

Kilkenny People 27/5/1916

**Interesting Letter from Mr. M. Keating, M.P.**

To the editor of the Kilkenny People.

Clodiagh, Inistioge,  
23<sup>rd</sup> May 1916

Dear Sir - I trust you will publish the enclosed letter' from the pen of that gifted writer, Mr. M. Keating, M.P. The beautiful words which I heard some thirty years ago at Warrington, England, from the lips of the late Joseph Chamberlain, might well be placarded all over England now—"God has made us neighbours, would to Heaven that our rulers had made .us friends." - Yours, etc.

C. Lynch

Following is Mr. M. Keating's letter to Mr. Lynch:—

House of Commons, May 20, 1916;

My Dear Mr. Lynch—I trust that by this time you have heard the whereabouts of your son, as the authorities have given prisoners permission to communicate with their relatives and to fill up forms stating their claims to be released. Yesterday I went down with several other members of the Irish Party to the Wandsworth Detention Barracks, where a large number of the arrested men are detained, in the hope of finding your son, but without success. The prison authorities are giving every facilities to members of the Irish Party to interview the prisoners, and I had the opportunity of speaking to several of them in private. They told me that they had nothing special to complain of in Wandsworth except the solitary confinement and the meagre fare of prison life. Prior to their leaving Ireland, however, they suffered greatly owing to the rough treatment they received and the limited space into which they were crowded. It was a pitiable sight to me to witness several hundred of my fellow-countrymen exercising in the spacious yard of Wandsworth Prison, under the watchful eyes of armed soldiers. They were unshaven and unkept, but in other respects they appeared normal. They are not allowed to speak to each other, of course, and they are separated from each other by about three feet during the marching exercises. The officer in command informed me that a considerable number had been released and sent back to their homes, and that this process was going on daily in the case of men against whom there is no evidence of complicity in the rising. . I saw four men altogether; two of them declared their absolute innocence of having been connected with the Sinn Fein movement, and two others were in the ranks of the Irish Volunteers but were absolutely ignorant of the decision to inaugurate the insurrection. One of them was in the actual struggle in Dublin.

The Irish Party has from the very first denounced the folly of the Government in allowing military authorities to execute the leaders of the Rebellion and to allow martial law to continue after the Rebellion was effectively suppressed. We have pointed out that General Botha only executed one man after the rebellion in South Africa, and he was an officer in the army who had directly acted under the instruction of the German Government. After the rebellion in Canada in 1837 the Leaders were deported to Bermuda, and not executed. After the rebellion in Ireland in 1848 the leaders were deported, and the chief reason for that policy was the well-known fact that many leading statesmen in England had contemplated rebellion themselves against the Reform Bill of 1832. The recent insurrection was the direct outcome

of the actions of men like Sir Edward Carson and Sir F. E. Smith, who encouraged the Ulster Orangemen to rebel against the Home Rule Act. The policy of executions after the recent rebellion is contrary to precedent, and the continuation of martial law in spite of the protests of the Irish Party is a constitutional outrage. The visit of Mr Asquith to Ireland and the procedure of the Commission of Enquiry into the causes of the rebellion have brought home the need of an immediate settlement of the Irish question to the minds of the English people.

Dublin Castle is dead and damned. Practically the whole British Press are agreed upon this question. They are also agreed that disarmament of the Ulster and National Volunteers is an immediate necessity. At the present stage, of course, it is impossible, to say what the outcome will be; We are awaiting Mr. Asquith's statement before the Irish Party decides what action to pursue in reference to the form of statement. But in the meantime we are pressing for leniency and clemency towards the rank and file of the Insurrectionists, and the immediate release of those who are innocent. It seems to me that every man of common sense in Ireland who is in sympathy with National ideals and aspirations should rally to the standard of the constitutional movement. As you know I have urged my views very strongly with all my friends in Inistioge and the Rower to discourage mere criticism and fault-finding with the Irish Party. It is an easy matter to criticise, but the consequences are sometimes dreadful. I do not by any means assert that the Irish Party ought to be above criticism, but I do fearlessly assert that there is no body of men in Ireland or out of it who are more genuinely desirous of serving the country and the people, or have greater knowledge or power to enable them to do so. In fact I think that the Irish Party is a bulwark against all the forces which tend to destroy Irish liberty. One of the most destructive forces is the spirit of nagging and faultfinding, because it divides the Irish people men and women preeminently (sic) capable of rendering assistance for the fulfilment of all these ideals. Let us all amalgamate our energies for the common good of our native land-Yours sincerely,

MATTHEW KEATING.