

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21

BURÓ STAIRÉ MILEATA 1913-21

No. W.S.

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BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 394.....

**Witness**

Rev. James Alex H. Irwin, M.A., B.D., D.Ph.,  
The Manse,  
Lucan, Co. Dublin.

**Identity**

Presbyterian Minister,  
Lucan, Co. Dublin.

**Subject**

Associations with Irish Campaign in U.S.A.  
and Canada, 1920.

**Conditions, if any, stipulated by Witness**

Nil

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# ORIGINAL

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BURO STAIRÉ MILEATA 1913-21

No. W.S. 394

Statement by

Rev. James Alex Hamilton Irwin, M.A., B.D., D.Ph.,

The Manse, Lucan, Co. Dublin.

I was educated at an ordinary National School, Rallagh, Co. Londonderry. For two winters I got a grind in Latin and Greek from a local teacher, Master Edward Devine, a Roman Catholic, who was shot and robbed in Belfast during the trouble. After passing the Matriculation by the Old Royal University, I went direct to Magee College, Londonderry, where I took nearly all my college course. In 1900 I went to Edinburgh University where I attended art classes and also theological classes in New College, Edinburgh. I was ordained in Killead in November, 1903, where I remained till October 1926, when I went to Edinburgh.

On two occasions I was a candidate for a chair in the Presbyterian Colleges in Belfast and Londonderry, and on both occasions I was at the foot of the poll, not from any lack of academic qualifications, but because of my political leanings which were not popular with the majority of the Ministers and Elders of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland.

While Minister of Killead I rendered great service not only to the local congregation and my own Church, but the general cause of education. I built one of the finest country schools in Northern Ireland and also two residences for teachers. In order to raise the money for this purpose without Government aid, I toured America and left all these buildings free of debt when I went to Edinburgh. In addition to this I carried out

extensive repairs to the Manse and Church property. To the exacting work of a large and scattered congregation I engaged in a great many outside activities in connection with National Health and was a member for many years of the Tuberculosis Committee for County Antrim.

In 1916 I had a serious illness which laid me aside for three months; this trouble, largely liver, kept recurring at times. In 1920, on the advice of a specialist and at the invitation of many friends which I had made in America during my collecting tour in 1913, I again visited the U.S.A. accompanied by Mrs. Irwin.

While in a hotel in New York I was introduced for the first time to Mr. de Valera.

A few months prior to this a deputation from the Ulster Unionist Council consisting of a number of leading Ministers and laymen toured the United States and Canada to enlist the support and sympathy of the Protestants of America against the Irish fight for independence. The meetings which they addressed, were largely held in Churches or in halls behind closed doors, to which admission was by ticket; seldom, if ever, did they venture to address a public meeting. Mr. de Valera and his friends were anxious to counteract this and to gain the sympathy and support of America, irrespective of creed or politics, so he asked me would I address a public meeting in New York. I agreed and a great meeting was held in one of the large halls of the city, capable of accommodating 8,000. It was

packed to capacity, and afterwards I addressed a crowd of many thousands outside; similar meetings were also addressed by me in Chicago and other large centres.

Mr. de Valera then asked me to accompany him on his southern tour to which I agreed, and I and Mrs. Irwin had a most delightful three weeks tour through the Sunny South. Everywhere we were received with the greatest enthusiasm and at every step Mrs. Irwin was greeted in the usual American fashion "Say it with flowers", and though the normal time of roses was not yet, she was presented with huge bouquets of roses.

Here is an extract from an American paper of the day:

"Wild outbursts of enthusiasm welcomed Rev. Dr. Irwin, Protestant Delegate from Antrim, whose scholarly oration voices the brain and head of intellectual Ulster".

We began the campaign at Norfolk in Virginia on 8th April, 1920, and went through Carolina - North and South -, Georgia, Florida, Alabama, Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, <sup>(Birmingham)</sup> Virginia, finishing up in Richmond on April 29th. Everywhere the reception and hospitality was overwhelming and nowhere was there any organised or even spontaneous opposition. At Savannah, Georgia, the report was spread that I was a Jesuit in disguise. When told I said the disguise was pretty thick when I had Mrs. Irwin with me. The Roman Catholic Bishop met us there and greeted me with the remark "what was I doing with that moustache on?". My quick retort was "it is the only thing I have to save my face". During this trip Mr. de Valera and I had the unique

privilege, a privilege hardly ever accorded to non-members of the Assembly, of addressing the legislatures of Virginia and Maryland.

At the public meeting in Savannah in Georgia, a telegram was handed to me from Mr. Hugh Pollock, Belfast, the Minister of Finance of Northern Ireland, to this effect: "Irish Presbyterian Church repudiates Dr. Irwin's mission in America and is taking drastic action against him". I read this telegram in scathing tones to the meeting and then in equally scathing tones dealt with this worthy flour merchant daring to speak for the Presbyterian Church in Ireland. It may be interesting to note that this tour was arranged by a Southerner, a member of the Baptist Body, and a prominent Freemason. This may be of importance later.

On return to Washington I addressed several meetings, including Kinwanis and other clubs.

Mr. de Valera then asked me to go further north to border cities and Canada, to which I agreed. A very large meeting was arranged in Detroit at which I spoke, under the chairmanship of a Jew, a leading citizen of Detroit. I then crossed into Canada and addressed large meetings in Toronto, Montreal, Quebec and Ottawa. In Ottawa, members of the Canadian Parliament arranged a great banquet in honour of Mrs. Irwin and myself. Unfortunately Mrs. Irwin was unable to go owing to illness, but there the hospitality and kindness were unbounded.

The only place where there was some opposition was in Winnipeg. The large hall engaged for the occasion was

filled to capacity, probably more of the enemies of Ireland than the friends. The opposition was largely organised by members of the Orange Order. The police had given orders that the doors of the hall should be left open and that when the platform was stormed, the occupants of the platform could escape. There was considerable interruption and disturbance when the Chairman was introducing me, but unfortunately (or fortunately) for the disturbers I was more familiar with how to handle an Orange audience and of the psychology of the Orangemen than they had made bargain for, and so instead of beginning my address on Ireland I began with prayer, a prayer afterwards quoted in full in the local paper. I then after the prayer launched into my subject. There were some interruptions which only enabled me to drive home my points still more forcibly and the meeting went on quietly to its natural conclusion. One of the organisers of the disturbance told a friend of mine afterwards, saying, "we went there and were determined to break up the meeting, but your praying parson was too many for us". So those who came to scoff remained to pray and willy nilly to hear Ireland's case put as they had never heard it before.

I had to remain in Canada till Mrs. Irwin had reasonably recovered when we sailed down the St. Lawrence and the Hudson to New York and thence back to Erin. Owing to Mrs. Irwin's health and anxiety to get home I regretfully had to decline an invitation from Mr. de Valera to accompany him to California and address meetings there.

Back home again the storm began. In my absence the Northern Unionist leaders had stirred up my

congregation against me to the nth degree; many left my church and my salary was cut down by half, but my whole session and by far the best members of my congregation remained loyal and faithful, to their everlasting credit, a faithfulness and loyalty which I will remember to all eternity. This, of course, only the more irritated my opponents whose sole object was not only to drive me out of the congregation but out of the Ministry of the Church.

Dáil Éireann presented me with a beautiful silver tray in recognition of my services in America and Canada to the cause of Ireland. The present was brought by car to my home at Killead. This was the precursor of trouble, of course; all my actions were carefully watched and duly reported at Unionist Headquarters, with all sorts of imaginative comments and additions. This visit was reported as bringing Mr. de Valera to my home and that he was in hiding there in the form of a domestic servant.

This got the authorities on the war path and my home was raided in the middle of the night by a band of military and police; every room was searched and every drawer in my desk had the contents tossed out looking for seditious literature. In this respect there is an amusing story going round which may be partly apocryphal. I was a considerable Hebrew scholar and kept dabbling in Hebrew. A document was found that none of the party could read or translate believing it to be Irish; they sent it to Belfast; none there could interpret it. It was sent to London with the same result. It was then sent to Dublin and the translation came back, a portion of the Twenty-Third Psalm "The Lord's

my Shepherd, I'll not want". As someone said it was the first time he knew that the Bible was seditious literature.

I was taken to the local barracks in the middle of a cold winter's night and left there without fire or bed or bed-clothes or food, on a Saturday night, to boot, so that my pulpit would be empty on the Sunday, but Mrs. Irwin saw to that. On the Monday I was taken to the jail in Grumlin Road, Belfast. On admission, the doctor found me to be suffering from bronchitis and sent me to hospital; this trouble has recurred ever since. After a time I was allowed out on bail. In a few weeks I was called up to hear a summary of evidence against me. This was conducted by a Captain of the British Army. The accused can ask the accuser questions but cannot be professionally represented. The accuser in this case was the local D.I., R. I. C., a presbyterian, brother of a presbyterian clergyman. In his evidence he said he arrested me on such a night. "Did you caution him?", said the Captain. "No", said the D. I. "That is a very serious matter", said the Captain, "that you arrested a man without cautioning him". In his further evidence he said he found a gun or a revolver without a permit, and also in one of the drawers in the desk an Irish Volunteer badge. "Did you see anything else in that drawer?", I asked. "No", said the D. I. "You are on your oath, Sir", I said. "Oh!, yes, I know I am on my oath". "Did you not see a number of Communicants' tokens in that drawer as well?". He said, "I would not know what a communicant's token was". "And you call yourself a presbyterian", I said. This finished the evidence.



After some weeks more I was called up to be tried by courtmartial at the military headquarters in Belfast. The total charge against me was that I had a gun without a permit and an Irish Volunteer badge. My lawyer advised me to plead guilty, and of course, I could not deny that I had the gun and had no permit, a crime of which practically every member of the parish might have been accused of as well as I.

At a courtmartial when the accused pleads guilty, no further evidence can be admitted save what is contained in the summary of evidence, so the poor D.I. was denied the privilege of an eloquent description of my political iniquities. My lawyer made a powerful defence showing what I had done for the nation and the country during the War years, breaking up a derelict farm of 150 acres and growing 70 acres of grain to feed the nation. The members of the Court were greatly impressed and said, "Dr. Irwin has worked, we only talked". All parties then retired to await the verdict of the Court, the old Captain outside with all the documents filled in except the amount of the fine (5/- or 10/-). One hour passed and nothing happened. Two hours passed and still no sign; then an officer appeared saying "Dr. Irwin must go back to Crumlin Road Gaol as his bail was surrendered". So back I went to the same cell as before. Next morning I saw my lawyer coming with a face like thunder and informed me that I had been sentenced to two years' imprisonment, reduced to one. "All right", I said, "tell Mrs. Irwin to send in my books for the final B.D. Degree of London University and carry on".

Then the fat was in the fire. Telegrams began to pour in to the British Government and the Press from U. S. A. and Canada. One from Canada is worth remembering :-

"Twelve Ulster-born Orangemen are willing to come over at their own expense to give evidence in favour of Dr. Irwin and demand a full and fair trial by jury".

My lawyer wrote to his friend, the Hon. H. Asquith, asking him to raise the question in the House of Commons. Here was the crime - a gun without a permit, and here the punishment - two years' imprisonment; the two were hard to reconcile.

While the members of the Courtmartial were considering their verdict in Belfast they had communicated by 'phone with General Maxwell in Dublin. He in turn had enquired of an ex-Moderator of the Presbyterian Church, an ex-Army Chaplain having rank of Brigadier General, as to what would be the effect on the Presbyterian Church of sending me to prison. What the answer was, of course, we don't know, but judging from the results we may assume it was not favourable to me; probably it was to the effect that the Presbyterian Church in Ireland would not be disrupted, but perhaps on the whole pleased even if I were hanged. In any case that something must be done to put me out of the Ministry automatically, for if a Minister is absent from his pulpit for more than three months without the leave of his Presbytery he has automatically demised his charge. Hence the extraordinary verdict - Russia today could hardly improve on it.

Mr. Asquith interviewed Sir Hamar Greenwood, then

Chief Secretary for Ireland, and told him he was going to raise my case in the House. Sir Hamar pled for some days grace till he would enquire into what was behind all the telegrams.

While back in prison owing to the intervention of the doctor and the kindness of the Governor I was given a certain amount of liberty, but at the same time strict isolation; I was not allowed to exercise with the other prisoners. I was visited by Sir Ernest Clark (then Assistant Chief Secretary for Ireland) with headquarters in Belfast, accompanied by Mr. Black of the Belfast 'Evening Telegraph'. What the object of the visit was is unknown, whether it was to see if I would make an *ad miseracordium* appeal for release or to see whether or not I was a fire-eating monster with horns and cloven hoof or an ordinary human being, but all things were discussed by them from American hotels to the state of the weather; save that I was here and they were there, and so they left as they came, except that they saw what I was like.

The Presbyterian Chaplain, the late Mr. Northey, was extremely kind to me, a kindness which I gratefully remember, as no other brother clergyman ventured to see me.

In the cell opposite was a man condemned to death for some political crime, but as he had a bad heart the doctor would not allow him to be alone, so two other political prisoners accompanied him in the cell (a quite large one) night and day. I occasionally took a slip into their cell for a chat. One morning I saw from their cell the Governor and the Chief Warder (a Cork man)

hurrying across the prison yard. I hurried back to bed. The Governor came in and said, "I have good news for you; you are to be released in the morning. I have it over the 'phone, but I must wait for written confirmation before releasing you". I thanked him. In the morning I was turned out without any reason why or wherefor and was never told why.

The Presbytery of Templepatrick had called a meeting to deal with the situation and to their amazement and consternation I turned up at the meeting so that nothing could be done except to argue and bide for a while. This attempt to drive me out of the Ministry had miserably failed, so other methods of attack must be tried.

A special visitation meeting of the Templepatrick Presbytery was called to visit Killead. This visitation took place early in the year 1921. At a visitation Presbytery there are a certain number of stereotyped questions that have to be asked to the Minister, Kirk, Session, Committee and congregation. All those were answered in most glowing terms as to the work I had done in the congregation for the past seventeen years, and of course, on the basis of the answers, an equally glowing finding would have to be formulated. An ex-D. I., an elder in a neighbouring congregation, saw the absurdity of the situation and how silly the Presbytery would look when they came to condemn, instead per force on the evidence before them, could only give unqualified praise and commendation. He, therefore, asked the Moderator to be allowed to ask me some additional questions. This request was granted and without any previous warning the following questions were shot at me by the said ex-D. I.: "Do you consider it consistent with your position as a

christian Minister to be associated with the head of the murder gang? (meaning, of course, Mr. de Valera). Without hesitating for a moment I replied, "the heads of the British Government are very anxious to be associated with him at present and what is good enough for them is good enough for me". This rather put out the good man, but he was not to be put off. He continued, "do you consider it consistent with your profession as a christian Minister to speak from the same platform as the head of the murder gang?. Again, my unhesitating reply was, "I consider it consistent with my freedom as a Presbyterian Minister to speak my mind on any platform in the world". "That's enough, Moderator", said the rather put-out ex-D. I.

The Presbytery then retired to consider their finding. When they had arrived at this I was called in to hear it. The finding was, "that the Presbytery refer the whole matter to the Synod of Belfast". "You are a pack of cowards", I said; "If I have done wrong, say it, and I am not afraid to answer the charge. If I haven't done wrong, say it; you are a bunch of cowards". The idea was that rather than meet the publicity of the Synod I would resign, but I felt that the publicity weapon was one two could use. The Synod of Belfast is usually a tame affair dealing with routine matters and attended by an old clergyman who acted as reporter for several papers, and no other reporters, but I spread the knowledge through Ireland as to what was coming up at the Synod. When the Synod of Belfast met in the spring of that year no less than twenty-two reporters were at the Press table from Dublin, Cork, Galway and where not. The members of the Synod were so scared at the array that they refused to

touch the case at all and referred it simpliciter to the General Assembly. This was dénouement number two as far as Church Courts were concerned.

When the Assembly met in June they were equally frightened and referred the matter to a select Committee. The Committee met at Killead and the Ladies of my congregation received them graciously, entertained them sumptuously and told them some home truths that did them good.

Meantime, the opposition felt that the ground under their feet was getting slippery and that they must do something to strengthen the hands of the select Committee.

To do this they got a number of the discontents to sign a petition asking the Assembly through the Committee to have me removed from the congregation. This petition lay for weeks in the local public house for signatures; the Clerk of the Assembly showed me this petition; most of the signatories had never attended worship in Killead during my ministry nor long before it. There was one signature which took my breath away. It was that of a very special friend of mine to whom I had rendered a very great and signal service. To make sure there was no mistake I interviewed this special signatory and asked him did he sign the petition and he said "no". I further asked him if he gave anyone authority to sign it for him and he said "no". I said, "will you come down and say that before the Assembly's Committee tomorrow?". Being a shy country man he said he would rather not. "Well", I said, "will you give me authority to say it for you?". He said, "certainly".

When the petition was referred to, I said, "Moderator, there is one signature to that petition I can prove is forged, perhaps others also, and another has withdrawn his name". Dr. Lowe, Clerk of the Assembly, said, "that is a very serious matter and I'm afraid invalidates the whole petition". After a long series of questioning and a good high tea, the Committee could come to no decision and went back to Belfast. I was on holiday at Portrush and came up specially for the meeting. On my way back I saw three members of the Committee - two Ministers and a layman, a lawyer. They said, "we have been appointed as a deputation to go down to Portrush to see you, but if you give us no encouragement there is no use in our going". I said, "come along, a day at Portrush will do you good".

Meantime I consulted some republican leaders and drew up with their approval the following document to submit to the deputation :-

"Dr. Irwin deeply regrets that, owing to outside interference, the happy harmonious relations that existed between all the members of his congregation and himself for so many years have been disturbed, but he is quite convinced that if this outside interference is removed those happy relations will be restored, but at the same time he claims the right that was accorded to other Ministers by our Church to speak his mind on platforms in America".

I submitted this to the deputation when they came to Portrush. The lawyer said, "we will put it in the negative - we disapprove of the indiscretion of all our Ministers speaking in America on a purely political question". "Oh, well", I said, "if you put us all on the same footing there is no use in quarrelling", and in consequence the statement was received as satisfactory.

Rev. Dr. Lowe who was then Moderator of the Assembly as well as Clerk, came down to Killead to read the decision of the special Committee to the congregation. It was a harmless enough document, differing slightly from the terms agreed at Fortrush. The difference was to save the face of the Assembly and at the same time not to do anything against me as I had done no wrong only exercised the inalienable rights of any presbyterian.

I asked a friendly member of the congregation what was the object of all this persecution. He replied, "of course, it is to put you out of the Church". "But supposing they don't succeed, what happens?", I said. The reply was, "oh, I suppose they'll curse God and die". So much for the ecclesiastical side of the question.

There was another side no less annoying and vexatious. Prior to the ecclesiastical trial a charlatan calling himself Gipsy Pat Smith was conducting an evangelistic campaign in the Y.M.C.A. Hall, Belfast. He had been to America and subsequently was hunted out of the country for his misdeeds. The real Gipsy Smith, who was a saint, if ever there was one, was very angry with Pat for usurping the name "Gipsy". Whether Pat Smith was brought over by the powers that be for the purpose of attacking me, or whether he was paid when here for doing so, or whether he merely expected to get paid for it, we don't know. In any case he told the Secretary of the Y.M.C.A. that he was going to attack me. The Secretary said, "if you take my advice you will do nothing of the sort". However, he did publicly in the Y.M.C.A., saying how he (Smith) had stirred up the



masonic element in the Southern States of America and that Mr. de Valera and I were hunted out of every city we went to. This appeared in full in the Belfast 'Evening Telegraph'. Someone called my attention to it and it gave me the very opportunity I wanted as the opposition had sedulously reported that I had repented, eaten the leek and recanted all my doings, and further it enabled me to put before the northern public the exact truth.

In a letter to the 'Telegraph' filling a column, I told the public that Mr. de Valera and I were received with honour in every town and city we visited, often met by a guard of honour of ex-servicemen and on more than one occasion receiving the freedom of the city, always listened to by crowded audiences without interruption or disturbance, and that the whole campaign had been organised by one of the most prominent freemasons in the South, adding what effect this had in the campaign, one way or another, I did not know, but the fact remained and I concluded by saying that I hoped Mr. Smith's presentation of the gospel was a little more accurate than his description of Mr. de Valera's visit in the Southern States. This was published in full by the 'Telegraph' and headed ironically "Their March through Georgia".

Pat Smith said to the Secretary of the Y.M.C.A. what should he do. The Secretary replied, "Dr. Irwin has practically called you a liar and you must produce proof of your statements". He said he couldn't. "Then you should not have spoken", said the Secretary.

One of the members of the Assembly's Committee said to me, "you will have to withdraw that letter to

'The Telegraph'. "Not a single syllable", was my emphatic reply.

When the various trials, civil and ecclesiastic, were over, I decided to hold a Sale of Work to liquidate a small debt that still remained on the school and buildings which I had erected in connection with the congregation. I was advised against this project in the present state of feeling, but I proceeded. Some time before the Sale was due to come off I learned on good authority that the place would be wrecked and no sale allowed, and that the B specials and R. I. C. would give no protection; consequently I appealed to the local I. R. A. leaders to send a contingent of republican police to take charge. Two lorry loads arrived the night before the sale. I put them up in the Manse barn. A number of the local opposition went to Crumlin (four miles) to the R. I. C. Barracks to report. The local Sergeant had no passionate desire to deal with this situation with the small force of four at his disposal, so he said to the reporters, "did Dr. Irwin send you here?". "No". "Did Dr. Irwin complain of trespass?". "No". "Then what the h... can I do?". "Is that the way of it?", said the reporters, who had to return as they came. The local midwife returning from her duties overheard the conversation and duly published it. Next afternoon was the Sale. The Head Constable R. I. C. came to me and said, "I hear you have visitors here". "Yes", was the reply. "Well", he said, "I can't be responsible for order if you keep them here". "Will you be responsible if I send them away?", I said. "Yes", he replied, "I will". "All right", I said, "I guarantee they will be away inside an hour". I then made arrangements and they retired across the fields to be met by their

Lorries on the road some distance away.

When the first patrons of the Sale began to go home, they were stoned and came back and told me. I went out to see the Head Constable and said, "I thought you undertook to protect the patrons of the Sale". "How can I?", he said, "when they are dispersing in all directions". "I don't care", I said, "you have to summon the whole British Army, you undertook to protect them and I'll hold you responsible". There was no more trouble, and the Sale passed off successfully, realising seventy pounds more than was necessary.

The next week the R. I. C. Sergeant from Antrim came out to me and came up to the fields where I was with my men raising potatoes. The Sergeant was nervous and not at ease. Finally he said, "I came out to get the names of these men who were at your Sale of Work". "I don't know their names", I said, "and if I do I am not going to give them to you. What is it your business who was at my Sale of Work?". "I know that", he said, "and that old ex-D. I., what is it his business sending me out here?". "Look here", I said, "I have patiently stood this persecution for over a year and I am not going to stand it any longer no matter what powers I have to invoke, and tell the ex-D. I. with my compliments, that he is a pensioner of the State and if he interferes with citizens I'll see that he loses his pension". That ended that.

Another incident occurred some time before this which is worth recording. My car was taken from me, or rather the carburettor, which handicapped me in the doing of the work of a large and scattered parish.

Mrs. Irwin had a serious illness and called in the old family doctor from Belfast who came out to visit her. He examined her and said, "I can't be coming out here, you will have to come in to town twice a week for injections". "But, Doctor", she said, "they have taken my car and how can I get in?". "Oh!", he said, "I am a great friend of Sir Ernest Clark's (the former mentioned Assistant Chief Secretary). He'll get your car for you, send in for the parts". She sent in but they sent out a Constable to say she could not get the parts. Mrs. Irwin said, "it is Sir Ernest Clark who is looking after my car. I am not bothering about it". This rather nonplussed the poor Constable. Mrs. Irwin wrote the doctor speaking of the police in language more forcible than polite or complimentary. She also gave instructions to the maid if any policeman came out, she was not to be asked to see him. The next day the Sergeant came out to see Mrs. Irwin. The maid said, "it is more than my job's worth, you can't see her". He said, "it is very important". "It does not matter", the maid said, "you can't see her". He then asked for a piece of notepaper and wrote a note asking her to send in for the parts, and she would get them. This was done and the parts restored and the car was on the road again. The doctor had shown Sir Ernest Mrs. Irwin's letter and his reply was, "d... them, they had to give her the car". It was only many months after that I learned that in order to restore the car Sir Ernest had to make an order restoring every commandeered car in all Ireland. I carried on my work. No brother Minister, with one exception (Rev. Wm. Martin of 2nd Randalstown) ever called on me or asked me to preach in his pulpit and many of them refused to speak to me. There were many pinpricks and petty annoyances, letters opened and everything done to make me

resign my charge in the Ministry. Rev. Dr. Lowe, Clerk of the General Assembly, was asked by some of the leading Unionists to go down to Killead and advise me to resign. Dr. Lowe asked the advice of another leading Unionist and his advice was, "you will do nothing of the sort. You saw Dr. Irwin walked twice out of Crumlin Road Prison and nobody knows why and you don't know what force you are up against". "I thought that", said Dr. Lowe, "but I wanted your opinion". However, to show that in some way he had carried out his commission, he sent for me. He said, "it has been suggested to me that you wanted to resign". "I haven't the least intention of doing so", I said. "I thought so", said Dr. Lowe, "but I wanted to make sure".

Late in 1926 I got the offer of a colleagueship in the beautiful Church of St. Michael's in Edinburgh. I went and had a very happy and successful Ministry there.

In 1928 I was appointed sole Minister of St. Thomas', Leith, Edinburgh, a Church built and endowed by the father of the Right Hon. William Ewart Gladstone. Here I laboured for over seven years, building a new hall and restoring two others, installing a beautiful pipe organ in the Church and adding to the membership great numbers, which then reached the colossal figure of 1900 when I left. The nostalgia for the homeland was still strong and when the little congregation of Lucan became vacant, I applied for it and was unanimously elected and installed there on Ascension Thursday, 1935, and by doing so made a drop in my salary of fifty per cent.

Since my return I have been appointed by the Assembly on various important Committees, given the chairmanship of the Committee that deals with Government and Education in the Twenty-Six Counties. In this capacity I have been able to render great service to the Church and the State.

One case is of some interest and of which I am very justly proud. A property in a little village in County Monaghan became alienated from the Church in the Forties of the last century when the landlord and the ascendancy party were all powerful. The property consisted of a Church, hall, school, graveyard, and a very valuable wooded site in the centre of the village. The ownership of the property became again in dispute so the case was handed over to me. By unearthing an old document from the Archives of the British Museum I was able to restore the whole property to the Presbyterian Church for all time without any recourse to the Civil Courts.

I sat for years on the Committee on Vocational Organisation and brought in a minority comment, which had a very favourable reception at the time and since some of its recommendations quietly appropriated by succeeding Governments.

I and many of my friends believed that the wide use made by the Church of my services indicated a change of heart in the Church's part, but we got a rude awakening last Easter Monday when the Presbytery of Dublin tried to censure Dr. Byers and myself for holding a service of intercession for the Republic on Easter Monday, 1949, in the Scots Church, Abbey Street,

when the Presbytery had decided to hold no service. It was then clearly revealed that the Church was using my ability and influence, which I had gained at such a price, merely for their own benefit without any change of attitude towards me or what I stood for.

SIGNED

J. C. Dwyer

DATE

12<sup>th</sup> June 1950

WITNESS

E. J. Jameson

Sean Brennan. Comdt.

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