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A.P.M's Office,
Curragh Camp,
Co. KILDARE.

13th February, 1954.

Lt.-Colonel J.M. MacCarthy,
Bureau of Military History.

I have this day authenticated the manuscript account of his Easter Week experiences handed me by V. Rev. Fr. Augustine, O.F.M. Cap., and which is being placed in the archives of the Bureau of Military History.

The typescript copies of that manuscript faithfully reproduce the original which owing to the age, illness and, later, the death of Fr. Augustine remained uncompleted and unsigned.

I am satisfied that this account represents the testimony Fr. Augustine desired to give in relation to the period he was able to cover therein.

Patrick J. MacNally
Comdt.
(Patrick J. MacNally)

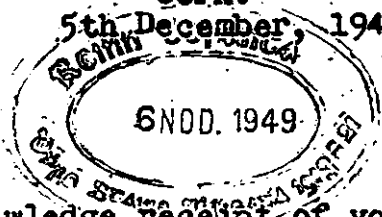


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ORIGINAL

A.P.M.'s Office,
Collins Barracks,
Cork.

5th December, 1949.



A Chara,

I acknowledge receipt of your letter dated 25th ult., ref. S.297, with enclosures for Father Augustine, O.F.M., Cap.

Father Augustine informs me that the Bureau may retain his unfinished manuscript account of the Easter Week period, but I am holding it for the present, as he might wish to consult it as he peruses the typescript copy.

Best wishes.

In mine,

Patrick J. MacNally

Comdt.

Patrick J. MacNally.

Secretary,
Bureau of Military History,
26, Westland Row,
Dublin.

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21
BURO STAIRE MILEATA 1913-21
No. W.S. 920

ORIGINALOFFICERS' MESS,
COLLINS BARRACKS,
CORK.

12th November, 1949.

Colonel J.V. Joyce,
Bureau of Military History,
26, Westland Row,
DUBLIN.

Sir,

As promised I called out to see Father Augustine, O.F.M. Cap., who is indisposed at present in the Bon Secour Nursing Home here. He is suffering from a "tired heart" but seems to be well on the way to recovery. To my very pleasant surprise he had written out part of his own account of the Easter Week Rising. He promised to do this for me at my previous interview with him last April, but I thought that his intervening illness would have prevented him carrying out his promise. This account is by no means complete, but he will give much more later on as his health improves.

The following documents are enclosed :-

1. Father Augustine's own incomplete account of the Easter Week Rising in his own handwriting.
2. Pencilled note signed "Ua Rathghaille", undated.
3. Receipt from Hely's, Dame Street, for £16: 9: 0: received from The O'Rahilly, dated 12/7/1916.
4. Covering letter with receipt for £16: 9: 0: from Hely's, Dame Street, to Father Augustine, Church Street, dated 12/7/1916.
5. Envelope marked in pencil as follows:- "Last letter of the Ua Rathaille".
6. Father Augustine's letter to me, dated 1/10/1949, from Bon Secour Home. (The date should be 1/11/49.)

Will you kindly have Father Augustine's account typed out and sent to me so as to reach me not later than Monday, the 21st instant. Then I shall have time to read it over again and to note down probable questions that might emerge from what he has already written. Please give the typescript copy to Commdt. Feely, and he will be of great assistance in formulating questions on points that are not fully explained, or that might require clarification. I have another appointment with Father Augustine on Wednesday, the 23rd instant, so if the typescript copy reaches me by the preceding Monday that will give me time for perusal. His hand-writing is not easy to follow.

Father Augustine would like to have a photostat copy

of the enclosed documents, Nos. 2, 3, 4 and 5. The originals could then be handed into the National Museum, a receipt obtained for each, and addressed to Father Augustine. Could these receipts and photostats be forwarded to me with the typescript, please?

With my kind regards to the Bureau Staff.

Patrick J. McNally

COMMANDANT.

(Patrick J. McNally)

This letter & the enclosures were handed to Colonel Joyce by Commandant McNally on Monday 14/11/49. They were later given to me by Commandant Feely.

JF 14/11/49

STATEMENT BY REV. FATHER AUGUSTINE, O.F.M., CAP.,
FRANCISCAN MONASTERY, ROCHESTOWN, COUNTY CORK,
FORMERLY OF THE PRIORY, CHURCH STREET, DUBLIN.

In the late hours of Saturday evening I suspected there was something unusual on foot, and on Easter Sunday morning I received an unsigned letter - handed in at the door - telling me not to hold any communication that might come from Eoin MacNeill. On Monday we were at dinner, between 12 and 12.35 o'clock, when a Brother who had been at the Convent door, rushed into the Refectory saying that a boy had been shot in Church Street and that the Volunteers were out.

About an hour later two or three of them were at our Bowe Street gate, two in the passage between Bowe Street and Church Street, commonly called the Chapel Yard, and barricades were being erected with great haste in Church Street. One of these was opposite our Church, another at the first turnings below the Church on the right, and another at the top of the street where Church Street intersects North Brunswick Street. Heavy firing was heard at intervals and this, as I observed while standing at the front door of the Church, seemed to have the effect of intensifying the zeal of the boys in strengthening the barricades.

I moved about freely for the next few days doing whatever I could in a spiritual way for the boys who had taken over the Father Mathew Hall as a first-aid post whence serious cases were removed to the Richmond Hospital. The side hall at the left, as you enter from the street, was devoted to the wounded, and on Wednesday a few soldiers were

/confined

confined in the main hall facing the entrance. The members of the Cumann na mBan were most devoted to those who had been wounded in the fight.

On Tuesday and Wednesday morning as I was near the Church a fine young Volunteer approached me. He told me he had been married that morning, but would like to go to confession before taking up his post. He left his gun standing against the wall, made his confession in the nearest confessional, and outside I bade him good-bye and gave him a blessing as he went off in the direction of North King Street. On Wednesday I had a chat with Piaras Beaslaoi who thought all was going well. On Thursday, after 3 p.m. as far as my memory serves me, after having attended to some calls in the district, I felt a strange urge to go and see how things were going in the Four Courts. I went off alone down Church Street and having succeeded in getting in was hailed by the boys with great delight. Some asked for confession and I began work at once. One of those who came was Patrick O'Connor who belonged to the 4th Battalion of which he was a Section Leader and who is now in the National Library, Kildare Street, where we met again in 1941 or 1942 when I was collecting matter for my book - "Footprints of Father Theobald Mathew, O.F.M., Cap., Apostle of Temperance", and revived many memories. Another was Frank Fahy, the present Ceann Comhairle. After confession I remember well telling him of some foolish talk that I had heard to the effect that the garrison would soon retire and fight their way into the open country. He looked at me, smiled and said that was impossible as they were being gradually surrounded.

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While I was still hearing confessions Liam O'Carroll came and told me that one of the Volunteers was badly wounded. I hastened away with him, descended to the yard where Liam told me bend as low as I could as the cemented path along which we ran under the windows was covered by a sniper until we came to an open door at the opposite side. "Now, Father", said Liam, "be careful in crossing here. "Better for us to go singly", said I, "as we'll give the sniper less chance that way. Now, Liam, you first". He cleared it at a bound. "Good man", said I, clearing the passage as quickly as I could, and bursting into laughter as I felt I had cheated the sniper. We mounted a stairs together and he showed me into a room where the poor wounded Volunteer lay with a Sacred Heart badge in his hand. The window was not too well barricaded with books and, while crossing for something, he was shot through the left lung. He now lay on his back on the floor, his head held up by a brave Cumann na mBan girl. I had to tell her bend lower as I was afraid she might be seen by the sniper. The few in the room knelt and I, lying on my side on the floor, annointed the brave man of twenty-nine summers who a day or two later died a grand catholic death in the Richmond Hospital kissing his crucifix and murmuring ejaculatory prayers.

Many and many a time since then have I thought of that afternoon during which I felt the urge to go to the Four Courts. I understood the urge better and thanked the good God that during all those eventful days I bore about with me the Holy Oils. Séamus Brennan, one of our
 /Volunteer

Volunteer teachers, told me later that Thomas Allen had often expressed a desire to see me. One Sunday, during catechism hour after the last Mass in Church Street, he was speaking to Séamus who pointed me out to him at the top of the Church near the altar rails. But because I was then speaking to a few of the teachers he refused his friend's kind invitation to come and be introduced, saying he did not wish to interrupt me now and we would meet some other time. God's ways are indeed wonderful and they are always full of love even in the face of death.

Having heard some more confessions I left about six o'clock and having reached the barricade where Bowe Lane intersects Church Street I stopped to have a few words with the young Volunteer who lay crouched beneath it. "You're in danger, Father", he at once said to me, and I remember well answering: "I know I am, but I want to get home". Realising that there were snipers about I did not wish to go along the Lane as I would be exposed too long to their vision, and decided quickly to take the shorter way to the Church Street gate leading to the Convent. I had scarcely left the barricade and come into view when a bullet hissed through the air. I flopped at once, got up quickly, and ran to the near gate protected by the houses, entering the Church immediately to say a prayer of thanks to the Lord for my escape. I wish here to state quite sincerely and candidly that during the whole week as I moved about I had no fear, but others may find it interesting to know my real feeling. Well, I felt that I might be badly wounded, but that I would not be killed outright.

On Friday activity in the city became more intense and machine gun fire was heard more frequently. More wounded were brought to the Father Mathew Hall and the English snipers were busy. Some shots from the direction of Smithfield pierced some of our windows and shattered a stair at the Smithfield end of our top corridor. That large window I had flung up on the previous Wednesday when I looked out and down Bowe Street to see if the enclosed bridge that spans the street and joins the two portions of Jameson's Distillery had been blown away. The Volunteers, suspecting that the English might enter from the Smithfield side and cross over to the other and rain down bullets on the Volunteers that were in the Chapel yard, decided to blow up the connecting bridge. But the experiment was not a success. When the bullets came through the window out of which I had looked for a few minutes only two days previously, I thanked the good God for His loving mercy in my regard. But my heart was sad in the evening when I heard that a dear pupil of mine at Rochestown College, whose laugh I loved, had perished while doing something similar to what I had done. Dominic O'Donoghue, a boy of about seventeen years of age, had been playing with a companion under the eyes of his Father in an open space at the North Dublin Union. When both gave up they agreed to mount the clock tower to have a look round at the fires, as I was told later, that now blazed in the city. Dominic put his head through the first window or aperture he found, and his companion, mounting higher, did the same. A sniper at the Broadstone saw them and sent them into eternity. Father Albert, who had been active between the Union and the Hospital since the previous Tuesday, was quickly on the spot

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and appointed both of them. The English were gradually closing in on us and two of the Fathers remained in the Father Mathew Hall this (Friday) night to attend to the wounded and be on the spot for further possible eventualities.

On Saturday morning, the 29th., things had become more serious, and British soldiers had succeeded in taking possession of some houses on both sides of North King Street. After early Mass and a hasty breakfast I relieved the two Fathers in the Father Mathew Hall and remained there the whole day. There was a couple of bad cases and we had no Doctor up to the present. About three o'clock in the afternoon, when the military were already firing on the barricade at the Hall, I sent Micheál Ó Foghludha, under a white flag, to secure one if at all possible. As he did not return, after about an hour or so I suspected something untoward had happened, and sent a young fellow named Doyle, with a white flag and a Red Cross one, to see the Colonel in charge to give him a letter I had written. In this I explained that I was a Capuchian priest, that the Hall was being used as a hospital, that I was there in charge of the wounded, and that, under the circumstances, I asked the favour of an interview. Having seen the Colonel at the barricade, after some considerable delay, he brought back to me the oral answer he had received and delivered it to me in words that I shall never forget. "He said, Father, that we were all rebels and outlaws and that we would get none of the amenities of war".

I remember well smiling at the words because many thoughts arose in my heart, but after thinking a while I took counsel with some of the wounded who now began to

/suspect

suspect that surely we would be shelled. I saw clearly that this might possibly happen and decided; therefore, to go to see the Colonel myself. But before doing so, as the following day was Sunday and as I did not know what might become of it, I was anxious to tell the other Fathers what I was about to do, so that in the event of my not returning the Masses would be arranged by the Vicar. The Fathers were just finishing supper as I entered the Refectory about 6.20 p.m. and after I had told them briefly what had transpired during the afternoon and what I was now about to do to prevent slaughter, Father Aloysius, who was then Provincial, at once volunteered to accompany me. With a warm 'God-speed' from the rest of the community we returned to the Hall and, accompanied by Doyle, who bore a white flag, we proceeded to the barricade at North King Street and asked to see the Colonel. Between two soldiers with fixed bayonets we were led up to a certain point in the street, and while we waited there, we saw three companies of soldiers marching down towards the barrier we had left, and also an armoured car and an ambulance quite near.

Colonel Taylor came at length and having heard what we had to say, spoke some words. I knew the situation at first hand hence Father Aloysius thought it proper that I should be spokesman. I then told the Colonel what I had already written him, that we were using the Father Mathew Hall as a hospital, that there were several serious cases there, and that we asked for a truce not only to look after our wounded properly, but also - I felt I was playing my trump card - to hand over two English soldiers who were detained there as prisoners. To our astonishment he replied not a word, but turning abruptly to the officers near him, he consulted for a short time, and then left the shop without having spoken a word to us.

We remained there for some time, and when the Colonel did not re-appear, we again asked to speak to him. A few officers, one of them General Lowe's son, walked down the street with us and we again met the Colonel near the corner where Church Street intersects North King Street. In a moment or two, as we were speaking to the Colonel, Micheál Ó Foghludha rushed across and, addressing me, complained of the way we had been treated. Just then some shots fired by the Volunteers struck the pavement, and the Colonel, angerily seizing Micheál, shoved him roughly to the other side of the street, covered him with his revolver and told him tell his to stop the fire and that if they fired again he would be shot. He did this in a hoarse voice still holding his white flag and then I turned quickly to the Colonel and said: "Will you, Colonel, grant the truce and promise me, on your word of honour, that if the Volunteers don't fire, your men wont fire." He replied: "I promise and I grant the truce until 10 o'clock on to-morrow morning." Not knowing then who was in command I moved a little up the street and spoke to the Volunteers many of whom by this time had their heads out the windows. "Boys", I said "I want to speak to you", and a loud shout came in reply: "Go on, Father". I then told them that we had obtained a truce until the morning and that the Colonel had promised they would not fire if the Volunteers promised not to fire. "Will you promise?" Another shout came "We will, Father". The Colonel was quite satisfied and we parted. We loitered about for a while chatting to the Volunteers and then went down to the Father Mathew Hall to give all there the news. Arrangements were made for the transfer of the

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serious cases to the Richmond Hospital and those who wished, nurses and patients, were told they could go home.

I wish to state here most definitely and solemnly that at this time I never thought of, much less uttered, the word 'surrender', nor did I know anything of the document in which Pearse said that he and his fellows of the Provisional Government had agreed to unconditional surrender and ordered the Commandants of the different districts to order their men to lay down arms. I knew nothing of the surrender of the General Post Office which had taken place before 4 o'clock, nor even of the surrender of the Four Courts that took place an hour or two later. The first intimation I got of this was on the following morning under the following circumstances. About 6.30 on this Sunday morning, the 30th., I went up Church Street and spoke with some of the Cumann na mBan girls who were still in the Hall and some of the Volunteers who were standing at the windows of the houses. I said a few cheery words to them and told them that I was returning now and would offer up Mass for all of them. I was partly rushed and waiting for the clock to strike before going out to say Mass at 7 a.m. Father Columbus, who had been away since the previous Thursday, opened the sacristy door and told me of the surrenders and of Pearse's document. Even then I doubted and asked him if he had a copy. "No, Father", he replied, "but I saw it and had it in my hand". "But", I rejoined, "I'm sure our men wont surrender unless they see a copy. Could you get one?" "Of course I can", he answered, starting off at once to the Four Courts, where he was not so successful as he had anticipated.

As he was not back at 8 o'clock I, being anxious, spoke to Father Aloysius and we decided to walk over to the Castle

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where we soon met Brigadier General Lowe who received us in a very gentlemanly manner. I told him we had heard of the two surrenders, that a truce had been granted in our area, but that we were in quest of Pearse's document as we felt the Volunteers in our area would never lay down arms until they felt quite sure about it. He assured us the document was genuine, that typed copies had been made of it, but that, unfortunately, he could not lay his hands on one just now. "But", he added, "Connolly is here and would reassure you on the matter, if you were to see him". "Of course", we replied, and he at once led us to where the leader of the Citizen Army lay in bed. General Lowe remained outside. We entered, passing the armed sentry at the end of the room near the door, and I remember well, just as if it were but yesterday, the feeling of admiration in my heart as I laid eyes for the first time on this man of fine head and noble brow. Approaching his bedside I asked him if the document said to have been signed by Pearse was genuine, and he assured me in the affirmative. "Did you also sign it?" I then asked, and he replied at once "Yes". Then, as I turned to leave him, he said "But only for the men under my own command". These words are indelibly imprinted on my memory, and I am all the more anxious to record them here because I have seen another account in which it is stated that it was General Lowe put him the question. The General was a gentleman; he recognised the delicacy of the situation; he knew our anxiety about the document; he trusted us fully and did not enter the room.

The General then, being still anxious as we were to get at least a copy of the document so that it could be shown to the Volunteers who had not yet surrendered, placed his car and chauffeur at our disposal and we drove at once to Arbour Hill Detention Barracks to see Pearse who, after a short while, was ushered into the room by a soldier who then stood

at the end with loaded rifle. Pearse advanced with noble mien and such soldierly bearing that the word 'Napoleonic' shot at once through my brain. In answer to my question he said that he had signed a document of unconditional surrender stating the reasons why he had done so, but that one of our Fathers had been here a short time previously, and as he assured him no copy of it could be found, he wrote another of which the following is an exact copy:

"In order to prevent further slaughter of the civil population and in the hope of saving the lives of our followers the members of the Provisional Government present at Headquarters have decided on an unconditional surrender, and Commandants or Officers commanding districts will order their Commands to lay down arms.

P.H. PEARSE.

Dublin. : 30th April, 1916."

The original document which could not be found ran as follows:

"In order to prevent the further slaughter of Dublin Citizens, and in the hope of saving the lives of 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

3.45 p.m."

Driving at once to Church Street, Father Aloysius and myself heard that Father Columbus had preceded us with the letter received from Pearse on reading which the Commandant

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in Charge, Paddy Holohan, in consultation with his men, decided to surrender. The usual procedure was followed, the Volunteers lined up, and were marched under military escort to Dublin Castle. He drove then towards Jacob's factory. Leaving the car a little above Whitefriar's Street we walked to the factory which we entered through a door in Peter Street, which was guarded by armed Volunteers. Passing through the building my eye caught sight of a large white car in a prominent place on which was posted in large capitals the following: "General Communion building". After consultation here with General Maxwell, General Lowe said that he was prepared to meet Mr. MacDonagh at the North East corner of St. Patrick's Park at 12 o'clock noon, and gave us a letter to that effect. With this letter we returned at once to the factory, and MacDonagh having read it, agreed to meet the General at the appointed place and hour. McBride volunteered to accompany him, but remembering the fine part he had played in the Boer War, I said it was better not. A volunteer was then called, and the four of us proceeded on foot. At the hour that had been arranged General Lowe, leaving his car, advanced, and MacDonagh and he met, each saluting the other in the usual military style. I could not help noticing the quiet, matter-of-fact salute of the former, for of the two MacDonagh was certainly then the cooler man. I remained beside the Volunteer and kept my eye on both as they talked together outside the railing, just at the corner of the park. To the crowds that were gathering and pressing in Father Aloysius appealed and they withdrew at once, leaving the Square free. After a time the two retired to General Lowe's car, and continued their parley for about ten or fifteen minutes, after which, rejoining us, we walked back to the factory. He told us

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there was an armistice until 3 p.m. during which he was to see the garrisons at the South Dublin Union and Marrowbone Lane as well as his own. The General placed his motor car at our disposal, gave MacDonagh a special permit to visit the Volunteer centres, and requested us to accompany him.

On returning to Jacob's, MacDonagh consulted with his officers and then addressed his men. He was evidently suffering a great strain and still held up and spoke bravely for a few minutes telling the men, among other things, that the Volunteers had fought a good fight, held out for one glorious week, and achieved what they meant to accomplish. I listened with great sympathy and while I was wondering how he could speak so coolly under such circumstances, he used the word that my mind had conceived but my tongue never uttered - "surrender", and then he burst into tears. Pulling himself together bravely after a very short time, and, I'm sure, feeling the difficulty of his position and the certainty of my opinion, he took the liberty of saying that I had advised them to surrender. Almost immediately he added to my astonishment: "Father Augustine will now address you". I stepped forward from the side, faced the men, and felt that God would help me. Taking up his last word I said that our men everywhere had fought a brave fight, and for the reasons mentioned by Pearse the best thing to do now was to obey and to lay down arms. "But they'll shoot us, Father", cried out one of the boys, and speaking the honest conviction of my soul at the time, I answered: "Not at all; the thing is unbelievable". After a few minutes I concluded, and then chatted with the boys, telling them, amongst other things,

/that

that I'd return before they left. Father Aloysius was all this time below with the chauffeur who was rather nervous in this area. MacDonagh and I joined him as speedily as we could and drove off, Father Aloysius sitting outside with a white flag, and I inside chatting with MacDonagh. He was under the impression that the country was up, and they wanted to quell us before attacking them. Near Basin Lane, because of a barricade across the street, we were obliged to leave the car, and then proceeded on foot to the South Dublin Union.

There I caught a glimpse of Eamonn Ceannt and Liam Cosgrave, and had a short chat in the corridor with a third - Ffrench Mullen. He, though wounded, was hopping about, chatty as usual, and actually thought things were getting on very well. But when I told him that Commandant MacDonagh was inside for a conference, he quickly went off and I did not see him again.

After the consultation with the officers during which surrender was agreed upon, MacDonagh rejoined us and we walked along quickly. Soon a shot was fired in our direction and speedily an English officer came forward to apologise and say that the soldier had been placed under arrest. I could not help noticing the nonchalant manner in which MacDonagh replied to the officer, saying: "I didn't notice it". I did, and felt glad that he was such a bad shot. Having regained the car we were soon at Jacob's and at 3 p.m. arrived again at St. Patrick's Park where MacDonagh informed General Lowe of the decision to surrender and handed his revolver and belt to an officer. It was now decided that he should now return to the two garrisons already named and also to Marrowbone Lane to arrange details of the surrender. We

/were

were again requested to accompany him and General Lowe's son, with another officer, was also with us. Father Aloysius remained outside with the chauffeur, and I accompanied MacDonagh into the building where we had a longer stay than I had anticipated. Having hurried away in my anxiety from Church Street in the morning after having taken only a cup of coffee, feeling sure of being back in a short time for breakfast, I was now suffering from a very severe headache. Telling a member of the Cumann na mBan she soon gave me a cup of tea and a biscuit for which I was very grateful. I am sorry I have forgotten her name, but I often after blessed her in my heart.

We returned to the South Dublin Union where MacDonagh made final arrangements and walking back he spoke more than usual. Amongst other things he pointed out to me the place where they had held a large Volunteer recruiting meeting some time previously, and a little later the spot near St. Catherine's Church where the scaffold was erected on which Robert Emmet was hanged. I could almost feel his thoughts. Regaining Jacobs's we were soon joined by Father Monahan of Francis Street who offered to do anything he could. But there was little now to be done. The boys gathered round me and asked me would I take messages for their people to which, of course, I replied in the affirmative. Some had written these, and while others were being written Fathers Aloysius and Monahan were approached by a Volunteer who told them that some looting was going on outside in Bishop Street. They went out and I heard after spoke to the looters who ceased their work and dispersed. Meanwhile I was filling every pocket I had with the messages of the boys mostly to their parents, and these were delivered in the city on the following day by a few members of the Third Order. One, I

/remember

remember well, was given me by one of the sons of the famous Irish writer, An Gruagach, who received it some time that week from Fionán MacColum to whom I had sent it. After a time Father Aloysius and myself bade good-bye to the boys amid much bustle, and we went to St. Patrick's Park hoping to see them there again.

They did not arrive and I began to wonder what was causing the delay. In about fifteen minutes, however, we saw the South Dublin Union garrison marching in, and at once my eye caught sight of the figure of the leader. The whole column marched splendidly with guns slung from their left shoulders and their hands swinging freely at their sides. They wore no look of defeat, but rather of victory. It seemed as if they had come out to celebrate a triumph and were marching to receive a decoration. Ceant was in the centre of the front with two others at his side. But my eyes were riveted on him so tall was his form, so noble his bearing and so manly his stride. He was indeed the worthy Captain of a brave band who had fought a clean fight for Ireland.

They drew up just opposite us as we stood at the corner where Street meets Street, and grounded their guns at his command. Father Aloysius and myself looked on in silence. We saw Eamonn give up his gun and then his belt to an English officer. But when I saw them taking off his Volunteer uniform I said at once to Father Aloysius: "I can't stand this any longer. Come along and we'll let them see what we think of those men."

/We

We walked across the street, shook hands warmly with Éamonn and with a "Good-bye and God bless you", just looked at the officers and departed for Church Street after a terse and trying day.

On Monday 1st May, Father Albert and myself were busy visiting prisoners, and in the afternoon Father Aloysius went to see James Connolly at the Castle. On Tuesday morning he informed me that General Maxwell was desirous of seeing me, and, hopeful that some good might accrue from our visit, we went about 11 a.m. to General Headquarters, Infirmary Road, where we met General Lowe who took us at once to General Maxwell. Introducing us in a short complimentary speech, he said he had met Franciscans before in the Holy Land and referred to our recent efforts as peacemakers. General Maxwell, who had none of the gentlemanly bearing of General Lowe, struck me as a well-preserved, English gentleman farmer; he had nothing particular to say beyond uttering a few words of thanks. He did, however, add that he was anxious to help with food the poor people who had been deprived of it for the past week. We informed him that the best way to do that was to get in touch with the St. Vincent de Paul Society.

On Tuesday afternoon Father Albert and myself went to Richmond Barracks where we saw, amongst others, Seán T. Kelly and Larry O'Neill. We heard some confessions but finding that a great many wished to go I promised them that I would arrange with the authorities and that we would return for that purpose on the morrow. One expression I heard then I shall never forget, and it was uttered by a Customs official, a fluent Irish speaker who was well known ^{to} /An t-Atair Peadar Ó Laoghaire. He had no connection with the Volunteer movement, but had been brought there by the military because

An Claidheamh Solus and other Irish papers had been found in his lodgings. "Look here, Father", said he to me, "it's not pleasant to be in here in this dirty place, but I thank God that I was here yesterday to see De Valera marching in with his men. He was grand and led them like a conqueror". In another part of the grounds of the Barracks is a fairly large building opposite which is a piece of land on which the grass was delightfully green. This sunny day, a few tired Volunteers were resting on it and one of these I recognised as Joseph Mary Plunkett who lay there in a sitting posture with his body thrown slightly back supported by his two hands which pressed against the ground. He was, I was told, awaiting his turn for courtmartial with his back turned towards us and his face towards the building he was soon to enter. My heart went out to him, but I did not then know that I was to see him so soon again.

On that afternoon I arranged with a Catholic officer about the hearing of the men's confessions on the following day. Telling him the hour at which Father Albert and myself would arrive, I asked him to have two rooms and two chairs ready, and also two small pieces of carpet on which the men could kneel. I remember distinctly asking for the last, not with much hope of getting it in such a place but with the object of showing my respect for those I was so anxious to assist. We arrived on the following day, Wednesday, at the hour appointed, 3 p.m. and saw this officer with another speaking to a Protestant clergyman. We waited for about ten minutes until he had finished, thinking he would then come to meet us. But, to our astonishment, both officers passed us by without taking any notice whatever. I followed quickly and said to the one I knew: "I beg your pardon, Sir", and then, when he turned, told him I had been
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been here yesterday and that he had promised to have things ready for me. "But", he replied, "did you see me speaking to that gentleman?" "Yes," I answered, I did and I was gentleman enough not to interrupt you. Will you now, please, be gentleman enough to do as I desire". He made no answer, but moved a little away, and I turning, saw another officer to whom I complained of the uncourteous way I had been received when asking a simple request. "Who treated you that way, Padre", said this officer, and then I pointed out to him the offender. "I have not authority over him", he answered, "but I shall be glad to help you in any way". I then told him my business, and requested two rooms, two chairs and privacy, explaining to him briefly the secrecy that was necessary for confession, as I guessed he was a Protestant. "Yes", he said, "I am a Protestant, but I have many Catholic friends and understand all about confession". He got us the rooms and the chairs without further ado and ordered two sentries to stand outside in a passage, but at a distance where they could neither hear nor see us. I thanked him for his kindness, and regret very much that I do not know his name. The name of the other officer I did hear afterwards, but I am glad I have forgotten it. This was the only discourtesy I met with during all this trying week.

After confession some of the prisoners gave me messages for their parents or other relatives, which, of course, I faithfully delivered. But there is one in particular that is written on my heart. It is the one given me by Arthur Griffith who said to me: "Could you possibly call on my wife, Father", he inquired. "Of course I can", I replied. "Well then", he said, "will you please tell her that, should anything happen to me, I shall die thinking of her". As clearly as if it were but yesterday

I still see him kneeling there at my knees and hear his calm, firm voice as he tenderly uttered those unforgettable words. Many other messages I have forgotten, but that one is still fresh on the tablets of memory.

Wednesday evening. P.H. Pearse, T. MacDonagh and Tom Clarke were shot this morning about 3.25, the two former being attended by Father Aloysius and the last by Father Columbus. He too was driven in an open motor car to Basin Lane Convent of Mercy to fetch Sister M. Francesca, his sister, who, on leaving him for the last time, flung her Rosary round his neck. Father Aloysius called for it on the following morning. That evening Father Albert and myself went to the house on the North Circular Road where we heard the chief English officers were staying and asked if there were to be executions on the following morning so that we might be prepared. We heard that there were to be four.

Thursday morning. This morning before 3 p.m. we heard loud knocking at the Bowe Street gate. I went down at once and the first words one of the soldiers said were: "You've got to hurry, Sir, as we have but little time". I quickly called Fathers Albert, Columbus and Sebastian and we started for Kilmainham where the Governor told us that four were to be executed - Edward Daly, Michael O'Hanrahan, Joseph Mary Plunkett and Willie Pearse. The Governor told us that there was not much time, but he had specially got a slight postponement of the fixed hour, so as to give us an opportunity of attending to the men. Father Columbus, having met him before at the surrender, naturally went to the first, Father Albert to the second, Father Sebastian to the third, and I to Willie Pearse whose hands were already tied behind his back.

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He was beautifully calm, made his confession as if he were doing it on an ordinary occasion, and received Holy Communion with great devotion. A few minutes later he stood before the firing squad, and with Our Lord in his heart, went to meet his noble brother in a better land.

Edward Daly I did not meet at all and he was, I feel sure, the first shot on this hurried morning. Willie J. Pearse was the second, Michael O'Hanrahan the third and Joseph Mary Plunkett the last. After I had left Willie Pearse I saw O'Hanrahan for a short while in his cell, and I now write here again what I wrote of him in another place shortly after he had laid down his life for Ireland. "He was one of the truest and noblest characters that it has ever been my privilege to meet. His last message to me before he went out into the dark corridor that led to the yard where he was shot was: 'Father, I'd like you saw my mother and sisters and consoled them'. I promised him I would, and whispering something in his ear, I grasped the hands that were tied behind his back. In his right he pressed mine most warmly; we exchanged a look, and he went forth to die."

Turning from him I caught sight of Joseph Mary Plunkett who was standing.

An explanation of the rush of the morning I heard that afternoon when speaking to the people. The military, some of them said, were for a long while pounding at our gate in Church Street, but since the full length of the Church separates it from the Friary, we heard nothing. At last some one ventured out and directed them to go round to the Bowe Street gate, which is close to us, and there we heard the knocking at once. Another explanation was given

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given me by Father Columbus who said Father Eugene McCarthy had told him that, having married Joseph Mary Plunkett and Grace Gifford on the previous evening at 8 p.m. or perhaps later, he returned to James's Street. Much later in the night a soldier called at the Presbytery and said that four men were to be shot in the morning. He thought that this was merely giving him the information they had forgotten the evening before, and felt sure that some Capuchians would be there to attend to the men. As at 2.30 no priest had arrived, the Governor sent for us.

He returned to the Friary after the executions and offered up Mass for the dear departed. About 10.30, as I was going to fulfil my promise to Michael O'Hanrahan, I met his sisters in Church Street who were coming to see me. I returned with them and tried to console them in one of our parlours for the loss of such a brother. They were very brave and grateful, especially when I promised that I would call as soon as possible to see their mother. That afternoon I went to see their brother, Harry, in his cell at Kilmainham. He asked me if I had seen his brother and I answered yes. "Where is he, Father?" was the next question and when I replied haltingly, with my heart stirred within me, that he was well, he suspected something and I then said I'd tell him all and that I felt sure he would be man enough to bear it. When I mentioned the first scene he leant his head against his right arm which was pressed against the wall and burst into tears and sobs. It was perfectly natural, of course, and with a few cheery words from me, he quickly pulled himself together. I spoke on, and after some time, I promised to see him soon again, and

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we parted. The good God gave me the privilege of attending him later during his last illness in the Mater Misericordiae Hospital and of anointing him before his happy death.

Friday morning, May 5th. After 2 o'clock this morning a loud knocking was heard at the Bowe Street gate. I went down and a soldier told me I had been asked for by one of the prisoners at Kilmainham. I was prepared owing to information received the previous evening at the Officers' quarters on the North Circular Road, and went at once. On reaching the prison I was immediately shown to a cell and on its being opened I gripped the hand of Major MacBride. He was quiet and natural as ever. His very first words expressed sorrow for the surrender, and then he went on quickly to say that having asked for water to have a wash a soldier had brought him a cupful. "I suppose", he added with a smile, "they think I could wash myself with that much". He then emptied his pockets of whatever silver and coppers he had, and asked me to give it to the poor. Finally, placing his Rosary tenderly in my hand, he uttered a little sentence that thrilled me: "And give that to my Mother".

Then, having given me a message for another that convinced me he was a man of very deep faith, he began his confession with the simplicity and humility of a child. After a few minutes I gave him Holy Communion and we spent some while together in prayer. I told him I would be with him to the last and anointed him when he fell. When the time was up, a soldier knocked at the door and we went down together to the passage where final preparations were made. I seem to see it all now vividly again, and as I write, I feel naturally stirred. He asked quietly not to have his

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hands bound and promised to remain perfectly still. "Sorry, Sir", the soldier answered, "but these are the orders". Then he requested not to be blindfolded, and a similar answer was given. Turning slightly aside, he said to me quite naturally in a soft, low voice: "You know, Father Augustine, I've often looked down their guns before." Later a piece of white paper is pinned above his heart, and inspired by the Holy Spirit I whisper into his ear: "We are all sinners. Offer up your life for any faults or sins of the past", and this brave man, fearless of death, responded like a child, yet firmly: "I'm glad you told me that, Father, I will".

The two soldiers and myself now move along the corridor, turn to the left and enter a yard where the firing squad of twelve is already waiting with loaded rifles. Six kneel now on one knee and behind them six stand. He faces them about 50 feet from the guns, two or three feet from the wall. The two soldiers withdrew to the left near the Governor and the Doctor, and I, oblivious of all but him, stand close at his right in prayer. The officer approaches, takes me gently by the arm and leads me to a position below himself at the right. He speaks a word, the prisoner stiffens and expands his chest. Then quickly a silent signal, a loud volley, and the body collapses in a heap. I move forward quickly and anointed him, feeling the meaning of the beautiful words of the Liturgy as, I think, I never felt them before, and the certainty of the consoling thought that the soul of the dear one who had fallen was already on its way to God and His Blessed Mother.

/Friday afternoon.

Friday afternoon: That afternoon I visited Kilmainham once more to see some of the prisoners and amongst others Liam Cosgrave whom I found seated in pensive mood. Beside him on the floor was a rough earthenware bowl filled with something. "What's that?" said I, and he answered: "Some bully beef, Father". "Why not eat it", I inquired, and, looking at me for a moment in astonishment, he responded: "Don't you know the day it is?" "But", I continued, "when did you last get something to eat?" and he replied: "In the morning"; and on further questioning I discovered that he might get nothing more until the following morning. "Look here", said I firmly: "I won't sit down and speak to you unless you take that and begin to eat it." He spoke of the things that were near our hearts for we were alone in the cell, and I left him in good spirits ready for anything that might come. On my way home I called on his Mother and told her all about my visit.

Sunday 7th: Father Albert and myself had a busy day at Richmond Barracks and in the evening about 8 o'clock went to the house on North Circular Road where the officers were staying to inquire if our services would be required on the morrow. We were told that four were to be executed and, being ready when the car came in the early morning, we were quickly driven to Kilmainham. Here we were given the names of the condemned men - Micheál Mallin, Seán Heuston, Con Colbert and Éamonn Ceannt.

Monday 8th:

