



4.0 The seven members of the Provisional Government

4.1 Tom Clarke

Tom Clarke, member of the Provisional Government of the Irish Republic. He made an Irish republic his life's goal.

Thomas J. (Tom) Clarke (1858-1916) was born on the Isle of Wight off the south coast of England, where his father James Clarke, an Irish sergeant in the British army, was stationed. James was Church of Ireland, but Tom was reared in the faith of his mother, Mary Palmer who was Catholic. The family moved to South Africa and later to Dungannon, Co. Tyrone where Tom grew up from about the age of seven, attending Saint Patrick's national school. While still in his teens he became a member of the Fenians, possibly as a reaction to his father's role in maintaining the British empire or in response to local sectarian tensions.

In 1882 Clarke emigrated to the United States, where he joined Clan na Gael. In April the following year he was sent to London on a dynamiting mission, but was betrayed by an informer and arrested in possession of explosives. Sentenced to penal servitude for life, he served fifteen years in extremely harsh conditions in British jails: Millbank, Chatham and Portland. His experiences are recalled in his memoir *Glimpses of an Irish Felon's Prison Life* (1922). Following his release on ticket-of-leave in 1898, he again went to the United States where he eventually found congenial employment with the Clan na Gael leader John Devoy, including a stint as assistant editor of Devoy's newspaper the *Gaelic American*. Meanwhile he married Kathleen Daly, niece of the veteran Fenian John Daly who had

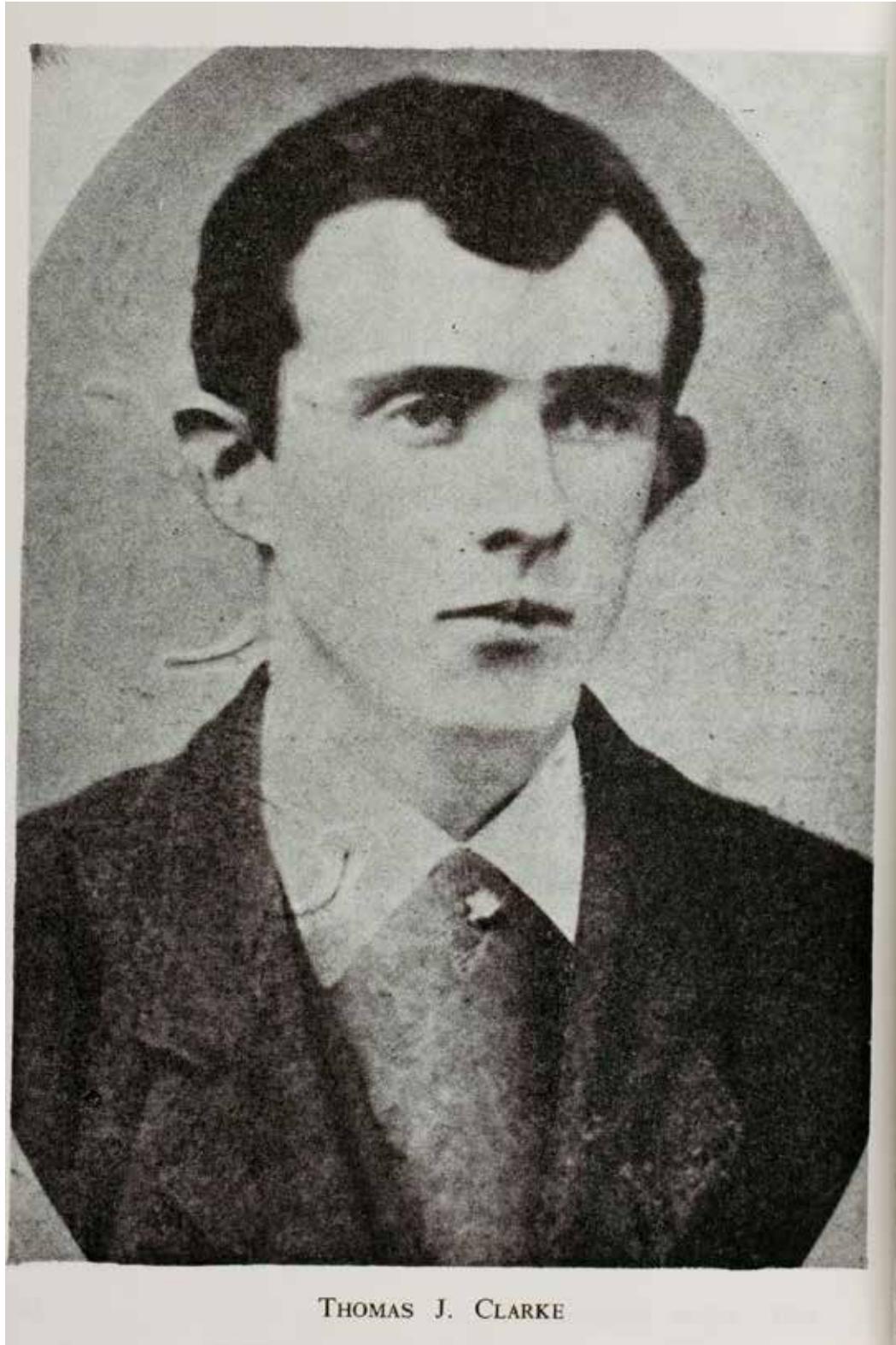
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served time with him in jail; Kathleen was a sister of Edward (Ned) Daly, later to be executed for his part in the 1916 Rising. The couple had three sons.

Clarke became a United States citizen in 1905, but the family returned to Dublin two years later, setting up business in Dublin with tobacconist/newsagent shops in Great Britain Street (now Parnell Street) and Amiens Street. His abiding concern, however, was in securing an Irish republic. Being still on ticket-of-leave, he maintained a low profile, but was an influential figure behind the scenes in the years of preparation for the 1916 Rising. Together with Denis McCullough, Bulmer Hobson and, most notably, Seán MacDiarmada, he revitalised the Irish Republican Brotherhood, and had a major role in setting up the organisation's newspaper, Irish Freedom. On the formation of the Irish Volunteers he immediately recognised their potential as an army of revolution. He joined but avoided being appointed to office. He deplored Redmond's splitting of the organisation in September 1914, but appreciated that the remaining Irish Volunteers constituted a more effective and cohesive force with the majority of members dedicated to a republic. He welcomed the outbreak of the First World War, seeing England's difficulty as Ireland's opportunity. A member of the IRB Supreme Council, in late 1915 Clarke was co-opted to its Military Council which was responsible for planning the Rising. Clarke worked out the general strategy and MacDiarmada was responsible for the details; Clarke was also the main link with John Devoy, Joseph McGarrity and other supporters in the United States.

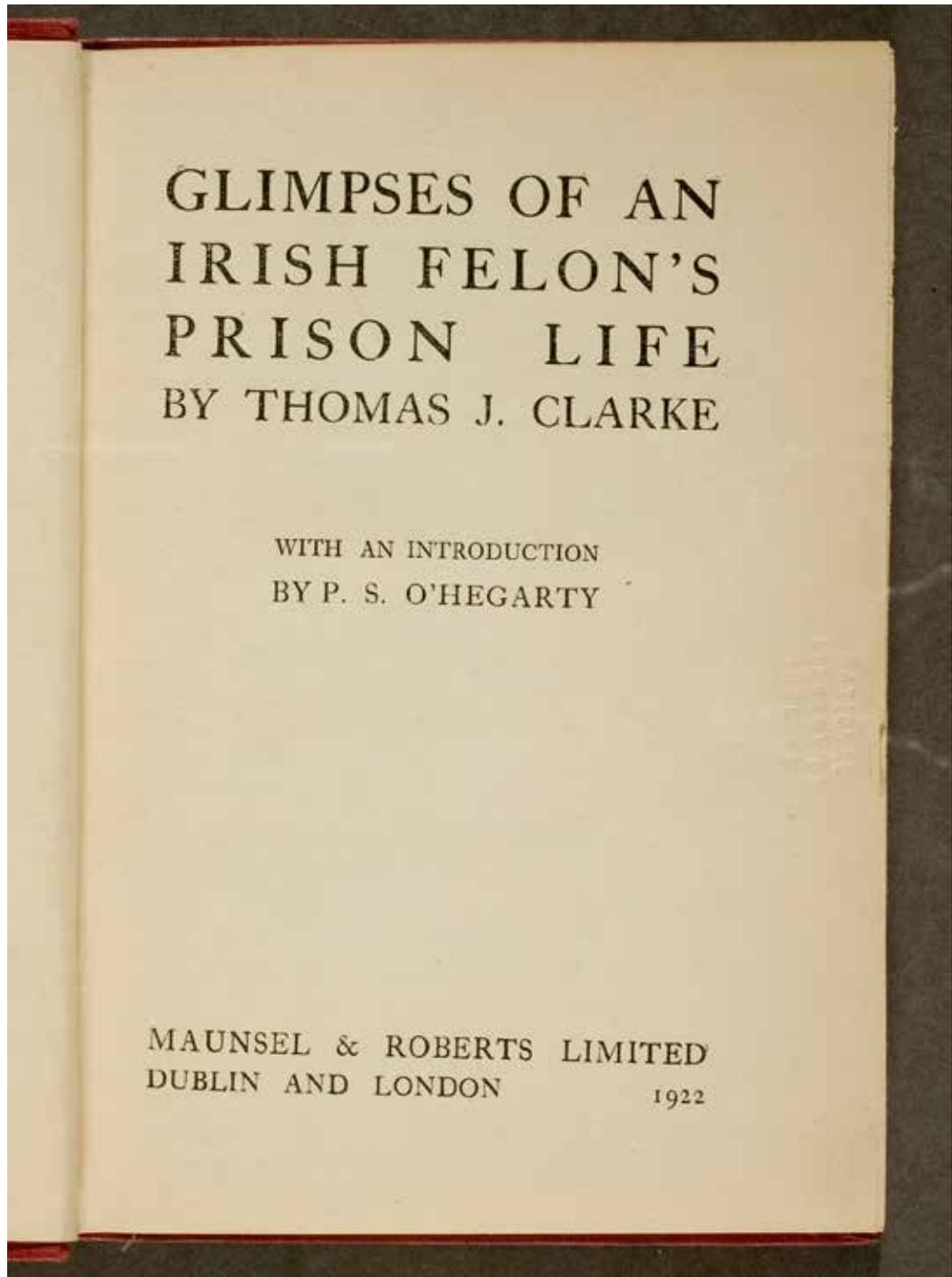
By virtue of his seniority and his contribution over many years, Clarke was given the honour of being the first signatory of the Proclamation of the Irish Republic. During the Rising he remained in the General Post Office with most of the other members of the Provisional Government. He opposed the surrender, but was outvoted. He was tried by court-martial. Tom Clarke was one of the first three rebels executed by firing squad at Kilmainham Jail on 3 May. He was survived by his wife Kathleen Daly and three children.

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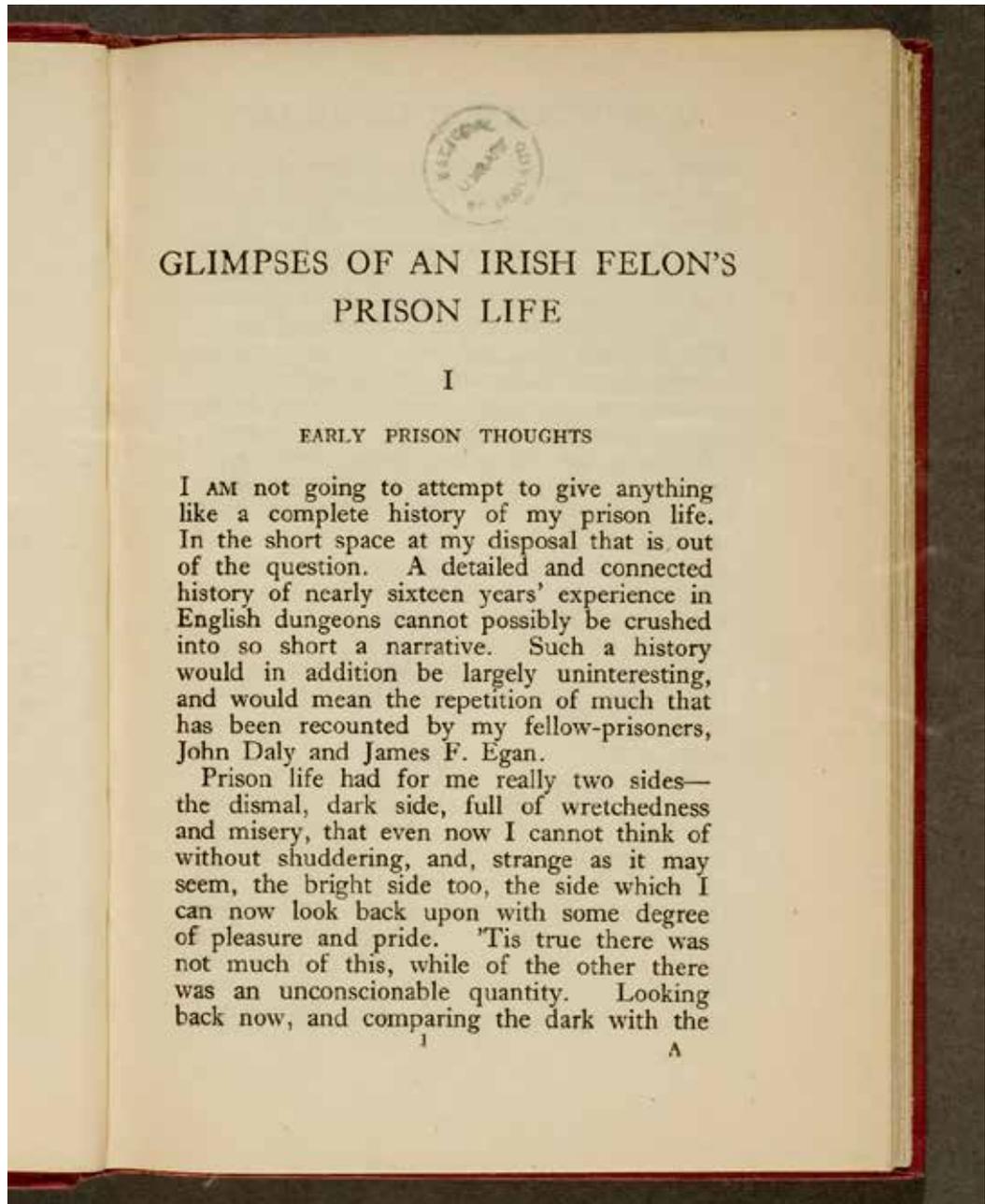
Clarke as a young man. He was later to become prematurely aged by his prison experiences.

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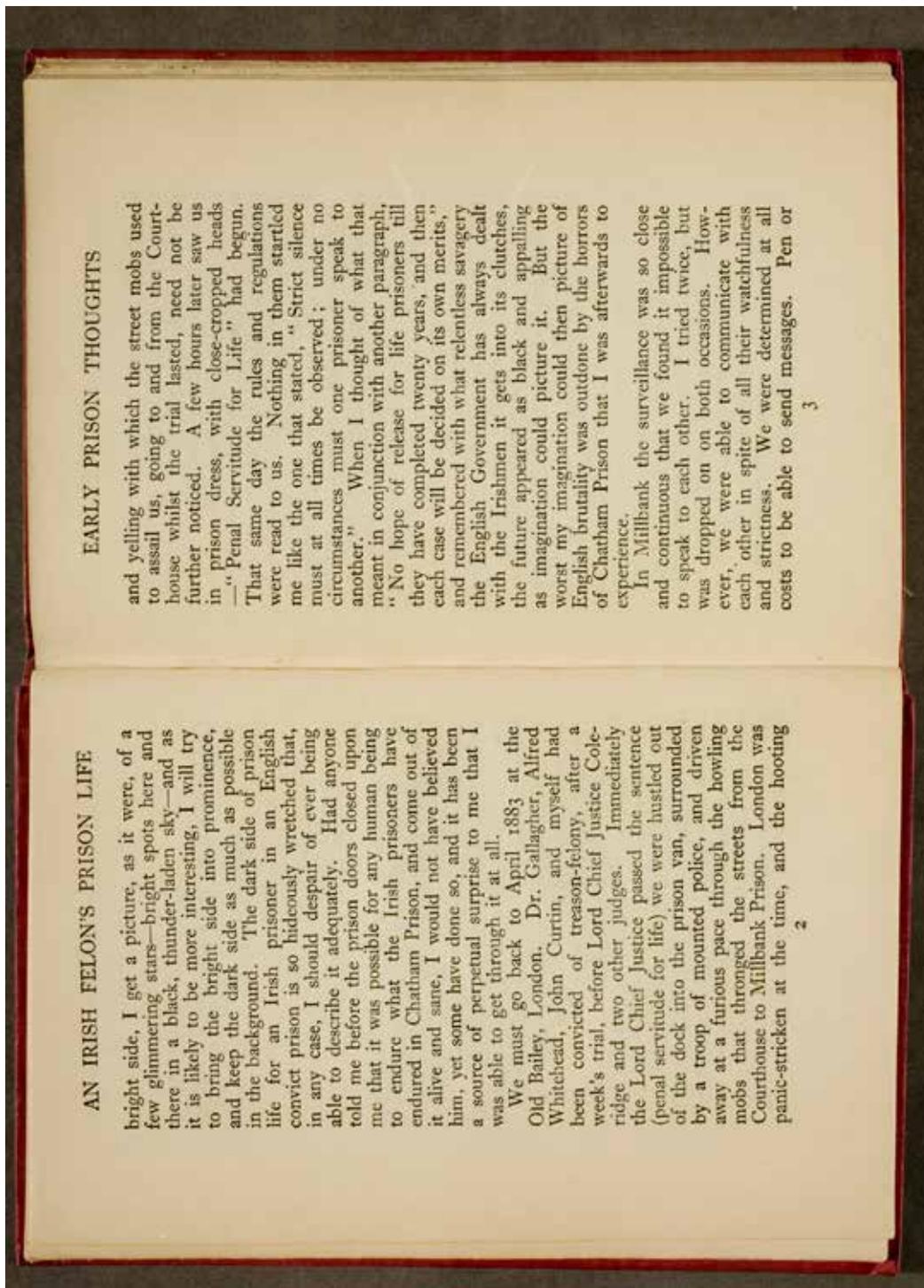
Pages from Clarke's recollections of his years in prison, published posthumously.

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April 11, 1901.

Dear Major. I got your telegram today & would
reply immediately. John is away & perhaps some
light could be thrown upon the question who is
the Haynes you mentioned - no name like that
is or near here & I suspect he must be
an A. O. H. man - In reference to the Fall
River, the Dist. Offr. of that Dist. John Dillon
wrote yesterday to the effect that both he & Cannon
(of Providence) had done their best to get up
meetings in Pawtucket, Taunton & Fall River
but failed - He said in reference to Fall River: -
"The Fall River people are afraid they could not
make it go without the A. O. H. & they would
want their share of the receipts & they might
be asking too many questions so the Dist. decided
under those conditions" &c. they do not to undertake
meetings -

Dillon says he will see you in Providence
& square up for the Lonsdale meeting - the delay
he says was owing to his Sec. of Committee being
sick -

The Mayo ladies are cutting their heads together
here in order to be ready to make a presentation

Letter from Clarke to Major John MacBride, then on a lecture tour in the United States, 11 April 1901. (Ms. 26,761).

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Transcript

April 11, 1901.

Dear Major,

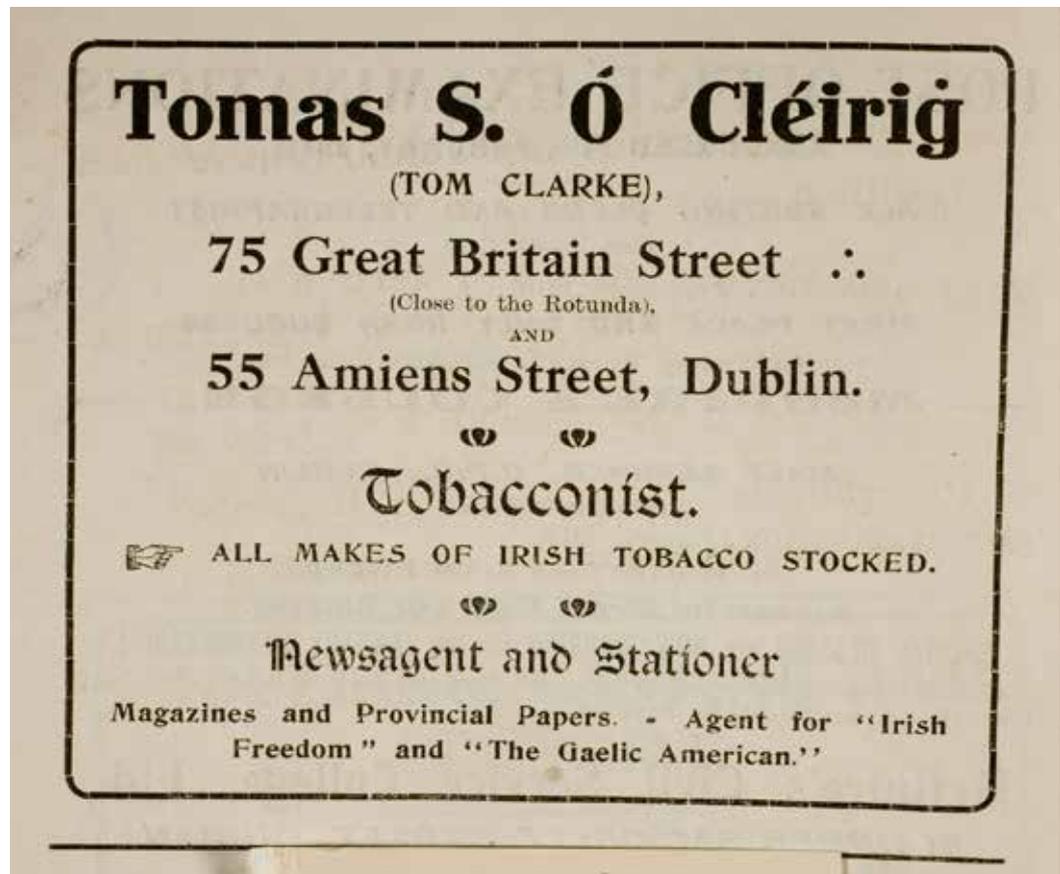
I got a telegram today and wired reply immediately. John is away and perhaps some light could be thrown upon the question who is the Haynes you mentioned. No name like that is on record here and I suspect he must be an A.O.H. [Ancient Order of Hibernians] man. In reference to Fall River, the district officer of that district, John Dillon, wrote yesterday to the effect that both he and Eamonn (of Providence) had done their best to get up meetings in Nantucket, Taunton and Fall River but failed. He said in reference to Fall River: 'The Fall River people are afraid they could not make it go without the A.O.H. and they would want their share of the receipts and they might be asking too many questions', so the district officer decided under those conditions not to undertake meetings.

Dillon says he will see you in Providence and square up for the Lonsdale meeting— the delay he says was owing to his secretary of committee being sick. The Mayo ladies are putting their heads together here in order to be ready to make a presentation to Major McBride when he returns. That will be news for you. Don't ask me what it is they are going to present. I don't know. Perhaps it's a wife—with a fervent wish that it may, I'll wind up this note. Trusting you are OK and Miss Gonne likewise.

Believe me, yours very sincerely, Thomas J. Clarke.

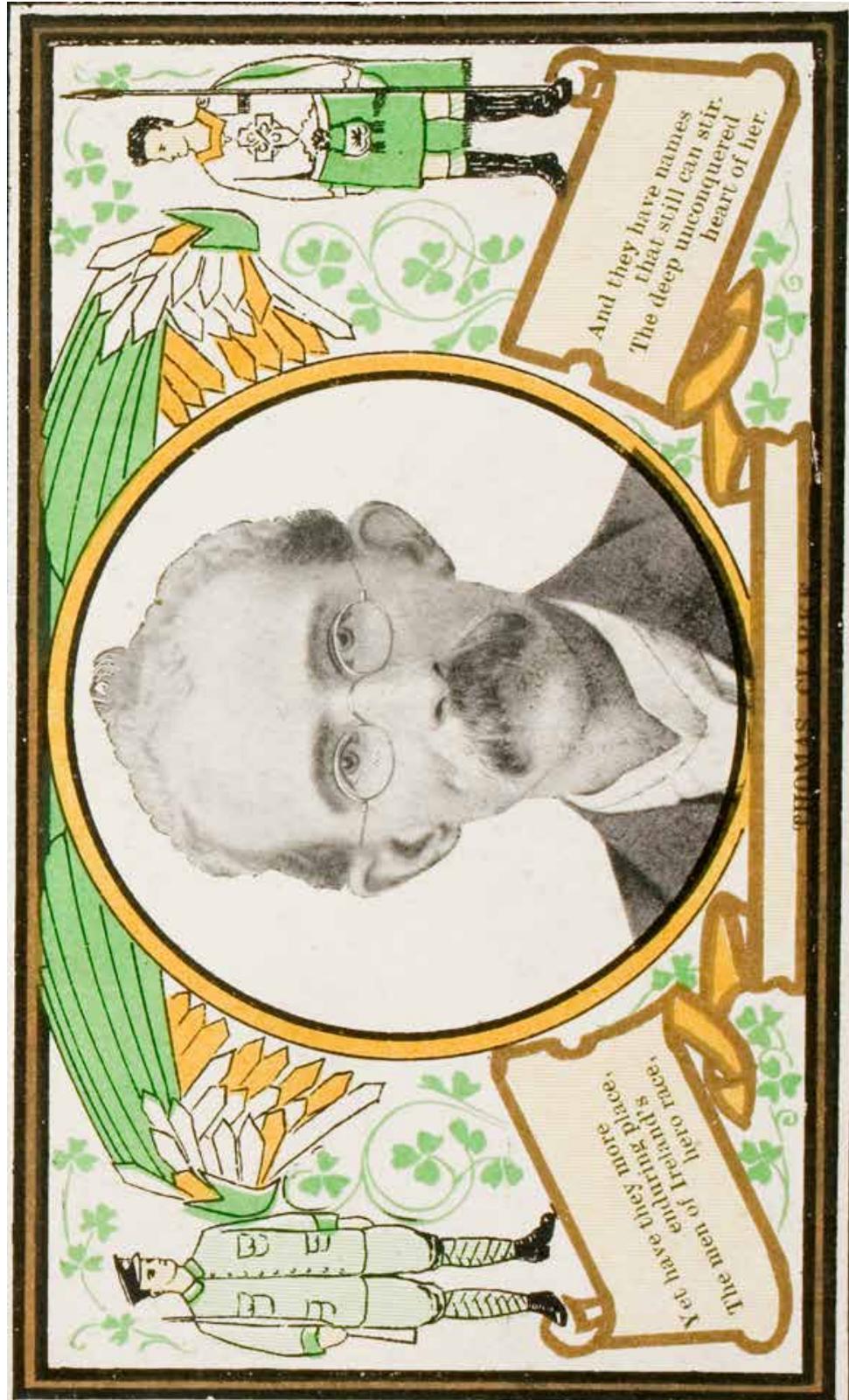
I was only able to get the copies of the New York World (with account of Chicago mutiny) through the mediation of Tom Lonergan. They only came last week. You got the copy I sent and the other papers, I suppose.

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Advertisement for Clarke's shops in Dublin taken from a brochure for the Sinn Féin Aonach na Nodlag 1910. (Ms. 13,069(26)).

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A commemorative postcard.