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Welcome to the latest edition of the IACI e-news.

Founded in 1962, the IACI is the leading Irish American cultural organization. The IACI is a federally recognized 501(c)(3) not-for-profit national organization devoted to promoting an intelligent appreciation of Ireland and the role and contributions of the Irish in America.

Guest contributors are always welcome! Please note, the IACI is an apolitical, non-sectarian organization and requests that contributors consider that when submitting articles. The IACI reserves the right to refuse or edit submissions. The views and opinions expressed in this newsletter are solely those of the original authors and other contributors. These views and opinions do not necessarily represent those of the IACI or any/all contributors to this site. Please submit articles for consideration to cbuck@iaci-usa.org.

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Our peace rests in our freedom to choose By Renee Gatz

At each moment of each day, we make choices for ourselves. Some of our choices are insignificant—what should we wear or what time we should leave for work. Other choices are very significant—what should we study in school or should we marry the person we have been dating. These choices govern our life from the kind of day we will have to how our lives will be shaped. When we stop and think about the enormous power our freedom to choose has, it is hard to reconcile that kind of power with the complete lack of control we have over the events that take place in our lives.

For example, if we choose to leave at 7:45 in the morning one day for work instead of 8:00 and find ourselves in an accident, our insignificant decision has now had a significant impact on our day and perhaps even our life. When we make a decision to pursue a course of study at school and discover as we practice our profession that our choice has placed us in a career that was not right for us, that choice may now have us struggling with an unhealthy financial or emotional state.

In fairness, these were our choices. However, circumstances beyond our control or a lack of knowledge can put us in a situation that is undesirable. While we may not have control over how we arrived in a particular scenario or have the ability to foresee that a choice we made was not in our best interest, our power to choose remains available to us. Our attitude is one of our choices. We can choose to become angry and feel as if we are doomed, or we can choose to find a new way forward and become wiser and ultimately happier as a result of what an experience teaches us. The attitude we elect to take to life's disappointments is ultimately what shapes our day and our lives. Our power to choose always remains intact regardless of the uncontrollable circumstances we may find ourselves in at any moment.

Each day when we wake, we have the power to decide if we will be optimistic and believe *our best days are ahead of us* or if we will *have a defeatist attitude and wallow in self-pity*. The decision to take an optimistic attitude to life's challenges does not guarantee a smooth journey. However, it is worth remembering that a poor attitude assures that we will continue to find ourselves in a never-ending state of anger and disappointment.

We were created to learn and grow from our experiences, not to be stifled by them. To grow, we must be willing to let go of resentment so we can make room for new joys. By willingly letting go of negative emotions and forgiving ourselves and others, we demonstrate to the universe that we are ready to welcome new blessings with an even greater level of appreciation than we had previously known.

Some situations are simply too painful for us to resolve on our own. When that happens, turn your worries and anger over to God. Let God take up your burdens so you can begin to heal yourself. Be patient with yourself. This may take time but rest assured as long as you are looking for the good in your life, you will begin to spend more time in that space and less time in a space occupied by negativity, thereby allowing new blessings to find their way to you.

Our peace is not available to us exclusively when things are going well. Our peace rests in our freedom to choose. We may not have control over the events that take place in our life, but we always have the power to choose how we respond to them.

On This Day in Irish History – July

4 July 1690 – James II flees to France for assistance after his defeat by William of Orange at the Battle of the Boyne.

5 July 1922 – Cathal Brugha (47) was mortally wounded fighting on the republican side against Free State forces in Dublin's O'Connell Street and died two days later.

11 July 1921 – A truce ends the War of Independence between the IRA and the British Army which had been raging since 1919.

12 July 1691 – More than 7,000 die in the Battle of Aughrim; the Williamites are victorious over the Jacobites.

13 July 1886 – Birth in Co. Roscommon of Father Edward Flanagan, founder of "Boys Town" in Nebraska.

16 July 1958 – Birth of Michael Flatley, Irish American step dancer, writer, flautist, and choreographer who became internationally known for his stage show, *River Dance*.

19 July 1782 – Irish Parliament declares its independence from English Parliament.

21 July 1972 – "Bloody Friday" in Belfast. Over a period of 75 minutes the RIA detonated twenty bombs in the city killing nine and injuring at least 130 others.

26 July 1856 – Birth in Dublin of George Bernard Shaw, playwright and winner of the Nobel Prize for Literature.

Book Review

*BLOOD RUNS GREEN – THE MURDER THAT TRANSFIXED GILDED AGE
CHICAGO*

By Gillian O'Brien

The University of Chicago Press ISBN 978-0-226-24895-0
2015 – 303 pp.

This is a well-researched book that deals with the murder of Dr. Patrick Henry Cronin, a prominent Irish physician in Chicago in the 1880's who was also a member of the Clan na Gael. The Clan na Gael was a nationalist organization founded in New York in 1867 by members of the Irish Republican Brotherhood in an attempt to end the factionalism of American Fenianism, which had fragmented in 1865 over the question of military tactics.

Cronin was a member of the Chicago Clan na Gael. Outspoken, yet respected, Cronin became suspicious of the actions of another prominent Clan na Gael member, Alexander Sullivan. Sullivan was a lawyer who took over the reins and ran the clan like a dictatorship. Cronin's suspicion centered on Sullivan's handling of the funds earmarked for the organization to help finance Ireland's efforts to gain independence from Britain. There was no "love lost" between the two men and their respective factions within the organization. In 1889, Cronin's naked, beaten body was found in a sewer. A worldwide media circus followed the investigation and subsequent trial as Cronin's death exposed a web of intrigue within the organization. Although considered the number one suspect by many, Sullivan managed to escape prosecution. Three other members of the clan took the fall for his murder and were prosecuted.

Cronin's case was followed extensively by journalists at the time. Conspiracies, foreign allegiances, spies, corruption, and violence all fueled the dailies and were brought out by the author. John DeVoy, who worked with Cronin, and was the national leader of the Clan na Gael, claimed that Cronin's murder "did more harm to the Irish cause than any other single incident for many generations and put obstacles in the way of the success that were not fully overcome until the sacrifice of the Easter Week 1916 gave the Irish Race at home and abroad a new outlook and brought back the Soul of Ireland." *Blood Runs Green* is a meticulously researched and elegantly written book by Gillian O'Brien. I rate it a TOP SHELF read.

Joseph Mary Plunkett, *An Irish Rebel* by Raymond D. Aumack



I SEE his blood upon the rose
And in the stars the glory of his eyes,
His body gleams amid eternal snows,
His tears fall from the skies.

I see his face in every flower;
thunder and the singing of the birds
Are but his voice—and carven by his power
Rocks are his written words.

All pathways by his feet are worn,
His strong heart stirs the ever-beating sea,
His crown of thorns is twined with every thorn,
His cross is every tree.

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Joseph Mary Plunkett, Irish Rebel, is an enigma wrapped in conundrum. He was a well-known poet, a devout Catholic with a strong attraction to the mysticism of St. John of the Cross and St. Teresa of Avila, Jesuit educated, a traveler throughout Europe, North Africa, and the United States, an intense nationalist, a brilliant military strategist, and the son of a Papal Count. In fact, the title “Count” is often applied to him in the literature though the title was his father’s without the right of inheritance. He was a signatory of the Proclamation of Irish Independence and designed the military strategy for the Rising of 1916.

Childhood and Education

Joseph Mary Plunkett was born into a wealthy family in Dublin on November 21, 1887. His mother was Josephine Cranny, a stern woman and, at the time, a rather harsh parent. His father, George Nobel Plunkett, a Papal Count by the grace of Pope Leo XIII, was the Director of the Science and Art Museum of Ireland and well known among the aristocrats, intellectuals, and political activists of Dublin. His own political activism was formed and developed by the influence of his children, especially Joseph, George, and John. Among his ancestors is St. Oliver Plunkett, the last priest martyr in 17th century England. The Count was a biographer with a well-received tome on the life of Sandro Botticelli. He also wrote a book on the history of architecture in Dublin. Finally, he updated a work on early Christian art in Ireland, originally the work of the late Margaret Stokes.

Though he was born to privilege, Joseph Plunkett had a very difficult childhood. He contracted tuberculosis early in his life and the effects of that illness continued to plague him throughout his short life. During the summers of his childhood he spent time in France, and Southern Spain as

well as North Africa with the hope that the warm climate would effectively soothe his glandular tuberculosis. It is alleged that during one of his sojourns to Algeria, he participated in and won a roller skating competition. I wasn't able to confirm the story but there is considerable mention in the Plunkett's diaries about his roller skating activities.

Joseph was educated at the Catholic University School. After a short stay at the Marist College in Paris, he became the beneficiary of Jesuit education when he continued his studies at Belvedere College in Dublin and at Stonyhurst, Lancashire, England. He finished his studies graduating from University College, Dublin. It was at Stonyhurst that he had the opportunity for military studies as part of the Officers Training Corp.

Early Career Interests

A Wave of the Sea

I am a wave of the sea
And the foam of the wave
And the wind of the foam
And the wings of the wind. My soul's in the salt of the sea
In the weight of the wave
In the bubbles of foam
In the ways of the wind. My gift is the depth of the sea
The strength of the wave
The lightness of foam
The speed of the wind.

Throughout his life he maintained an interest in Irish language and culture. He also spoke Esperanto, an international language designed to be universal, transcending nationalism, to promote international peace. It was commonly used among European countries. He founded the Irish Esperanto League. He joined Douglas Hyde's Gaelic League and studied with Thomas MacDonagh who would become a lifelong friend. One of the connections that bonded them was religion. Plunkett was the faithful Christian with an interest in Spanish mysticism and MacDonagh was the sceptic. They spent many enjoyable hours discussing their positions. The Gaelic League's goals were limited to promoting the Irish language and culture, but not surprisingly became the breeding ground for revolutionary ideals because of its wide appeal to Irish Nationalists and Republicans. So close were Plunkett and MacDonagh that they even dated the Gifford sisters, Muriel and Grace, who would eventually become their respective spouses. The sisters were both converts to Catholicism and were fascinated with the positions of both MacDonagh and Plunkett. Both Plunkett and MacDonagh became published and recognized poets and both had an active interest in theatre. Both joined the Irish Volunteers very early in its history where they continued their military training.

Plunkett the Poet

Like his fellow revolutionary poets, Pearse and MacDonagh, the themes of Plunkett's poetry were of torture and despair. However, Plunkett, having more natural talent drew his inspiration from the Spanish mystics, Sts. John of the Cross, Teresa of Avila, and Francis de Sales. He embraced the notion of a romantic morality which approved the sacrifice of self for others in the pursuit of self-realization. He published a book of poetry in 1913, *The Circle and the Sword*. He was also founder and co-editor with Thomas MacDonagh of an Irish literary newspaper, *The Irish Review*.

After the publication of *The Circle and the Sword*, Plunkett's talent as a poet became universally recognized. A great literary career was projected for his future. He was also interested in theater and with his friends, MacDonagh and Edward Martyn he founded the Irish Theater for the promotion of Irish literary arts and culture, on Hardwicke Street, Dublin. Two of the plays he produced were written by Padraig Pearse, *Iosagain* and *The Master*.

Plunkett and Gifford became engaged with a plan for a double wedding with Plunkett's sister on Easter Sunday in 1916. Before this time MacDonagh became engaged to Grace's sister, Muriel with plans to marry in 1914.

The Irish Republican Brotherhood

At sometime during 1915, Plunkett joined the Irish Republican Brotherhood. He was assigned to go to Germany where Sir Roger Casemont, who was not a member of the IRB, but shared all of its revolutionary values was independently negotiating with the Germans for weapons for the revolution planned for the next year. It was important to the IRB leadership to have one of their own to oversee the negotiations. Casemont was distracted by the opportunity to train Irish prisoners of war to create a brigade to fight in the rebellion and it was left to Plunkett to complete the negotiations and seal the deal for the delivery of the weapons.

Plans for the Rising

All our best ye have branded
When the people were choosing them,
When 'twas Death they demanded
Ye laughed! Ye were losing them.
But the blood that ye spilt in the night
Crieth loudly to God,
And their name hath the strength and the might
Of a sword for the sod. In the days of our doom and our dread
Ye were cruel and callous,
Grim Death with our fighters ye fed
Through the jaws of the gallows;
But a blasting and blight was the fee
For which ye had bartered them,

And we smite with the sword that from ye
We had gained when ye martyred them!

By 1915, almost all of Plunkett's energies were focused on preparations for the Rising. He was obsessed with military matters. Together with Pearse and Eamonn Ceannt he was appointed to a committee of the Irish Volunteer leaders of the Irish Republican Brotherhood, the forerunner of the Irish Republican Army. They were charged to draw up strategies and plans for an insurrection. Plunkett was an effective member of this committee. It turned out that he was the intellectual powerhouse of this group and is ultimately credited with designing the military strategy for the rising. His house at Kimmage was essentially the clearing house for the arms landed at Howth in 1914 for the Irish Volunteers.

In 1915, a major split occurred among the Irish Volunteers. More than sixty percent supported John Redmond's pleas for the support of British forces during World War 1.

A secret military committee was established, consisting mainly of the men who would form the nucleus of the rising. Plunkett again went to Germany to seek additional arms for the Rising. Tragically, this resulted in the ill-fated transport of arms. The German ship, "The Aud," encountered a terrible storm and was sunk just off the coast of western Ireland. In the week before the Rising, Sir Roger Casement was captured and was subsequently executed by hanging in England. Plunkett also visited the United States in 1915 to meet with John Devoy to solicit arms from the Clan-na-Gael organization. Although Pearse was the public face of the Council, it is generally believed by historians that Plunkett and MacDiarmada were the leading planners of the Rising. James Connolly came on board with his Irish Citizen Army in January 1916 after being convinced that a Rising of his own would be fruitless.

Failing Health

By this time, Plunkett's health was rapidly failing. His tuberculosis was in an advanced stage. He had to undergo glandular surgery the week before the Rising. A dying man at this time, he was frequently hospitalized. Plans for the Rising were deliberately kept from the Chief of Staff of the Volunteers, Eoin McNeill, for fear that he would publicly cancel it. In the week before the Rising, he uncovered the plot and desperately tried to stop it. Paying attention to the chaos, even from his hospital bed, Plunkett forged documents indicating that the authorities were about to arrest the leaders.

In the months before the Rising, Plunkett's home literally became an arsenal. Up to 60 volunteers trained at his home in preparation for the Rising. This was the group that seized the General Post Office on Easter Monday.

Plunkett and Grace Gifford were scheduled to be married on Easter Sunday. Because of the chaos that ensued the previous week and because the Rising was delayed until Easter Monday their participation in the double wedding had to be delayed. Despite his enthusiasm, Plunkett was critically ill and spent the week of battle in a bed at the General Post Office. Still, he gave orders. His aide-de-camp was a young newcomer, Michael Collins.

The Rising Fails

The sun rose up at midnight,
The sun rose red as blood,
It showed the Reaper, the dead Christ,
Upon His cross of wood. For many live that one may die,
And one must die that many live—
The stars are silent in the sky
Lest my poor songs be fugitive.

The battle waxed and waned for the rest of the week resulting in the eventual prudent surrender. Plunkett and the other were arrested and taken to Kilmainham Jail. He was identified as the ‘wealthy poet’ during his court martial and along with the others was sentenced to death by firing squad.

Plunkett petitioned to be allowed to marry Grace Gifford before his execution. On the eve of the execution he was brought to the chapel at the jail in handcuffs and he and Grace pledged their undying love in through the Sacrament of Matrimony.

They were allowed ten minutes together, under surveillance by the guards. Grace Gifford became forever linked in the struggle for Irish independence. A few years later she found herself in the same jail during the Irish War of Independence.

Thomas MacDonagh who was executed the previous day was married in 1914 to Grace’s sister, Muriel;

On the following morning, May 4th, Plunkett was executed by firing squad. He was 28 years old and the youngest signatory of the Proclamation of the Irish Republic. Though he was dying from tuberculosis, there is no doubt that he craved a romantic, heroic end. His last words were, “I am glad to be dying for the glory of God and the honor of Ireland.” He is buried in Arbour Hill Cemetery in Dublin.

His father, Count George Noble Plunkett and his brothers, George and Jack were all actively involved in the Rising and in the fighting. The Count was exiled to Oxford, England and the brothers received a ten year jail sentence. The Count returned to Ireland nine months later and the brothers were released in the general amnesty the following year.

Given the significance of his role in the Rising and as a signatory of the Proclamation, one would think that Plunkett's legacy would be more significant throughout Ireland. His legacy along with that of the others is that the Rising was a successful failure. An independent Ireland came into being as a result of their efforts. Had he lived, he would have been on the Republican side of the debate. He has a railroad station in Waterford named for him.

He was bonded in life with the most fascinating people in Ireland and flourished among them. With them he is elevated to the pantheon of Irish heroes, arguably the most fascinating among them.

The Heritage to the Race of Kings

This heritage to the race of kings
Their children and their children's seed
Have wrought their prophecies in deed
Of terrible and splendid things.

The hands that fought, the hearts that broke
In old immortal tragedies,
These have not failed beneath the skies,
Their children's heads refuse the yoke.

And still their hands shall guard the sod
That holds their father's funeral urn,
Still shall their hearts volcanic burn
With anger of the sons of God.

No alien sword shall earn as wage
The entail of their blood and tears,
No shameful price for peaceful years
Shall ever part this heritage.

All the poetry cited is from the Joseph Mary Plunkett collection.