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Speech of Thoma. M'Donagh

memorised from notes taken by one
of the Court martial

Gentlemen of the Court martial

I choose to think you have but
done your duty according to your lights in
sentencing me to death. I thank you for your
courtesy. I would not be seemly for me to
go to my doom without trying to express,
however inadequately, my sense of the high honour
I enjoy in being one of those predestined to die in
this execution for the cause of Irish freedom.
You will perhaps understand this sentiment
for it is one to which an Imperial part of
a bygone age bore immortal testimony. "It is
sweet and glorious to die for one's country."
You would all be proud to die for Britain
your Imperial patron and I am proud and
happy to die for Ireland my glorious fatherland.
(A member of the court) You speak of Britain
our Imperial patron ~~in what way~~ ~~and~~ ~~would you~~
~~die for her?~~

Prisoner (interrupting) Yes, for some of you are Irishmen and Britain is not your country.

(A member) And what of your imperial patron - what of Germany? Would you die for her?

Prisoner - Not if Germany had violated and despoiled my country and persisted in withholding her birthright and freedom.

President of the Court - Better not interrupt the prisoner.

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Prisoner Thank you. There is not much left to say. The Proclamation of the Irish Republic has been adduced in evidence against me as one of the signatories. I adhere to every statement in that proclamation. You think it already a dead and buried letter - but it lives, it lives! From minds alive with Ireland's vivid intellect it sprang in hearts aflame with Ireland's mighty love it was conceived. Such documents do not die.

The sentence of Courtmartial having been conveyed to Mrs W. Donagh he requested permission to thank the Court in person for their courtesy and addressed them as follows.)

Sep. 10th. 1916.
By S. Nolan.

Thomas MacDonagh.

Mr. Hickey.

The sentence of the Court Martial having been conveyed to Thomas MacDonagh, he requested permission to address the Court in prison for their courtesy, and addressed them as follows:-

Gentlemen of the Court-Martial.

I choose to think that you have but done your duty according to your lights in sentencing me to death. I thank you for your courtesy. It would not be seemly for me to go to my doom without trying to express however inadequately, my sense of high honour I enjoy in being one of those predestined to die in this generation for the cause of Irish Freedom.

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You will perhaps understand this sentiment, for it is one to which an Imperial poet of a by-gone age bore immortal testimony:

“~~It is~~ sweet and glorious to die for one's country.”
You would ~~would~~ all be proud to die for Britain, your Imperial patron, and I am proud and happy to die for Ireland, my glorious Fatherland.

(A member of the Court):- You speak of Britain as our Imperial patron.

— Prisoner (interrupting) Yes for some of you are Irishmen, and Britain is not your country.

— (Member of the Court) And what of your Imperial

patron, what of Germany: Would you die for Her?

-(The prisoner):- Not if Germany had violated and despoiled my country, and perverted in withholding her birthright of Freedom.

-(The president of the Court):- Better not interrupt the prisoner

-(The prisoner):- [bowing]:- Thank you. There is not much left to say. The proclamation of the Irish Republic has been adduced in evidence against me as one of the signatories. I adhere to every statement in the proclamation. You think it already a dead and buried letter - but it lived, it lives. From minds alight with Ireland's vivid intellect it sprang; in hearts aflame with Ireland's mighty love, it was conceived. Such documents do not die.

The British occupation of Ireland has never for more than one hundred years been compelled to confront in the field of flight a rising so formidable as that which overwhelming forces have for the moment succeeded in quelling. This rising does not result from accidental circumstances. It came in due recurrent seasons, as the necessary outcome of forces that are ever at work. The fierce pulsation of resurgent pride that disclames servitude may one day cease to ~~beat~~ throb in the heart of Ireland. - but the heart of Ireland will that day be dead. While Ireland lives the brain and brawn of her manhood will strive to destroy the last

of British rule in her territory. In this ceaseless struggle there will be as there must be an alternate ebb and flow. But let England make no mistake. The generous high bred youth of Ireland will never fail to answer the call we pass on to them, will never fail to blaze forth in the red rage of war to win their Country's Freedom.

Other and tamer methods they will leave to other and tamer men; but for themselves they must do or die. It will be said our movement was doomed to failure. It has proved so. Yet it might have been otherwise. There is always a chance of success for brave men who challenge fortune. That we had such a chance, none know so well as your statesmen and military experts. The mass of the people of Ireland will doubtless lull their consciences to sleep for another generation by the exploded fable that Ireland cannot successfully fight England. We do not propose to represent the mass of the people of Ireland. We stand for the intellect and for immortal soul of Ireland. To Ireland's soul and intellect, the inert mass drugged and degenerated by ages of servitude must in the destined day of resurrection render homage and free service receiving in turn the vivifying impress of a Free People.

Gentlemen you have sentenced me to death, and I accept your sentence with joy and pride since it is

for Ireland I am to die. I go to join the goodly
company of the men who died for Ireland, the
least of whom was worthier ^{far} than I can claim
to be; and that noble band are but themselves
but a small section of the great un-numbered
army of Martyrs whose Captain is the Christ
who died on Calvary. Of every white-robed knight
in all that goodly company we are the spiritual
kin. The forms of heroes flit before my vision
and there is one the star of whose destiny sways
my own; there is one the key-note of whose nature
chimes harmoniously with the swan-song of
my soul. It is the great Florentine whose weapon
was not the sword but prayer and preaching.
The seed he sowed fructifies to this day in
God's Church.

Take me away and let my blood bedew the
sacred soil of Ireland.

I will die in the certainty that once more
the seed will fructify.
