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BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 362

Witness

Right Rev. Monsignor J.T. McMahon,
The Presbytery,
South Perth,
Australia.

Identity

Secretary to Most Rev. Dr. Clune,
Archbishop of Perth, Australia,
1920.

Subject

- (a) Activities of Archbishop Clune as mediator
between Lloyd George and Michael Collins
1920.
- (b) Biographical notes on
 - (i) Archbishop Clune
 - (ii) Michael Collins.

Conditions, if any, stipulated by Witness

Nil

File No. S.1436

Form B.S.M. 2.

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21

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STATEMENT BY MONSIGNOR J.T. McMAHON

The Presbytery, South Perth, Australia.

Chapter I.

"The Black-and-Tan Auxiliaries".

On Tuesday, 30th November, 1920, a farewell luncheon was given in London to Archbishop Clune of Perth, Western Australia, by Sir J. D. Connolly, the then Agent-general for Western Australia. It was an informal affair and to it came the Rt. Hon. Lord Morris, the Rt. Hon. T.P. O'Connor, M.P., and Mr. Joe Devlin, M.P. After the luncheon the situation in Ireland was discussed. The Archbishop expressed himself freely on the reign of terror that he had just left. Listening intently to this eye-witness account of what was happening across the Irish Sea, one of the party suggested that his Grace should postpone his departure for the Continent until he had told his story to the Prime Minister, Mr. Lloyd George. Mr. Joe Devlin, who was particularly friendly with the Prime Minister at the time, volunteered to arrange the interview. The Archbishop agreed to cancel his bookings with Cooks, if such an interview were granted to him. Mr. Joe Devlin saw the Prime Minister and proposed to him that the Archbishop should go to Ireland as a mediator.

On Wednesday, 1st December 1920, the first meeting between Mr. Lloyd George and the Archbishop took place in the House of Commons. The Archbishop painted a picture of the real state of conditions in Ireland, emphasizing the recent happenings in his native County Clare which occurred while he was staying in Ennis with Bishop Fogarty. Later the Archbishop when he received an audience with the Pope gave him an account of these happenings. I was also

*Archbishop Clune
told me
of this interview
J.T.M.*

*I was present
at the audience
J.T.M.*

present at this audience, and, while corroborating the Archbishop's account, gave details of my own personal experience. On the road between Lahinch and Miltown-Malbay, in the County of Clare, a police car was ambushed. Some of the police were killed, and in the ensuing battle between the reinforcements armed with machine-guns, three of the soldiers were killed. That night as a reprisal, "Black-and-Tans" left Limerick with tins of petrol and bombs. On arrival at Lahinch, they broke into a public-house and drank so much that they went through the village street like drunken savages, yelling, and using disgusting language.

Most of the people left their homes to spend a bleak winter night shivering in their night attire crouching by the rocks on the seashore. Six houses were set on fire and burned to the ground, the blaze illuminating the countryside. In one house the "Black-and-Tans" found a young couple, the wife rocking the cradle. They ordered them out on the street while they sprinkled the house with petrol. The young husband, who was not an active "Sinn Feiner", muttered something about his home being destroyed. A "Black-and-Tan" fired point blank at him, and as the young man screamed with the pain of the bullet, they lifted him and threw him into his blazing house.

Footnotes: (-x- 1) These men wore khaki coats with black trousers and black berets. The people promptly named them "Black-and-Tans". They were not subject to military discipline. The terms of their commission were generous; the usual rate of pay was a pound per day.

It is on record that men were released from English prisons on volunteering to go to Ireland as auxiliaries to the military and the police.

(-x- 2) "Sinn Fein" (pronounced "Shinn Fein") are the Gaelic words for "We ourselves". The Sinn Fein party was founded by Arthur Griffith. Sinn Feiners became the accepted name for the young men on the run.

At these first-hand evidences the Prime Minister expressed his horror, and stoutly condemned all reprisals. He then asked the Archbishop if he would go to Dublin and interview the Sinn Fein leaders to arrange a temporary truce in order to prepare an atmosphere for negotiations. The Archbishop consented, and the Prime Minister promised to call his Cabinet together at once to discuss the project.

Meeting the Prime Minister the next day, the Archbishop was informed by him that although the suggestion that he act as mediator was strongly opposed not only by a section of the Cabinet but also by General McCready, then commanding the British forces in Ireland, the majority were in favour of his going to Dublin. Now arose a Gilbertian situation. Amazing as it may appear, the next difficulty was to organise some arrangement by which the Archbishop could meet and have free access to the Sinn Fein leaders to discuss terms for a truce.

So completely had the "Black-and-Tans" been given a free hand to do what they liked, and to go where they liked, that neither the Government nor the ordinary military command in Ireland could control this irresponsible and undisciplined corps of truculent adventurers. Mr. Lloyd George admitted the situation to the Archbishop, and quoted the advice received from the official military authorities in Dublin that they could not guarantee the safety of Archbishop Clune if it became public that he was going to Ireland to interview the Sinn Fein leaders. Never for a moment would they consent to a safe conduct for the Sinn Fein leaders to meet the Archbishop.

Mr. Lloyd George conveyed this information to the Archbishop without a trace of embarrassment. It shows

how far the reign of terror of organised lawlessness had progressed, when even the Cabinet could not promise a safe conduct to the men who were to discuss a settlement, so strongly and sincerely favoured by the majority of the Government. Accordingly, the Archbishop had to decide whether to run the risk of going to Ireland privately and incognito, in the hope of meeting the Sinn Fein leaders wherever they could be found, or abandon the attempt and return to Australia. His Grace was very reluctant to miss this opportunity of bringing peace to his stricken land. He was fully aware of the dangers surrounding such a mission, fearing not for his own personal safety, but rather for the Sinn Fein leaders who might be found with him. Before deciding, the Archbishop went out to Nazareth House, Hammersmith, London, where Dr. Mannix, Archbishop of Melbourne, was residing at the time, having been taken off his ship in the Atlantic by an English destroyer, and prevented from visiting his aged mother in Ireland. After discussing the problem, Archbishop Clune decided to take the risk on the advice of Dr. Mannix, who gave him a letter to the Irish leaders in Dublin. Later, Dr. Clune presented that letter to Michael Collins and to Arthur Griffith, the founder of the Sinn Fein policy, who was in Mountjoy prison, Dublin.

The only difficulty remaining was where Dr. Clune would stay in Dublin so that his mission might not become public, and his whereabouts discovered. Mr. Lloyd George solved this by sending one of his confidential secretaries
(-x-)
to Sir John O'Connell then visiting London.

Footnote: (-x-) On the death of his wife, Sir John O'Connell, a prominent Dublin lawyer and author, went to Rome where he was ordained for Westminster.

When approached, Sir John O'Connell gladly accepted. On Saturday, 4th December 1920, Archbishop Clune and Sir John O'Connell left by the Irish mail from Euston station in a reserved compartment secured for them by one of Mr. Lloyd George's secretaries. Sir J. D. Connolly was the only person who knew their mission, and he was on the platform to bid them "God speed". When they had to sign the usual list of travellers on the mail boat, Sir John gave the name of the "Rev. Dr. Walsh" for the Archbishop. The boat was crowded with military chiefs and noisy auxiliaries. At Kingstown (now known as Dún Laoghaire) Sir John and "Dr. Walsh" slipped quietly off the boat, and went to St. Michael's Church, where the Archbishop said Mass.

Mass over, the Archbishop motored first to the Gresham Hotel to hear from Bishop Fogarty and then to Ard Eirin, Killiney, Co. Dublin, about nine miles south of the city. The house stood secluded in its own grounds, a perfect situation for the purpose on hand. A railway station was nearby. Here at Ard Eirin the Archbishop remained as the guest of Sir John O'Connell. Only once was his hiding place and identity guessed at. An enterprising reporter called Sir John on the 'phone and put the point-blank question: "Is Archbishop Clune of Perth, Australia, staying at Ard Eirin?" Sir John fortunately was at home and answered the call himself. He justified himself that his guest was listed in the press as "Rev. Dr. Walsh", and to the public there was no Archbishop Clune staying with him. So he countered that dangerous question in the good old Irish fashion by asking another: "What on earth put such an idea into your head? Did you read your own paper's personal column which said that the Rev. Dr. Walsh was my guest? Who then would be staying at my house but a Rev. Dr. Walsh?"

Sir John was highly successful, for the press on both sides of the Irish Sea never once hinted the name of the secret negotiator, until near the collapse of the mission.

Had Sir John not been at home, and had that message been taken by one of the servants, sufficient suspicion would have been aroused to send newspaper sleuths prowling around Ard Eirin, and the Archbishop would certainly have been recognised.

Chapter II.

A Plot to Murder a Bishop.

On Thursday, 2nd December, Dr. Clune took me to lunch at Nazareth House, Hammersmith, where I saw Dr. Mannix for the first time. After luncheon both Archbishops retired to discuss Dr. Clune's mission to Ireland. At the request of Dr. Clune, Dr. Mannix telegraphed Bishop Fogarty of Killaloe to come to Dublin and meet him at the Gresham Hotel. The hall porter of the Gresham, Hugh, an institution in himself, was a close friend of Dr. Clune, and it was quite safe to rely on his discretion and prudence.

On the advice of Archbishop Mannix, Dr. Clune saw Mr. Art O'Brien, who was acting as a secret liaison officer between Mick Collins and events in London, and through Art O'Brien Dr. Clune got a letter to the Sinn Fein leaders.

In life we are warned never to put a prepaid telegram or an envelope intended for the post into one's pocket, because, if we do, we are certain to forget posting it. An Archbishop is no exception to this general recommendation, for that is what Dr. Clune did on arrival in Dublin. That slip of memory saved the life of an Irish Bishop and the story is worth re-telling, but let the Bishop who owes his life to it tell us in his own words.

Dr. Fogarty, Bishop of Killaloe, sent me the following

account of this fortunate accident:

"On the night of Friday, 3rd December, 1920, four Auxiliaries (Black-and-Tans) with blackened faces descended on my house about 2.30 a.m. to take my life, carry me off, and, according to General Crozier, bury my body in the Shannon.

"The circumstances of my escape from that onslaught were so markedly providential that one might describe it by the mercy of God - miraculous.

"On the evening of Thursday, 2 December, about 7 o'clock, while at tea with Mr. Hogan of Kilmallock, a telegram was handed to me from Dr. Mannix, Archbishop of Melbourne, who was then in London, saying: "Archbishop Clune crossing to Dublin tonight. Meet him Gresham Hotel on important business".

"I was very unwilling to go to Dublin in response to this message because I had just been away for some time. There were no trains running owing to the blockade, except one from Cork to Dublin, to catch which I should have to drive to Limerick Junction and stay the night in Limerick. I telegraphed Archbishop Clune, Gresham Hotel: "Inconvenient for me to go up. Could you come down to Ennis", and, to make sure, I prepaid the reply.

"Dr. Clune, as he afterwards told me, got the telegram when he called at the Gresham Hotel on the morning he arrived, read it, made up his mind that he would send me a telegram during the day that I need not come up, but he forgot to send it - there was the providential care. All that day I was greatly embarrassed as no telegram was forthcoming, and at one time made up my mind not to go as no telegram had come. But about 4 o'clock a strong feeling took possession of me that I ought to go as the telegram seemed so important, and about 5 o'clock I sent for Dr. J.B.

"MacClancy, Surgeon at the County Hospital, Ennis, who had a motor car and got him to drive me to Limerick. I stayed the night at St. John's Hospital, Limerick, and while I was there sleeping, the four assassins arrived at my house.

"Their loud rapping at the hall door about two-thirty in the morning awoke Miss Murray, my then housekeeper. She opened the door.

'Where is the Bishop?'

'The Bishop is not at home.'

'Where is he? When did he go? Where did he go?' etc.

They were disconcerted at her replies, and demanded a light, refusing to light the gas which she indicated to them. She gave them the candle she had. They had blackened faces and were armed with revolvers. They searched every nook and corner in the house, even under the bed. Two of them, evidently officers, tall burly men, then went to the library and proceeded to examine some papers; Miss Murray, all the time standing by, in her bare feet and nightdress.

"Frank O'Connor, the houseman, had come on the scene and displayed great courage by following them around the house in spite of their threats. Two of the intruders - one a very tall savage-looking man, the other rather short and thick with face heavily blackened and who never spoke a word, through fear, I presume, of being recognised - returned to the cellar where they found a bottle of whiskey. One of them had the bottle in his mouth when Frank O'Connor descended on him. They rushed at Frank with their revolvers. He returned to the library, and told the other two officers that they should look after their companions as they were drinking raw whiskey. The party then left, ordering Miss Murray to shut the hall door and come no further. Their names were never discovered with any certainty."

General Crozier, in his reminiscences, "Ireland for Ever", writes:-

"At Killaloe, I received further evidence that the hidden hand was still at work, and was told in confidence that instructions had been received to kill the Roman Catholic Bishop of Killaloe, Dr. Fogarty, by drowning him in a sack from the bridge over the River Shannon, so as to run no further risk of detection by having his body found".

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Chapter III.

First Contact with Michael Collins.

Killiney is a spur of the Wicklow mountains, against which that "mischievous lad - Dublin", leans his back as he dips his toes in the bay. Just south of Dún Laoghaire the spur runs to the edge of the sea, facing a deep narrow channel in which the picturesque island of Dalkey is set. One never tires of the view from Killiney Hill. The Dubliners' adjective is "lovely" - and lovely it is. Perched on a slope of that outpost of the blue Wicklow mountains rests Ard Eirin, amid the other exclusive dwellings of that fashionable suburb.

Here for a week Dr. Clune set up his headquarters. When Bishop Fogarty arrived in Dublin on Saturday he went to All Hallows College, where he stayed. Through Hugh, the head-porter at the Gresham Hotel, he learned where the Archbishop was staying, and arranged to meet him at the Gresham on Monday.

The Envoy from Michael Collins.

The first visitor to Ard Eirin was a young man named Joseph F. O'Reilly, later to be a Colonel in the Free State

Army. As A.D.C. to President Cosgrave, I met him several times. At my request he wrote the following account of his visit to Killiney:-

"I met Archbishop Clune twice during the negotiations. The first meeting was in Sir John O'Connell's house at Killiney, Co. Dublin. The late Michael Collins gave me a letter arranging an appointment with His Grace and told me to cycle out to Sir John O'Connell's house and hand the letter personally to Dr. Clune. I had some difficulty in getting access to the house owing to the area around Sir John's home being patrolled by detectives, whom I recognised at once. After a few detours I eventually got in a back way and then made my way to the front of the house and rang the bell. A maid answered. Without revealing who I was I succeeded in securing admission. I was ushered into a large room and was there about fifteen minutes when a clergyman entered the room. It was 8 p.m. on the evening of Sunday, 5th December 1920. He asked who I was, and what was my business. I told him my name, and said that I wanted to see Archbishop Clune. I ventured to ask him if he were Dr. Clune, for I noticed that his stock was black, and that he was not wearing a ring. He admitted with a smile that he was Dr. Clune. I then handed him the letter which Michael Collins had entrusted to me for him. His Grace read the letter and spoke to me for a little time, but the only part of the conversation I now remember is that he was most anxious to meet Michael Collins as soon as possible. I asked His Grace to be very careful when setting out to keep any such appointment as the car might be shadowed, and this might lead Michael Collins into the eager hands of Dublin Castle. His Grace became very serious at that, and after a while he asked:-

" 'How do you know that I might be followed?'

" 'Well, Your Grace', I replied, 'I had to make several detours on my bike before I called here this evening, because I recognised some Dublin detectives in the neighbourhood.'

"This upset His Grace quite a bit. He realised the danger to which he was exposing Michael Collins, and he discussed whether it was worth the risk to continue his mission. I remained silent until he made his own decision, but I felt that I was right in warning His Grace of the danger. I then left the house, saw no sign of the detectives, and rode back to Dublin, where I reported to Michael Collins that I had delivered his letter to Dr. Clune.

"My next meeting with Dr. Clune was the evening of the next day, Monday, 6th December, 1920, when about eight in the evening I called at the Gresham Hotel in O'Connell Street, met Dr. Clune, and told him of the time and place where he would meet Michael Collins the next day. I again warned him to be very careful on leaving for the appointment, and to show no surprise if the driver of the car that I would send took a round-about way. His Grace took me aside and expressed his uneasiness at the prospect of being followed by Dublin Castle. He then said to me: 'I will go to Dublin Castle and see if my movements have been watched. It were better drop the negotiations than risk the capture of Michael Collins'.

"I suggested to His Grace not to do that, for what certainty could he have that the Castle would keep its word? The prize of Michael Collins was too tempting to scruple over a promise. I then left the Hotel, and did not meet Dr. Clune again during his stay in Dublin that time. Later

"that evening when I reported in detail my interview to Michael Collins, stressing the Archbishop's anxiety lest he might endanger him, Michael Collins said: 'What a splendid man Dr. Clune must be! I am most anxious to meet him'."

(Dublin, 7th March, 1929).

Chapter IV.

Interviews with the Irish Leaders

The next day, Tuesday, 7th December, Dr. Clune, accompanied by Dr. Fogarty, Bishop of Killaloe, set out from All Hallows College, Drumcondra, for the first interview with Michael Collins. They were driving quite a time, not noticing where they were, too interested in their chat, when Dr. Clune looked out as the car drew up before one of the fine residences in Merrion Square, a most unlikely hide-out for a man with a price on his head. The driver knocked at the hall-door and the two bishops were shown into the consulting room of Dr. Robert Farnum, one of Dublin's leading gynaecologists. I called upon Dr. Farnum in October 1935, and he told me that Dr. Clune and "Mick" Collins met in his house regularly during the negotiations. Mick usually came on a bike which he left at a tobacconist in Merrion Row, just round the corner. At that time, December 1920, Dr. Farnum was attending the wives of two of the auxiliaries, and consequently his house was never suspected. He remembered the horrible feeling he had on one occasion as a lorry full of auxiliaries pulled up before the door while Mick and Archbishop Clune were upstairs. The doctor had a few bad minutes until the husband of one of the two patients handed him a message from his wife.

Another day Mick came down the stairs arm-in-arm with the Archbishop. Both were laughing at some story as Mick

opened the hall door, and stood behind it until Dr. Farnum hailed a cab from across the street. As the Archbishop got into the cab a lorry full of "Black-and-Tans" moved slowly past the house. Perhaps some one had recognised Mick on one of his many visits. Mick closed the door, drew his revolver and watched the lorry from a corner of the curtain. The lorry continued its beat up and down the street, so Mick decided to get out through the back garden. That his house was never once searched or suspected throughout the negotiations Dr. Farnum attributes to his professional interest in the wives of the auxiliaries he was attending. Suspicion there undoubtedly was, probably through some policeman glimpsing Michael Collins on one of his visits, but, fortunately, the house escaped a search, luckily for all concerned.

In his hospitable home at Ennis, Co. Clare, one winter evening in January 1936, I sat with Dr. Fogarty before a fire that warmed him into reminiscent mood. He recalled the surprised eyes of Dr. Clune as they alighted at Dr. Farnum's home in Merrion Square. In his student days Merrion Square was a preserve of the aristocratic Anglo-Irish, and never did the Archbishop dream that he would one day be brought there to meet the "arch-rebel" of the Sinn Fein activists.

"Having greeted Dr. Bob Farnum as an old friend, we both sat down in a large room, when out of the darkness there emerged the smiling boyish figure of Mick Collins, whose first salutation was:

"My Lord, you had a narrow escape last Friday night."

"Was it the local "Black-and-Tans" that were in it?"

I asked Mick.

"Oh, you never can tell. That may have been planned here in Dublin, or down in Limerick or Cork', replied Mick."

The plot failed as we have already seen, but that was not due to any restraining hand on the plotters, nor to any neglect about the plans.

Dr. Fogarty was very curious how Mick Collins knew he was in Dublin, and that he was staying at All Hallows College, Drumcondra. For Mick said to the Bishop:-

"My Lord, I am glad you did not stay at the Gresham Hotel. You are much safer at All Hallows College".

The Bishop's decision to go out to an old friend, a priest from the Killaloe diocese, Very Rev. Father T. O'Donnell, C.M., the president of the college, was only made on arrival at the hotel and finding Dr. Clune not there. Mick's Secret Service certainly did their work well.

Dr. Clune showed Mick Collins the letter from Archbishop Mannix, and the three of them discussed the proposed truce. Mick never allowed the Bishops to remain serious for long; he always had a joke on tap.

"The next day", continued Dr. Fogarty, "Dr. Clune rang me up at All Hallows and arranged for me to accompany him to Mountjoy Prison. We set out on a very cold day, a bitter wind sweeping in from the bay. As we approached Mountjoy the prison looked very forbidding and we were not over-bright, thinking of our grand boys behind those walls. Mr. A.W. Cope, the assistant-under-secretary for Ireland, met us inside, and on his authority we could interview any of the prisoners. We saw Arthur Griffith first, to whom Dr. Clune gave Archbishop Mannix's letter. We discussed the proposed truce, which Arthur Griffith welcomed with enthusiasm. We then saw Eoin MacNeill, who was not so impressed, but was willing to accept it. He then outlined

for us his idea of terms. Michael Staines was the next with whom we discussed the proposal.

"Mr. Cope came into the room and asked if there were any other prisoners we would care to see. I asked about the Countess Markievicz in whose sincerity I always believed, but Dr. Clune and Cope got talking about the truce, and I forgot all about the Countess until I had left Mountjoy".

"What was your opinion of Cope?" I asked the Bishop.

"Cope made a favourable impression on me that day in Mountjoy. He convinced me that he was sincere in his efforts for a truce. Alone among the die-hards in Dublin Castle, he kept Lloyd George's interest in the truce alive. He was undoubtedly Lloyd George's man in Dublin, sent there to watch events. In his frank talk with us that day he expressed the view that were a truce arranged, and had hostilities ceased on both sides, a splendid opportunity would present itself for a final settlement".

After some discussion Dr. Clune was asked by Cope to submit a preliminary draft for a truce to Dublin Castle. Dr. Clune emphasised that no surrender of arms was to be demanded from the Irish side. At that he very cordially bade us good day.

The Bishop recalled that as they drove away from the prison a lorry full of "Black-and-Tans" followed them for some considerable time, until eventually they shook them off by winding in and out of the small streets of the city.

"The next day", the Bishop remembered, "we met Cope, who told us of the hostile reception the draft for the truce received in Dublin Castle. The Chief Secretary, Sir Hamar Greenwood, and the military heads were wild that someone could cross from London and have interviews with Collins here in Dublin, while their Secret Service could

not run him to earth. The die-hards decided to send a strong deputation to Lloyd George, demanding the surrender of arms by the rebels as a necessary preliminary for any truce. Cope felt that such was a ruse to kill the truce negotiations, for Dublin Castle knew that Mick Collins and his men would never surrender their arms."

"The next day I saw Dr. Clune off from Dún Laoghaire. Later I heard from him that the boat carried a strong deputation of military chiefs going to Lloyd George with their demand. Cope was also on board, bound on the same mission, but not on their side. Cope came up to Dr. Clune on board, and pointing to a group of officers he said very dejectedly:

"I do not like to see these fellows crossing in such strong numbers. They have convinced themselves that they have the boys in the hills beaten, and they want no talk of a truce to interfere with them now. But the Prime Minister may not listen to them. Who knows? I still have hopes of that truce."

Chapter V.

Untimely Appeals for Peace.

Dr. Fogarty continues his reminiscences:

"Dr. Clune returned to London full of hope and sought an interview with Lloyd George. It was some days before he could see the Prime Minister. He was dismayed to find Lloyd George's attitude changed. For the first time the surrender of arms was mentioned. The Dublin Castle deputation had certainly lost no time since they crossed the Irish Sea. Dr. Clune countered this by reminding the Prime Minister that England never asked the Boers to lay down their arms as a preliminary to a truce."

"Do you think Lloyd George was sincere in his efforts to bring about peace in Ireland?" I asked the Bishop.

"I shall not comment on the sincerity of Lloyd George", answered the Bishop, "but I believe that he was ambitious enough to relish the fame of being the Prime Minister who solved the Irish question. At the same time he was a politician and he feared the minority within the Cabinet, headed by Bonar Law. So shrewd in politics, he played for time by sending Dr. Clune back again to Ireland for a draft of terms as a basis for a conference.

"Two events took place in Ireland about this time which, in my opinion, destroyed Dr. Clune's mission. The first of these was a resolution passed by six men in Galway. The Galway County Council, with a membership of thirty-two, had pledged allegiance to the Irish Republic. Nearly all the members were in prison or evading arrest. The quorum of the Council was eight. On 3rd December, without notifying the rest of the Council, six of the members met, and in the name of the Galway County Council issued an 'unanimous' resolution as follows:

"We view with sorrow the shootings, burnings, reprisals and counter-reprisals now taking place all over Ireland and England; we therefore, as adherents of Dail Eireann, request that body to appoint three delegates to negotiate a truce. We further request that the British Government appoint three delegates who will have the power to arrange a truce and preliminary terms of peace honourable to both countries. We consider that the initiative lies with the British Government who should withdraw the ban on the meeting of Dail Eireann.

Footnote: (-x-) "Dail Eireann" is the name of the Irish Parliament which was banned but continued to hold secret meetings.

"The second event was a telegram to Lloyd George from the Rev. Father Michael O'Flanagan, as follows:-

"You state you are willing to make peace at once without waiting till Christmas. Ireland is also willing to make peace. What first step do you propose?"

I remember buying the "Westminster Gazette" in London one afternoon to find this telegram of an interview with Father O'Flanagan, who was acclaimed as the President of Sinn Féin, and a most powerful influence in Irish politics. I brought the paper to the hotel and gave it to the Archbishop, who was obviously upset at this untimely cry for peace. I watched the papers the next day to find Father O'Flanagan's private appeal for peace was discredited by de Valera whose comment on the telegram was published in the "Daily Sketch", 7th December 1920, as follows:

"It is unofficial. If Mr. Lloyd George makes any reply, the acceptability of that reply must be determined by the Irish Republican Government. Father O'Flanagan speaks for the Sinn Fein political organisation on the spot, and not for the Irish Parliament or the Irish Government."

Chapter VI.

Mick Collins the "Irish Pimpernel".

When Dr. Clune returned to Dublin to consult the Irish leaders he began to feel the strain. His one anxiety was that he might be the unhappy occasion of one of them being arrested. He was taken one day to see Desmond Fitzgerald in a house in St. Stephen's Green. Scarcely had the door opened when a lorry of "auxiliaries" pulled up, and two of them with pistols in their hands rushed past him through the hallway and up the stairs. But Desmond Fitzgerald was

peering through a door and did not wait to ask who they were after, but took to his heels through the back garden. The next day another appointment was arranged for Dr. Clune, who reluctantly kept it, as the other experience convinced him that he was now shadowed.

I have often heard the Archbishop say how delighted he was to meet Desmond Fitzgerald later and how he enjoyed his talk with him.

Another incident occurred at Harold's Cross. While the Archbishop and Kevin O'Higgins were discussing the proposed conference, a young man burst into the room to warn them that a lorry of "Black-and-Tans" was coming down the street. Kevin O'Higgins quickly got away and the people of the house came into the room with tea to pretend they were entertaining the Archbishop. Up and down the street the lorry moved for about half an hour, challenging every man that entered it. The Archbishop remained until the lorry left the street.

On his return to London Dr. Clune went out to Nazareth House, Hammersmith, to give Dr. Mannix an account of his interviews and to assure him that the Irish leaders were anxious for a truce. As an example of the seriousness of the situation Dr. Clune stated that for three days a military cordon encircled Dublin and no one was allowed in or out of the city without being questioned and searched. Every effort was made to capture Mick Collins. Comb the city streets as they would, raid homes in every sector of Dublin by day and by night, and yet they failed to capture Mick, the "Irish Pimpernel".

At the first interview granted to Dr. Clune on his return, Mr. Lloyd George seemed very interested in the Irish leaders' terms for a conference. Throughout the interview,

The Archbishop
told this
JFM

which was a lengthy one, Mr. Lloyd George constantly referred to Collins as "Mick", and expressed many a wish to meet this amazing fellow who continued to avoid the net stretched for him by Dublin Castle. He chuckled at the military heads' outbursts of anger that they could not get Mick, whereas Dr. Clune could see him any time. Dr. Clune's hopes of a settlement were high. I remember how elated he was on returning to the hotel.

His Grace had another interview with Mr. Lloyd George on Saturday morning, 11 December, 1920, and at his request returned to Dublin that night. During the week he continued his negotiations with both sides and reached an agreement with Dublin Castle on the question of the meeting of Dáil Eireann. The Castle authorities were prepared to admit the Irish Parliament to meet and discuss the issue, with two exceptions, Michael Collins and Richard Mulcahy, the leaders of the Republican Army. The terms were referred to the Cabinet. This concession was rejected and now another condition was insisted on - viz., the surrender of arms.

Archbishop Clune returned to London again on 18th December. With the assent of Sir John Anderson of Dublin Castle, Dr. Clune was to interview the Prime Minister and persuade him to waive aside the new condition of the surrender of arms. He also submitted for approbation a second proposal, drawn up by Arthur Griffith in Mountjoy Prison and ratified by Michael Collins, containing the following terms:- "The British Government undertakes that during the truce, no raids, arrests, pursuits, burnings, shootings, lootings, demolitions, courtmartial or other acts of violence will be carried out by its forces, and there will be no enforcement of the terms of the Martial Law Proclamations. We on our side undertake to use all possible

"means to ensure that no acts whatever of violence will occur on our side during the period of the truce. The British Government, on their part, and we on ours, will use our best efforts to bring about the conditions above mentioned, with the object of creating an atmosphere favourable to the meeting together of the representatives of the Irish people, with a view to the bringing about of a permanent peace."

On Tuesday morning, 21st December, His Grace saw the Prime Minister at 10 Downing Street and pressed very hard for the waiving of the clause of the surrender of arms. His Grace emphasised the necessity of looking at the question from the real point of view. There were two ways of looking at the problem, from the military point of view and from the point of view of a statesman. To the military the question seemed easy enough. It was merely a question of dealing with some hundreds of men on the hill sides. By force of numbers they would quickly surround them and thus end the fight. Reprisals were an effective weapon and therefore why not use them? Accordingly the military element in the Cabinet pressed the Prime Minister to give them another trial and they guaranteed to put an end to the war on the hills. The Archbishop, on the other hand, asked the Prime Minister to see it from the broader outlook of the statesman. He had to deal not merely with a small band of desperate men in Ireland. The question was a much larger one, and comprised the satisfying of the millions of the Irish race scattered throughout the world. It was an issue which affected the Empire, and which influenced the relationship between the British Government and the United States of America. His appeal was to a statesman, not to a commander-in-chief.

Mr. Bonar Law entered before the interview concluded, and His Grace appealed to him to see the question in its broader and truer light. Mr. Bonar Law replied that:

"He did not think public opinion in the country would approve of a truce without the condition of the surrender of arms. However, he would withdraw his opposition if General Macready and Sir John Anderson thought otherwise." The meeting terminated on the understanding that these gentlemen would be communicated with.

Chapter VII.

Dublin Castle has its way - and fails.

What Dr. Clune considered as commentary inspired by the Cabinet appeared in the London "Evening News". His name is now mentioned as the negotiator, and his arguments quoted. Having read it he said to me: "This is preparing the way for the rejection of a truce. I know what to expect when I next meet Mr. Lloyd George." This was the "Evening News" commentary in their column headed: "Diary of a Man about Town"

"The Irish position is still undecided. A great deal of behind-the-scenes negotiation has been going on during the past twenty-four hours - more than the public imagine; but it cannot really be said that the outlook is too bright. Conflicting interests in the Cabinet have to be reconciled.

"The position is this: Archbishop Clune, the Roman Catholic prelate from Australia who has been acting as intermediary between the Government and the extreme Sinn Feiners, has had a long interview with the Prime Minister. The terms of an armistice have been drawn up, and would be agreed upon were it not for two outstanding points:

- "(1) The Government demand that all the rebels should lay down their arms.
- "(2) The Sinn Feiners demand that the armistice should include everybody.

"To the first point the Archbishop made reply that such

"a condition was impossible. There are outlying districts of Ireland which not even the extreme Sinn Feiners can control, and the Archbishop asked the Prime Minister: Were you able to compel all the Germans to lay down their arms at the moment of the armistice?

"With regard to the second point, the Government at present assert that no amnesty can be granted to four named leaders of Sinn Fein. Archbishop Clune, in reply, quoted the case of South Africa, and pointed out that Botha and De Wett were not excluded from the general amnesty when formal peace negotiations were begun.

"I understand that Mr. Lloyd George agreed that there was some reason in the Archbishop's line of argument; and he hinted that Mr. Bonar Law was in substantial agreement with him.

"There is one other factor. The military are satisfied that genuine progress has been made in putting down lawlessness - both Sinn Fein and military - and they are averse from the Government accepting conditions that may seem weak and yielding."

On Christmas Eve, Mr. Davies, a secretary of Mr. Lloyd George, rang up His Grace and informed him that as no further progress had been made to waive aside the condition of the surrender of arms, the Prime Minister would not encroach further on his time. His Grace then concluded that the negotiations were at an end. However, later that day, Mr. Philip Kerr, the private secretary of the Prime Minister, called and had a long discussion over the question of the surrender of arms. The analogy of the Boers in South Africa was quoted, but His Grace replied that the condition was never pressed and that the Boers did not surrender their arms. The next morning's post brought a letter from the

Prime Minister requesting His Grace to remain in London until the following Thursday as a special meeting, not only of the Cabinet but of Irish Officials, was summoned.

On the 28th of December Mr. Philip Kerr called again and His Grace gave him a written statement containing his proposals for a New Year's truce. They were as follows:

- (1) Cessation of hostilities - acts of aggression and activities on both sides for the period of one month in order to create a peaceful atmosphere.
- (2) The meeting of Dáil Eireann to discuss among themselves or with plenipotentiaries of the Government the final settlement of the Irish Question.

The Cabinet meeting took place on Wednesday, 29th December at 4 p.m., but Cabinet refused to accept the terms. Thus ended the negotiations. Mr. Lloyd George conveyed to His Grace, through his secretary, Mr. Philip Kerr, his warm appreciation of what he had done to endeavour to settle the Irish Question. He thanked him especially in giving him new light on the subject, which enabled him to estimate the men in Ireland in their real character. His Grace's description of those leaders in Ireland had disillusioned him of the idea that they were a band of assassins thirsting for blood.

His Grace conveyed to the Prime Minister, through his secretary, that he believed the Cabinet would yet regret their decision in not accepting his terms. He warned them that they were living in a fool's paradise in hoping that they would crush the people and frighten them. His warning is now history.

Six months later peace negotiations began again. The official instructions issued by the Government more than

conceded all that Archbishop Clune asked in December 1920. Had his proposals been accepted then, Ireland would have been spared all the bloodshed, misery, and hardships that it suffered from December to July. The marked change of tone under which the concluding stages of the negotiations were conducted made it clear to His Grace that there was some influence working against his efforts. This counter-force expressed itself by insisting on the surrender of arms. Failing to secure a truce on their own terms, those few members of the Cabinet forced the Government to continue their campaign of force. The terror began once more with redoubled energy and brutality but it failed to bring the people to their knees. The campaign of terror ceased on Monday, 11th July 1921. The Government then realised the truth of Archbishop Clune's warning. The people were not frightened; they did not appeal for peace at any price. If the peace negotiations failed in December 1920, the Irish leaders were not to blame. They did not then demand anything unreasonable; the withdrawal of the troops was not mentioned, no, not even the "Black-and-Tan" forces. The Irish leaders conceded many things in their desire for a truce.

Chapter VIII.

Lloyd George played Politics.

Bishop Fogarty's comment on the final breakdown of the December 1920 negotiations to me as we sat by his fire that January night in 1936 was as follows:

"Lloyd George weakened at the prospect of a split in the Cabinet, and its probable effect on the country. He played politics by allowing the minority to have its way, and thus sanctioned a more intensive campaign of terror in

Ireland. The military clique assured him that they would finish off the rebels within a month. A month was granted to them, allowing them a free hand, but at the end of the month the rebels still lived, so back to Lloyd George they came for an extension of the campaign for another month, and back again until six months of armed atrocities were inflicted upon the Irish people. The terms of a settlement of the Irish question then proposed were not as generous a form of freedom as those granted under the Irish Free State, but in December 1920 they would have been gladly accepted, and if accepted, there would have been no civil war. The Irish people in December 1920 were very tired of the Black-and-Tan reign of terror and a peace proposal would have been welcome.

"When the truce did come, six months later, the people were not broken, nor were the armed men subdued. England offered peace not because it had the country quiet, but because official opinion in U.S.A. was hardening, and already showing signs of hostility to British interests. American feeling was aroused and British finances were suffering."

On leaving, Bishop Fogarty gave me Archbishop Clune's letter to him from London, with permission to publish it.

(Archbishop Clune to Bishop Fogarty):

Jermyn Court Hotel,
London,

New Year's Day, 1921.

My Lord,

You have heard, I daresay, that I broke off negotiations on the morning of Christmas Eve and that in the afternoon the Prime Minister's Secretary was here begging me not to leave town till the New Year, as Cabinet was to consider the whole question, and important developments might take place. He came again last Tuesday evening and took back with him a memo of the points of the truce. On Wednesday

afternoon there was a long Cabinet meeting and another on Thursday, at which General Macready, Lord French, and several others were present. The secretary rang me up on Thursday morning to inform me that he would call that night late or Friday (yesterday) morning. He came at 11.30 a.m. yesterday, and here is a summary of his oral communications. That Cabinet etc. had given long and careful consideration to my proposals: that the proposed truce gave no effective guarantee for a permanent settlement: that consequently the Government had come to the conclusion that it was better to see the thing through as was done in the American and South African wars unless meanwhile the Sinn Feiners surrender their arms and publicly announce the abandonment of violent measures: that the Government felt sanguine that the new Home Rule Bill when studied and understood would be worked, in fact they felt sanguine that within six months all would be working in harmony for Ireland, etc., etc. He then added a few gracious personal compliments from the Prime Minister. My first comment was that I felt sure the Holy Ghost had nothing to do with such a decision which sent him off exploding with laughter. What is the source of this strange optimism about all classes working the Home Rule Bill in harmony within a few months, I can't make out. (Greenwood repeats it in a speech quoted in to-day's paper), unless it is a deduction from the whining across the water.

This Government determination to carry on the policy of frightfulness to the bitter end may be bluff. I think it is not, and hence I believe that the position needs further reconsideration in the light of this considered declaration of policy on their part. The secretary incidentally mentioned that from my conversations the Prime Minister had a higher idea of the gunmen: that there could be no humiliation before the world in yielding to vastly superior forces: that the Home Rule Act can be worked for Ireland,

not for England, and that through the working of it practically every English official could be sent out of Ireland in a few months, etc., etc. The point I am coming to is: Ought our grand boys allow themselves to be butchered to make a Saxon holiday? Ought they not rely on passive resistance? However, I suppose the advent of De Valera to Ireland will quickly solve these questions.

Though I am naturally sorry that my mission has not been successful, in another sense I am glad it has ended. I was beginning to feel the strain. It has done good, I think, indirectly. It has narrowed down the issues, and incidentally it has saved Your Lordship's life and All Hallows College from military occupation.

My programme is now to leave for the continent as soon as Father McMahon joins me, and to catch the boat at Naples on the 24th. I feel sure you need have no further apprehension about yourself. They have given me assurances that all necessary measures would be taken to safeguard your life.

Wishing Your Lordship a full measure of New Year graces and joys. I remain, with grateful memories of your kindness.

Yours very sincerely in Xt.

P. J. Clune
Archbishop of Perth.

Chapter IX.

"The Cream of their Race."

I remember the morning we left the Jermyn Court Hotel. The licensee attended both our Masses in the exquisite little oratory upstairs. Then we had breakfast with him. After breakfast he asked the Archbishop to come to his office as he had something to say to him. The Archbishop gladly acceded, and on his way he convinced himself that a

considerable portion of the hotel bill would be cancelled. Earlier in the negotiations the Archbishop told him about his mission. The old man was so pleased that he promised to cancel the bill if a truce came. Well, thought the Archbishop as he descended in the lift, it was almost a success, and, surely, the old man will be generous.

The licensee welcomed Dr. Clune to his office, locked the door, drew down the window blinds, and then went on his knees, looking very pious:

"Your Grace, before you leave the hotel, give me a very special blessing". The Archbishop did so. The old man rose to his feet. The Archbishop lingered, hoping, but all that eventuated was a cigar, which came to me later. The Archbishop returned to his room where I was packing his cases; he was chuckling to himself at the fall the old man gave him. He told me the story with obvious glee at his own expense, and concluded with:

"The pious old humbug! Surely I had every reason to expect something after such a solemn ceremony. But a native shrewdness did not desert the old man. No, his promise was for a truce, and I did not get the truce. But all that fuss for a blessing, when already that morning he attended my Mass. Thank heaven I can enjoy the funny side of the situation." And his infectious laugh filled the room.

We arrived in Paris in the first week of January 1921. Here let me tell an experience where examination standard French brought me some embarrassment. It happened at the official luncheon given to Archbishop Clune at the Grand Hotel by Mr. Seán T. O'Kelly (now President of Éire), the resident envoy of the Dáil (the Irish Parliament which sat in secret) in Paris. It was a great event to me, to see the representatives of the Continental press, listening to the Archbishop tell the true story of what was actually

happening in Ireland, and then to hear their eager questioning of him. Through the interviews released to the press of Europe by that luncheon, Ireland's cause was greatly benefited. From Europe these facts were written up in the press of the United States, and there began a wave of criticism of English rule in Ireland, which within six months compelled the English Cabinet to offer peace terms resulting in the Irish Free State of 1921.

At the luncheon I was seated beside Mrs. O'Kelly, who before her marriage was Miss Mary Kate Ryan, a lecturer in French at University College, Dublin. She remembered me as one of her students, and introduced me as such to several of the French pressmen, who poured avalanches of French on me at such a terrific pace that I did not understand what they were saying. So I hid behind a smiling face, and a series of gentle: "Oui! Oui!" But it really prevented me doing justice to the excellent French cooking.

We lingered on after the guests had departed, and Mrs. O'Kelly relented by speaking English to me, assuring me that I knew enough about the language, but had not enough practice in speaking it.

Then Mr. Seán T. O'Kelly called the head waiter and asked for: "L'addition". His pronunciation of that word rings in my ears yet. Returning to our hotel, both the Archbishop and I practised saying "L'addition" as we heard Mr. O'Kelly sing it, yes, for sing it he did with impressive intonation. Until I caught the boat at Naples some weeks later, "L'addition" became my great stand-by, in cabs, stores and hotels.

There were several young Irishmen at the luncheon, some associated with Mr. O'Kelly, and others doing a similar service to Ireland in other parts of the continent. To

hear their excellent French, with all the colour, emphasis, and gesticulation of the French newspaper men present, I was amazed at first, and then very proud of my countrymen. Such a situation had never occurred to me while I lived in Ireland. They certainly were very creditable representatives of what the English press called "a band of assassins".

The next morning, 11th January 1921, the papers featured the luncheon and Dr. Clune's interview, making headlines of the following:

"What do you think of the Sinn Feiners?"

"I admire their courage", replied Archbishop Clune.

"During the negotiations, when my taxi would stop before the house where I was to meet one of the leaders, I was exposing him to certain death. Yet I never saw one of them tremble. When Lloyd George, the Prime Minister, in my presence, spoke of them as 'assassins' I corrected him, saying: "No, Sir, not assassins but the cream of their race'".

That phrase, "the cream of their race", spoken in Paris on 10th January 1921, circled the globe, and played an important part in bringing about the Peace Conference of July 1921, from which the Irish Free State emerged.

On my arrival at Freemantle on the "Osterley" on 17th February 1921, the first greeting I received was this from one of the priests on the wharf:

"That was a grand phrase His Grace used in Paris: 'Not assassins but the cream of their race'. It certainly must have pleased Mick Collins and his boys on the hills".

Chapter X.

A Memorable Audience with the Pope.

Our way to Rome was a rare delight to me, seeing for the first time the Campo Sancto of Genoa, St. Mark's at

Venice, Milan's Cathedral and the art treasures of Florence. We entered the eternal city at night and drove to the Redemptorist Monastery, on the Via Merulana, where we stayed. The next morning I was privileged to say Mass at the shrine of Our Lady of Perpetual Succour. A young cleric, well over six feet, served my Mass, and in thanking him afterwards I addressed him as Monsignor, for he had purple edges to his soutane. He replied: "You're welcome", in an American accent. I was surprised at one so young-looking wearing purple, but reassured myself that such things are possible in Rome. Later at breakfast I told Father Murray, the Father General of the Redemptorists, how impressed I was by the humility of the young Monsignor who served my Mass. He laughed heartily at my words, and gave the table the story. It seems that my prelate was not even in major orders. He was a student from the American College, wearing his college soutane and, at the moment, was making a private retreat at the Monastery.

At supper that evening in the Monastery I saw a living pageant of the Catholicity of the Church in the Redemptorists representing the many provinces of their order at the mother house.

The following day the Archbishop, with Father Murray as interpreter, and I set out for the Vatican in a four-wheeled cab drawn by two horses. Off we clattered over the cobble-stones and I all eyes to see both sides of the streets. On entering the Vatican I was immediately impressed by the towering Swiss Guards, who clicked their heels and grounded their halberds as the Archbishop passed through the rooms until we reached the ante-chamber, where the noble guard received us, and ushered the Archbishop and Father Murray into the presence of the Holy Father.

There in the ante-chamber I sat for forty-five minutes

until a Monsignor came for me. As I was ushered into the room I had a fleeting glimpse of a little figure in white standing between the Archbishop and Father Murray, who is also a tall man. Down on both knees I went and there I remained, for ages it seemed to me, not daring to look up until I was bidden. The Holy Father, Pope Benedict XV, had a jewelled shoe. As I looked at it, fascinated, back flashed a memory of someone who had told me of his kissing the Pope's toe. Without thinking I automatically bent my head to kiss the jewelled shoe. I had almost reached it when the Pope withdrew his foot. Once again it was within reach, and I bent to kiss it, but the Pope withdrew his foot to the accompaniment of a chuckle, and on looking up I found His Holiness laughing with the others. He had been having a joke with me. The first audience with the Pope is an extraordinary experience. One seems lifted up from the earth to share in a slight degree the feeling of exaltation which drew from the Apostles on the Mount of Transfiguration: "Lord, it is good for us to be here", as if to say, let us stay here, for earth cannot give us what we have felt here. I did not wish to talk to anyone that day, for so much had happened to me in that audience chamber that I was too busy with my own thoughts, and desired no interruption. To see and hear the Vicar of Christ on earth for the first time is a memorable day for a Catholic priest.

The Archbishop was very gratified with the reception Pope Benedict XV gave him, and the attentive hearing he received. This audience was of invaluable service to the cause of Ireland, a service far-reaching in its effects, not merely on those living in Ireland, but on the Irish sympathisers in the new world. To have had the opportunity of placing the stark realities of the situation in Ireland before the Holy Father at such a critical moment repaid Dr. Clune in full for the strain of the truce

negotiations. And Ireland must never forget Archbishop Clune for his devotion to his homeland in her hour of need.

Archbishop Clune realised the situation in Rome before and during his interview with the Pope. English influence was pressing for a decree against the Irish "rebels", and Cardinal Merry del Val was their instrument. The only account which reached the Pope came through English sources, and very naturally the Vatican looked upon the "rebels" as a lawless band in arms against the de facto government. What convinced the Pope was the Archbishop's eye-witness account of the burning of Miltown-Malbay, Lahinch and Ennistymon, and the shooting of several men there. To that I added my own experience the night before I left my own home in Ennis. The Black and Tans raided my home at 2 o'Connell Square and dragged me out into the street, and what would have happened then, Heaven knows, had not my mother followed them down the stairs and clung on to me, despite their efforts to shake her off. The Tans were drunk, demanded money, which she gave them, and satisfied their anger by kicking me around the street. The Pope was obviously moved by this recital and gave me a relic of the True Cross, which I still have.

The next day Cardinal Merry del Val called on the Archbishop in a very friendly mood, to make up for his cool reception earlier. The Archbishop believed that his visit was a command. What might have happened had we not had that interview and audience, which lasted over an hour and which convinced the Pope of the real facts in Ireland, it is dreadful to imagine.

SIGNED

J. T. Furlong

DATE

March 8. 1950.

WITNESS

D. J. Feely, Comdt.

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21

BURO STAIRÉ MILEATA 1913-21

No. W.S. 362

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES.

Archbishop Clune:

Patrick Joseph Clune was born on a farm near the village of Ruan, County Clare, Éire, on 6th January, 1864. He was educated at the Ruan National School under its famous teacher, Hugh Brady. From the Diocesan Seminary at Ennis, he went to the Missionary College of All Hallows, in Dublin, where he was ordained a priest for the Diocese of Goulburn on 24th June 1886, at the early age of twenty-two. A class-mate was the late Cardinal Glennon, Archbishop of St. Louis, who died in Dublin in 1946, on his return from Rome where he was created Cardinal.

For seven years (1886-1893) Father Clune worked as a secular priest in Goulburn, teaching at St. Patrick's College under the great classical scholar, Rev. Dr. John Gallagher, who became the third Bishop of Goulburn in 1910. Later, Father Clune became Administrator of the Cathedral.

In 1893 Father Clune entered the Redemptorist novitiate at Bishop Eaton, near Liverpool. For eighteen years (1893-1911) as a Redemptorist missionary the name of Father Clune drew great congregations into the cathedrals and parish churches of the old lands and the new. Since his coming to Australia in 1899 until his consecration as Bishop in 1911, Father Clune has been recognised as the most eloquent preacher and one of the most successful missionary priests among the Redemptorists.

In 1911, he was consecrated the fourth Bishop of Perth by Cardinal Moran. In 1913, he was named Perth's first Archbishop. For twenty-four years (1911-1935) Dr. Clune ruled over the destinies of the Perth Archdiocese with zeal and vision.

In 1916, he went overseas as Chaplain-General to the Catholic members of the A.I.F. He visited the Australian Forces at their sector on the Belgian front, at their encampment in Egypt, on Salisbury Plain, and wherever their military hospitals were situated.

In December 1920, he acted as negotiator between the British Cabinet and the Irish leaders.

In 1930, he opened the completed sanctuary of St. Mary's Cathedral, which remains his memorial in the West. On Sunday, October 22nd, 1933, he received as Coadjutor the Most Rev. Dr. Prendiville. On 24th May, 1935, he died at St. John of God Hospital, Subiaco. He has been acclaimed as the best occasional orator among the Australian hierarchy. Speaking at his funeral, the late Archbishop Killian of Adelaide declared him to have been "the best loved member of the Episcopate in Australia".

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