great help to Casement throughout his difficult negotiations with the Germans, alone escaped capture, and is happily in Dublin to-day - I see him here to-night - to speak for himself. A year or so ago he gave a thrilling account of his experiences in Germany and after his landing in Ireland, to an audience in the Father Mathew Hall, which I am sure many of those present must have heard.

The story of Casement's capture later on Good Friday is familiar. He was taken to Ardfert, then to Tralee, then to Dublin and to London. In Tralee he asked to see a priest, and a Dominican, Father F.M. Ryan, O.P., saw him.

Father Ryan wrote me, in reply to a letter I had sent him, as I wished to have in black and white what he could tell me. Father Ryan's letter was dated July 12, 1916. He said: "Sir Roger Casement saw me in Tralee on April 21st, and told me he had come to Ireland to stop the rebellion then impending. He asked me to conceal his identity as well as his object in coming, until he should have left Tralee, lest any attempt should be made to rescue him. On the other hand, he was very anxious that I should spread the news broadcast after he had left."

That is all I can usefully say on the facts in this rapid summary, but perhaps a few items concerning the trial itself may be of some interest.

As to Casement's defence, from the legal standpoint the

defence depended on the construction of an ancient statute of treasons, made in England under Edward III in 1351, upon which the indictment of Roger Casement for treason was based. After the conviction, an appeal was taken on his behalf on the ground that the court of trial had misconstrued the Act. The appeal was rejected, and the Attorney General refused leave to the prisoner to appeal to the House of Lords.

On the facts alleged against Casement, while nothing was certain, there was very little prospect of success, though there was a bare possibility of a disagreement of the jury. Casement was quite determined that nothing should be said in his defence against the Germans or their Government, and nothing whatever about any differences between himself and the General Staff. Anything of that kind would have been hailed with glee by the British Press and people. Nor, of course, did the fact that he came for the purpose of trying to stop the Rising emerge at all in the evidence put before the jury. Nor was there much point in any attempt at correcting the evidence of soldiers, some of whom confused Joe Plunkett's speeches in Germany with Casement's, and probably thought they were speaking the truth.

No evidence was called for the defence, except that Casement himself made a very brief statement, unsworn, and so he was not cross-examined, mainly to repudiate as a slur on his honour the suggestion that he had taken German gold. If he had exposed himself to cross-examination by giving sworn evidence, his inevitable admissions would have copper-fastened the case for the prosecution against him. But after the verdict of "Guilty" had been given, Sir Roger made a speech from the dock, which was beautiful, powerful and dignified. It is, in my opinion, one of the great speeches from the dock. The jury's work was finished when

this speech was made by Sir Roger at some length, but they listened to it from the jury-box. One of them said afterwards - I cannot say for how many he spoke - "We could have kissed his hands after that speech". The speaker was, of course, one of the men who had condemned him. The fact is, that all the nobility of the man came out triumphantly in a speech which rang true from beginning to end.

As a little sidelight on the trial, I had as solicitor taken steps to be able, if occasion arose, to challenge jurymen, when called into the jury box at the beginning of the trial. Apart from the right of the prosecution to object to jurors, the prisoner had a right to a few challenges without giving any reason; but he could also exclude from the jury box any man whom he could show to be biased. I believe juries had not been challenged by a prisoner in England since the famous Tichborne case in the '70s, because the English have confidence in their juries. However, feeling was running so high that nothing could be left to chance, especially as one dissenting juror alone might save a desperate situation, and one could not tell in advance how far the evidence against Casement would be convincing. There was always the possibility of important witnesses being broken down in cross-examination.

There were 200 men on the jury panel from the City and County of London. The plan adopted was to approach every one of them before the trial, except a few who turned out to be dead, when their homes were visited, with a view to ascertaining what kind of a man each potential juror was. The method of approach selected was this: every one of them was visited at his home by a man who did not know that he came from me, and did not know that his mission was connected with Casement, though he must very soon have

guessed that Casement was somehow behind his mission - from the conversation that ensued. He visited each potential juror to enquire if he would support an independent candidate at the next general election. This led to conversation, and several of them told the visitor that they were on the panel for the Casement trial. Six of them were good enough to add words to this effect: "Yes, and if I had my way, there would be no --- trial; I'd just put him up against a wall". So we knew where we were, with those men at least.

There were a few Catholics on the panel, but none of them in the least friendly. The Crown, unaware of their outlook, however, took care to object to every Catholic who was called on the jury.

The visitor discovered that one man alone of the whole panel of 200 might prove useful if put on the jury. This man said he had a rooted objection to capital punishment, and would refuse to go on the jury if he was selected, but he changed his mind about that and actually sat on the jury. There was just a shadow of a hope that that man's deep convictions would not allow him to convict Casement on a capital charge, and, in that event, a second trial, in accordance with the rather barbarous Irish practice, was unlikely, so much so that I had a car waiting at a private exit to whisk Roger~~s~~ away to a harbour of refuge, if by any chance there was a disagreement of the jury. But there was no disagreement.

The Crown were so unused to challenges by a prisoner that any man to whom we objected stood down without any reason being given, so that the evidence of violent prejudice in the minds of some potential jurors never came out, as it must have if we had been required to justify our



objection to such men.

I think there is no point in telling you about the petitions for reprieve organised by some of Sir Roger's friends. The petitions were signed by names so influential that, until the last day, there was great expectation that the sentence of death would not be executed.

The sincerity of Sir Roger was widely appreciated, and his courage admired by Englishmen, despite the war atmosphere, and a very strong feeling manifested itself, in intellectual circles particularly, against the carrying out of the death penalty.

To conclude, anybody really interested will find an able and critical description of the whole affair in Desmond Ryan's book, "The Rising", and a very much fuller picture in a book called "Roger Casement" by Geoffrey Parmiter, an English barrister, published in London in 1936. That is a remarkable study, and I can speak of it frankly as I had nothing whatever to do with the book and have never met the author. It is the work of a detached Englishman, and, though you may disagree with some things in it, it is full of information, carefully collected and very well arranged. It is a book of intense interest to anybody who admires Roger Casement.

After the execution, Father McCarroll, a devoted young Irish curate, who was with Roger at the end, found his last words jotted down on a sheet of paper in his cell. They were to this effect: "And for the last, my love to all men, to those who are about to take my life, as well as to those who tried to save it. We are all brethern now. R.C."

I can fittingly end this talk with Eva Gore-Booth's

touching verses entitled "Roger Casement" -

I dream of one who is dead,  
As the forms of green trees float and fall in the water,  
The dreams float and fall in my mind.

I dream of him hearing the voice,  
The bitter cry of Kathleen ni Houlihan  
On the salt Atlantic wind.

I dream of the hatred of men,  
Their lies against him who knew nothing of lying,  
Nor was there fear in his mind.

I dream of our hopes and fears,  
The long bitter struggle of the broken-hearted  
With hearts that were poisoned and hard.

I dream of the peace in his soul,  
And the early morning hush on the grave of a hero  
In the desolate prison yard.

I dream of the death that he died,  
For the sake of God and Kathleen ni Houlihan,  
Yea, for Love and the Voice on the Wind.

I dream of one who is dead,  
Above dreams that float and fall in the water  
A new star shines in my mind.

*Completed.  
G. G. D.  
5/15/1950.*

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