

APRIL 13 1921

THE LIMERICK MURDERS.

PREMIER AND "INDEPENDENT INQUIRY."

In the House of Commons on Monday afternoon, Lieutenant-Commander Kenworthy asked the Prime Minister whether he had received a letter dated 31st March, 1921, sent to him by Alderman Marie O'Donovan, sister of the widow of ex-Mayor O'Callaghan, of Limerick, enclosing copies of letters addressed to the Press by that lady on the 14th and 30th March, 1921, stating that Mrs O'Callaghan had evidence in her possession which, if brought before an impartial jury, would bring home the guilt of the murder of her husband to the individuals responsible, and asking for such a jury, and what action he proposed to take in the matter.

Mr Lloyd George, in reply, referred to the answer he had given to Mr MacVeagh on Thursday last.

Lieutenant-Commander Kenworthy—May I ask the right hon. gentleman if he has given any further consideration to the setting up of what he described as a fresh and independent inquiry; what kind of inquiry would this be; would it be simply another military inquiry with the same people on it, or will it be a judicial inquiry.

Mr Lloyd George—The same inquiry. I guarantee that it will be a perfectly and independent tribunal.

Lieutenant-Commander Kenworthy—Does the right hon gentleman consider a military tribunal on which the local commanders of troops in these areas are sitting an independent inquiry?

Mr Lloyd George—Certainly—I can assure the hon and gallant member that the military of that area are exceedingly anxious to get the facts. They set up a thoroughly independent tribunal for that amongst other reasons.

Lieutenant-Commander Kenworthy—Is the right hon gentleman aware that the lady named is prepared to furnish particulars as she alleges of the assassins, and does he not think it worth while to try and meet her by setting up a judicial inquiry if he wants that matter cleared up.

Mr Lloyd George—This will be a judicial inquiry.

Lieutenant-Commander Kenworthy—How can it be?

No reply was given.

Major Mackenzie Wood—Will there be a legal member of the Court?

Mr Lloyd George—I think there is a legal member on every Court.

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AN interesting account of a visit to the house of the late Mr M. O'Callaghan has been contributed to the "New Republic," an important American magazine, by Mr Francis Hackett, who spent some days with the then Mayor and Mrs O'Callaghan last summer. There are some very illuminating passages in the sketch, which is, unfortunately, much too long for publication in full.

Mr Hackett says :—When my wife and I were visiting Ireland last summer our hosts in Limerick were the O'Callaghans. At this time Michael O'Callaghan was Mayor of Limerick. In Dublin we had met him at the home of a well-known writer, where we had gone to be introduced to Arno Dosch-Fleuret of the "New York World." It was curious meeting Michael O'Callaghan. On seeing him I forgot he was "Mayor of Limerick." I recognized him as a cousin from his likeness to his brother Eugene, whom I knew in childhood, and he delighted me by claiming me as cousin. I thought him handsome, though he was very broad shouldered, and at the same time short in stature. On this occasion he wore a suit of light homespun that became him excellently, and increased the air of brightness that went with his fine, clear, brown eyes and his definitely friendly hand clasp.

We liked the O'Callaghans instantly. Mrs O'Callaghan I at first thought was an American, she had a style so little like the indifferent ease of Dublin, and in Limerick, when we knew her better, we twitted her for having bought at least one cloak in London. But in five minutes' talk it was indisputable that she was Irish. She had the flashing darkness of eye that goes with certain quick-spoken and quick-hearted natives of Southern Ireland. She was from Cork, we found. My wife soon admired her as one of the first Irish wives she had met who had ideas and opinions on her own account, though both she and her husband were equally devoted to Gaelic culture, their Catholic religion and Irish freedom. I liked Michael O'Callaghan partly because of these precious sympathies but also because of himself. There is something that one finds in men and women of the Irish gentry, a quality of heart mingled with a quality of manner, which he possessed to the full. It is kindness, if you like, but kindness that unites with a warm smile and the warm tones of a voice to bring one into the inner room of intimacy. Yet his was not that seductive gift for intimacy which receives more than he can humanly entertain. His nature had that touch of dignity which comes from having been tested. He had had experience and trial, which gave him integrity and candor. This fact, that he not only rang sweetly but rang true, was what endeared Michael O'Callaghan to us.