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Transcript of the Diary of Madeleine ffrench Mullen

(Written in Kilmainham and Mountjoy Jails, 5-20 May 1916)

Note from the Editors

This is the first time in the history of the Irish State that extracts from the diary of Madeleine ffrench Mullen are published. We invite all readers to reflect on the significance of this and the fact of its entering into the symbolic-public domain. The entering into public discourse of the contributions of women involved in the Irish Revolution and the founding of the Irish Free State, including suffragettes such as Madeleine ffrench Mullen and Dr. Kathleen Lynn, who were also life-partners, is a necessary remembering, re-making and renewing of Irish history which until recently excluded the contributions of these women. We suggest that the modernisation of Ireland, up to and including the revolutionary success of the Marriage Referendum in May 2015, almost one hundred years after the 1916 Rising, owes a debt to these brave and pioneering women. (Eve Watson and Peter O'Connell)

Appreciation

We are most grateful to the Military Archive at the Defence Forces, Dublin, under the auspices of the Irish Defence Forces, for granting permission to *Lacunae* to print the diary extracts. In particular, we appreciate the goodwill and support of Hugh Beckett and Stephen McEoin at the Military Archive. We also extend our thanks to Rosemary King, archivist at the Allen Library.

Editorial Note

The manuscript is written in lead and coloured pencil on writing paper, scraps of paper and envelopes, the back of a medical prescription and a postcard. The manuscript is faded and torn in places. In this transcript, the original spelling and punctuation has been retained except for abbreviations, which have been silently extended where the meaning is obvious. The original was written on ten units of numbered paper, which are indicated in the transcript by italicised numbers in square brackets, e.g. [3]. Pages are divided by a forward slash in bold, i.e. /

Other editorial conventions used in this transcript are:

- \text/ indicates authorial insertion into main body of text
- <text> indicates text deleted by author
- [text] indicates editorial insertion. Notes on attributed names can be found in Br. W.P. Allen, transcript of Madeleine French Mullen, memoir/diary written in Kilmainham and Mountjoy Jails, 5-20 May 1916, of which the present transcript is a revision.
- ... indicates gap caused by illegibility of text, usually due to difficulties in reading original manuscript.

KILMAINHAM JAIL. 5 May 1916.

24 April

At 12:00 p.m. left Liberty Hall with a detachment under Commandant Mallin and marched to St. Stephens Green. The gates were closed, trenches were dug and barricades thrown up especially at the Leeson St and Shelbourne Hotel

corners. In spite of a murderous fire from snipers and machine guns, the Green was held till 8 o'clock a.m. on Tuesday. The Ambulance was established on the East side to the left of Clarence Mangan's Statue. The girls suffered a good deal from the attentions of snipers though fortunately no one was hit. The Snipers even took deliberate aim several times at the heads of the ambulance dressed in long white coats with the red cross and in the morning they got the \range of the Ambulance Kiosk/ and turned on the machine gun. The wounded were moved behind the Kiosk and happily no one was hurt though the gravel was raised in clouds and the sharp fire lasted about 20 minutes.

25 April

By 8.30 a.m. the Green was successfully evacuated having been held from the previous noon by 35 men with the loss of 2 killed and one wounded. We retired to the College of Surgeons and proceeded to barricade the ground floor and upper windows with benches, pedestals etc., leaving only the small door in York Street free.

26 April

Spent the day in getting things in order. An exploring party discovered a very large quantity of ammunition, military stores / and 71 rifles. Tuesday night a risky sortie was made successfully. Wednesday night Miss S[*kinnider*] was badly wounded during a Sortie. The Ambulance was telephoned for but we were told that it never went out at night.

27 April

Spent 3 hours trying to induce Doctor to come and look at the poor girl. The British government has forbidden with such severe penalties any Doctor to aid us unless in the Hospitals where she can arrest us at leisure that it was almost impossible to get help but at last a young Doctor a member of the recruiting committee and quite on the other side came with me for the sake of the girl, all honour to him.

28 April

Hunted unsuccessfully for a Doctor to dress [?]the girls wounds ...]nobody [*page creased, writing faded*]. Otherwise the day passed as usual attending to the wounded, seeing after the rations etc. while the military extended and fortified their line and planned sorties etc. I forgot to mention that we had about a dozen prisoners in the Green but we let them all free except the most important Laurence Kettle whom we held till the end. Watched the fires from the roof at night.

29 April

Was out in the morning making arrangements for stores of food a good deal of desultory sniping between the Volunteers and the military from Camden Street to Portobello. In the afternoon called at Countess Plunkets' found there a lady Doctor who c[*change from lead to coloured blue pencil*]ame with me at once and on leaving offered to come as often as needful while the Revolution lasted. That evening there were / [2] Rumours of surrender etc. but after the Rosary Commandant Mallin spoke to us all and told us to have courage no matter what rumours we heard that we had ammunition and food for a six week siege So our cause was not yet lost.

30 April

About 7 o'clock I was keeping watch beside Miss S[*kinnider*] and the Countess and Commandant Mallin were both sleeping when a knock came to the door. I did not wish their too short rest disturbed but the dispatches were urgent so I woke Lieutenant Markiewicz (The Countess). [*change from blue to lead pencil*] We then found it necessary to wake the Commandant and I shall never forget the breaking_of that awful news.

The news was kept secret till breakfast was over as the Commandant wished the men to make a good meal in preparation for the long and trying day before them and it was pitiful to hear them planning all round and on how they could best celebrate our first Sunday in barracks. <Then a Council of Officers was> We telephoned for an ambulance and got our badly wounded away to hospital. Then there was a Council of Officers and after some deliberation they / unanimously decided to abide by the decision of headquarters and to surrender though it was hard to do so with our ammunition and every preparation for a siege. Then the men were all called together and it was a heartbreaking scene when the news was told and they all crowded round the Commandant and Countess Markiewicz to shake their hand for the last time. About 11 o'clock a Sargent arrived to oversee the laying down of arms and to conduct us to the Castle, and about 12 o'clock we left a garrison of 117 men and 12 women.

As we turned out a crowd of about 400 cheered us wildly and then we proceeded down Grafton Street and Dame Street which had been judiciously

cleared of the General public to the Castle. There we stood for about 20 minutes in the Shadow of the Birmingham Tower where England's captives had been housed before and there I chatted with the Commandant for the last time. We were then marched by streets emptied of all but soldiers and separation allowance women to Richmond Barracks. Here we were divided from the men and the ambulance Corps with Lieutenant Markiewicz and I were placed in a room overlooking the barrack square. The Countess Markiewicz made a protest as holding a Commission in the Citizen Army as Lieutenant and counting as a combatant she should not / [3] have been placed with the ambulance. We were in charge of an Officer who I must say treated us courteously and provided us with tea and a tin of fresh biscuits. About 7 o'clock we were marched to Kilmainham Jail with about 150 of our men and thus ended our "week of Glorious Freedom" as Countess Markiewicz used to express it and it was Glorious as a thing to live for and the Republican tricolour floating over our citadel.

General Lowe asked someone who shall be nameless to procure our flag for him as a personal favour after our surrender, but needless to say it had already been burnt lest it should be sullied by irreverent hands. In all this I have given the barest outline, paper is scarce and I cannot carry a bulky document about with me but I could write so much more of the bravery of our men, double the needed number of Volunteers stepping forward / when the sortie meant certain death to some of them at least, their rescues of wounded under a hail of bullets, their reverence and devotion at the Rosary in the evenings given out by Councillor Partridge, the utter absence of grumbling at the food though this was so scarce the first few days that the portion served out to each one was

very small indeed. As to the 1/2 dozen men who, as orderlies, helped me with the wounded and the rations and made it possible for me to get through the work I shall never forget them. Nor do I wish to omit mention of the girls who worked so cheerfully night and day and faced fire so courageously that they made the men ashamed to flinch. In spite of the constant danger and the hardships there was a cheerful friendliness and peacefulness pervading the whole fortress which made for happiness.

This was largely due to the influence of our leaders. Countess Markiewicz I already knew many years and the admiration I had for her was hardly capable of any increase. / [4] The Commandant <John> M. Mallin I hardly knew by sight that Easter Monday when I was placed under his command but at the end of that week I knew him better than many life acquaintances. I don't know what struck me most about the man, perhaps his wonderful patience and self control. I have known him long hours without either food or sleep and yet he would never show the slightest sign of irritation under the most exasperating circumstances, He thought of everyone and everything, not merely the important matters but little details as regards our comforts that few men would even think of. With all that he kept strict discipline. Of course our lives depended on the vigilance of the sentries but apart from them from the Countess down without any exception of persons or place an order was an order and had to be obeyed instantly and to the letter. As to his religion, though we of the Citizen Army are denounced (by those who have never set foot in Liberty Hall) as beyond the Pale, Atheists etc., I was speaking to the Priest who had assisted at his execution, some hours after and he said "Oh Mallin, Mallin is in heaven" and from what I know of him I would have said so

too. By the shooting of Mallin and Pearse the English have done us an almost irreparable injury, of the two I should say Mallin was the greatest loss to the country. Every decade has produced a host of politicians but our military leaders have been very few and Mallin was the man we needed to organise our Republican Army. / <[illegible]> Arrived in Kilmainham, Countess Markiewicz was placed in solitary confinement, we just caught a glimpse of her or a wave of her hand when we went to fetch water. The first night, we others were put 4 in a cell but I was too tired to mind anything and slept like a log on the floor with a parcel under my head.

May 1

Got a packet of cocoa and some ships biscuits marked Jacob for breakfast the same quantity of soup and biscuits for dinner, got out for about half an hour exercise together, were told expressly that it was not necessary to take our belongings as we would be returning to the same cells. After Exercise we were all placed in different cells on another landing ... of the ... state of ... [*manuscript creased and faded*]. Later in the day I saw Miss Molony pass by, I hurried to the door in time to hear the Matron call a 3rd for this cell so I landed there at one bound and was let remain. What a night of news, she told me how she and some dozen others were all week in Ship Street Barracks including Doctor Lynn who had been moved with them to Kilmainham that evening. Asked the Matron if we might not exchange Bessie for Doctor Lynn and she said yes in the morning, Bessie being one of the Countess's camp followers was quite content to be exchanged. Thought the morning would never come. We had heard various stories that the Doctor was arrested, missing and the Countess and I feared we would not see her again.

May 2

Met the Doctor going for water, had her to breakfast hip, hip / [5]

May 2

We 3 who had lived together since Christmas now spent the comparatively happy days together again comparing experiences.

May 3

Awaked by firing right under our windows, thought it was our men attacking or possibly the Germans. Heard later that it was 3 of our leaders who were being shot Tom Clarke, McDonagh and Pierce. R.I.P. Poor Tom Clarke, he spent 18 years in an English prison from his 17th to his 35th year, he looked a frail old man of 65-70 though I believe he was not yet 50. He was I believe an American Citizen. I trust America will aid us when we avenge him. Coming in from Exercise we were told only 2 could be allowed in a cell and Miss Malony was moved to the storey above. It was horrid being parted, and especially the way they spring things on you at a moment's notice, other instances of this will occur later. /

May 4

Awakened again at 4.15 by 3 volleys, 3 more of our men shot in cold blood though they were honourable prisoners of war. The Doctor and I settled down to life and agreed that as long as we were left together prison was somewhat bearable. It was the Doctor reduced our day to a certain amount of order, to the end we could never fathom why the bells rang, they rang at peculiar hours

and for no apparent reason. At 5.45 there was a great clanging and an equal row at 6.15 but it was about 7 the wardresses came and unlocked us then we could go for water and exchange greeting with our friends and sometimes even see the Countess. Until the Doctor came with the basin that Tuesday morning I had seen neither soap / [6] nor water in Kilmainham and as it was condemned as a prison some 10 years ago and hurriedly put in order for our reception cleanliness was not its prevailing feature and I needed that wash. For the first few mornings we had to take it in turn to wash first as we were only allowed 1 basin of water. Happily the towel was a young sheet of good Irish linen and there was always a dry corner of it left. Later the Doctor and I used to manage to get a basin of water in the afternoon or evening and change it again when we were called but it didn't always work sometimes you were told to leave the basin at the tap that you could not have it in your cell at that hour. Arbitrary and unreasonable orders of this kind were often hard to put up with.

. / [6'] The wardresses on the whole were better than I had expected, one a Miss Barrett was a terror years of chivying unfortunate convicts had ruined her, the others were young and good looking and somewhat skittish, not above flirting with the sentries which surprized me the youngest and prettiest was apparently on our side and when I get out I shall not forget her various kindnesses especially to Countess Markiewicz. The food also was a surprise to me having read tales of Prison food. Though not perhaps what you would choose it was always eatable. In the morning you got a packet of cocoa and a 1/4 of a loaf of bread, it was served like all meals in a double tin, a deep tin with

¹ There are two units of paper numbered '6.'

the liquid and a shallower tin with the bread fixed on top. For dinner you got a packet of good soup with pieces of meat and vegetables, $\frac{1}{4}$ loaf of bread sometimes potatoes and cheese as well sometimes neither but then food was often very scarce / and we were really treated better than the soldiers who often came very short. I remarked to a sweeper once the superfluity of sweeping brushes and he said, "if only they were good to eat" in a most feeling manner. Between 4.30 and 5 we got an evening meal, 1 packet of stir about and bread but we generally saved some bread and cheese and had a supper before retiring to rest. In the early days it was difficult to pass the time after breakfast we used to do "Löwe" [*German: lion*] in other words pace our cell like the lions in the Zoo, afterwards we found it was best to do this in figure of eight, it gives you a longer stretch and does not make you giddy. We enlivened our exercise with singing or whistling patriotic or Operatic airs, at times the walls echoed to Die Wacht am Rhein and / [7] "Deutschland über Alles." I wonder if the Ghosts of long forgotten Prisoners enjoyed the scene. We had a needle and plenty of thread and with what joy did we not pounce on anything that needed darning a tear was the source of the greatest rejoicing so welcome was a little occupation. We also made handkerchiefs out of some remaining triangular bandages, neatly hemmed them and later we embroidered them. About 12 we got out for exercise sometimes for over an hour, sometimes for less than half though I believe we were legally entitled to 2 full hours. After dinner we took a siesta, then did Löwe and devoted some time to the sweeping and polishing of our cell. Later someone ever to be gratefully remembered provided us with a Bible and a Prayer book and we used to read the Psalms together and discuss them. About 9 o'clock we retired for the night but not to peaceful sleep, the thought of our friends to be shot at daybreak beneath our

windows made the night hideous and successfully banished sleep once daylight came. About midnight, there were voices and footsteps and lights passing too and fro and you knew it was the priests and the relatives of the doomed men, it was terrible and is unforgettable.

May 4

More volleys this morning. 4 more of our men gone among / others poor Joseph Plunkett. Although his poor mother was a prisoner in their hands beside him they did not allow her to see her son nor have not yet the day I am writing May 17" told her officially of his death.

May 5

Only one volley this morning, we know now it was Major McBride. R.I.P. Miss Barrett and her satellites have become beyond all bearing so this morning Doctor Lynn asked to see the Governor. He excused Miss Barrett on the plea that she was long accustomed to dealing with convicts, we maintained that she must bear in mind that we were not Convicts but Prisoners of War. The Governor, who we always found agreeable and satisfactory to deal with, quite agreed as to our status and after his visit there was a distinct improvement in the attitude of the Wardresses. He also told us that there would be Mass and also Divine Service on Sunday. He also said that he would endeavour to have us liberated as soon as possible. At any rate the large number of little girls from 15 upwards there were then about 70 / of us many arrested by the military for no apparent cause, one poor woman with a shawl over her head had been arrested near her house and not allowed to go back even to call a neighbour though she left 3 children, the eldest 4, the youngest 15 months.

Another respectably dressed woman had been out fetching water from the pump when the military caught her. She had been expecting her husband from Glasgow that day and he had intended taking herself and the children back with him but for a whole week the poor woman got no word from the outside world. These were only two cases of many of people who had not the slightest connection with the rising.

May 6

No firing this morning and the day passed uneventfully. No examinations today up to this. We have been examined at the rate of about 9 per day.

May 7

No firing this morning again and no sign of breakfast, there is such a strong smell of toast we come to the conclusion we are going to get something / special but no the ordinary breakfast arrives at 9.45 our usual hour is 7.30. At 10 o'clock the wardress asks if we have been examined. We have not. Then I will not be allowed to go to Mass. The Doctor will be allowed to go to Church. This seems monstrously unfair but there is no redress. This is the second Sunday I have been kept from Mass by the British Government. Examinations are proceeding with feverish energy, about 10.30 we are examined so the Doctor is fully qualified to attend her devotions at 11 o'clock. The story goes that an order has come that the result of the examinations is to be sent to London that evening, which may or may not be true. I hear now Mallin was at Mass and looked round afterwards to see if he could see any of us. The Countess had been removed that morning to Mountjoy. Two officers head [sic] come to her cell and read to her the sentence of the courtmartial penal

servitude / for life, (the life [sic] of the British Empire bien entendu). Sunday is a most unsatisfactory day, no exercise in the open air, dinner an hour later and very meagre, no potatoes or cheese evening meal much earlier, it is somewhat trying to get stirabout and dry bread served to you at 4 o'clock on a Sunday afternoon and dignified by the name of your "tea." However, "tis in vain for soldiers to complain" as a good Irishman has already said. \Great stir in the house about midnight/.

May 8

More volleys this morning. Poor Mallin and Kent and Colbert and Heuston. It is serious when they begin shooting minor characters like Heuston. Where will it end. Later in the day, we had a visit from one of the Church Street Priests, Fr. A. He had been present at the executions, had been for half an hour in the cell with poor Heuston saying the Rosary in Irish, he said it was a privilege to be present at such edifying deaths that the devotion the recollection of it was marvellous he would gladly / have taken his place. It was he who said to me "Mallin is in heaven" and yet he has been styled a "ruffianly anarchist from Liberty Hall." The shooting threw a gloom over the day even before we knew for certain that it was Mallin who was shot. About 8 o'clock in the evening wild excitement, the majority are to be liberated, there is great hurrying and chivvying and they are hardly given leave to collect their things and the hour is so late most of them had to be wakened from sleep. The hubub subsides and all is peaceful. But only for some five minutes then there is another uproar at first we think it is a new batch of prisoners but discover later it is our friends back again. When they got as far as the gate it was decided that it was too late an hour to turn these young girls loose so they were ordered back and are now

huddled into cells 5 and 7 together anyway till morning. Another example of British muddleheadedness and indecision.

May 9

No shots this morning but at an early hour the captives are liberated we discover at exercise that we are now 10, crème de la crème or 11 / [9]including Countess Plunkett whom we have not yet seen. The presence of the second Countess caused some misunderstanding. \To us there was but one Countess/ we heard the Countess was above that she was not well, that she was getting eggs for breakfast and other delicacies. Beware “the Greeks bearing gifts” this unwonted kindness after sentence had been passed might mean some deep laid plot and caused us some uneasiness till we found that Countess Markiewicz was in Mountjoy since Sunday and that it was to Countess Plunkett that they referred. On our return from exercise we were without the slightest warning or time to collect our necessaries hustled into separate cells, the Doctor so we were told was appalled at the idea of having two of us sleeping in one cell. I was “Wutend” [*German: furious*] no translation could express my state. After some hours I cool, thinking on the Fenians some of them 5 years without a letter 7 and 10 years without a visit and settle down to bear my solitary confinement with Philosophic calm.

About 8 o'clock word went round hurry we are starting for Mountjoy in 5 minutes. In less than 5 minutes we were on the corridor but it was a good $\frac{3}{4}$ of an hour before we started. We made the journey / in a Black Maria and whether they expected a rescue or what I know not but we took a long and circuitous route. We left Kilmainham with regret, some of us had been there

before and we all knew the change to Mountjoy would not be for the better. Arrived at Mountjoy the Officials and Wardens were drawn up to receive us. In Kilmainham we had 4 wardens, 2 on duty at a time and numerous sentries. Here apparently there is a wardress for every second prisoner not counting the overseers. I agree with Miss Molony \I prefer/ dungeons they may not be so comfortable but more human. Even in Chilton the unfortunate one can look out through his bars at the blue sky but here in this prison built on approved modern English humanitarian lines even that is denied you. The windows are built into the walls on a slant, they neither open or shut, the glass is not muffed but peculiarly lined so that you see only a travesty of the sky or the pigeons that perch on your sill. I think the English / could give points to the Borgias in some things. The cells here are smaller and not so lofty as in Kilmainham. I should say 10 feet long and 10 feet high. In Kilmainham you got good mountain air in the window and the iron door was worn with ages and let in a good draught all round perhaps even too much in winter. Here the door fits with the precision of a plug, neither air nor sound passes in or out and the glass <window> peep hole is fitted with a slide on the outside so that you cannot even see out. 4 panes have been broken out of my windows. I believe it was done by a suffragette in durance here I am duly grateful. God help those with unbroken windows in this sultry May evening. I made some such remark to a wardress and she assured me these cells were not intended for "Ladies." Of course, if you are not a lady it does not matter how you suffer from heat or cold. Some people in Ireland have a lot to learn yet before we make good Republicans of them /

[from here manuscript written in black ink]

May 10

No shots in Mountjoy but as we heard last night that <poor> Sean McDermott was to be shot this morning. Sleep was successfully banished in the early morning hours. Poor Sean they examined him 15 times I hear before they came to a decision. We heard later that Connolly was shot with him. <When> At one time I thought it was a special dispensation of providence that Connolly was so seriously wounded. Even the English could not shoot a man in bed so he would have to be spared to us for a little but no they carried him out on a stretcher and propped him on a chair.

We were never really incarcerated until now. If we are let out of our cells it is singly for fear we would ever catch a glimpse of the others, we get two hours exercise but it is only after a firm stand that we are let speak they wanted us to walk at stated intervals like condemned Convicts. Life is made more bearable by a dear motherly old wardress who cheers and consoles us to the best of her ability (thinking that we need the cheering) every time she brings us food, she is sure we will be let out soon, thinks they couldn't keep us in, if only the British Government had as good an opinion of us as she has. Moreover after a couple of days, she / [10] contrives to give us a bath every morning and a bath also means a pleasant chat coming and going. I cannot fathom how any can prefer to remain in bed but such there be.

Also we have had the pleasure of seeing Countess Markiewicz several times, <s>. her cell is under ours and at first she used to take exercise on the ground under our windows so that we could at least enjoy the sight of her but now even that is denied to us. Poor Madame she wears the prison clothes with such

an air and the cap is so very becoming to her. Then also she looks so aggressively happy it makes you ashamed of your grumbling attitude.

How one day is like another. I shall no longer keep a diary as I said before our old dear of a guardian helps to make life easier allows us to share our cakes and jam etc. with one another and other harmless – which I believe are strictly against the rules. We have decided that the Republic must strike a special medal for her later. While we are treated except in some / few instances as condemned Convicts our fellow prisoners in Richmond barracks are merely interned, treated in all respects as Prisoners of War. We have at last written a formal protest to the Provost Marshall calling his attention to the fact but now before he has had time to reply we have been served with forms containing the names of districts in England where we will be permitted to reside in lieu of internment. Some of us have requested to be allowed to go instead to a neutral country as we are dependent on what we earn and <we> it would be obviously impossible for us to earn our living in England at present and so the matter stands on this Saturday evening May 20 1916.

God Save Ireland

Thou art not conquered yet dear Land.