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COSANTA.

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS.

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 864

Witness

The Hon. W. Evelyn Wylie, Q.C.,
Clonsilla House,
Clonsilla,
Co. Dublin.

Identity.

Late Judge of the High Court;

Prosecutor in the trials of the leaders
of the Rising of 1916.

Subject.

Trials of the leaders
of the Easter Week Rising, 1916.

Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness.

Nil

File No. S.239

Form B.S.M. 2

I approached The Hon. W. E. Wylie, Q.C., at the Curragh Races, yesterday, and had an interview lasting quite a considerable time with him. In previous interviews I had urged on him the necessity of his recording his experiences for the Bureau.

He told me yesterday that he had now actually written his account of his experiences but that he had decided not to give it to anybody whosoever during his lifetime and he had made a proviso in his Will leaving it to his daughter after his death to use in her discretion.

I told him there were a few factual matters that we were particularly interested in at the moment relating to the courtmartial following the 1916 Rising, and he told me that all these courtmartial were drumhead courtmartial in the early stages, and he appears to be quite satisfied that no records were made or kept of these courtmartial.

He stated that the three officers constituting the Court made occasional notes but that no official record was taken or kept.

General Blackadder presided at these drumhead courtmartial, and Mr. Wylie stated that he himself was present at them all.

I asked him if any speeches had been made by the accused persons during the course of these trials and he replied that Pearse had made a speech to the Court which tried him. And in reply to a further specific question by me he told me that MacDonagh pleaded "Not Guilty" to the charge but made no speech. Mr. Wylie stated he was quite certain of this.

Mr. Wylie stated that he was attached to the Dublin University O.T.C. prior to and during Easter Week. He stated that early in Easter Week he was detailed to guide two British Battalions across Dublin to a British Barracks, and when he was so doing he passed the gates of Dublin Castle where he saw the then Attorney-General and the then Solicitor-General standing. They smiled and waved to him as he was passing and he thinks that it must have been as a result of this that he was noted and selected for courtmartial work immediately afterwards.

Immediately following the Rising he was sent for by General Sir Joseph Byrne (afterwards Commissioner of the D.M.P.) and told that he was to prosecute at the forthcoming trials of the leaders of the insurrection. He asked General Byrne what they were to be charged with and was told that the charges were a matter for him to prepare; that that was his business. He told me that all this was included in his statement.

I might add that Mr. Wylie was very friendly during this interview. He emphasised that his reason for keeping his statement completely to himself was that he did not want any living person to see it while he was still alive, because, he added, no matter however well disposed he might be, there was always the danger that he might allude to it in some way or another. Even giving it to us under seal, which I had mentioned previously to him, did not seem to satisfy him.

Mr. Wylie is the Senior Steward of the Turf Club this year and to give me nearly half an hour of his time during a Curragh race meeting is certainly a compliment to the Bureau.

11th June, 1953.

(J.V. Joyce)

Colonel.

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