



## 4.0 The seven members of the Provisional Government

### 4.3 Thomas MacDonagh

Thomas MacDonagh, member of the Provisional Government of the Irish Republic and commandant of the 2nd Battalion of the Irish Volunteers.

Thomas MacDonagh (1878-1916) was born in Cloughjordan, Co. Tipperary, the son of Joseph MacDonagh and Mary Parker, both of whom were teachers. He was educated at Rockwell College near Cashel, Co. Tipperary, where he spent seven years training for the priesthood.

On leaving Rockwell, MacDonagh worked as a teacher at St Kieran's College, Kilkenny (1901-3) and at St Colman's College, Fermoy, Co. Cork (1903-8). During this time he joined the Gaelic League, which first introduced him to nationalist ideals. To improve his fluency in Irish he visited the Aran Islands, where he first met Patrick Pearse. When Pearse opened St Enda's in 1908, MacDonagh joined the staff as assistant head teacher. While teaching full-time, MacDonagh also studied part-time at University College, Dublin, graduating as BA in 1910; the following year he gained the degree of MA for his thesis, 'Thomas Campion and the Art of Poetry' (published in 1913). Also in 1911, he was appointed lecturer in English at UCD.

Meanwhile, MacDonagh was developing his talents as a poet, his first volume, *Through the Ivory Gate*, being published at his own expense in 1902; it was followed by further volumes including his most accomplished work *Lyrical Poems* (1913). He also wrote three plays; *When The Dawn is Come* had an Irish insurrection as its theme; and *Pagans* contrasted

## 4.3 Thomas MacDonagh

the conventional with the bohemian. In addition, he contributed articles to various journals, including *The Nation* and *The Leader*, establishing a reputation for himself in Dublin literary and theatrical circles.

He was also active on other fronts. He was an enthusiastic member of the National Literary Society, and in 1909 he was a founding member of the Association of Secondary Teachers of Ireland. He was also a founding member of the literary monthly *Irish Review* (1911), which he edited jointly for a period. Believing in the need for a theatre devoted to the drama of realism (as an alternative to the romanticism of the Abbey Theatre), in 1914 MacDonagh, Joseph Plunkett and Edward Martyn established the Irish Theatre in Hardwicke Street.

MacDonagh was always politically aware: he was active in the Irish Women's Franchise League set up in 1911, and he was a member of the Dublin Industrial Peace Committee during the 1913 labour dispute. He joined the Irish Volunteers on their formation in November 1913, becoming a member of the provisional committee and taking part in the Howth gun-running. He also wrote 'The Marching Song of the Irish Volunteers'. In March 1915 he became commandant of the 2nd Battalion of the Dublin Brigade. At this time he believed that Irish freedom would be achieved by what he called 'zealous martyrs', hopefully through peace but if necessary by war. Although a member of the Irish Republican Brotherhood from April 1915, he was not co-opted to the Military Council until early April 1916, and so had little part in planning the arrangements for the Rising. He is believed, however, to have contributed to the content of the Proclamation.

As one of the four Dublin battalion commandants, he took an active part in the Rising, being in charge at Jacobs' biscuit factory in Bishop Street. His two most senior officers were Major John MacBride and Michael O'Hanrahan, a close personal friend. Mainly because of its location in a densely built-up area providing no easy approach, Jacob's was not directly assaulted. When Pearse's surrender order reached the garrison on Sunday, MacDonagh and his men were initially reluctant to comply.

Thomas MacDonagh was tried by court-martial and executed by firing squad in Kilmainham Jail on 3 May. He was survived by his wife Muriel Gifford and his children Donagh and Barbara.

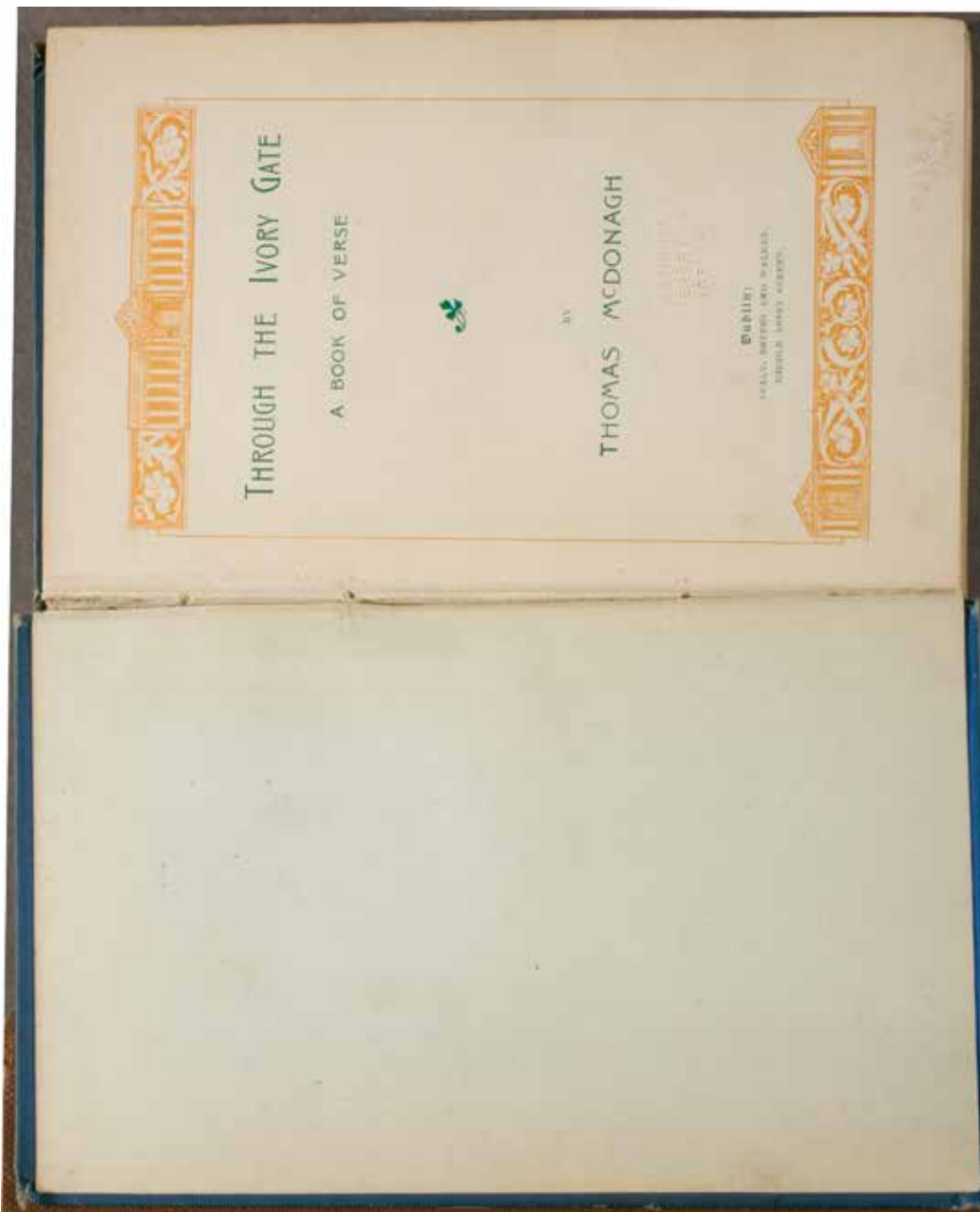
4.3

Thomas MacDonagh



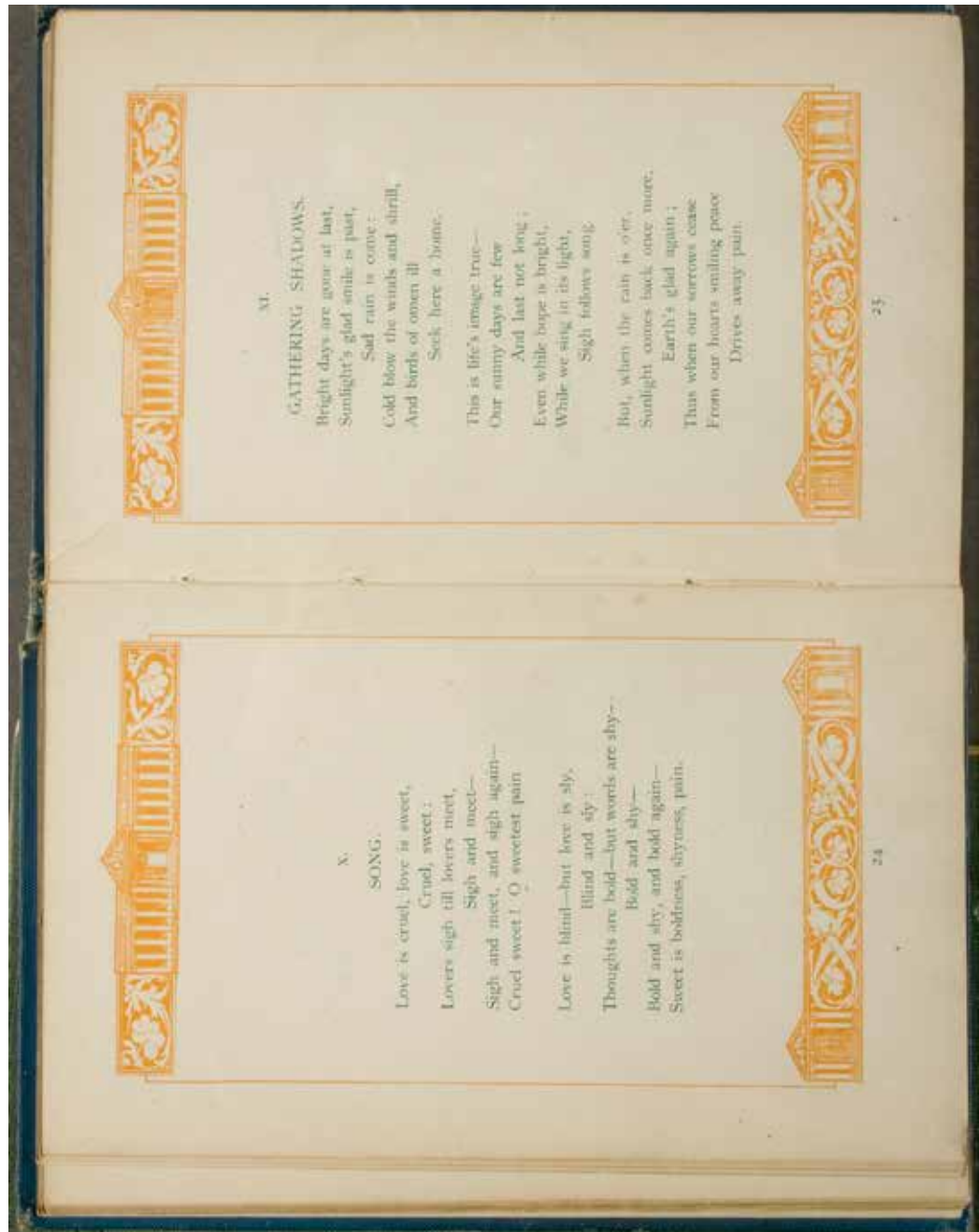
Thomas MacDonagh.

## 4.3 Thomas MacDonagh



Pages from MacDonagh's first collection of poems which was published in 1902.

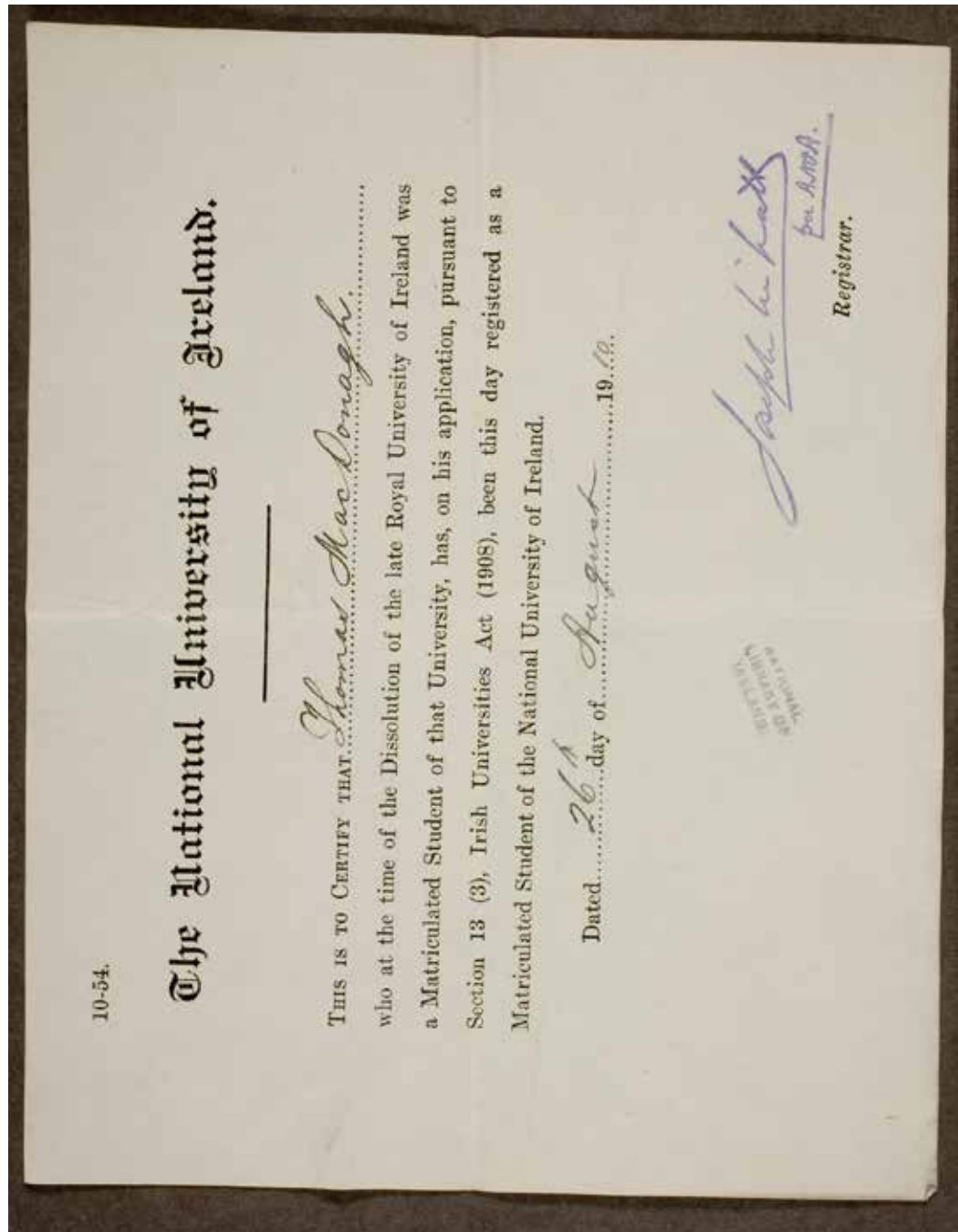
4.3 Thomas MacDonagh



Pages from MacDonagh's first collection of poems which was published in 1902.



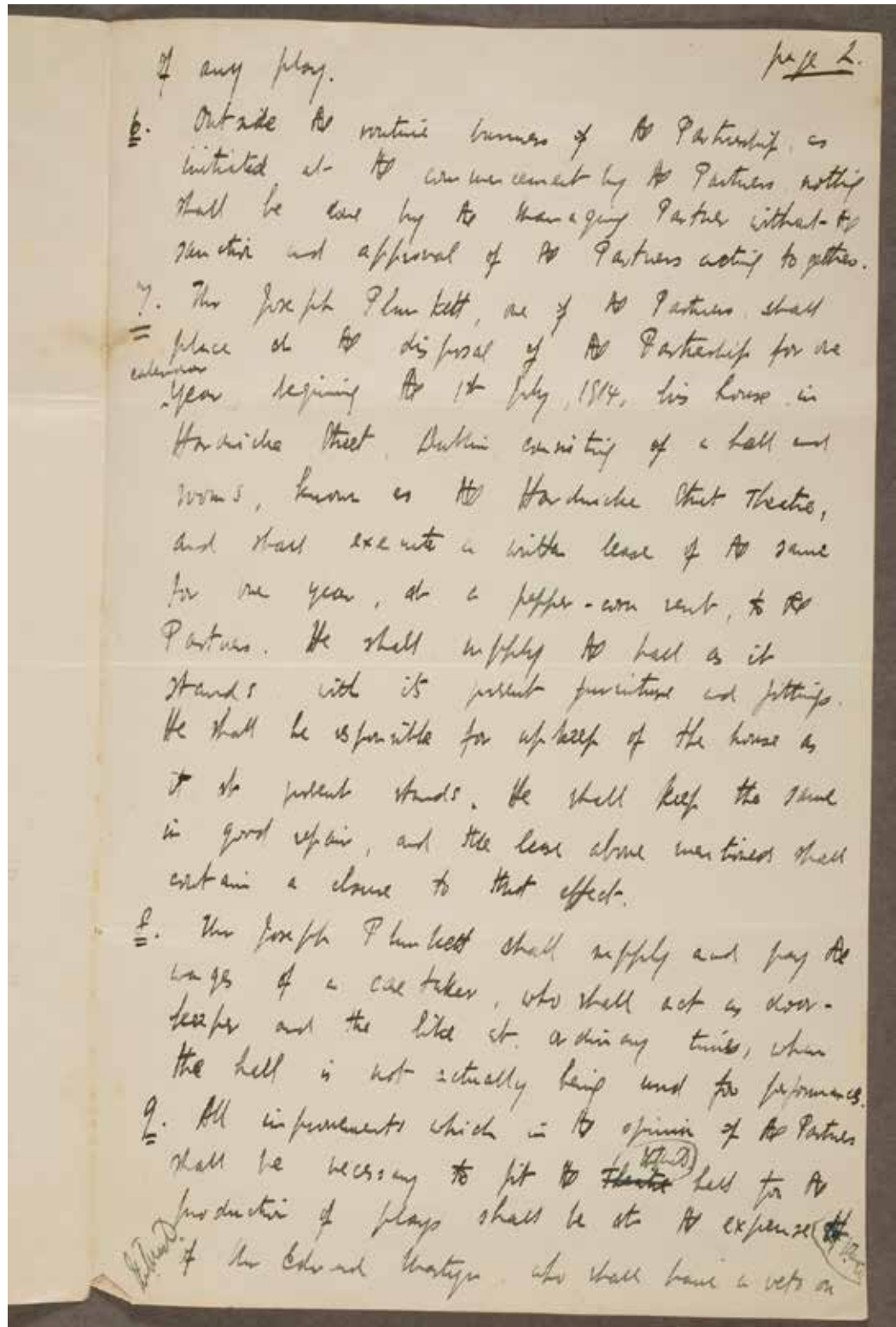
4.3 Thomas MacDonagh



Certificate from the National University. (Ms. 10,855).

4.3

Thomas MacDonagh



Agreement between Edward Martyn, MacDonagh and Joseph Plunkett concerning the establishment of the Irish Theatre, 30 June 1914. (Ms. 17,301).

4.3 Thomas MacDonagh

page 3

the execution of any such improvement.

10. The expense of lighting the hall and rooms for rehearsals and performances shall be paid by Mr Edward Martyn.

11. Mr Edward Martyn shall bear all the expenses of management. He shall at the last day of each of the twelve calendar months, beginning the 1<sup>st</sup> July, 1914 and ending the 30<sup>th</sup> June 1915; pay to the Managing Partner Mr Thomas MacDonagh, the sum of twelve pounds and ten shillings (£12-10-0). Mr Thomas MacDonagh shall thereupon defray all theatrical and managerial salaries and expenses, and such expenses as are provided for by Articles 12 and 13 hereof.

12. Mr Martyn shall pay for stationery and stamps, advertisements, theatre programmes and all necessary general printing, accounts to be furnished by the Managing Partner and duly audited.

13. Mr Martyn shall bear all the expenses of the production of plays by the Partnership.

14. All moneys received by the Partnership, from any source whatever, shall be placed to the account of Mr Edward Martyn at his bank within one week of the receipt thereof.

15. Mr Thomas MacDonagh, one of the Partners, shall act as Managing Partner of the Irish Theatre during

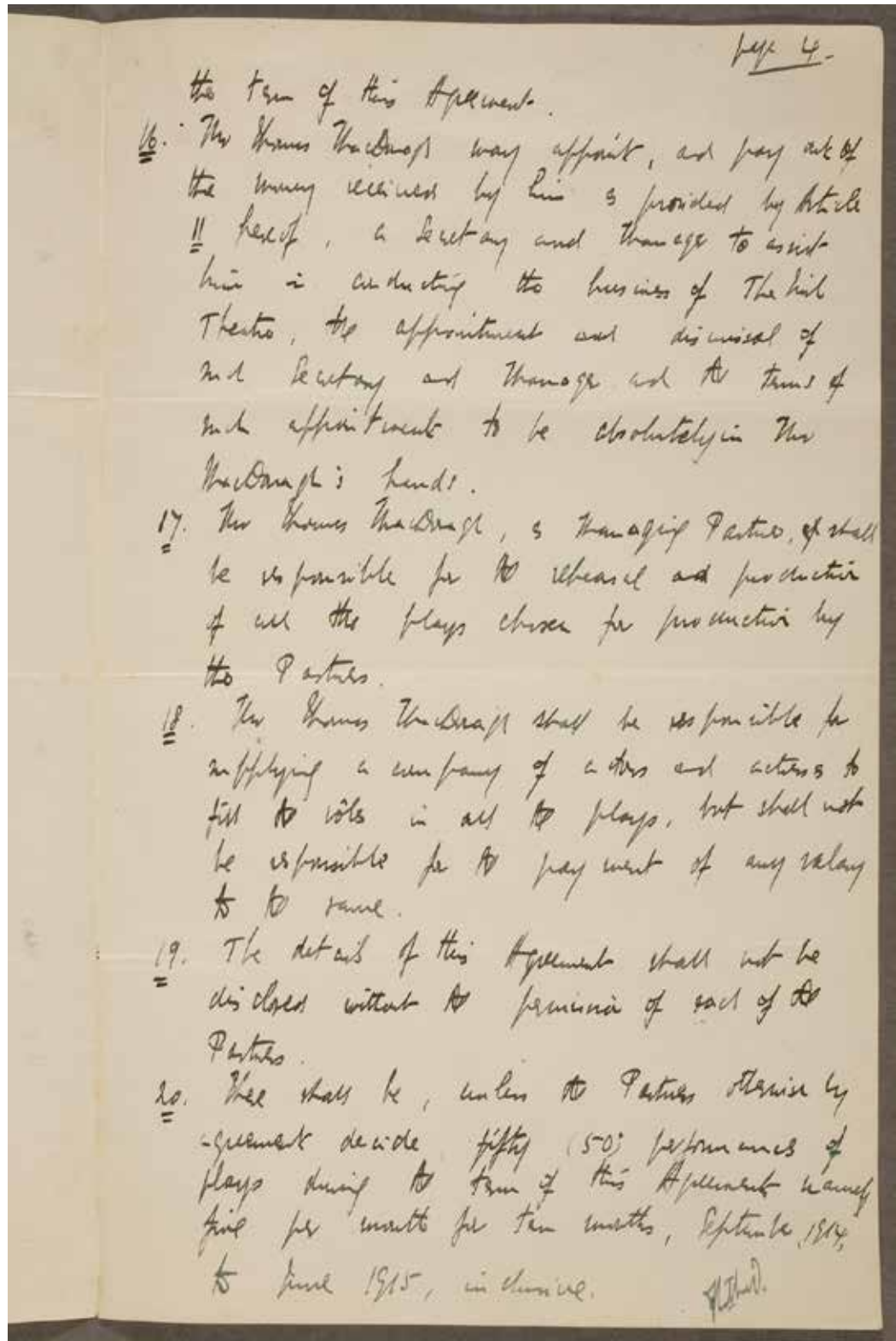
copy  
MacDonagh

Agreement between Edward Martyn, MacDonagh and Joseph Plunkett concerning the establishment of the Irish Theatre, 30 June 1914. (Ms. 17,301).



4.3

Thomas MacDonagh



Agreement between Edward Martyn, MacDonagh and Joseph Plunkett concerning the establishment of the Irish Theatre, 30 June 1914. (Ms. 17,301).

4.3 Thomas MacDonagh

21. The terms of commission of the publisher of any  
other person to the performances shall be fixed  
by the Partners.

22. The partners shall on the 31<sup>st</sup> March, 1915, or within one  
week thereof state to each other in writing whether  
they are willing to enter into an agreement of  
partnership substantially similar in terms to those  
presented to continue for a further year.

23. It is agreed that of the total number of  
plays in the English language, original or  
translated, produced by the partnership during the  
ten months, September 1914 to June 1915, at  
least one half shall be plays written by  
The Edmund Spenser, if so many be available  
and be approved by the Partners.

24. The accounts of the Partnership shall be audited  
at the end of the term by an independent  
accountant to be selected by the Edmund Spenser  
and The Irish Plunkett. Any liabilities the  
fund due, and is here to be provided for, shall  
be borne by, and any profits shall be placed  
to the credit of the Edmund Spenser

Signed this 30<sup>th</sup> day of June 1914.

Edmund Spenser  
Thomas MacDonagh  
Joseph Plunkett

Agreement between Edward Martyn, MacDonagh and Joseph Plunkett concerning the establishment of the Irish Theatre, 30 June 1914. (Ms. 17,301).

## 4.3 Thomas MacDonagh

### Transcript

An agreement for the foundation and maintenance of a partnership made this 30th day of June 1914 between Edward Martyn of Tulira of the first part, Thomas MacDonagh of Woodlands, Fairview of the second part and Joseph Plunkett of 17 Marlboro Road, Donnybrook of the third part.

Whereas the aforesaid parties are desirous of establishing a partnership for the production of plays in the city of Dublin upon the terms hereinafter set forth, now it is hereby agreed as follows:

1. A partnership is hereby established for the production in the city of Dublin of the plays of three classes, namely: (1) Plays in the Irish language, (2) Plays, other than peasant plays by Irish authors, and (3) Plays translated from foreign languages.
2. The name of the partnership shall be The Irish Theatre.
3. Messrs Edward Martyn, Thomas MacDonagh and Joseph Plunkett shall be the partners. The term of the partnership shall be the calendar year, beginning the 1st day of July 1914.
4. The partners shall have complete control of the enterprise and all business connected therewith.
5. They shall chose the plays to be performed, but any one partner shall have a veto on the production of any play.
6. Outside the routine business of the partnership as initiated at the commencement by the partners nothing shall be done by the managing partner without the sanction and approval of the partners voting together.
7. Mr Joseph Plunkett, one of the partners shall place at the disposal of the partnership for the calender year beginning the 1st July, 1914, his house in Hardwicke Street Dublin consisting of a hall and rooms, known as the Hardwicke Street Theatre, and shall execute a written lease of the same for one year, at a pepper-corn rent, to the partners. He shall supply the hall as it stands with its present furniture and fittings. He shall be responsible for upkeep of the house as it at present stands. He shall keep the same in good repair, and the lease above mentioned shall contain a clause to that effect.

## 4.3 Thomas MacDonagh

8. Mr Joseph Plunkett shall supply and pay the wages of the caretaker, who shall act as door-keeper and the like at ordinary times, when the hall is not actually being used for performances.

9. All improvements which in the opinion of the partners shall be necessary to fit the hall for the production of plays shall be at the expense of Mr Edward Martyn, who shall have a veto on the execution of any such improvements.

10. The expense of lighting the hall and rooms for rehearsals and performances shall be paid by Mr Edward Martyn.

11. Mr Edward Martyn shall bear all the expenses of management. He shall on the last day of each of the twelve calendar months, beginning the 31st July 1914 and ending the 30th June 1915, pay to the managing partner

Mr Thomas MacDonagh, the sum of twelve pounds and ten shillings (£12-10-0). Mr Thomas MacDonagh shall thereupon repay all residual and managerial expenses, save such expenses as are provided for by articles 12 and 13 hereof.

12. Mr Martyn shall pay for stationary and stamps, advertisements, theatre programmes and necessary general printing, accounts to be furnished by the managing partner and duly audited.

13. Mr Martyn shall bear all the expenses of the production of the plays by the partnership.

14. All monies received by the partnership, from any source whatever, shall be placed to the account of Mr Edward Martyn at his bank within one week of the receipt thereof.

15. Mr Thomas MacDonagh one of the partners, shall act as managing partner of The Irish Theatre during the term of this agreement.

16. Mr Thomas MacDonagh may appoint, and pay out of the money received by him as provided by article 11 hereof, a secretary and manager to assist him in conducting the business of The Irish Theatre. The appointment and dismissal of such secretary and manager and the terms of such appointment to be absolutely in Mr MacDonagh's hands.

#### 4.3 Thomas MacDonagh

17. Mr Thomas MacDonagh, as managing partner, shall be responsible for the rehearsal and production of all the plays chosen for production by the partners.

18. Mr Thomas MacDonagh shall be responsible for supplying a company of actors and actresses to fill the roles in all the plays, but shall not be responsible for the payment of any salary to the same.

19. The details of this agreement shall not be disclosed without the permission of each of the partners.

20. There shall be, unless the partner otherwise by agreement decide fifty (50) performances of plays during the term of the agreement, namely five per month for ten months, September 1914 to June 1915, inclusive.

21. The terms of admission of the public as of any other persons to the performances shall be fixed by the partners.

22. The partners shall on the 31st March 1915 or within one week thereof state to each other in writing whether they are willing to enter into an agreement of partnership substantially similar in terms to these present to continue for a further year.

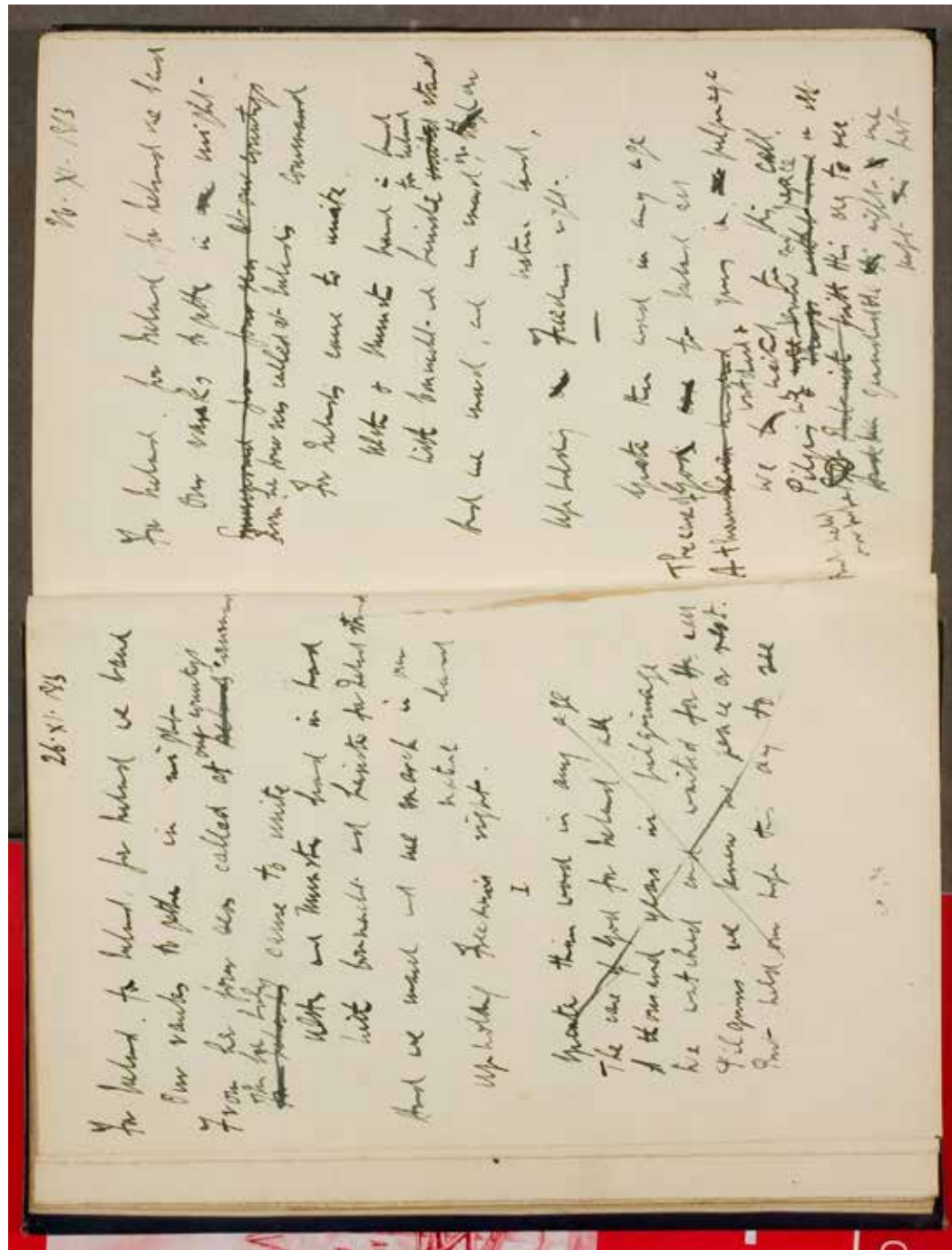
23. It is agreed that of the total number of plays in the English language, original or translated, produced by the partnership during the ten months, September 1914 to June 1915, at least one half shall be plays written by Mr Edward Martyn, if so many be available and approved by the partners.

24. The accounts of the partnership shall be audited at the end of the term by an independent accountant to be selected by Mr Edmund Martyn and Mr Joseph Plunkett. Any liabilities then found due, same as heretofore provided for shall be borne by and any profits shall be placed to the credit of Mr Edmund Martyn.

Dated this 3rd day of June 1914. Edmund Martyn, Thomas MacDonagh,  
Joseph Plunkett

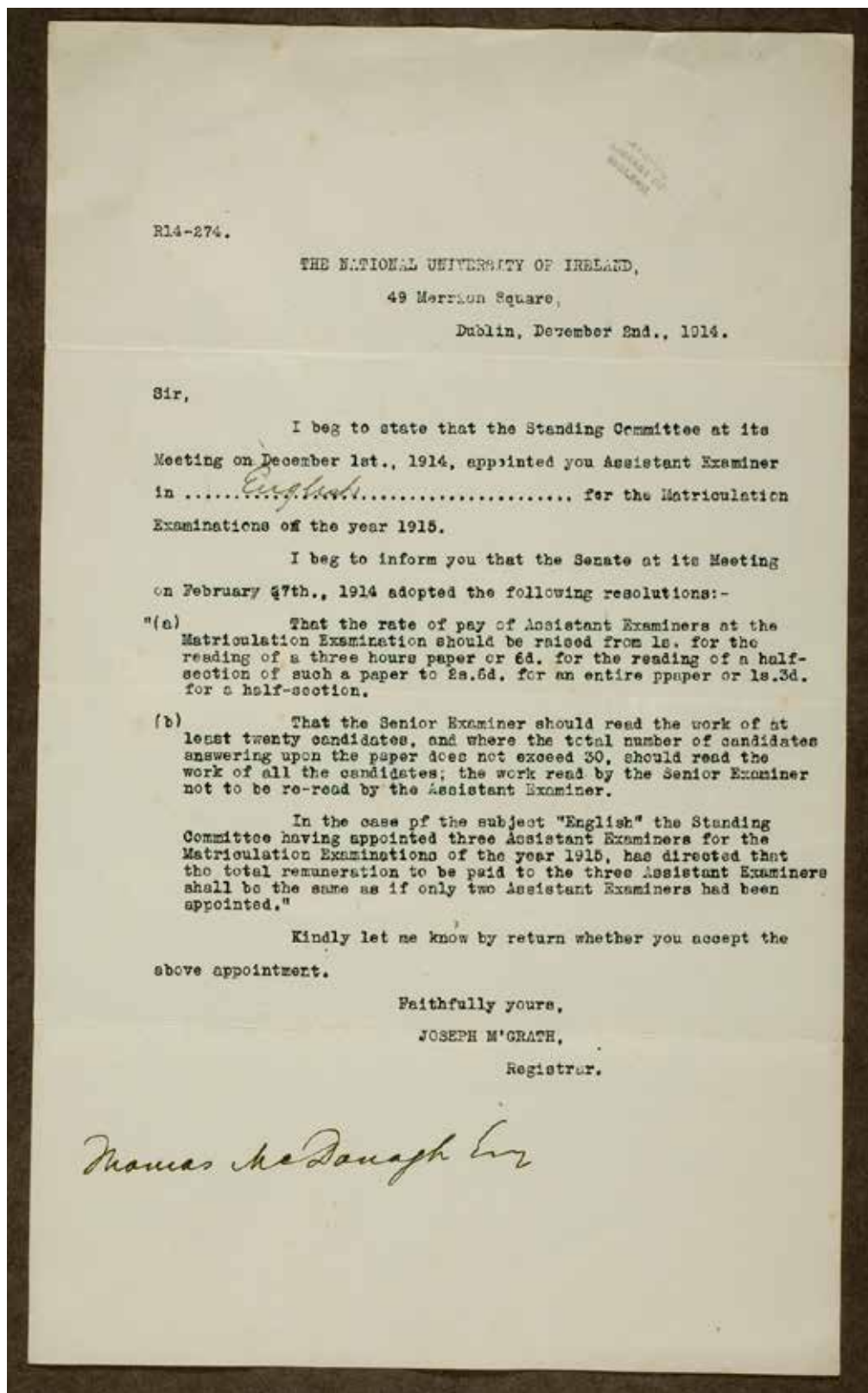


4.3 Thomas MacDonagh



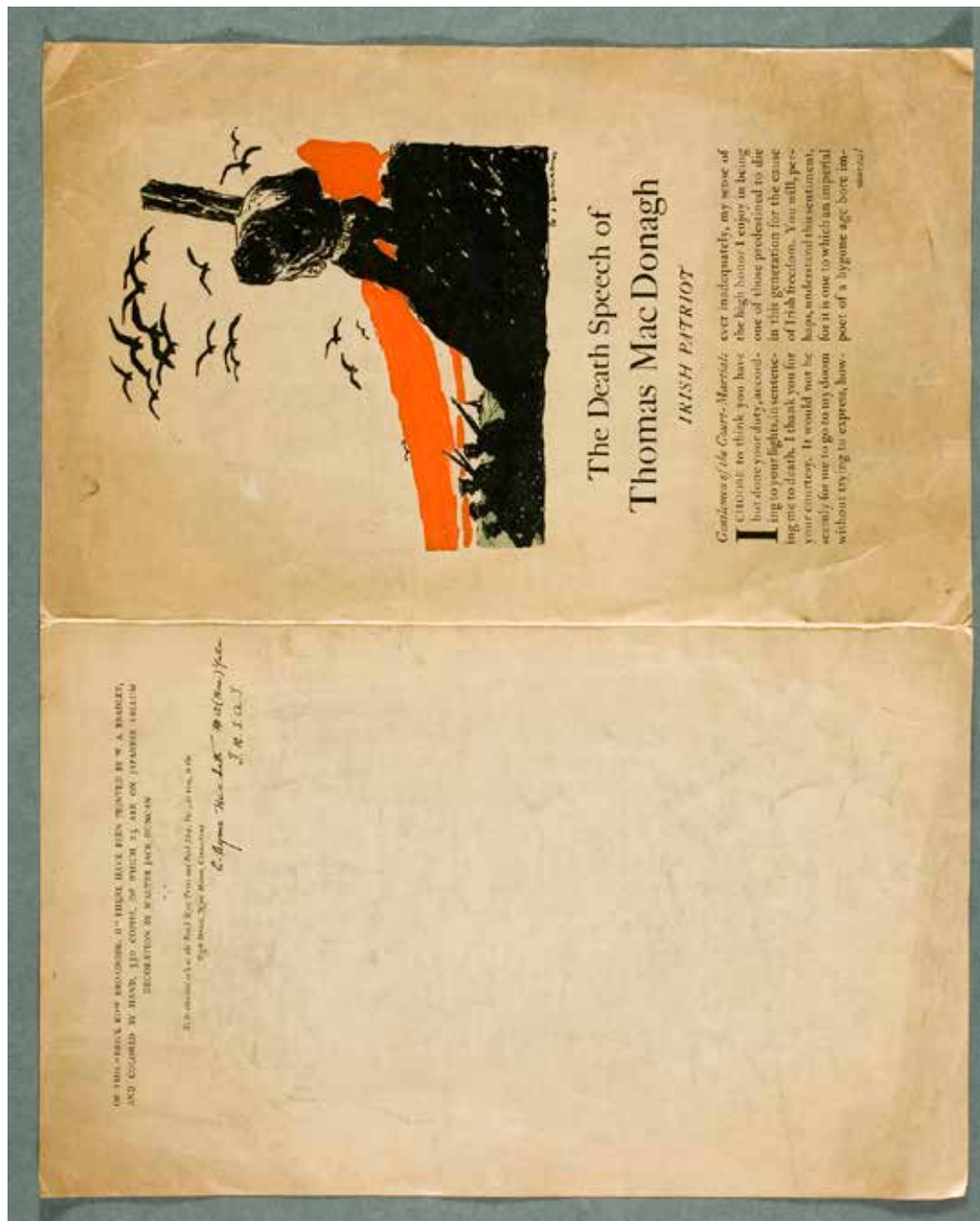
Drafts of a poem by MacDonagh. (Ms. 1645).

4.3 Thomas MacDonagh



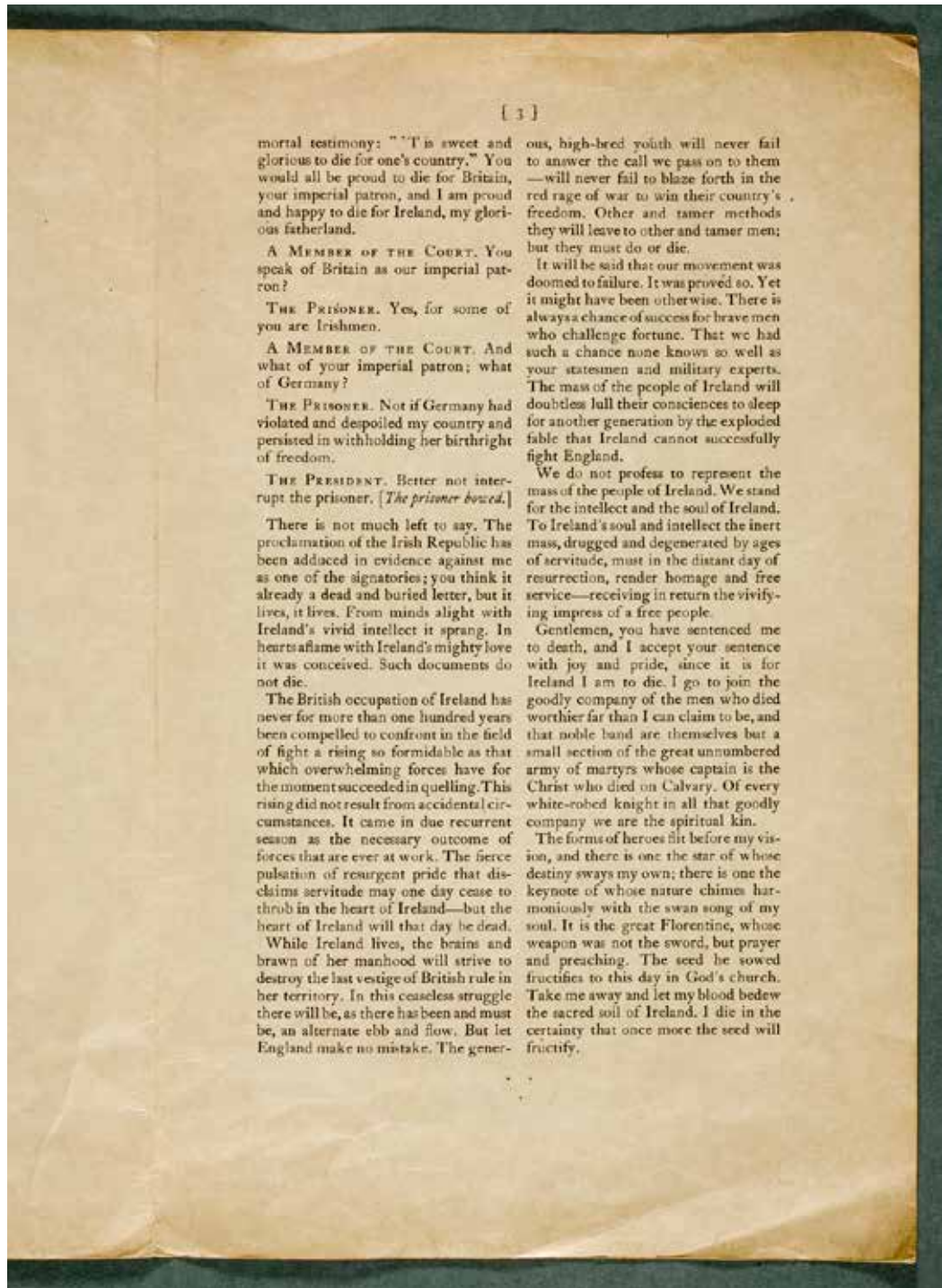
Appointment of MacDonagh as an examiner for matriculation examinations, 2 Dec. 1914. (Ms. 10,855, MacDonagh Papers).

## 4.3 Thomas MacDonagh



An undated American edition of MacDonagh's speech to the court-martial. The imagery echoes the legendary Cú Chulainn who tied himself to a pillar so that he would die standing. (Proclamations).

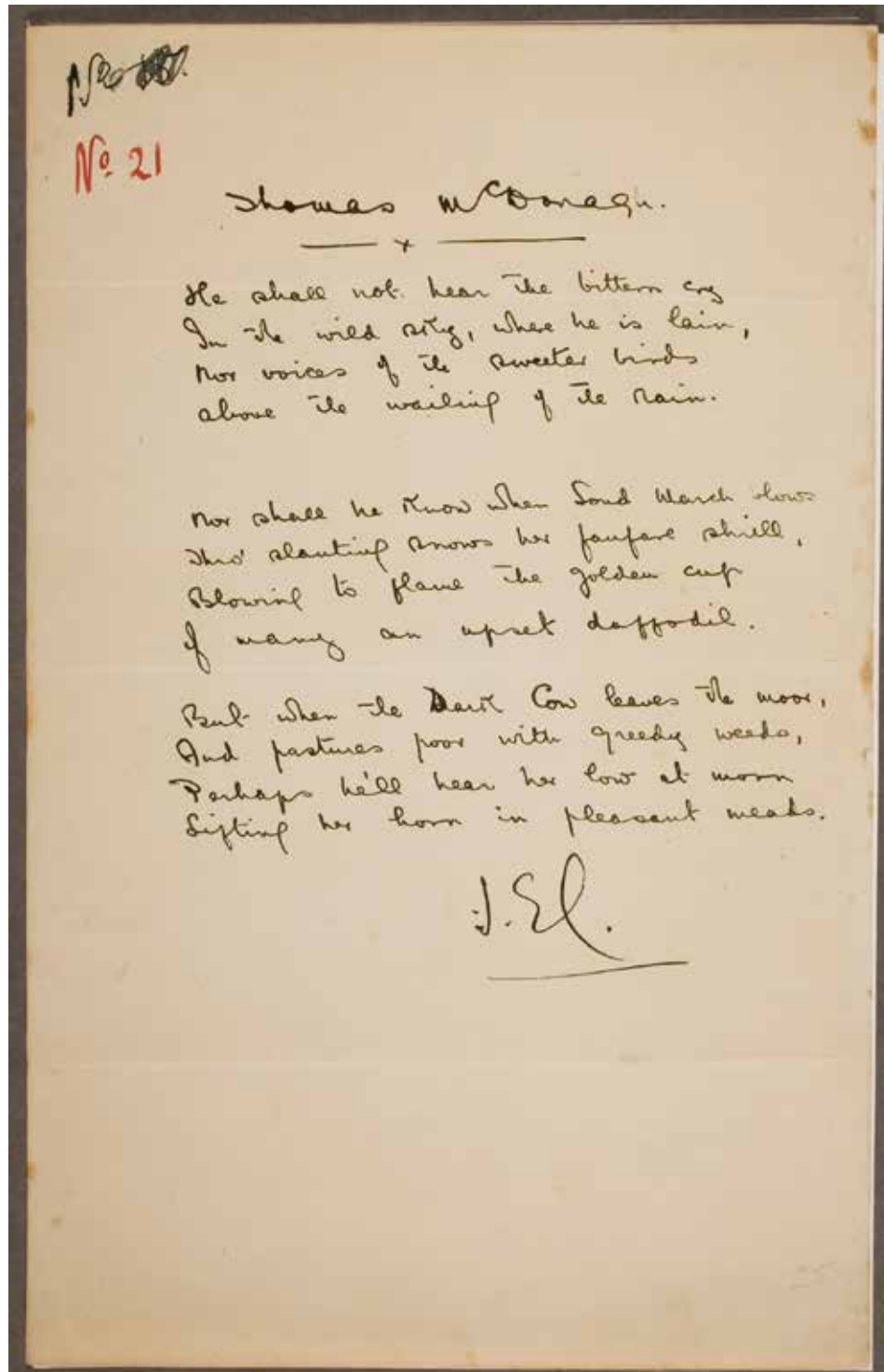
4.3 Thomas MacDonagh



An undated American edition of MacDonagh's speech to the court-martial. The imagery echoes the legendary Cú Chulainn who tied himself to a pillar so that he would die standing. (Proclamations).



4.3 Thomas MacDonagh



Autograph manuscript of Francis Ledwidge's poem in memory of Thomas MacDonagh. Ledwidge gave it to his friend Lord Dunsany who presented it to MacDonagh's son Donagh in 1940. A former member of the Irish Volunteers, Ledwidge was killed in action in Belgium on 31 July 1917. Lord Dunsany was a captain in the Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers at the time of the Rising and was wounded in the Church Street area near the Four Courts on the Tuesday of Easter Week. (Ms. 15,542).



## 4.3 Thomas MacDonagh

### Transcript

Thomas McDonagh

He shall not hear the bitter cry  
In the wild sky, where he is lain,  
Nor voices of the sweeter birds  
Above the wailing of the rain.

Nor shall he know when loud march blows  
Thro' slanting snows her fanfare shrill,  
Blowing to flame the golden cup  
Of many an upset daffodil.

But when the Dark Cow leaves the moor,  
And pastures poor with greedy weeds,  
Perhaps he'll hear her low at morn  
Lifting her horn in pleasant meads