

it is right to make it clear that there are different views on the subject. It is also right to say that we are free to hold our own opinion, as nothing has been officially decided for or against. And from this it follows that, since there is a reasonable doubt, a priest would do wrong in refusing to administer the Sacraments to a dying hunger-striker. That much seems to be quite certain, at any rate. People who hold that hunger-striking is equivalent to suicide will of course maintain that it is unlawful. But most people are slow to conclude that it is direct killing of oneself at all. It is of course refusing to take food in the first place; but it is not refusing to take food with the intention of killing oneself. Thus death is certainly not intended directly: if death follows, it follows rather indirectly; and the question then is whether or not there is a proportionately grave cause to overcome the evil indirect result. Strong arguments for or against might be multiplied at length; and their weight will probably depend a great deal on the bias of the individual. So far as we are concerned personally, we hold that hunger-striking is not suicide, and that the Irish strikers have sufficient cause to excuse them. In the absence of theory we venture to suggest one fact that tends to justify them. When St. Eusebius was thrown into prison he refused to take food from his gaolers and nearly died of starvation. If that did not prevent the canonisation of the Saint it can hardly be identified with suicide. And if the guilt of his death could in the case of Eusebius be thrown on the gaolers it is hard to see what case can be made against Irish strikers fighting for a principle. There seems no evidence for suggesting that St. Eusebius refused to eat because to accept food in his case might involve sinful communication with heretics. Certainly, other confessors of the faith did not think they disobeyed any law of God when they accepted food in prison under like circumstances. As Father Gannon, S.J., says of this instance: "The story, as Flenry tells it, will give us pause before pronouncing dogmatically upon the ethics of this manner of protest." The conclusion seems to be: that to accuse the Irish hunger-strikers of acting unlawfully is rash; that much may be said for the contrary view; and that sound theological principles would not leave any priest free to refuse the Sacraments to a striker in Mr. MacSweeney's circumstances. Whether the cable telling us of Father Vaughan's view be true or false we cannot say. Probably, like most cables, it was false. But even if it were true, Father Vaughan has not been so orthodox during the war that we should select him as a safe guide in questions of theology. Popular preachers are more often than not poor theologians.

Another Colthurst

Mr. Darrel Figgis and Colonel Moore were appointed as a deputation to attend a meeting held at the Courthouse, Carrick-on-Shannon, to deal with the question of the Arigna coal deposits. While the meeting was in progress a British captain and a guard of soldiers entered. The captain ordered the arrest of the chairman, Mr. Kealy. Upon Mr. Kealy's asking for his authority the brave officer produced a revolver and said: "This is my authority; the authority of force." The captain removed Mr. Kealy and returned later and demanded the names and addresses of all the other members. When he came to Colonel Moore, the Colonel told him his name and added that he was ashamed to see an officer disgracing the uniform he wore. "I suppose," he said, "these are the manners of the new army." Mr. Figgis then gave his name, whereupon the officer cried out roughly, brandishing a revolver in Mr. Figgis's face:

"Oho! you're Darrel Figgis. I want you, and now that I've got you I am not going to let you go."

Mr. Figgis was marched to the guardroom. In conversation with the soldiers they said to him:

"The captain must be awash with liquor or else off his head."

On the spot the mad or drunken officer tried Mr. Figgis by a sort of drum-head court-martial and sentenced him to death. A sergeant was sent away to buy 20 feet of rope for the hanging. Mr. Figgis warned the Brithun that if he were hanged there would be trouble over it. The gallant champion of small nations replied—again brandishing his revolver:—

"I have no need to worry about trouble. I know very well that they will be thankful to me for hanging you, and it will mean a good thing for me. I have been specially wired down here by G.H.O., Ireland, and I am sure they did not wire me here for nothing. You remember what happened in Tuam. It is clear that they want me to make a similar example here in Carrick."

Apparently, however, the Captain did fear something, as he now said he would bring Mr. Figgis to the District Inspector. They marched the prisoner to the police barracks, where they saw the D.I., who did not know what to make of the situation at first. He said to Mr. Figgis:

"Things look serious, and I don't like the way the man spoke and handled his revolver. It is men like that who make all the trouble in this country."

He also expressed his opinion that the captain was probably in drink. The captain, who gave his name as Cyril Crowther, produced some papers which he took from Mr. Figgis, and submitted them to the D.I. and also to the County Inspector, who arrived later. These gentlemen said they saw nothing in the papers to justify arrest, and decided that Mr. Figgis ought to be set at liberty. Mr. Figgis returned to Dublin with Colonel Moore and told his story to the press. The facts as here related are found at length in the *Irish Independent*, July 23, and they are certainly well worth consideration for those Church-Councillors in New Zealand who hold that the British Government in Ireland is maligned by the *New Zealand Tablet*. Since the day in 1916 when Colthurst shot down in cold blood innocent men, we have heard of nothing to rival this sample of British militarism in a small nation. The authorities refused to interfere with the assassin, Colthurst, and Major Vane was driven out of the army for bringing his crimes under Kitchener's notice. When Kitchener forced the Castle to take action, Colthurst was whitewashed as a lunatic. What will the Government do now with the drunken or mad Crowther? Lunatics, drunkards, fools, armed with revolvers, are apparently suitable persons to send to Ireland as Lloyd George's ministers of peace.

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As in tumultuous floods and rushing falls of water, every drop is obedient to the laws of nature as if it lay in the bosom of the tranquil lake, so all things on earth, in their wildest excesses as well as in their calmest flows, are obedient to God; and His providence is in them stately and serene, going to its own ends and manifestations.—Beecher.

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