

OLUSCOIL NA hÉIREANN

THE NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF IRELAND

TEXT OF THE INTRODUCTORY ADDRESS DELIVERED BY PROFESSOR MICHAEL HAYES
M.A., BARRISTER-AT-LAW, APRIL 14TH, 1966, ON THE OCCASION OF THE CONFERRING
OF THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF LAWS *honoris causa* ON DONAGH MACDONAGH.

CHANCELLOR AND MEMBERS OF THE UNIVERSITY,

It is my privilege to propose that a doctorate in law be conferred today on Donagh MacDonagh, a graduate of this University, a writer, a lawyer who sits as a Justice in our District Courts.

The object is to honour Donagh MacDonagh's father, Thomas MacDonagh as a signatory of the Proclamation of the Irish Republic on Easter Monday, 1916.

Thomas MacDonagh deserves to be honoured as a patriot and a soldier who gave his life for Ireland, but he was also a diligent scholar, a man of high academic achievement.

In 1878 Thomas MacDonagh was born at Cloughjordan, Co. Tipperary where his father and mother were national teachers. For his secondary course he was sent to the Holy Ghost Fathers at Rockwell College. Later he became a secondary teacher and worked hard at English and Irish. In 1908 he came to Dublin to assist Patrick Pearse at Scoil Éanna and in 1911 wrote a thesis for the M.A. degree in English under Professor Robert Donovan. He was awarded first class honours and became a member of the staff of the English Department, University College, Dublin.

He had already begun to study the influence of the Irish Language upon the English spoken and written in Ireland. For such investigation he was admirably equipped. He knew English literature well, he could recite Irish poetry so as to bring out the metre, the rhythm and the beauty of the language, and he was a frequent visitor to France, a student and a lover of French literature. His book *Literature in Ireland*, published in 1916 after his execution, contains sound original thought as well as excellent translations from Irish.

Thomas MacDonagh had two ambitions, one to become a writer, to make a name for himself in scholarship and succeed to the chair of English at University College, Dublin, and the other to be a soldier for Ireland. He believed the poet must also be a patriot—a doer of deeds as well as a writer of verses. To James Stephens he said, "When will you lads stop writing stories and do something?" and in his book "No Irish poet or dreamer knows the day when he may be called into action in the ancient fight." Again, he talks of Irish nationalism "this (nationalism) free from alien hope and fear, craving no ease, hearing always the supreme song of victory on the dying lips of Martyrs".

In 1907 he wrote a play "When the Dawn is Come"—showing "a military council of seven men, fifty years hence, planning an insurrection". He describes the action as "a forecast of what will spring from our present movements". The General of the Insurgents, a poet, is killed in the struggle. When the Irish Volunteers were formed in 1913 he seized the opportunity and threw himself heart and soul into the work. In April 1916 he was one of a council of seven men, appointed to plan and carry through an insurrection. He was put to death. In his own person he enacted to the end the prophecies in his play. MacDonagh, the poet, was "a captain in time of insurrection" and gave his life. He had counted the cost and was ready to pay the price. He paid it nobly.

Thomas MacDonagh was no idle dreamer, no reckless revolutionary. Whatever he undertook, he did thoroughly, unsparing of himself. He worked hard to fit himself for a University Chair. As an Irish Volunteer officer he made every effort possible in his circumstances to equip himself and his men for the tasks ahead.

Cheerful, tolerant, gentle, full of zest for life, he was a poet, a teacher, a critic, a scholar, genuinely skilled in three languages, a European as well as an Irishman. He had a broad view of life and a clear understanding of the various strains that go to make up Irish nationalism. He knew and savoured the Munster poet, Eón Rua Ó Súilleabháin, the Ulsterman, Cathal Buí Mac Giolla Gunna, the Love Songs of Connacht, as well as Wolfe Tone, Thomas Davis, John Mitchell and Fintan Lalor. His College and his University are entitled to be proud of his life, of his work and of his death. In honouring him we are honouring ourselves.

Bhí an shuim ag Tomás Mac Donnchadha sa Ghaeilge is thug sé leis go maith í. Níor bh'aithnid dom riamh aoinne ba mhó bhain aoibhneas as an mbeatha so ná é. Ní raibh mar aisling aige, ba dhóigh leat, ná mar rún gruama daingean é féin d'iodhbairt ar son na hEireann, cé nár staon sé nuair a tháinig an tam.

Bhí dóchas riamh na chroí is má tá féin gur dhein sé deimhin da dhóchas ní gan é féin d'ullmhú chuige do réir a acuine a chuaidh sé sa troid. Bhí na buanna aige a mholtar go hárd i litriocht na Gaeilge, léann, filíocht, calmacht, cneastacht, meas ar an gceól, caint chongarach is argóint gan searús.

Dá mairfeadh sé, bhí sé indán do saothar fiúntach litearga a dhéanamh. Dob'é an bás ba rogha leis.

PRAEHONORABILIS CANCELLARIE, TOTAQUE UNIVERSITAS :

Praesento vobis hunc meum filium, quem scio tam moribus quam doctrina habilem et idoneum esse qui admittatur *honoris causa* ad gradum Doctoratus in utroque Jure, tam Civili quam Canonico, idque tibi fide mea testor ac spondeo, totique Academiae.
