

MR. SHEEHY-SKEFFINGTON'S CASE

STATEMENT BY HIS FATHER.

As English papers, Liberal as well as Tory, are allowing in their columns letters and comments and references tending to asperse the character of the deceased and indirectly to justify his death while admitting their details do not affect the case, and these have been copied (with misleading headings) in some Irish papers I must ask you, in justice to his name, to allow me to deny such slanders and to show his real spirit and aims.

It is plainly stated in one place that "he was not a Pacifist," though his numerous personal friends, in England and Ireland, as well as all who read his writings in "The Irish Citizen," his letters and pamphlets, know well that if he had any faults they were being too "Pacifist" and too "Feminist." To prove this it is only necessary to refer to his articles in "The Citizen" since the war began. Thus, in 1914, August to December, we have a series such as "Stop the War," "Women and War," "The Crime of War," "War in Itself, Hell," "Back to Barbarism," "War upon War," etc. Again in 1915, March to August, we have "Working for Peace," "Brute Force versus Brains," "Killing War," "Peace Congress," etc., "Blessed are the Peacemakers," etc. Again, December, 1915, to April, 1916, a series on the "Ford Peace Mission," "The Peace Ship," "Henry Ford's Career," "The Peace Crusade," etc. His pamphlet, "Feminism and War," is a deeply philosophical discussion of the matter, well worth reading.

He opposed bloodshed by any party. His only weapons were those of spirit and intellect and passive resistance. See his letter published in "Irish Citizen" of 22nd May, 1915, to MacDonagh, one of the Chiefs of the Volunteers—a most affecting appeal, a prophetic letter, which might have saved all horrors of the "Ereunte."

Thus he speaks of "the disgusting duties of bayonet fighting," saying: "I am glad I did not join it, as its essence, preparation to kill, grows repellent to me." He condemns the "Irish Volunteer" for extolling war as "the greatest and noblest game on earth," and prophetically states:—"Those who rejoice in warfare will inevitably take the direction of the organisation." He condemns the idea that "Ireland's hills should crimson to prevent partition," which he says could be defeated too dearly.

But what does he ask? "To see the long-age fight against injustice clothe itself in new forms suited to a new age." He wants an "organisation disciplined in self-sacrifice and 'true patriotism,'—'armed with the weapons of intellect and will that are irresistible'; prepared to suffer, to dare and to die, but not prepared to kill our fellow-men." Could anything be higher, nobler, more sublime?

(c) To show that his views and sentiments were the same up to the end, he expressed the same to me strongly, yet with something of despair as to the outlook, a few days before Easter, when he paid his last visit with his little son.

In confirmation of his latest views, I quote here extracts from his two recent letters to myself bewailing the physical force movement, and hoping for an anti-taxation agitation to turn the people into peaceful paths.

From letter dated 27th February, 1916—"Politically, the most interesting thing here is the Anti-Taxation Meeting arranged for next Tuesday; the Nationalism of the country is diverted into the Physical Force Movement. That is a dangerous position. The Taxation question seems to offer the best prospect of creating a new movement, militant and aggressive, but not committed to Physical Force."

From letter of 26th March, 1916—"Anything may happen in the next few months—A Safety Valve militant, but not militarist, is needed—and will be still more needed—if and when the inevitable disillusionment comes to the physical force people. Such a safety valve will, I hope, be provided by the Anti-taxation Movement, which, as you will see, is going ahead very fast."

As to his personality, he was a pure vegetarian, an absolute teetotaller and non-smoker, courageous, innocent, unsuspecting, mild as a dove, but wanting the serpent's cunning to avoid unscrupulous and implacable enemies. He lived a saintly life—he died a martyr.

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Warrenpoint.

1st June, 1916.