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STATEMENT BY WITNESS

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 735

Witness

Charles J. MacAuley, M.B., F.R.C.S.,
63 Fitzwilliam Square,
Dublin.

Identity.

Joseph Plunkett's Medical Attendant, 1916;
Member of Prisoners' Aid Association, 1916 - .

Subject.

(a) Irish Volunteer medical services, G.P.O., Dublin, Easter Week 1916;

(b) Associations with some of the Volunteer leaders, 1916-1921.

Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness.

Nil

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ORIGINAL

W.S. 735

STATEMENT BY CHARLES J. MacAULEY, M.B., F.R.C.S.,

63 Fitzwilliam Square, Dublin.

My people came from the Glens of Antrim snd we were traditionally national in outlook. One of my relatives was John MacNeill, who was a great figure in my early days.

When I came to Dublin as a student I naturally became associated with the MacNeills. I used to visit John MacNeill's house in Herbert Park. As a student I knew very little about the national movement, but I was impressed by the people who used to visit MacNeill. I distinctly remember The O'Rahilly, and I have an idea that Roger Casement visited MacNeill too, but I am not quite sure.

I was at the meeting in the Rotunda to launch the Volunteer movement. Amongst others MacNeill and Alderman Tom Kelly spoke at that meeting. One of the striking things I remember was the attitude of a contemporary of mine, Michael Davitt. Although he was the youngest of the speakers, he was most conservative in his outlook, which was surprising to people who knew his historical background.

Another feature of that time was the Irish National Literary Society which held its meetings in Parnell Square and in which Pat MacCartan was one of the leading figures. Social and literary meetings were held during the winter session. They were attended by many university students. I remember striking addresses by Padraig Pearse and Countess Markievicz, and one particular meeting at which W.B. Yeats and Tom MacDonagh spoke to a crowded house. At that meeting I created rather a sensation when, egged on by my comrades, I stood up and corrected a misquotation by Yeats of the wellknown words of St. Augustine about Beauty. For Yeats' wrong English version I gave the original Latin. The great man was very annoyed and the audience much amused.

I remember being tremendously impressed at Dr. Brian Cusack's wedding in 1916 by a speech from Sean MacDermott, so full was it of national revolutionary fervour.

Before the Rising in 1916 I was introduced to the Reddins, who lived at Rockfield, Artane. We used to go out there on Sundays and stay for tennis. Mrs. Reddin had a penchant for inviting literary, artistic people - in fact, any kind of notability - to her home. Amongst the people we met there was Captain White, son of Sir George White of Ladysmith fame. He was rather a departure from the White tradition. He was a socialist and drilled the Citizen Army.

Mrs. Reddin was, I think, associated with Madame Maud Gonne MacBride, and she asked me to give a lecture on First Aid to the Cumann na mBan. I did - in a room in the vicinity of Pearse Street, near, I think, the present Queen's Theatre. I remember some of the people who were there. They included the present Mrs. Blythe (then Miss Annie McHugh), and Miss Louise Gavan Duffy. That, I believe, was the first formal Cumann na mBan lecture given.

Shortly before the Rising I was asked to hold an examination of Volunteers in First Aid work. I examined them in the old Volunteer rooms in Dawson Street. I remember being greatly impressed by their knowledge of First Aid. The results of the examination were reported in the current issue of the Irish Volunteer. During that examination Eamon de Valera was coming in and out of the room. He was in uniform.

About the same time I was closely associated in my medical capacity with Joseph Plunkett. The first time I saw him he was living at Larkfield, Kimmage. I went out there to see him. He was very thin and highly strung and he was suffering from an abscess in his neck. I remember in the course of examining him he asked me did I see a "G" man at the gate and I said I did

not notice anyone at the gate. He said I would know one by his feet. He seemed rather disappointed that I had not seen one.

As he required an operation I sent him into Miss Quinn's Nursing Home in Mountjoy Square. I operated on him there and he was there for some time under treatment.

While he was there quite a number of young men visited him. I remember once finding a group of them seated round his bed with notebooks and pencils in their hands, while he was sitting up in bed, apparently giving them instructions. I, frankly, did not take this at all seriously and remarked: "Napoleon dictating to his marshals" - a remark which was not well received. On another occasion I joked him, saying: "I suppose you sleep with a revolver under your pillow" and, to my surprise, he said: "I do" and pulled one out. He also showed me a steel casque for a hat which he had invented. It was of the early tin-hat variety and was for stopping bullets. His visitors seemed to be always coming and going and he appeared to be greatly wrought up.

The first inkling I got from him that there was something serious on was with reference to a remark he made about bloodshed with Britain. He spoke of the British designs to arrest Archbishop Walsh - how far that rumour was true I could not say - which excited him very much. He said it would be resisted by force.

On Easter Saturday evening I was asked to see Joseph Plunkett by his brother-in-law, Tom Dillon. I was told to go to the Metropole Hotel where he was then. He had now left the Nursing Home. This was against my wishes as he still had an open wound in his neck. I saw him that night in the Metropole Hotel and he was in a state of great excitement and talked continuously. He was wearing a striking sombrero hat. He told me that there would be an armed parade of the Volunteers the next day and that there might be bloodshed. I tried to persuade

him to get back to the Home on account of his physical condition, but he refused point blank. I was very disturbed myself after that and I went home realising that some event of importance was impending and that there was a likelihood of bloodshed.

I went to a colleague of mine - another doctor - who lived near me, and said I thought something very serious was going to happen, that there was going to be a revolution, as far as I could interpret. We then discussed what we should do about it. I said if the Volunteers were going to be attacked we should be with them. This man made the usual plea, that he had too many commitments, and so on. I know I spent a very uneasy Easter Saturday night. I was greatly relieved on Sunday morning when I read MacNeill's order on the "Sunday Independent" countermanding the parade on Easter Sunday morning. I thought everything was over, as did everybody else.

On Easter Monday, thinking everything was quiet, I went out to Hermitage to play golf. With me were Paddy McGilligan, Joseph Algar - now professor of chemistry - and James O'Connor, now professor of physiology in University College. During the course of the afternoon in Hermitage, we heard that a revolution had broken out in Dublin. My companions pooh-poohed the idea, but I did not. I said to them: "Come in". We did, and on the return journey to the city it was difficult to realise that anything had happened as people seemed to be going about their business in the ordinary way; but when we reached Kingsbridge there was a group of people gathered who told us that the General Post Office had been attacked and various other places including the Mendicity Institute. So we decided on going home and went down the north side of the quays. We noticed then that there was no one else about.

Almost opposite the Mendicity Institute there was a burst of fire. We took shelter under the parapet and as we lay on the ground we saw just across the street from us a group of British soldiers firing across with rifles actually over our heads.

We lay there for some time and, when there was a lull in the firing, we decided to make our way back. We crouched along the wall back towards Kingsbridge where a group of people interestedly watched the interchange of fire between the British soldiers and the Volunteers. We managed to reach Kingsbridge and we then made our way back by a circuitous route to Leeson Street. McGilligan lived opposite me in Leeson Street.

Late that night Mrs. Desmond Fitzgerald came to see me and told me there were some Volunteers wounded in the G.P.O. and would I go down. I said: "Yes" and got my bag with dressings in it. We walked down. It was very late at night and the streets were very quiet and deserted. I remember that journey well because I was wondering what my reaction to the Rising should be and my criterion was John MacNeill. I decided that if he were in it, I should be in it also. I asked Mrs. Fitzgerald if he were in the Post Office. She hesitated before answering, but said he was not. I was greatly taken aback by her attitude and gathered from her that MacNeill had no part in the Rising. Like so many people, I did not know what to make of the situation, and decided to stay out of it.

I went into the Post Office. Everything was very quiet. The windows were barricaded and there was Volunteer activity all round the place.

I was taken to two Volunteers who had been wounded. As far as my recollection goes, they were only superficial wounds from bomb splinters. I dressed them. I then decided as MacNeill was not there and there was no activity at the time that I would go home. Before leaving, however, I inquired of somebody was Joseph Plunkett in the Post Office. I was brought over to a prominent looking Volunteer. I learned he was Pearse and I said if Joseph Plunkett was there I'd like to see him. To the best of my recollection, Pearse called on Jim Ryan to take me upstairs. I was taken upstairs to a very large room which was evidently the restaurant for the employees in the Post Office.

Seated very disconsolately at the long table was one solitary figure - a British officer in uniform. He had been taken prisoner that day.

In a tiny room off the main room there was a group of people whom I remember very distinctly. Stretched on a pallet on the floor was Joseph Plunkett in riding breeches and wearing a green Volunteer uniform shirt. In the room also seated there was Tom Clarke in civilian clothes with a bandolier across his shoulders and a rifle between his knees. He was silent and had a look of grim determination on his face. I was greatly impressed by him. It was as if he thought his day had come. He never spoke. My friend, Sean MacDermott, cheerful and gay as usual, was also in civilian clothes. Sean T. O'Kelly was there, too.

I knelt down to dress Joseph Plunkett's neck. I took the dressing off to have a look at the wound and he talked a lot and was obviously very excited. He showed me a dagger which he had in the pocket of his green shirt and said: "This was Lord Edward Fitzgerald's dagger". He asked me if I saw the tram which was overturned in Talbot St.; he said it had been blown up.

I finished dressing his wounds and during the course of it Sean T. O'Ceallaigh was chatting away. I have often recalled to him since what he said to me on that occasion: "Young man", he said, "if you continue to associate with people like us you will never find yourself in Merrion Square".

The last thing I remember about the Post Office in the early hours of Easter Tuesday morning was being escorted to the top of the stairs leading down to the ground floor by Sean MacDermott. He shook hands with me at the top of the stairs. He had a charming personality and appeared calm and gracious as usual, but I felt an element of sadness in his farewell.

Before 1916, when I was in Leeson Street, Sean MacDermott came to see me. He wanted to know if I could use an X-ray apparatus or if I knew of anyone who could. He was very guarded in his conversation. I gathered that it had something to do with wireless communication. I made some suggestions, but I never heard anything more about it.

On one occasion he brought to me a young man with an injury in his hand, whose name was Collins; but whether he was Michael Collins or his brother, Sean, I do not know. He brought him very secretly and he said he was a very valuable man.

After that there were only a few incidents worth noting. Immediately after the Rising, I remember going out to James MacNeill's house in Woodtown, Rathfarnham. There I met John MacNeill, Bulmer Hobson, who was arrested by the Volunteers but escaped and made his way to Rathfarnham, and 'Ginger' O'Connell. They were a rather disconsolate group, as far as I cam remember. James MacNeill was a retired Indian civil servant, a brother of John MacNeill.

There is a second incident which must have occurred about that time that I wish to refer to. It must have been shortly after John MacNeill was arrested. Dr. Seamus O'Kelly got in touch with me and asked me to meet him down town. I remember we went into Mackey's seed shop in O'Connell St. ostensibly to examine bulbs. He passed me a glass phial and in it was a slip of paper. This slip of paper was to be given to James MacNeill by me, and it was to be used at John MacNeill's trial. I examined it before handing it up. It was a leaf from a small pocket notebook and it was a note written in pencil. To the best of my recollection, which, I think, is fairly correct, it read as follows: "All orders given by the Chief of Staff (John MacNeill) must be countersigned by me."

Signed: P.H. Pearse".

I assumed that this was to prove at MacNeill's trial that all

orders given by him were superseded by orders given by Pearse with the object of reducing MacNeill's complicity in the Rising. Wylie was the prosecuting counsel at MacNeill's trial. I heard afterwards that he behaved very well; that he gave his papers to the defending counsel.

The next thing of interest that I can recall was the Prisoners' Aid Association. After 1916, there was a body formed to establish a Prisoners' Dependants' Fund. I was a member of that body. To the best of my recollection, the Prisoners' Aid Fund was started partly by people of the Redmondite Volunteer group. I remember at an early stage Miss Gavan Duffy was on it, also Alderman Corrigan. Anyhow, a certain amount of friction developed because another organisation was started, I think by the widows of some of the executed 1916 leaders. A move was set on foot to amalgamate the two bodies, but the immediate relatives of the executed leaders - Mrs. Ceannt and, probably, Mrs. Clarke - wouldn't touch the other group because of one man who was chairman of it, namely, Lorcan Sherlock. We had a meeting, I think, in the Dolphin Hotel at which the idea was to get Lorcan Sherlock to retire. This would enable us to be taken over by the other committee. I remember Larry Ginnell was at that meeting. An interesting incident occurred at the meeting. When we were seated round the table a number of people came to me and said the object of the meeting was to form a deputation to meet these ladies. Other people came to me and said:"We want Lorcan Sherlock to resign". Larry Ginnell made a great speech in support of the necessity for amalgamation. I sided with him and pointed out that these people had suffered and that their demands should be met. It is of particular interest that many present were agreed that Lorcan should cease to be a member in deference to the wishes of these ladies. But when a vote was taken there were only two votes against Lorcan Sherlock and one of them was mine, and I suspect that the other was his own.

The vast majority - 8 or 10 - voted for Lorcan Sherlock and he, having carried the vote, gracefully retired. It was my first introduction to political intrigue. When I backed up Larry Ginnell, Sherlock referred to me as a young man of romantic ideas. I think the two bodies eventually amalgamated. I think it was about that period Michael Collins came into it.

The next thing was in relation to Thomas Ashe. I was present in the Mater Hospital when the Thomas Ashe inquest was opened in September 1917. There was a great feeling of tension at that inquest. All sorts of officials were present. A number of my chiefs were called to give evidence - Sir Arthur Chance, Professor McWeeney, Dr. Martin Dempsey, etc.

The only other point I wanted to refer to was when the fighting was at its height the British Government issued an instruction that all admissions of patients suffering from bullet wounds should be notified to the authorities. To the best of my knowledge, every hospital in Dublin refused to carry out this instruction - even the hospitals that were unsympathetic to the Volunteers.

I was a member of the staff of the Mater Hospital from 1919 on. No questions were asked in relation to patients admitted and no information was given to the British authorities.

Detective Sergeant Smith was, I think, the first "G" man shot. He was wounded and was taken from Millmount Avenue, Drumcondra. I remember when he was admitted. He received a bullet wound in the chest and was actually under my care. He was taken from the General Ward to a Private Ward because it was feared the Volunteers would follow him up in the hospital. He was guarded. The British authorities obviously regarded us as hostile. He got an abscess in his chest from the bullet wound and he died.

There were various other spies. I remember one Secret Service agent who was shot in Glasnevin district. His name may have been Jameson. He was a magnificent specimen of a man. I remember seeing his body when he was stripped and noting his magnificent physique. There were all sorts of comings and goings at that time. No information was given at any time by any hospital in Dublin.

The only prominent I.R.A. man I saw was Tom Ennis after the burning of the Custom House. He was a member of the Active Service Unit. My recollection of what he told me was that in spite of his loss of blood he made his way to a laneway in the immediate neighbourhood of the Custom House. He dragged himself there. He saw a breadvan with a driver on the street and he pointed his gun at the driver and told him to get down. He managed to get up on the bread van, took the reins and drove off. It was a tremendous feat, considering his grave wounds. When he was in Miss O'Donel's Nursing Home in Eccles Street he used to be visited by all kinds of people. One whom I recognised afterwards was Oscar Traynor. To show the spirit of the man. Just at that time, while he was in the hospital, the famous Lloyd George announcement was made that he was going to have barbed wire all over the country and enforce general suppression of I.R.A. activities. Tom Ennis said: "What does he think we are going to be doing while he is putting up the barbed wire?"

Another incident was - I remember being asked to see Ernie O'Malley immediately after his escape from Kilmainham. Two members of Cumann na mBan came to me. (I think they were then unmarried - Maureen McGavock and Josephine Ahern). They asked me under the greatest secrecy would I make my way to a house in Lower Beechwood Avenue belonging to a man named Seamus Moore. He was secretary of a motor traders' association, or something like that. He lived quietly there with his sister. Ernie O'Malley was brought to that house immediately after his escape with, I think, Simon Donnelly. Ernie was very much knocked

about. He was growing a beard. But he had the same indomitable spirit as Tom Ennis. I remember his saying that he would not be taken alive anyway. His health was pretty low at the time. Neither in his case nor Tom Ennis's case was there any suggestion of lack of spirit.

I remember Dick Mulcahy came to the Mater Hospital once. He made a speech there, but I cannot remember the details. He did address the staff there, I think. I think it was in connection with the treatment of wounded men. I have only a vague recollection of it. I remember Dan Breen coming there, but only by hearsay. He escaped by Eccles Street. That was after the incident on Drumcondra Road where he was with Sean Treacy.

I was not a Volunteer and held no official position in the movement, but I was known by the Volunteers and trusted. In my professional capacity I attended to many wounded Volunteers at the Mater Hospital and elsewhere.

I remember on one occasion visiting a man in Callan, Co. Kilkenny, who had been shot through the knee. Dr. Phelan, the local doctor, brought me there. There was a British garrison in Callan at the time. There had been an ambush down there and I think this man succeeded in getting away after the ambush, but he was chased by one of the British and was shot through the knee by a British sergeant. While I was seeing this escaped Volunteer, Dr. Phelan was asked to visit a military barracks and he brought me along with him. There was a soldier in the barracks who, curiously enough, had shot himself. I think he died. It was strange that these two things were going on at the same time. The Volunteer recovered. When I saw him I think it was some time after he had been shot. He had got a diseased bone in his leg, which I feared would have to come off. He must, however, have made a fairly good recovery. I saw him afterwards and he had a stiff leg. He was engaged in the motor business so he must have been fairly well.

Shortly before the Truce, at James MacNeill's request, a secret meeting was held in my house, 22 Lower Fitzwilliam Street. To the best of my knowledge, in addition to James MacNeill, Cope and James MacMahon were there. They were closeted together for some time. I could only guess at the subject for discussion, which I took to be some form of secret peace negotiations.

Signed: Charles MacAuley
(Charles MacAuley)

Date: 8th October 1952
8th October 1952.

Witness: William Ivory Comdt.
(William Ivory) Comd't.